

Phillips Exeter Academy
Exeter, New Hampshire

The Exonian

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Chris Pappas and Gavin Newsom Hold Rally in Town of Exeter

By JOHANNA HILLMAN and LEVISTOLL

On Saturday, Oct. 17, residents of the town of Exeter streamed into Town Hall for an event hosted by Exeter Democrats. Featured speaker California Governor Gavin Newsom was a main draw of the event, but other speakers included New Hampshire Democratic candidates Chris Pappas, Stefany Shaheen, and Cinde Warmington, the candidates for the U.S. Senate, the U.S. House of Representatives, and N.H. governor, respectively.

Other speakers included current U.S. Senator Maggie Hassan, N.H. House Democratic Leader Alexis Simpson, and Debra Altschiller, the state senator representing N.H. District 24, which includes Exeter and other neighboring towns.

Speakers repeatedly reminded attendees of the impor-

tance of the upcoming midterm election, which will take place on Nov. 3.

The event was attended by a largely supportive audience numbering more than 200 people, and most of the speeches catered to supporters of the Democratic Party. Town Hall was largely full, though some standing room remained.

Before the speeches began, staffers distributed campaign stickers and signs for Senate candidate Pappas. Most of the speakers focused on affordability, education, the environment, reproductive rights, and LGBTQ+ rights. Current candidates also criticized their opponents. Most of what was said was met with applause from the audience.

Multiple speakers emphasized the importance of New Hampshire to their goal of gaining a Democratic majority in Congress and criticized



Democrats Chris Pappas (left) and Gavin Newsom (right) hold rally in the Exeter Town Hall.

what they called corruption in the Republican Party.

Gubernatorial candidate Warmington especially criti-

cized her opponent, incumbent governor Kelly Ayotte. “If you think you’re getting screwed, you are, and Kelly Ayotte is holding the screwdriver.”

she said. Maggie Hassan spoke in support of Pappas, character- PAPPAS AND NEWSOM, 3.

The Out-Trigue ofNYT Filmmaker James Robinson



James Robinson shares how embracing discomfort can lead to meaningful connections.

By KAYLEE GONG and AMELIA MUENTENER

“On any given day, you might find me doing a huge variety of tasks — narrating, or filming, or editing — but really, I think I only have one job, and that job is to get people to care. And I actually think this isn’t just my job. I think

it’s your job, too,” emphasized Emmy-Award-winning filmmaker, author of the book and film “Whale Eyes,” and New York Times videographer James Robinson.

On Monday, Oct. 12th, Robinson reflected on his book and film, “Whale Eyes,” which shared his experiences as someone with strabismus, an eye

condition where the eyes do not align, causing him to see the world out of one eye at a time. He focused on the ability to form meaningful connections even in uncomfortable situations.

“Whale Eyes” was the summer read for the 9th grade class, so Robinson

ROBINSON, 4.

New Trustees Underscore Belief in Exeter’s Transformative Power

By ADRIAN CHAN and DOWAN KIM

With the release of the Summer 2026 Exeter Bulletin, the Exeter community was introduced to four new Trustees: Jeffrey N. “Jeff” Bannon ’77; Zemin “Will” Li ’90, P’25, P’28; Marshall A. Smith ’87; and Seisei Tatebe-Goddu ’01. Currently, the Academy has 21 trustees: the principal; 17 term trustees, who serve one or two five-year appointments; and the president and two vice presidents of the Exeter Alumni Association (EAA), who serve one

or two terms of two years. “Collectively, the Trustees bring a breadth of leadership, governance expertise and specialized professional knowledge,” wrote President Kristyn McLeod Van Ostern ’96.

Term trustees “are chosen for their passion for Exeter’s mission, belief in education’s transformative power and dedication to shaping the school’s future,” as cited by Van Ostern. The Board of Trustees elect new term trustees, nominated by the Governance and Nominations Committee while the EAA president and vice

president are elected by the EAA directors. The Trustees’ priorities this year, Van Ostern shared, are “supporting our new principal’s first year and ensuring strong school leadership; sound financial stewardship; and management of campus resources, including budget, investments and audit and risk oversight; student safety and an inclusive community; strategic planning for Exeter’s future; and engagement with alumni and support for the Academy’s advancement efforts.”

TRUSTEES, 2.

Humberto Mata ‘86 Kicks Off Exeter Belonging Weekend



Humberto Mata ‘86 shares his journey of queer belonging, resilience and advocacy.

By GARY GUO and DIYA SANDEEP

“We were visible, everyone knew who we were, we were popular. And yet, we weren’t ourselves.” These words described much of Humberto Mata’s Class of 1986 Exeter experience. Mata, alongside two other members of his class who have since come out as queer, was forced to hide his sexuality during his time at Exeter for fear of his family’s and peers’ reactions. Almost 40 years after his graduation, he returned to campus to give his third Assembly on October 16, 2026. Mata’s Assembly kicked off Exeter Belonging Weekend, the first event of its kind, where queer alumni of the Academy return to engage with current students. During his time on stage, Mata touched on the difficulties of coming out, his work with HIV-positive mothers, and the Academy’s philosophy of non sibi.

Mata began by telling students about his time immediately after Exeter. Only a few years after he graduated, the first student to publicly come out at Exeter

came forward. He, as well as the other queer members of his graduating class, gave an Assembly in 1989. He discussed the importance of a strong, visible queer community, saying, “The feeling of loneliness that [not having an assured support group] creates, the isolation—I was outspoken... and yet, you suffer, you feel pain. These are not things that a lot of communities go through; [most of them] have a safety net.”

Mata also detailed during his Assembly and the following luncheon the ways in which the queer community is being tried right now. He commented on the prevalence of homophobia, especially on social media, as well as the push to exclude vulnerable groups even within the community.

Much of Mata’s work for his nonprofit, the topic of his second assembly, is centered around preventing vertical transmission of HIV. He works with mothers who test HIV-positive during pregnancy to ensure that they give birth to healthy babies. Fundación

MATA, 4.

News

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» HUMBERTO MATA

Read about Humberto Mata’s return to share experiences of queer belonging and the importance of *non sibi*, 1.

Midterms & METICs: The Reminders for Improvement

By YUZU EMOTO, IAN ZHOU, and TONY ZHU

The Academy has passed the halfway point of the fall term, and with it come midterms and METICs. Each class dedicates a part of its class time to filling out their METIC, with the instructor waiting patiently outside the classroom as the students inside thoroughly discuss their class dynamic. With a few subtle jokes sprinkled in, the class usually writes down their strengths, weaknesses, and areas of improvement on the whiteboard. They brainstorm about slight changes the teachers could make to further improve their class. Beyond the METIC, the week of midterms has served as a good opportunity to check in with how students are doing in class.

Depending on their results, midterms can serve as a wake-up call for students to put more effort into their classes to improve their in-class performance, or as a slight encouragement to maintain their grades. Most

agree, though, that for the second half of term, they have many goals which they hope to improve on. Prep Derek Geng noted, “I think I want to focus more on my participation in class... to be more engaged when I’m doing homework to avoid making small mistakes or calculation errors.”

Prep Daniel Huo shared a similar sentiment, stating, “I want to stop making careless errors, especially on tests.” As for the seniors, though, they shared a slightly different attitude as a result of college applications. Midterms and family weekend act as a checkpoint before the deadline of essay submissions on November 1st. During this time, it is when they are most stressed, and for many, their main goals are to edit and finish their essays. For example, senior Bela Rodriguez stated, “My goal is to not only maintain my grades but also to manage my time well to finish my essays in the process.”

Furthermore, this year, midterms were released be-

fore family weekend, leading to students and families learning about their grades before they arrive in person. Some students find this change troubling, especially students who may have received worse grades than what they had wanted. As Rodriguez states, “if you didn’t do good on your midterms, that’s rough because you just have to be face-to-face with dis- appointment for the next four days...” However not everyone shared this sentiment as for some preps, since their fall term is graded as Pass/Fail, they didn’t mind these changes, as Huo noted, “It’s prep fall any- ways. So, I’m not too wor- ried about what my grades look like.”

During midterms, an ini- tiative started by Student Council, called the MET- ICs (Midterm Effort To Improve Class), allows for direct contact between stu- dents and teachers on how they think the class dy- namic is so far in the term. For most students, they all had positive experiences with METICs; in general,

they believed that it was a valuable asset to improve the class environment. The vast majority of students highlighted that METICs serve an important role in effectively helping stu- dents to see their standing in class, but also the prog- ress of the class as a whole. As new upper Aiden Yoon stated, “I really like MET- ICs because we can really give critical feedback to the teacher whether it’s good or not. It is important that we are giving feedback to ourselves but also to teach- ers.” As for a majority of classes, there are common improvements that can be added to foster more in- depth conversations.

Prep Clara Tsang com- mented that for one of her classes, “we said that we should stay on topic of discussion.” Yoon also ex- pressed a similar struggle that one of his classes tends to “stay away from those actual discussion questions that our teacher provided to us.” Especially for new stu- dents in the classroom, the transition to Exeter can be a demanding experience as

they continue their efforts to try to find a comfortable place to fit in and learn the Exeter way.

Many students use mid- terms and METICs to im- prove in the second half of their term. For one, new students use midterms as a reality check to see whether or not they are fitting into the Exeter style of educa- tion. Returners, on the oth- er hand, use this period to see what they need to work on to further improve their grades. In terms of MET- ICs, though, they clearly identify the improvements each class needs to make to create a better class envi- ronment where everyone is able to participate. More- over, these METICs allow for students to directly give feedback on possible chal- lenges encountered.

As the fall term contin- ues to head towards Thanks- giving break, students look forward to further refine their performance in class and, as a result, improve how their classes function.

Trustees Cont.



Jeffrey N. “Jeff” Bannon ’77

Jeff Bannon’s path changed at his very first choir rehearsal during his first week as an Exeter Student. Teaching the baritone solo from Handel’s Messiah at the first rehearsal of Concert Choir, former Chair of the Depart- ment of Music Irving Forbes asked Bannon to sing the solo for the entire choir and, after he sang, the room “burst into applause.” Having previously hidden his singing because of the stigma around boys who sang, Bannon was elated that his voice was instantly celebrated at Exeter. “Until the day I graduated, not a day went by that friends, acquaintances, somebody would take me to the music building and ask me to sing for them...It was like, honestly, if I died and gone to heaven.”

Exeter stuck with Bannon as he started his Broadway career. At his first audition, he found, to his great surprise, that his Exeter Camelot cast mate David Loud’80 was the music director. “[Loud] re- membered me, and he boast- ed about me to everyone in the room. Before I knew it, I had my first Broadway gig - the workshop production of Kander & Ebb’s STEEL PIER” After 20 years of act- ing, including multiple nation- al tours, Bannon transitioned into communication skills training, eventually starting his own company where he teaches public speaking skills primarily to lawyers at major law firms.

Bannon did not apply to be EAA director but hypoth-

esized that close friends Tim Kuo ’77 was his “informal campaign director[s]” and nominated him to be an EAA director. Even today, many of Bannon’s closest friends are Exonians: “I love them as much as I love my family members,” he said. As EAA director, he arranged a net- working skills webinar with the Alumni Affairs office to teach recent alumni the same skills he used to succeed pro- fessionally.

Now as a Trustee, Bannon describes himself as bringing a “certain joy and enthusiasm for Exeter” that reminds oth- ers why they serve. As a com- munications consultant, he is also very skilled at teaching people how to be a good lis- tener, adjust communication styles to different audiences and work out dilemmas with different stakeholders. Ban- non hopes that Exeter will continue to be a place where every student learns how to approach others and issues as a “compassionate smart thinker.”



Seisei Tatebe-Goddu ’01

Seisei Tatebe-Goddu ’01, a mediator and organi- zational consultant, brings decades of experience facil- itating cross-community con- versations to Exeter’s Board of Trustees. As a three-year student and a resident in McConnell, she started off her lower year as a member of In Essence, an a cappel- la group. She recalls herself as a studious student with a particular interest in marine

biology, while also partici- pating in GSA and concert choir outside of classes. For Tatebe-Goddu, Harkness was about understanding others and synthesizing different perspectives—skills she now uses professionally. “This place put me on a trajecto- ry that I could not possibly have imagined for myself,” she said. At Exeter, she prioritized “opportunities to get involved,” building connections with friends, faculty, and even her dormitory custodian, with whom she exchanged Christ- mas cards for 15 years.

Tatebe-Goddu’s path to Exeter’s Board of Trustees was shaped by her longstand- ing commitment to the Acad- emy rather than her ambition. Reflecting on her journey, she emphasized that meaningful opportunities often emerge from genuine involvement coupled with humility. “[Staff and faculty] will open path- ways for you because of that commitment and...humility,” she explained. She was nomi- nated to be a member of the Exeter Alumni Association Board of Directors; after serv- ing six years in the position, she was appointed to another two-year term, elected as an Officer, and became a trustee.

As a trustee, Tatebe-God- du hopes to preserve Exeter’s founding value—non sibi. She explained her role as the “guardian” of the school’s constitution, the mission, and the bylaws. While emphasizing the importance of caring for others, Tatebe-Goddu ex- plained that “[non sibi] needs to be in balance with [one’s] own needs and requirements.” She recognizes that dedicat- ing oneself to others should not mean disregarding one’s own needs.

Through her service, Tate- be-Goddu desires to cultivate a community where students of different backgrounds can engage in a meaningful dia- logue. “When we lift up one group, we lift up all groups,” she explained, emphasizing the need for acceptance of di- versity and differences. Con- necting non sibi and inclusion at Exeter, Tatebe-Goddu has

one message for the students: “Show up for yourself and for your community.”



Zemin “Will” Li ’90, P’25, P’28

Will Li arrived at Browning North (now Guptill House) as a lower from Boston planning to be an engineer. He played intramural soccer and winter track, and was a member of the math team. As a full finan- cial aid recipient, he supple- mented his income by work- ing as a dishwasher in Elm Street Dining Hall, becoming a crew chief in his upper year. An economics class with For- mer Instructor in Economics Arthur Gilcrest set him on a path to major in econom- ics in college, taking him to Harvard College, where he received his A.B. magna cum laude in economics and East Asian Studies and went on to earn his MBA from the Stan- ford Graduate School of Busi- ness. He has since worked in investment banking for twelve years before starting a hedge fund management firm: Ocean Arete Limited. Li has run Ocean Arete for 15 years as its founder and chief invest- ment officer. Li has remained an active alumni member as co-chair of the Exeter Asia Council, a regional associ- ation that allows for alumni and parents based in Asia to connect to each other and to the Academy through events, programs, and receptions. Li’s most memorable moments in the Exeter Asia Council and Hong Kong alumni communi- ty are centered around Hark- ness: “talking to prospective students and parents about the Harkness [Method], so different from the traditional East Asian pedagogy.” As a trustee, Li has two priorities

to his tenure: “[firstly], en- suring that Exeter maintains its focus on humanities edu- cation in the age of AI [and, secondly] ensuring that the broadest spectrum of students has access to an Exeter edu- cation.”



Marshall A. Smith ’87

Marshall A. Smith ’87 ar- rived at Webster North as a new Upper from New Jer- sey. At Exeter, he was a dorm proctor and pursued football, basketball, winter track, and lacrosse (captain). Smith recently retired from Goldman Sachs, where he worked for more than two decades, as a partner and former Global Head of Healthcare Invest- ment Banking. Aside from his role as an EAA trustee, he is also a member of the Board of Directors of a nonprofit pro- viding meals for marginalized communities: Rethink Food NYC.

The four new Trustees come from diverse profes- sional backgrounds: perform- ing arts, mediation, finance, and investment banking. De- spite their different careers, they all share a longstanding involvement in and connec- tion to Exeter. The Trustees embody the core values of Exeter in their own unique ways; Bannon emphasizes compassion and communica- tion, Tatebe-Goddu focuses on Non sibi and inclusion, Li underscores accessibility and preservation of education, and Smith brings financial leadership and nonprofit ser- vice. Together, the four new Trustees bring diverse back- grounds and a shared commit- ment to preserving Exeter’s values while shaping its fu- ture.

Exeter “No Kings” Protest Emphasizes Power of the Vote

By CHANGYU JEONG, SEAN RICARD, and ANNIE ZHU

On Saturday, Oct. 17, from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m., hundreds of people took part in a “No Kings” protest in downtown Exeter outside of Town Hall. The protest featured live music, as well as speeches from local and state politicians. Congressman Chris Pappas, who is running for Senate, as well as California Governor Gavin Newsom, appeared at a separate political rally directly following the protest.

Exeter has seen multiple “No Kings” protests over the last two years, as they often correspond with national mobilization efforts to express dissatisfaction with the Trump administration. While many signs and chants focused on Trump’s policies, there was an added emphasis placed on participating in the upcoming mid-term elections on the federal, state, and local levels.

The protest began with smaller groups meeting in four separate locations — The Powder Mill, The Senior Center on Court Street, the Elementary School on Main St, and Eyesight Optometrist on Portsmouth Avenue — all of which marched downtown to convene outside of Town Hall.

The protest did not have a permit to organize on the roads, so protesters limited themselves to sidewalks and parking areas. Organizers of the protesters, who wore visibility vests labeled “peace-makers,” helped protesters cross the streets and ensure that traffic was able to flow.

As the protest continued to attract attendees, the Portsmouth-based Leftist

Marching Band provided music. The self-described “activist street band” consisted of limited brass and woodwind instruments yet still featured a variety of music. “We Shall Overcome,” “We Got That Fire,” a classic New Orleans tune, and “African Marketplace” by Abdel Ibrahim, an anti-apartheid musician, were among the songs they played.

Charkee McGee, who played trombone in the band, spoke on the reasons the band chose to perform in political demonstrations. “[Playing at events like this] is really why the band exists,” McGee said. The band later performed with TJ Wheeler, a jazz and blues guitarist who also attended the protest.

Dissatisfaction with the Trump administration and concern for the future of the country were common themes among attendees’ motivations. Protester Lew Hitzrow said, “Our current administration is incredibly corrupt and moving the country in a very dangerous direction.”

She also spoke about the importance of preserving democratic institutions for future generations: “I’m 85 years old. It’s going to affect you and your generation, and I’m hoping we can turn things around so you have a better future.”

After the band concluded at 11 a.m., Exeter Select Board Member and owner of Water Street Bookstore Dan Chartrand gave the first speech, representing Exeter’s local government. Chartrand spoke to Exeter’s revolutionary history as the site of the first independent



Sean Ricard & Emily Wang / The Exonian

state government, and how Exeter will uphold those virtues in the upcoming midterm elections, where “we must select individuals who will secure the sacred stores of our democratic traditions.”

The following speaker, India Sieke, Regional Cam-

paign Manager at the New Hampshire House Democratic Victory Committee, also spoke on the importance of voting, drawing attention to down-ballot issues such as education, specifically ballot question #2, which would put a funding cap on public schools.

U.S. Senator Maggie Hassan, who represents New Hampshire, also spoke about Exeter’s revolutionary history and encouraged people to vote in the midterms, but focused more on Trump and national politics. “I think the

PROTEST, 5.

Pappas and Newsom Cont.



izing his opponent, Republican nominee John E. Sununu, as an agent of current president Donald Trump. “We can’t give Donald Trump yet another senator who doesn’t have the courage to tell him no,” she said. In contrast, she portrayed Pappas as a strong leader who “never backs down” when “New Hampshire is on the line.”

According to NBC, Sununu has attempted to keep the president at arm’s length and has previously criticized him, though Trump did endorse his candidacy in February.

Pappas and Newsom spoke last. Pappas emphasized the importance of support for the Democratic Party, calling the upcoming election “the most important midterm election of our lifetime.” He criticized his opponent, Sununu, and encour-

aged attendees of the event to volunteer for the Democratic Party.

Finally, Newsom took the stage to raucous applause. He criticized the Trump family, accusing it of corruption. He framed the upcoming midterms as crucial to the preservation of American democracy. “If we lose this year, we lose this country,” he asserted. The end of his speech was met with a standing ovation from the crowd.

After the speakers left the stage, they took questions from members of the audience and press on the floor of the hall. Shaheen, the Democratic nominee for New Hampshire’s 1st Congressional District, spoke about the unique position of Exeter in the upcoming election. “Exeter is a critically important part of.. the first congressional

district,” said Shaheen.

State Senator Altschiller highlighted the excitement she saw among the attendees. “I am here to get people fired up, and let them know that there is a better way of doing things,” she said.

The event was originally RSVP-only, though organizers eventually allowed some who had not registered to enter, including Phillips Exeter students. One of these students, upper Jess Anselm, described Newsom as her favorite politician. “Newsom’s speech was on another level,” Anselm said. She found his rhetoric to be incredibly effective: “I was clapping and shouting — he really made the entire crowd want to vote for Pappas.”

Lower Emma Lee said the

event helped her realize the importance of community and democracy. When Pappas spoke, she said that “you could just feel how much love and support was in the room.”

Students also appreciated the chance to connect with candidates on a more personal level. “I never really invested time into learning about the representatives of Exeter or New Hampshire, so this event provided me a first impression of getting to know some of these officials,” explained lower Ben Kim. He said attending this event made him feel “extremely privileged and lucky.”

However, lower Izzy Cabral did note that she and her friends were among only a few high school students at the event and the protest that preceded it. “I truly wish there were more younger students at both the protest and the rally,” she reflected.

Not all students had fully positive impressions. Kim felt underwhelmed by the substance of the speeches. “[The speeches] mainly consisted of criticizing Trump and regurgitating over-generalized goals,” he said. “I would have liked to have heard more specific plans of action from the candidates.”

Upper William King was another student attendee. He was surprised by the extent of messaging around New Hampshire by most candidates. “Governor Newsom, not as much, but I guess that’s where his priorities lie,” he reflected. King was furthermore surprised by the impression that Newsom left on him. “Newsom is charismatic to be sure, but he’s a little bit of a cornball,” he said. “I think that was one of my main takeaways.”

Instructor in History Alexa Caldwell was not present at the rally, but her instruction of HIS550: Politics and Public Policy provided insight into the event. “Something we have discussed in our 550 class is how out of touch national politics feels from local politics,” she said. “If this kind of an event is a way to bridge that gap and bring local issues to the national stage, I am all for it.”

She found that the rally likely benefited all speakers involved. “I think it both signals significant support from a high profile politician like Newsom, and it is a little self-serving for Newsom who might be running for president in a few years,” said Caldwell.

Many community members who spoke with The Exonian emphasized the importance of youth involvement in politics. “I always like to say that you may not be old enough to vote,” said audience member Kevin Fleming, “but you’re old enough to get ten people to vote.”

When The Exonian spoke briefly with Newsom, he reiterated the same message. “You have the agency to shape the future,” he asserted. “It’s not a rehearsal. It’s critical that young people exercise their voice.”

Lee, who said the event helped her realize the importance of political involvement, concluded by encouraging students to get involved by attending similar events for all sides of the political spectrum, saying, “We are lucky to be able to attend events like these, hear directly from political leaders, and engage with what is happening with our state and nation.”

CCO Hosts Information Sessions

By ELLINA KIM and ANNA YANG

The College Counseling Office (CCO) plays a critical role in every Exonian’s transition from high school to college. Beyond assigning each upper a college counselor during the winter term, and organizing large college fairs, the department hosts information sessions with admissions officers from various colleges. This allows seniors to connect with a school in a more structured and personal environment than the aforementioned college fairs.

Betsy Dolan, Dean of College Counseling, further explained the difference between a college fair and an information session. “College Fairs,” she described, “are meant to offer a wide range of colleges for students to consider, whereas college admission information sessions are for students to dive deep into information about one college.” Before these sessions, the CCO sends preliminary emails with information on the college visiting, providing simple demographic statistics, recommendations for similar institutions, and highlighting specific programs. The sessions are offered in EPAC Forum for around 45 minutes.

The in-depth perspective offered at a CCO information session can be a valuable re-

source for students who feel overwhelmed by the college admissions process. Some students feel, however, that it isn’t worth the time. A senior, who asked not to be named, attended a Georgetown College info session, but because she had already talked to their officers at the college fair, she received similar information to what she had learned before. She said, “The only reason I went was to show demonstrated interest. But the types of schools that come don’t even do ‘demonstrated interest’ because they’re already so selective.”

Instead, the senior highlighted another offering of the CCO: their college workshops. She explained the unique format: “There were some we did where they would tell us about the size of the school, the culture, the spirit, everything. But then they would hide the name. And then after we decided if we liked it or not, they would show us the name.”

Some uppers were intrigued by the info session opportunities, which were only open to seniors, and hopeful about attending sessions next year. Upper Rayann Cisse illustrated how this would be a useful resource next to online college research. “I feel like [an information session would] give us more information than just when you just search on your own. You actually get college ad-

mission officers’ point of views.”

Cisse also described how it can often be challenging to know what admissions officers want to see in an applicant. “The sessions [would] give us a nice perspective into what college admissions are looking for and help us know what we should do.”

Upper Eilena Ding expressed some cautious interest in the usefulness of future sessions as a senior, saying, “I think I definitely would want to go. It’s really nice that the school has that as an opportunity for you to listen and get to know it better.” She continued, “I also think it would depend on how much time I have, because oftentimes in those types of info sessions, you can find a lot of that kind of information online.”

With early decision applications due either October 15 or Nov. 1, common applications being filled out, and seniors committing to colleges, the CCO is in its busiest season. Dolan noted, “This is a critical time for seniors and college counselors. From writing personal statements to answering why a student may want to study a particular field, seniors are deep in their application process.” Attending college fairs and information sessions is just the beginning of an upperclassman’s long and thorough journey with the College Counseling Office.

Robinson Cont.



Na Ayudhya & Plearn Devakula / *The Exonian*

came for an extended three-day residency on campus. Past the assembly, many opportunities were arranged for him to engage further with Exonians: the post assembly luncheon, open time in the Learning Center, and Q&As with various groups around campus. Robinson could always be found across campus wearing a signature red cap.

Robinson opened assembly by speaking about a word he coined, which he dubbed “out-trigue.” Out-trigue describes when something catches your attention, but contrary to intrigue, which creates a bridge, out-trigue creates a rift between you and another person.

Robinson used an anecdote from his first year of college to explain this emotion. When he was leaving a lecture, another student approached him and started a conversation. This student stood right next to him, close enough that Robinson could “feel the little bits of spittle coming from his mouth.”

At that moment, Robinson admitted that he was feeling out-trigue. But Robinson continued on with this story, explaining that this student, Sanji, eventually became Robinson’s close friend.

When Robinson first encountered Sanji, he did not know that Sanji was a nomadic herder and grew up in a cold region of the world. He also did not stop to think that Sanji grew up in a place where you stood close to people if you wanted to stay warm.

Prep Aadhira Satheesh highlighted this as a memorable moment during the assembly, sharing “I liked how he explained a time when he experienced out-trigue.” Robinson reminded students that his visual disability does not exempt him from feeling out-trigue, and he is still responsible for making others feel heard.

Building off the idea of out-trigue, Robinson shared strategies he uses in his book, films, and everyday work for The New York Times to get people to care: focusing on a precise moment, flipping the narrative, using the form of the piece, and listening.

“When you think about that film ‘Whale Eyes’, you might think it’s about a lot of big ideas. You might think it’s about disability, or my eyes, or family, or childhood. But really, it’s a 12 minute film about 10 seconds in time: it’s about the 10 seconds when you first

see me, and you can’t tell which eye to look into,” said Robinson, when explaining the importance of using a specific moment to address large stories. In terms of finding these moments, he hinted that they often are when people feel the most out-trigue.

For the second tactic, Robinson referred back to “Whale Eyes”, in which he aimed to flip two cultural narratives: that disability was something to be overcome and the stereotypes around misaligned eyes. Despite many surgeries, Robinson never “defeated” his condition. However, he realized that he could make the audience do the overcoming themselves. He said, “I put the burden on them and asked them to look back into the eye that was looking at them.”

When Robinson was younger, he thought he could ignore his eye condition and it would go away. By flipping the narrative, Robinson recognized that his eye condition is important to talk about, but it also requires the audience to share the burden. Prep Stella McCue said she enjoyed “his perspective on growing up and trying to hide [his disability] into eventually accepting it.”

In the film “Whale Eyes”, there is a scene in which the video switches between two cameras, moving the shot from side to side. In the book “Whale Eyes”, letters fall off the page, and some words are upside down. Both of these choices allow the viewer to see the world how Robinson does and are an example of Robinson’s third method: using the form to advance a message.

“The last tip that I want to share doesn’t involve telling a story, but rather listening to one,” said Robinson, sharing how his understanding of the word “disability” has shifted by listening to the various voices, especially ones of the disability community. “To tell a child they’re disabled is to tell them that they’re protected. That long before they took their first breath, it was a community that was fighting for them. It’s a community that continues its fight to this day.”

Robinson concluded by returning to out-trigue and how to address that feeling: “The real reason to lean into out-trigue is not because you want that discomfort to go away, the real reason is because the connections that are waiting for you on the other side are so worth it.”

Mata Cont.



Sean Ricard / *The Exonian*

VIHDA has helped deliver 4,500 healthy babies and continues its work in Latin America today.

Mata’s commitment to nonprofit work grew out of his own experience during the AIDS crisis. He buried two boyfriends who died from the crisis, including a partner who died in 1996, months before the medication was available. Before the partner died, he entreated Mata, “Don’t forget me.” These losses motivated Mata to find a way to help.

The largest theme in his presentation remained queer belonging—“When you’re gay, and I use gay in the LGBTQ definition, having someone say hello to you is already huge. Huge. You are being seen. You will have multiple opportunities in your life to do this.” He invited all Exonians to think about the small ways we can practice non sibi in our day-to-day lives, especially for members of our community who may struggle to feel like they belong here.

During lunch, Mata shared what it was like settling into college in 1988. Though his roommate was accepting of Mata’s coming out, objections arose from his roommate’s family. Mata’s roommate eventually moved out, leaving Mata with the room to himself. “It sucked,” Mata recalled. “I made jokes about it; I said, ‘Oh, I don’t care, I can have a whole room my-

self,’ but deep inside, that’s a type of rejection.” Twenty years later, the family invited Mata for dinner together and apologized for how they made him feel.

Mata’s parents responded differently when he came out. “I was ready for a fight with my dad. But instead, he gave me a hug, and told me he already knew,” Mata recalled. Although his mother took longer to get comfortable with Mata’s identity, she eventually became a peer counselor for her best friend when her friend’s daughter came out as a lesbian.

Mata described his preparation for the Assembly as ‘unconventional’ and explained, “I don’t like to write my remarks because it forces me to read them and then I feel my delivery is flat. So I write some notes, but once I’m on a stage, I free flow the speech so it comes from the heart and becomes a more personal experience.”

He added, “When I’ve spoken at Assembly, it’s like practicing a little Non Sibi inwards. I feel helping current students put their Exeter experience in perspective and let them know what we went through so it helps them gain some wisdom in their own experiences is an important task for alumni to contribute our share to current students’ experiences.”

Upper Jules Morris-Scott, co-head of GSA and part

of the duo who introduced Mata, noted, “I think it was just really nice that he really focused on the energy that he was trying to put out into the audience rather than the specific words he was gonna say, and that he said that usually helps him convey his message.” She added, “He loves what he does, and it really shows when he speaks. He told a lot of stories, but it really didn’t feel like he was just lulling on, so that was really nice. It was really great to just hear his experiences.”

“He was very well spoken, and I was very impressed by the fact that he was able to speak so eloquently with no script,” senior Axel Peña said. Having had little exposure to the history of Exeter’s queer community, Peña gained a better understanding of the legacy Mata and other members of the LGBTQIA+ community have left on campus.

Mata’s journey extends past his work that he shared on the stage. He is currently working on a podcast called Causa y Pluma, preparing to produce a short film, and funding a queer theater event that he explained was “entirely produced and curated by young queer writers, directors and actors.”

Mata encouraged allies and other students outside the LGBTQIA+ community to begin with small actions close to home. “I think that the challenge that we all have coming out of here is that we have opportunities to change the world by starting in your block, in your neighborhood, in your family. And this is what my journey has been.” Mata said.

Mata reminded students that identify as straight, “Don’t be afraid to be an ally and stand up for what YOU KNOW in your hearts is right.” At the end of the lunch discussion, he assured the queer community with a few words that, with his efforts, will only become truer with time: “You are not alone.”

From the Archives: The Evolution of Exonians’ Understanding of Indigenous History

By CONNOR CALABIA and EILENA DING

Exeter, New Hampshire, historically known as M’Squamskook, is located on N’dakinna, which is the ancestral homeland of the Abenaki, Pennacook, and Wabanaki Peoples. Located on this land, the Academy has always been surrounded by thousands of years of deep Indigenous presence. However, by the founding of Exeter in 1781, conflicts from the late 17th century had heavily displaced the local Indigenous population.

As debates over Columbus Day and Indigenous Peoples’ Day have evolved nationally, The Exonian has captured changing conversations about how Indigenous history is represented at the Academy, from discussions of Native American culture as early as 1881 to debates over Columbus Day and the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives in Exeter’s U.S. history curriculum in 2021.

In June 1881, four years after The Exonian was founded, the paper published a poem titled “On Seeing Indian Remains Exhumed,” which reflected on the consequences that European settlement had on Indigenous peoples. The poem described the seizure and transformation of Indigenous land, writing that “busy towns

rise from your wigwam home.” The author condemned the violence of colonization and judged that the nation had been “reared on a base of sin, disgrace and hate.” This was a growing belief among a certain populace in America at that time, thanks to the book. In an article published that same year, the G.L.S. Literary Society, most likely the Golden Branch Society, debated: “Resolved, that the Indian tribes of the United States have been abused and misgoverned, and ought to be made citizens.” The affirmative ultimately won by a slim margin of thirteen to twelve. Though this debate cannot be representative of Exonians’ thoughts on the abuse of Native Americans, it demonstrates, along with the 1881 poem, that the treatment of the Indigenous population was on the minds of Exonians at the time. Notably, no Indigenous voices appear in either.

A century later, that changed. In a 1992 article, the paper covered “The Third World of America: Part I — The Natives of America,” a symposium dedicated to drawing attention to Indigenous cultures and the challenges that Native American communities faced. This event included demonstrations of traditional dances and incorporated discussions of Indigenous representation, broken treaties, and

environmental threats to Indigenous land. During the event, Upper Mandy Begay, who identified as White Mountain Apache and Navajo, expressed concern that throughout the United States, “when most people talk about diversity, they don’t talk about Native Americans.” The symposium also raised the question of who should have authority when teaching Indigenous history. Jeffrey Hamley, then director of Harvard’s Native American Program, and Susan Harijo, a Cheyenne Indian and the president and executive director of the Morning Star Foundation, both argued that Indigenous people should have authority over their own history and education. The coverage shows that questions about Indigenous representation were present at Exeter well before the Academy’s more recent discussions of diversity in course curricula.

By 2013, some students began considering how the Academy’s values were reflected in the holidays it observed. In “To Celebrate or Not to Celebrate?,” an OpEd published on Dec. 12, 2013, Rex Tercek ’16 questioned whether Columbus Day deserved celebration at Exeter. Noting Exeter’s observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Tercek saw MLK as “an exemplary role model of our school motto, non sibi.” Con-

sidering Memorial Day, Tercek observed the elements of non sibi in honoring the selfless acts of veterans as a nation. Concluding that the Academy should celebrate holidays that align with its values, he challenged the historical significance of Columbus’ arrival in the Americas, emphasizing that Indigenous peoples inhabited the Americas long before his arrival. Tercek’s article framed the importance of celebrating holidays that “recognize vulnerable groups of people,” pinning the Academy’s duty to celebrate holidays that “exemplify the tenets for which we stand.”

In 2021, Exonians turned to the classroom. The Exonian published an article on April 8 reporting that students criticized the underrepresentation of Asian, Latinx, and Indigenous perspectives in the Academy’s U.S. history curriculum. The article included students’ expressions of disappointment over the lack of these perspectives, and several argued that Asian, Latinx, and Indigenous perspectives were too often treated as supplementary to the main historical narrative rather than playing the integral role they did.

Most recently, in 2025, Indigenous students were no longer the subject of the conversation but its organizers. In “Community Reflects on Indigenous Peoples’

Day,” members of the Indigenous Culture Club (ICC) described efforts to raise awareness on campus, from chalk-ing reminders that the Academy sits on Indigenous land to hosting a fry bread event to share culture through food. Cohead Jacquie Lonian explained that Columbus should be recognized but not celebrated, continuing the debate that Tercek began in 2013, while cohead Vida Ntem-Mensah II warned of the ongoing erasure of Indigenous cultures. Echoing the 1992 symposium’s call for Native people to have authority over their own history, the article suggests that Indigenous representation at Exeter now extends beyond the classroom into everyday campus life.

Across coverage from 1881 to 2025, The Exonian’s archives show students moving from reflecting on Indigenous people to hearing from them, and from expressing historical regret to challenging our own calendar and classrooms. The paper has shown Exonians driving this change and efforts to expand Indigenous representation at Exeter continuing. But after 145 years of coverage, Exonians’ reckoning with the land beneath the Academy and the values they claim has made immense progress but is still far from complete.

Protest Cont.

founders would be ashamed to see that after all they did to unite these states,” she said, “we now have a president who tries to divide us, who disdains the people’s voices, who robs the people with his corruption, and then demands to be rewarded for his failures; he prizes, parades, and monuments.”

Susan Cole Ross ‘77 was also among those related to PEA who attended the protest. Ross attended the protest to spread awareness of the ballot issue for local public schools. At the protest, she handed out pamphlets and enlisted those interested in going door-to-door to convince local members to vote. “I care about my country,” she said.

Ross was impressed by the size of the protest and encouraged more students at PEA to join future efforts. “Community makes change in this country so far,” she said. “I am thrilled to see so many people here, and that’s a real indicator that we are not alone.”

Very few students joined the protest, but those who did attend were lower Ben Kim and his friends. However, those who attended the demonstration were passionate about their causes. “I just resonate with the town’s passion for democracy, for freedom, for liberty, and I just want to do all that I can

to support that,” Kim said.

Upper Ben Lewis, co-head of PEA’s Republican Club, discussed the prevalent discontent toward the current administration on both sides of the American political spectrum. “Critiquing Trump is not ... just a Democrat or liberal thing. I think that there’s a lot of people that disagree with Trump.” Lewis also noted that the current approval rating of President Trump is approximately 32 percent nationwide.

Upper and Exeter Political Union co-head Larry Lyu also shared his opinions on the sentiments of the protest. “I just think it’s a sign that people have become sort of discontented with the current administration. They think that his policies aren’t really helping Americans, and he’s mainly trying to take power for himself,” he remarked.

In a No Kings rally that specifically emphasized the midterm elections, protesters hope for more involvement from the younger generation. “It’s your future,” said protester Cathy Woods of Exeter. “The importance [is in] those who can vote,” she added. “[Students at PEA] are going to be leaders of this country, and it’s up to your generation.”



Sean Ricard & Emily Wang / *The Exonian*

Life

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Senior of the Week Axel Peña: Exeter’s Next Oscar-Winner



Peña poses by Swasey Parkway. Sean Ricard & Plearn Devakula Na Aydhya / The Exonian

By JOHANNA HILLMAN and CHANGYU JEONG

“There’s only us, there’s only this. Forget regret, or life is yours to miss.” — “Rent” (Musical)

Axel Peña is one of those “annoying people” who sings in the shower. For the residents of Peabody Hall’s fourth floor, where he’s lived all four years, hearing

a resounding countertenor through the walls is just another Tuesday. He admits his shower-singing is a bother. It is also appreciated, for it is not solely his voice that radiates through the walls, but his kindness,

his generosity, and his ever-present care.

Peña is from Hingham, Massachusetts. He was initially attracted to Exeter’s boarding environment and rigorous academic curriculum. However, he emphasized that it is ultimately the people and the community he’s found that bring him back. “It’s about meeting new people, learning new perspectives, and growing as a person,” he said. “And being dragged out of your comfort zone. Really dragged.”

“My mom raised me on Glee albums and the Mamma Mia soundtrack,” remarked Peña. It was during his childhood that his passion for singing began — through voice lessons and “screaming [his] head off in the car” — and it was at Exeter that it truly flourished: in Concert Choir, the Scrubbythings tenor/bass ensemble, and in Gli Scala-

tori, an advanced ensemble that sings Italian madrigals.

At the beginning of his Exeter career, Peña simply tried to take it all in. “I kept falling into what made me happy and what interested me,” he reflected.

Due to his enthusiasm and dedication to his craft, singing has provided for Peña a community like no other, where he’s formed close relationships with the other members of Exeter’s vocal community. “If you surround yourself with the types of people that you want to be, I think you eventually end up where you want to be,” he said. For him, he’s ended up singing in advanced ensembles and serving as the section leader of the Tenor 2 section since his upper year, a role in which he’s excelled.

When he first joined Concert Choir, upper Tobe

PEÑA, 9.

Teaching Begins with Curiosity: Christopher McCormick



McCormick smiles in D Squared Java, his favorite coffee shop in town. Adrian Chan / The Exonian

By CAROL LEE and ARISA YOSHINO

A text written four centuries ago can still start an argument. Around the worn maple Harkness table, students interpret, analyze, and push back against each other’s points — they root themselves in words that have long outlived their writers. At the head of the table, Instructor in En-

glish Christopher McCormick always listens intently, suppressing a grin as each discussion unfolds.

For McCormick, the beauty of Harkness is what makes teaching at Phillips Exeter Academy worthwhile. Whether discussing centuries-old literature, teaching creative writing, helping students discover their voices, or simply listening to their stories outside the classroom, he approaches

each interaction with the same enthusiasm and genuine curiosity.

“The love of literature ended up bringing me here,” McCormick put simply.

This deep appreciation for reading has developed throughout his entire life, but not always linearly. As a young child, growing up in California, McCormick loved

MCCORMICK, 10.

WHAT ARE EXONIANS LISTENING TO?

By DIYA SANDEEP ‘28

Whether you’re strolling on the paths, studying in the library, working out in Downer, or eating at Elm Street, you will always spot at least one Exonian with earbuds in or headphones on. It has become perhaps one of our most defining features as students...but what are Exonians actually listening to?

Lower Anna Yang recommended a number of PinkPantheress songs, including “Mosquito,” “Nice to Meet You,” and “Capable of Love.” She called the artist her favorite, and complimented her music for being “uplifting and joyful to listen to...It makes me feel good about starting my day.” She added that she appreciated PinkPantheress’ music for “sampling older songs with fresh and nuanced interpretations.”

Prep Sabrina Mekhaya cited “Merry Christmas, Please Don’t Call” by Bleachers as her current favorite song, and explained, “I rediscovered it, because I used to listen to it, and then I stopped, and I started playing it again. And it’s part of my fall playlist, so it’s been on repeat.” Nostalgia being a big theme, she also added that The Beatles have become her favorite band as “it’s music my dad used to make me listen to in the car, and I think I’ve grown accustomed to it, I’ve grown into it.”

Upper Stephanie Chynoweth mentioned a number of artists she loves when prompted,

including Sienna Spiro, Noah Cyrus, Frank Ocean, and Dominic Fike. She said of Spiro: “The music she’s been releasing is spectacular... Her style is a lot different from other people, and I feel like that is kind of what we need in an industry where, for example, AI is being used a lot and there’s a lot of unoriginal art, and just overall an increase in artists’ main goal of being liked...she just exemplifies originality, and I hope that’s what we can start to see with other people too.”

Lower Justin Zhang was interested in a completely different genre — classical music. He praised Mozart for the technical complexity of his pieces and the variety of ways they can be played. He also mentioned that he finds contemporary composers to be underappreciated by other fans of classical music, and “Schindler’s List” by John Williams to be a wonderful transition into contemporary music, describing it as “very moving, a very sad and deep piece about love and about betrayal. Because it has no words, you can interpret it however you want, and because we all have different life experiences, we all take that in our own ways.”

So what are students on campus listening to? A lot of things, apparently. From “Sunkiss” by TUIDE to Mozart, students on campus have different genres they love, different artists they swear by, and different songs to recommend.

TALES FROM TOWN: COMMUNITY WITH DAN CHARTRAND

By **TIAGO BILYK ‘28**

As owner of Water Street Bookstore and Member of the Town of Exeter’s Select Board, Dan Chartrand’s presence can be felt all over town. And for him, it’s all about community.

The store itself, the largest commercial bookstore nearby, is an icon of the town of Exeter. A chance. Located in the very center of downtown Exeter, just a few stores over from some of Town’s most popular haunts, an Exonian is often bound to pass its beautiful windows with blue and gold embroidered overhangs protecting and framing the many books that hug the glass. Inside, the walls are lined nearly floor to ceiling with slanted bookshelves. From signed first editions of the newest releases to timeless classics like the Iliad and the Odyssey, it has got it all.

Chartrand is probably, however, more influential in his role as a Selectman, an elected member of the Select Board which acts as the governing body of the Town of Exeter. He fills a role which he describes as being historically populated by a “merchant,” representing the Town’s vivid history of commerce up and down Water Street.

Chartrand grew up in St. Paul, Minnesota, but his father had been born in New Hampshire. “We would visit family here and in New England,” he recounted, “and I announced, I think, when I was eight years old, ‘I’m going to live here

someday.’” After graduating with a Bachelor of Arts from the University of St. Thomas he “reversed [his] father’s immigration” and moved back to the New England area.

It was then that he decided that he wanted to open a bookshop. “I had worked in a bookstore in St. Paul,” he said, “and that had been my entry into the book business. [Then] I worked for a publisher, Houghton Mifflin [Harcourt], in Boston, and ran a trade association for booksellers in New England, what was then the New England Booksellers Association.” In his role at what is today called the New England Independent Booksellers Association, or NEIBA, he was destined to travel around the country visiting a variety of stores and towns. “Part of my job was going and visiting bookstores all across New England. And in the course of doing that, I said, ‘You know what? I really want to own my own shop.’”

Water Street Bookstore opened in that very same spot, right in the center of town, back in 1991 when the world, Chartrand says, was a very different one. “When we started, it was very much in the mold of, ‘We’re going to sell a lot of books.’ But in the 2000s, we saw the rise of the most fearsome selling machine ever created: Amazon.” The aftermath of Jeff Bezos’s conquering the book market forced many independent bookstores to close or restructure. But Water Street remained strong.

“We realized that my approach to this was not viable

for the long term,” Chartrand recalled. “If it was just about selling stuff, well, we were up against a machine that was way better at that than we could ever imagine being. We knew we needed to shift our mission.” So, in the early 2010s Chartrand gathered his bookstore’s most loyal supporters in a room with one goal in mind: to forge the future of Water Street. Chartrand decided to keep himself out of that discussion, saying that he was “too close to the history and tradition of the bookstore to contribute in a vibrant way to what they were going to come up with as a new mission.”

A short while later they had come up with a plan. “The mission is to build a diverse and vibrant community around the written word,” Chartrand shared. “Full Stop. That’s it . . . The store has thrived ever since we adopted that.”

To accomplish that goal, today the store holds all varieties of events and read-alouds, hosting PEA families, students, and faculty. Chartrand recalled a particularly memorable experience of hosting the Academy’s Democratic club when they were asked to meet off of Campus, an occurrence he said happened on and off again over some ten years, particularly when Mrs. Weatherspoon was adviser to the club.

Part of its mission also includes fostering a nationwide network of bibliophiles, many of whom are connected to the store’s author to reader business. “We want to make sure that the best fans of some real-

ly popular authors get a signed book, whether they live in the area or not,” he said. “We have this broader community of readers, and connecting readers and authors is something we spend quite a bit of time on.”

Finally, Chartrand said, the mission is accomplished in the physicality of the store itself. “Then,” he shared, “you need to consider just cultivating and curating a space that people come into and feel comfortable in, and feel like they belong. It’s one of those places that’s not home and it’s not work.”

Chartrand’s mission for Exeter is not unlike that of the Academy itself, emphasizing the importance of community and belonging. “I was raised in a Catholic family,” he recounted, “and I was the eldest son. There’s this tradition in Catholic families that you give your eldest son to the priesthood. Well, I wasn’t going to do that,” he said, laughing. “But one of my friends pointed out to me that, in a way, I’m running a sort of secular spiritual community, where the spirituality is around books and reading, and people improving their outlook on life. And I’m like, ‘Okay, I can go with that. Secular spiritual community. I will go with that.’”

Being a business owner in today’s tumultuous environment is not easy on anyone, something Chartrand thinks about often. “I’ve at various times felt very good about this, and then at other times I’ve thought, ‘Is this really what I was meant to do with my life?’

so I’ve had ups and downs with that personally.” By focusing on community, however, Chartrand has seen improvement. “Right now, I have never felt better about doing this, which is bizarre, because it’s been so much time. But I look back and see what are now becoming generations of people that we’ve had a positive influence on, and I have a lot of gratitude for that.”

When asked about the many people he has seen wander and roam through the store, Chartrand reflected again on the Weatherspoons from PEA. “[Former Dean of Residential Life] Russell [Weatherspoon] and Jackie [Weatherspoon] had a tremendous impact on me and how I thought about my life’s work.”

Chartrand further reflected on R. Weatherspoon’s speech when he and J. Weatherspoon received the founders’ day award. “Russel had said once that ‘Exeter is a community, but it’s not just the community that’s here at any one time. It’s a community that is across the world.’ And he said that the community lives and breathes and it comes most to life right here. I think about the bookstore in that way as well. Some people visit for a day, but they feel attached, and they assign themselves the label of a member of our community. We have people who were small children or babies when they were first introduced to the store, and now they’re bringing their kids. It’s the generationality. That’s what makes it special.”

Alumni Spotlight: Nat Wyatt ‘14

By **SELASIE AMEMASOR, JESS ANSELM, and ANNIE ZHU**

Many Exonians today know the phrase, “You can do the work. You will make lifelong friends. Absolutely, you belong here.” It’s a phrase uttered by our Principal Emeritus Bill Rawson. But what does belonging actually mean? It’s fair to say, belonging means something different to each and every Exonian that has passed through these halls. For alumnus Nat Wyatt ‘14, belonging has always had a complex meaning.

A New York native, Wyatt spent their academic career in a school nearly as rigorous as Phillips Exeter Academy. As bustling paths in New York City became the cracked pavement of Exeter, their love of the classics stayed the same: “I loved Latin and ancient Greek, and I was very lucky that I was able to do that from a young age,” they recalled. “When I got to Exeter, part of the excitement was getting to do that at a very high level as a high schooler.” Their first year was spent on Latin and later would take up to nine classes in Latin and Ancient Greek with Instructor in Classics Sally Morris, who still teaches both languages today.

Wyatt felt that their academic career here was elevated not only by the academic rigor here but by the people around them. “I was a very nerdy kid,” they explained. “I loved to read, and I think that is part of why I actually wanted to go to Exeter.”

While it is stressful to compete, “being in community with people who were really impressive” to Wyatt inspired them to “work harder and be better.” One of the best lessons they could have learned — however cliché it may be — was the message of

non sibi. “It’s valuable to know how to articulate what you believe, but it’s also really valuable to know when to listen,” Wyatt reflected. “Quite a few teachers taught me that here.”

During their time here, Wyatt was a proctor of Merrill Hall. As a proctor, Wyatt provided a shoulder for students to lean on, taking the extra steps to make sure others in their dorm felt seen.

They took a moment to reflect on many of the alumni who, for whatever reason, did not graduate with them. “My worst memories here were seeing some people leave this place before graduation, because of the pressure of this institution,” they said. “I think it’s true that the rigor is what makes this place extraordinary, but it’s also what makes it so challenging.”

Wyatt was also a part of Exeter’s queer community. During their prep year, gay marriage was still a question under the Obama administration and remained a contentious topic; it was finally legalized during their freshman spring of college. Despite the political climate and Exeter’s community and how challenging it was to be out, Wyatt still was able to live normal high school experiences, such as taking their partner to prom. “We got to do things that were very kind of cliché, and I wasn’t bullied for it,” they recalled. “I think that I definitely was one of the few, and so there was a loneliness sometimes, but it was, in some ways, very normal.”

Many of the older alumni, however, had different experiences. Previous alumni that went to school in the 80s were in America not nearly as accepting of LGBTQ+ communities. It wasn’t until the late 2000s that the position of queer people really began to shift.

Many students in Wyatt’s year are also impacted by their openness; they explain that a few students in their year and the surrounding years thank them for their authenticity, years later. While Wyatt may not have noticed it, their presence gave hope to many on campus.

Wyatt recalled that many queer folk felt that their existence was often in the political spotlight, both on and off campus. “GSA felt like it was a very political organization because we were fighting for marriage equality as well as the interrogation of single sex spaces,” Wyatt said. Having queer identity de-spectacularised was important for many on campus.

Wyatt entered Yale University in 2014, where they were deeply involved in many of Yale’s LGBTQ+ organizations. In addition, they were captain of the women’s rugby team and majored in American Studies with a focus on African American and Film and Media studies. During that time, they also taught sex education in New Haven’s public schools. While they were in Yale, they were a member of the Academy of American Poets.

After graduation, they moved out from the East Coast into Los Angeles to work in Hollywood. When describing their work, Wyatt said, “I get to work with writers and filmmakers, and I get to help them make art.” As a talent agent, Wyatt represents writers and other artists, helping them find work on TV shows or develop their own projects and sell them for a living.

Facing the growth of AI, especially in some creative spaces, Wyatt offered some words of wisdom about their role in protecting artists. “It’s really hard making a living off of writing, especially in a world of AI, and



Courtesy of Academy of American Poets

you wonder a lot about what your future is going to be like,” they said. “In a lot of ways, my job is protecting people in those situations and making sure that they feel taken care of.”

Since then, Wyatt has been on the Forbes 30 Under 30. They started in the mailroom of Williams Morris Endeavour, a major talent agency. From there they went on to be the first openly transgender agent in Hollywood’s history, representing writers for hit shows like “The Bear”, “Mr. & Mrs. Smith,” and “House of the Dragon.”

One of the main reasons as to why Wyatt works in this field was because they saw that there were certain groups not being given the same opportunities as others. When Wyatt was a student here, they had no idea their future career existed. Their job requires them to do one of the hardest things in the world every day: speaking up. They advocate for the creatives in their community whether it be pay, a foot in the door for shows being made, or the creation of shows. “It’s really vulnerable, being

creative.” They note, “In a lot of ways, my job is protecting people in those situations and making sure that they feel taken care of.” They admit that even after years of doing this job there are still days where having to speak up is daunting. “The flip side of it is it’s a job where you have to pick up the phone and call people you don’t know every day, right? There’s a lot of bravery that comes with not being scared to do that, right?”

Looking back on their journey, Wyatt advised current Exonians to take advantage of the diverse opportunities at Exeter. Being in a career they never planned to follow at Exeter, Wyatt certainly followed the advice themselves. “I think that sometimes if you try to engineer your life too much or try to build the resume you think the world wants, you can sometimes be doing yourself a disservice,” they said. “You have an amazing opportunity to follow your curiosity to the next thing, and you’ll be surprised where it might lead you.”

A Legacy in Five Parts: Diana Davis Delivers Meditation

By LEVI STOLL and NICOLE SUBKHANBERDINA

Five mistakes, five outcomes, five realities. On Wednesday, Oct. 14, Instructor in Mathematics Diana Davis delivered a meditation that followed five strings pulled from the fabric of her uncle John Bischoff’s life. Each one, though harmless on its own, unravelled into a life-changing reality that would mark generations ahead.

That morning, the hall of Phillips Church filled with the warm voices of faculty: Instructor in Religion Kaitlyn Martin Fox introduced the meditation with an acoustic guitar cover of “Where Have All the Flowers Gone?” After the first few verses, the audience softly sang along, reciting the lyrics of the Pete Seeger song: “Oh, when will

they ever learn?”

The song is a famous anti-war anthem, specifically protesting against the Vietnam War—the war that Bischoff died in. Davis took the podium after the last of the guitar chords faded from the room. She introduced the five mistakes that she would cover in her speech before introducing Bischoff to the crowd. “John was the first member of the family to attend college,” she noted. He graduated from the University of Nebraska as “president of the Arnold Air Society, where he was learning to fly with the Air Force ROTC.” Bischoff’s passion for flying would remain for the rest of his unduly short life.

“When John died at age 25, it absolutely devastated the family,” Davis said. “And though he died decades before I was born



Hopson Kounavis / *The Exonian*

and I never met him, never knew him, never loved him, the trauma of his loss is soaked into my bones.” Her meditation ascribed this trauma to five discrete decisions. Alongside her description of these mistakes, Davis spoke of Bis-

choff’s continued influence on her and her family. Examples of this influence range from wooden dinnerware brought back from his tour to Davis’s emotional connection to the national anthem and fighter jet flyovers due to Bischoff’s

death.

The first mistake she described was the United States going to war in Vietnam in the first place. The second mistake outlined by Davis was that Bischoff

MEDITATION, 11.

Red Runners Raise \$3,565 with 5K Fundraiser



Courtesy of Jocelyn Wen

By OYA ATALAY and LYDIA KUHNERT

At 8 a.m. on Sunday, Oct. 11, most Exonians were lying in bed. A few may have just started to get ready for the day. Even fewer may have been sleepily sipping on a latte in town. But, on Hatch Field, many determined Exonians were already up and working hard, running through the woods, setting up banners, and decorating the field, all in preparation for the Red Runners Club’s Fundraiser 5K.

The race itself went off without a hitch. Around fifty Exonians took the starting line at 10 a.m., and in total, they raised around \$3,500 dollars for the charity School the World, which builds schools in rural and remote communities.

The co-heads of Red Runners have been planning this event since spring term. Upper Annika Nystedt explained, “We got the idea that we really wanted to do an event like this and fundraise for a really good cause last year. However,

it was too short notice in the spring, so we decided we would rather do it this fall.”

Once the general date was decided, the team spent the summer brainstorming various ways to get the community involved, and how to make the race a success. One especially innovative idea was the “clip campaign,” which involved students fastening paper clips to each other to spread word of the event. In addition to that, the co-heads spoke at assembly to promote the event, and sent many emails to the track teams.

This promotion didn’t just target students — many adults within the Exeter community signed up as well. Instructor in Mathematics, Julie Van Wright, described, “I saw a flyer in the dorm, I’m a dorm fac in New Hall, and I knew my son would be excited to run a 5k on the PEA XC course. So, I signed him up first. At the last minute, I decided to sign myself up as well.”

Participants ranged

RUNNERS, 10.

Fall Student Showcase Concert



Lower Alvin Zhou on cello and accompanist Jacob Hiser on piano.

Olivia Wang / *The Exonian*

By JUNE KOH and ARIANA METZGER

From the intricate Mozart pieces to the dramatic music of Elgar and Liszt, the recent Student Showcase brought the vibrant musical talent of Exeter onto the stage. The fall term showcase offers campus musicians, both ensemble members and independent soloists, a low stakes yet profound platform to share their dedication and artistic passion. The Chair of the Department of Music, Marcus Rabb, emphasizes that the event plays a unique role on campus by giving “students an opportunity to perform who are not necessarily in ensembles, [and] highlighting the musical growth journey that they are all a part of in their individual lives.” Ultimately, the showcase is a celebration of hard work and community support across Exeter.

The performers of the Fall Student Showcase were chosen after giving five minute auditions in front of members of the Music Department. Their performance was then discussed and scored accordingly.

Preparing for this concert requires intense rehearsal and polishing. Senior Claire Xiao described how practicing for her performance was a months-long commitment. “For piano, the preparation process is excessive. It takes months to learn a lengthy piece, a week or two to memorize it, and a few more weeks of practice.”

Each soloist selected a repertoire that matched their technical goals and person-

al artistic voice. Lower Lily Cui chose Violin Concerto No. 4 in D major, K. 218, 1st Movement by Mozart, noting that the composer is ideal for refining technique. Cui also mentions that this maturity is shown through “a lot of individual 16th notes and articulations that are important.”

Xiao was drawn to Liszt’s Un Sospiro, calling it “unconventional by nature, with rapid hand-crossings and an articulate bottom line.” Meanwhile, lower Alvin Zhou chose the fourth movement of the Elgar Cello Concerto, a piece that resonates deeply with him as the first work he ever performed with an orchestra, in preparation for an upcoming concerto competition later this year.

Beyond technical precision, the showcase provides performers a perfect place for emotion expression and audience engagement. For prep Astin Fu, performing served as “a very good transition stage” for his first concert at Exeter. He also mentioned that he hopes the audience will “notice the work and the time that was put in.”

Zhou hoped his performance communicated more than just a strong grasp on technical skills. Zhou describes, “it’s a really emotional piece, and I hope I convey the message well through not just good technique, but also capturing the audience’s attention.”

For many, the core of the event is about building connections and preserving the arts. Cui reflected that the showcase offered “another oppor-

tunity for me to share my passion for music with the school and with my friends,” adding, “I really missed the feeling of going on stage and giving the audience a story through a piece.” As traditional arts face shifting cultural trends, Xiao expressed a broader hope that “classical musical works will continue to be celebrated” on campus and beyond.

The concert was an incredible display of the talent found here at Phillips Exeter. Lower Julia Zhu attended to cheer on friends and enjoy the music. Zhu, who has previously performed in a showcase, was “inspired by their musicality” and “hopes to create the same sound and feeling with my own playing.”

At the end of each piece, the lengthy applause showed how there was so much admiration for the performers and their phenomenal performances. “I was so thankful for the opportunity to watch so many talented performers play these incredibly sophisticated pieces,” says Hanna Zhang ‘29.

As the Student Showcase series continues throughout the academic year, organizers and performers both encourage the Exeter community to make time for upcoming concerts. Rabb emphasized, “Everybody should try to come to at least one concert,” adding that the concerts “gives people the chance to see others in a completely different light.” By keeping their eyes and ears open, listeners not only support their peers’ artistic growth but also gain a deeper appreciation for the beauty and emotion music brings to campus.

EXETER’S WHIMSICAL DINING EXPERIENCE: OBA NOODLE BAR



OBA Noodle Bar on a cold October night.

Justin Zhang / *The Exonian*

By DEVON CHANG and PETRA ESKANDAR

OBA Noodle Bar is a significant piece of culture at Exeter for many students. Exonians come on the daily for a delicious meal and experience. OBA is a Thai-Asian fusion noodle bar with an American twist, which provides a space for community gath-

ering and a place to eat. Dim lighting mixed with a neon “OBA” sign outside created a “cozy and homey” vibe, according to lower Emmanuelle Hazelton. Quiet music and the murmur of conversation fill the air. “I think the music keeps a very low-key vibe.” Hazelton continued. While the atmosphere

is lovely, the real reason students dine at OBA is for the food. After a couple of minutes, our server took our orders. For appetizers, textures were juxtaposed at the table. Bok choy was served in a playful metal tub. They were prepared to have a crispy exterior, but contain a rich salty flavor. However textures were inconsistent because crispy leaves were mixed with

soggy stalks of bok choy slathered in too much oil. In addition, the amount of salt on the bok choy was overpowering the seasoning of the bok choy was overpowering the flavors of the leafy green, which led to a rating of 6.75/10. On the other hand, the pork gyoza with a crispy bottom and flavorful filling was a highlight of the dinner. A mixture of soy sauce and vinegar that was salty and acidic complemented the juicy pork filling blanketed in a soft dumpling skin. The gyoza popped with pork fat dripping with flavor and seemed to melt in your mouth, awarding this dish a 9/10. Steaming ramen came in a large bowl from the kitchen. The OBA ramen is a simple but powerful main dish: a miso broth bowl that contains noodles, pork, cabbage, bean sprouts, corn, and more. The broth was rich and was able to fill the space well. The crunch of the bean sprouts and lettuce contrasted the soft noodles. The flavors of pork, corn,

and broth all tie together to make a great dish. Had there been more noodles and less insignificant toppings, the dish would be elevated to the next level, so it receives 9/10. Golden brown crispy duck breast lay atop a bed of egg noodles; it was exceptional cooking in its purest form. An island of egg noodles surrounded by a five-spice broth was prepared with the finesse of a noodle master. Crackling skin produced a sound like firecrackers in my mouth. Elements of the dish like bean sprouts, scallions, and garlic provided a different texture and flavor into the dish, which allowed the dish to transcend into a realm of food that provides comfort and flavor, 9.5/10. This restaurant is a quintessential part of Exeter’s culture. Dishes at OBA were flavorfully complex and diverse, while the warming environment creates a perfect spot for students to relax and have a good time. OBA Noodle Bar: 8.5/10.

Peña Cont.

Muoto said he didn’t know “my left from my right or what I was doing.” It was due to Peña’s mentorship that Muoto began to settle into his position in the choir. Many in the choir credit the Tenor section’s abilities to Peña’s leadership. “[Peña] is more than able to give feedback, and people are more than able to receive it when it comes from him,” observed fellow section leader Ezequiel Martinez. It is this quality, according to Martinez, that makes Peña “essential to the Tenor section’s work.” Moreover, the enthusiasm and brightness that Peña brings to every rehearsal have helped his influence to reach beyond just the Tenor section. Peña, the “sweetest person ever,” always works to uplift others during rehearsals, according to upper Ryan Ramos. “He’s actually just a giant teddy bear,” she said. Alumna Harini Venkatesh ‘26, a close friend of Peña’s and a former member of Concert Choir, praised his generosity. “He’d mention helping a student work through audition music when he was preparing for the same audition himself,” she emphasized. Instructor in Art Jihye Han, Peña’s advisor, also reflected on his role as a proctor in Peabody Hall. She described him as “a kind of mom” to the younger students. “He is always thinking about other people,” she added, highlighting instances when Peña mentored younger students or helped her carry her groceries. Muoto, a fellow Peabody resident to Peña, recounted an episode from his lower year when Peña helped him complete his English assignment late at night. “It was 11 p.m.,” he recalled, “[Axel] was on his way to bed, but I told him about my narrative ... He left a ton of comments, told me how to do it better.” Muoto still remembers the day as one of his most fond memories, em-

phasizing that Peña offered him a hand “when I really, really needed that help.” As a co-head of the Environmental Action Committee (EAC), Peña is a fervent advocate for environmental sustainability. Senior and fellow co-head Lynnwoo Hong noted that “he’s very driven and ambitious.” Senior Roy Bulsook, another one of the EAC co-heads, touched upon Peña’s insight and resourcefulness. “He has that knowledge to be able to give feedback to new projects and also be able to recommend a course of action,” he said. Peña’s love of song has also found its stage in musical theater. During his time at Exeter, Peña has been cast in many shows, including three mainstage musicals — “The Addams Family,” “The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee,” and “Little Shop of Horrors” this past spring. It is through theater that Peña and Martinez’s friendship has truly blossomed. A particularly cherished tradition highlighted by Martinez is their biweekly outings to Szechuan Taste, which often include debriefs after long or taxing rehearsals. According to Martinez, Peña has mastered the skill of constructive yet caring feedback — a skill that has helped Martinez to improve himself as a performer. “I wish that I could wear my heart on my sleeve and be able to communicate my opinions without fear of destroying a relationship [the way he does],” reflected Martinez. While finding friendship, Peña has also strengthened the theater community as a whole by serving as a mentor to lowerclassmen. “Being a leader in [a theater] environment is being able to model vulnerability, but also encouraging others to put themselves out there in the same way that [Peña] has through the years,” explained Theater Director



Peña poses in front of Goel Center for Theater and Dance. Plearn Devakula Na Ayudhya / *The Exonian*

Lauren Josef. “His genuine love for theater just pours out of him,” commented Venkatesh. “It’s always inspiring to me how he makes every character seem so real.” She recalled how before each Spelling Bee show, she and Peña would wander among the audience. It was in these moments that she began to recognize Peña’s acting skill. Lower Trip Spurlock experienced Peña’s leadership firsthand while starring alongside Peña in Little Shop of Horrors. Peña, who Spurlock described as a “six-foot-five pillar of theatrical knowledge,” helped Spurlock to blossom as an actor. “It’s good to receive the knowledge he can impart about the art.” Furthermore, Peña’s extroverted personality has helped Spurlock to find his place within the theater community. “You feel like a people person just being around Axel,” Spurlock commented. However, “Little Shop of Horrors” also marked a moment of challenge for Peña. The week before the show, his upper spring, Peña fell ill with a high fever and ended up unable to perform the role of Mr. Mushnik. “That was going to be my last performance at Exeter,” he reflected. After the hard work he had put in over the term, not getting the chance to share his art was crushing. Looking back, however,

he was able to find a silver lining. “The performance is a huge part of theater,” he reflected. “Everyone gets addicted to applause eventually.” However, in this difficult moment, the community he had supported and encouraged showed up for him. “I think I realized that it was the community that I really needed,” he said, highlighting the many “text messages, voice messages, and calls” he received from his castmates. Furthermore, missing out on performing gave Peña the unique opportunity to watch the performance. “I’d never been in a show and then gotten to watch it afterwards,” he remarked. Another pivotal moment was the support and love he received from the cast after the show was finished, when he got to give everybody in the cast a “great big hug.” Josef also commended Peña’s graciousness. “It was heartbreaking because Axel had worked really, really hard in that role,” she said. “He was able to celebrate [his understudy] Gavin... he even sat in the audience and cheered everybody on.” For Josef, Peña’s actions were evidence of a rare level of maturity and self-assuredness. Throughout his time at Exeter, Peña has faced moments of challenge and mo-

ments when he’s felt unsure of his path forward. Through it all, he’s maintained a constant optimism and brightness. “Sometimes,” he said, “you just need to take a deep breath and know that you’re gonna get there eventually.” Peña’s also learned the value of stepping outside his comfort zone. For him, as a self-identified “bio kid,” it’s been in courses like English and physics that he’s grown the most. One of his physics teachers, emerita Instructor in Physics Tanya Waterman, commended Peña’s “superb curiosity.” “I marveled at his analytical ability, his attention to detail, and his incredible work ethic,” she said. Although Peña’s future remains open as he looks toward life beyond Exeter, his commitment to helping others remains unwavering. Whether through theater, music, or environmental advocacy, Peña has found fulfillment not only in his own accomplishments, but also in those of the people around him. Beyond the academic opportunities, performances, and leadership positions, it has been the relationships he formed that have made his experience meaningful. “As long as I get to connect with people and make sure that people feel like they belong in their spaces, that’s my main priority,” he asserted.

McCormick Cont.

reading — however, in high school, “I really fell out of love with reading,” he said. As an avid musician, other priorities took over, meaning he stopped reading for leisure for many years.

McCormick did not believe he would ever return to his love for reading. However, in college, at the University of California, Berkeley, a required English class reawakened his passion. “My teacher, Scott Covell, taught in a way that was so contagiously enthusiastic, and made literature feel alive,” he said. “He made you feel like the great books were not just great because someone says they are, but because you get to co-create them as a reader — they’re interactive experiences.” This shift in McCormick’s perspective on literature compelled him to return to reading.

After graduation, McCormick worked in Silicon Valley for a few years as a content creator and manager at a sports software company, but continued to write short stories on the side. Even when it meant writing these stories on top of 60-hour work weeks, his passion stuck with him — making him realize that perhaps writing may be his calling. He then applied to graduate schools for writing, and ended up at the University of Michigan.

At the University of Michigan, McCormick got a job as a graduate student instructor, then was later hired as a lecturer in the English department after his graduation. During that time, in 2016, he published his first book, *Desert Boys*.

McCormick then relocated to Minnesota when he was hired as a tenure track professor at Minnesota State University, where he went on to publish his second book, *The Gimmicks*. He taught in Minnesota for eight years, but after having a baby — his now four-year-old daughter, Celia — he and his wife knew that they wanted to move to either California, where he was from, or New England, where his wife was from, to be closer to family. Still, McCormick had never considered teaching high schoolers.

McCormick’s interest in boarding schools first sprouted when his wife, Mairead Small Staid ‘06, an alumna of the Academy and former Bennett Fellow, set up a day for him to sit in on classes taught by Instructor in English Todd Hearon, who was once her advisor. Even before applying for a job at the Academy, McCormick was instantly fascinated by Harkness: “I just got to see Harkness in action for the first time, and I was like, ‘What is this?’ ... This is such an amazing way to learn.” He then applied and was selected to be an Instructor in English at the Academy, and is now entering

his second year in the position.

As an Instructor in English, McCormick reflects his passion for literature to his approach in teaching. For McCormick, the most rewarding Harkness moments are when students are genuinely absorbed in the material, engaging with one another’s ideas rather than attempting to impress each other.

The enthusiasm McCormick brings to class has not gone unnoticed by students. Senior Dash Seals recalled how he quickly came to appreciate McCormick’s energy. “I think Mr. McCormick’s teaching style is defined by being really passionate and engaged in the material,” Seals said. “That’s the thing that stuck out to me most when I first had him.”

Beyond his enthusiasm, McCormick strives to cultivate a safe environment in his classroom. Rather than dominating the discussion, he allows students to direct the conversation themselves, stepping in when guidance is necessary or to ensure that quieter voices are heard.

Upper Sophie Feng appreciated this approach, particularly his attentiveness to everyone around the table. “He’s very good at making sure that everyone gets into this discussion,” Feng said.

Senior Krithikh Raja agreed, adding that he is “willing to step in and help you make a point or understand the text better, rather than just let you flounder and struggle.”

Seals added to this sentiment, stating that McCormick does a great job in fostering an environment where students can share ideas without fear or judgement. “I think the classes I’ve had with Mr. McCormick, both last fall and last spring, have been probably some of the safest spaces I’ve been in.”

McCormick strives to facilitate the writing process as well. Rather than enforcing a particular voice or style, he encourages students to explore their own voices and helps them feel comfortable in their writings.

Senior Ashley Gong appreciated the freedom McCormick gave for her writing. While providing helpful suggestions and new perspectives, Gong recalled that he still respected her creative decisions and her own unique style.

For senior Summer Mansfield, McCormick’s encouragement fundamentally changed her relationship with English. “I thought English was my least favorite subject, but he taught me a new way to think about it,” she said. McCormick helped her see writing as something more than an assignment. “I wasn’t writing a personal essay to write a personal essay, but to learn about myself,” she expanded.



For McCormick, being an educator means more than teaching students how to read and write. It is also about making time for conversations and making real connections with students. “The thing to admire most about Mr. McCormick is how much he cares about his students ... not just in class, but how you’re doing it outside,” Seals stated. McCormick understands the balance Exeter students face and inquires into his students while not overstepping their boundaries.

His colleagues have observed the same dedication. Instructor in English Jane Cadwell described McCormick as “a kind and enthusiastic teacher,” adding that “he invests in each student and supports them to do their very best work.”

Instructor in English Erica Lazure, who has served as McCormick’s mentor at Exeter, said she has “had a front row glimpse of his creative approach to teaching in the classroom, the intention and care he puts into his assignments and texts, and the incredible impact he’d had both at The Exonian and in Cilley Hall.”

Beyond the classroom, English Instructor Joseph Gaudet described McCormick as “one of the kindest, most generous people I’ve ever met,” adding that “he is always willing to help and always has time to talk, whether it’s to a student, a colleague, or a friend.”

Besides being an exceptional English instructor, McCormick also serves as a dorm faculty in Wentworth Hall, where he moved this year from Cilley Hall. In both dormitories, he has been well-loved by all the residents.

When transitioning to Exeter, however, “dorm duty was the biggest mystery to me,” McCormick said, noting that he had never worked in a residential role before. “I was a little afraid of it, to be honest.” Although he was unsure what the job would entail, being a dorm faculty has since become one of his favorite parts of his job at Exeter.

“I get to know students in such a casual, comfortable,

sometimes vulnerable way,” McCormick reflected. “When you see people between their appointments and in their homes or where they live, this trust that you get to build with each other is really long lasting.”

McCormick goes out of his way to build connections and show care with the students in his dorm. Senior Max Gerbut, a resident of Cilley Hall who is also in McCormick’s advisory, explained, “Mr. McCormick really cares. He picks up small details you don’t think matter at the time, and later he brings them back up. That’s how you know he was actually listening.”

Many students also appreciate McCormick’s positive presence, especially during check-in on his duty nights. “It feels really nice to be done with a long day of work and just come back to the dorm and have someone greet you with such enthusiasm and kindness,” upper and Cilley Hall resident Eric Jin said.

“Myself as well as so many other people all really enjoyed talking to Mr. McCormick during check-in because he would empathize with and understand our troubles,” upper and Cilley Hall resident Kyros Wu added.

Jin recalled a night when he had a narrative due the next day, and was struggling to write it. “I went up to him very late at night, just before he was going to leave the dorm,” he explained. “Usually, teachers, at 11 o’clock, just go back home. But Mr. McCormick stayed there with me and helped me work through it.”

“He just brings joy and an energy that this kind of school can lack at times,” upper and Cilley Hall resident Jack Savino added. To many, McCormick is like a breath of fresh air amid Exonians’ busy schedules.

Raja further emphasized this grounding presence. “Whenever I go and talk with him, I usually go in feeling stressed about something else,” he said. “But when I leave, I feel like I have a plan in place and I’m able to process things at a pace

that makes sense to me, and he really is crucial in helping me understand that.”

Above all, “he truly encompasses what it means to be a teacher at PEA,” lower and Wentworth Hall resident Luke Lang, an advisee of McCormick’s, reflected. “He’s always super positive, always kind, and always checking in with you. I’ve never seen him not smiling.”

McCormick has also involved himself in music at the Academy. He is a member of the faculty band “The Preps,” and assists Chair of the Department of Music, Marcus Rabb, by playing bass for the global rhythm ensemble and chaperoning an upcoming trip to New Orleans with the jazz ensemble.

Instructor in Art Adam Hosmer met McCormick through this musical connection. “[The Preps] were desperately searching for a bassist, which Mr. McCormick has prodigious talents in,” he said. “His wry humor coupled with his musical ability made him a winning candidate for both band member and friend.

“I love the music department,” McCormick explained. “I’d like to think of myself as a little barnacle on the hull of their ship.”

Within just over a year at the Academy, McCormick has established himself as a genuine and compassionate figure on campus. No matter how you know him, he is sure to greet you on the paths by name, offer you profound advice, or give you a smile that makes your day just a little bit better. This presence is something he intentionally, consciously cultivates — which is what makes it all the more meaningful.

McCormick views Exeter as the overlapping section of a Venn diagram. “In one circle, you imagine, ‘What do I love to do?’ and then in another circle, ‘How can I be most useful to other people?’” he explained. “Exeter is in the middle of the diagram. You get to do what you love, and you get to be as impactful as possible for young people. And to me, there is no better job.”

Runners Cont.

from novice runners to competitive members of the track team. Impressively, the co-heads of Red Runners were able to make it an amazing experience for everyone, no matter their experience. Volunteers marked out the course through the woods with red “Xs,” making it easy for participants to find their way around, and co-heads blasted music and cheered runners on with signs throughout the course.

Prep Neila Blake thought

the race was very approachable. She said, “The event brought out more people who weren’t competitive runners. Aside from a few people, mostly everyone was running for fun... And no one just got their prize and left. We waited until everyone was finished. People were cheering each other on, eating snacks, and making friends.”

Upper Ria Wilson agreed, adding, “I think I finished on the later side, because I walked some

of it, but when I finished, people were still all cheering each other on whenever someone would finish. There were donuts and coffee and hot chocolate. It was very rewarding in the end.”

In addition to bringing the school together, the 5k raised funds to promote access to education in Central America. Upper Ved Reddy said, “Being able to support their lives and help them get an education where they don’t have that opportunity is a meaningful cause for me. And being able to do that, while participat-

ing in a community event was really special.” That’s what Red Runners sets out to do, to provide a welcoming space for people to run, bond with others, and have fun, while doing some good in the world.

In this digital age, it’s easy to be caught up in all the terrible things happening in the world, and it can make you feel small, like there’s no way you can change anything. That’s why it’s especially important now, for the community to come together as it did last Sunday, to raise awareness for a cause and give

students a way to help. Upper Sam Fisher said, “It’s important to make events like this known on campus, to let the community know that they can be involved, by volunteering, by participating, by donating.” He added that even though a race might not be life-changing, Red Runners had changed his life for the better, in a small, but essential way. It certainly will be life-changing for some underprivileged children, who will be able to get an education, and have a richer, more fulfilling future in front of them.

Meditation Cont.

fought in combat at all — he never passed the black-box, an Air Force test meant to simulate the experience of a prisoner-of-war. “If John hadn’t passed the survival school, he couldn’t have gone to combat,” she said. “[He] likely would have continued supporting the war by flying C-135 cargo planes.”

The third mistake described by Davis was more specific than the first two: Bischoff accidentally clipped the wing of another F-105 while refueling over Laos, prompting him to eject from his jet. The fourth mistake was directly related to this ejection: it was made by the Air Force when it removed leg restraints from all F-105s, resulting in Bischoff breaking both of his femurs when he ejected. “[Bischoff]

landed with two broken legs in a forested area deep in the jungles of Laos,” Davis said. Yet his immobility was not fatal: “[he] had a rescue helicopter over him in under an hour,” she described. The final fatal mistake was that Bischoff administered morphine from his medical kit lying on his back, leading him to inhale vomit as he lost consciousness. He was alive when rescuers pulled him into the helicopter but never regained consciousness.

Davis connected the five mistakes to the grief that followed Bischoff’s death, describing how his absence continued to shape the lives of her family members long after the war ended — and how it shaped her life, even as she was born after his death. “We can ask now,

with sixty years of hindsight, what was it all for?” she asked. “Raising up a good solid farm boy, twenty-five years of life, gone in an instant.”

The meditation concluded with Instructor in History Troy Samuels playing “Blowing in the Wind” on acoustic guitar. Copies of What if?, a book authored by Bischoff’s sister, were available to students departing from the speech.

As they left the church, many students recalled feeling deeply touched by the meditation. Lower Sally Shattuck was one. “Her insistence that some mistakes were intended for good was very powerful to me,” she said. “For example, the ejection mechanisms which would break the pilots femurs, as well as the morphine which caused her uncle to pass out.”

Additionally, the meditation made her think of the

role grief plays in a family: “It really made me realize that even the things that you don’t experience firsthand can impact you so heavily through your parents, and that the seemingly small decisions lead can change our lives completely.”

Shattuck particularly liked the portion of the meditation when Davis described the tableware she had amassed over the course of her family’s history, rendering them priceless.

As the meditation’s opener, Martin Fox cherished it as a way to connect with a fellow colleague, as well as raise important questions surrounding war, family, and grief. Originally, guitar teacher Eric Sinclair was set to open the meditation, but when something came up for him, Martin Fox, having just learned the piece, was asked to play it.

“Dr. Davis made such thoughtful choices about the

music that would accompany her meditation,” said Martin Fox. She appreciated the way the songs tied together the strings of Davis’s personal story: “While Dr. Davis’ med was about her uncle in Vietnam, the music [also] helped communicate questions that resonate today: ‘How many years can some people exist before they’re allowed to be free? How many deaths will it take ’til he knows that too many people have died?’ I am grateful I could lend my voice and guitar to raise those important questions in our times.”

The Vietnam War ended in 1975, yet its effects can still be seen fifty years later in traces like Davis’s meditation. It explored the mark that grief leaves on families and raised questions about war and futility, resonating deeply within the community regardless of one’s background and history.

2026 Nobel Prizes Give Exonians New Questions to Explore

By GARY GUO and OLIVIA WANG

What can particles from space reveal about the universe? How can light help scientists understand the brain? And how do the decisions of individual households shape an entire economy? This year’s Nobel laureates have helped answer these questions, advancing their fields while opening new avenues of inquiry. Established through the 1895 will of Swedish inventor Alfred Nobel and first awarded in 1901, the Nobel Prizes honor contributions that benefit humanity: scientific discoveries, literary achievements, and efforts to advance peace and address global challenges.

For the 2026 Nobel Prize cycle, Francis Halzen was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics “for decisive contributions to the IceCube Neutrino Observatory and the discovery of high-energy neutrinos of astrophysical origin,” Henri B. Kagan and Kenso Soai won the Nobel Prize in Chemistry “for the discovery of non-linear effects and autocatalysis in asymmetric organic synthesis,” “For their discoveries concerning light-gated ion channels and optogenetics,” Karl Deisseroth, Peter Hegemann and Georg Nagel were awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine.

Anne Carson was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature “for her bold and inventive oeuvre that, in playful dialogue with the classical tradition, has created new forms for contemporary literature,” Navi Pillay won the Nobel Peace Prize “for her efforts to promote peace and international law,” The Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel was given to Robert E. Hall and Michael Woodford “for microeconomic foundations of macroeconomic stabilization.”

Alfred Nobel (1833-1896) was an inventor, entrepreneur, scientist, and businessman who also wrote poetry and drama. When he died, his will stated that his fortune was to be used to reward “those who, during the preceding year, shall have conferred the greatest benefit to humankind.” Nobel’s prize would reward outstanding ef-

forts in the fields that he was most involved in during his lifetime: physics, chemistry, physiology or medicine, literature and peace. In 1969, a new prize was established — the Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel — and added to the series to celebrate the tercentenary of Sweden’s central bank.

The Nobel Prizes in Physics, Chemistry, and Economic Sciences are given out by the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, which evaluates nominations and proposes candidates for the vote by the full Academy. For the Physiology or Medicine category, research findings are evaluated by a working Nobel Committee at the Karolinska Institute. The Swedish Academy and the Norwegian Nobel Committee handle the selection process of the Nobel Prize in Literature and the Nobel Peace Prize, respectively.

Between 1901 and 2026, the Nobel Prizes and the Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel were awarded 639 times to 1,036 people and organizations. In the Academy’s history, three alumni have received Nobel Prizes: William Howard Stein ‘29 won the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 1972, Lloyd Shapley ‘40 was awarded the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences in 2012, and most recently, in 2018, Paul Romer ‘73 won the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences.

On Hall and Woodford’s approach to connecting individual decisions with changes in the broader economy, Instructor in History and Economics Bryan Boucher said, “I think the findings of this year’s winners help to demonstrate the role that individuals have in the larger economy, and give credit to households for making more predictive choices as opposed to reactive choices.”

He elaborated, “This research helps to explain how central banks and governments can respond to economic shocks, which are the most challenging types of economic conditions for both monetary and fiscal policy.” He highlighted the timeliness of this research, “As we learned, and are still learning, from the COVID pandemic, these shocks can

take years of policy for proper reconnection, but the work of this year’s winners gives us greater guidance on how to use these tools to recover from economic shocks.”

Boucher noted the relevance of Nobel Prize-winning economics research to the Exeter curriculum. “There are great connections to our Macroeconomics course, where we often grapple with the role of governments and central banks in ‘fixing’ the economy.” He shared that these new findings will “certainly be a topic of discussion in [his] economics classes this winter and spring.”

Instructor in Physics Jim DiCarlo shared, “The Nobel Prizes give you a chance to just revel and appreciate how smart people can be, to see what the limits are.” This year’s Nobel Prize in Physics goes to Halzen’s contributions to the detection of neutrinos. “[Neutrinos allow us] to learn about cataclysmic events that happen in distant parts of our universe. The interesting thing about using neutrinos is that because they basically don’t interact at all, they’re carrying information directly from whatever that crazy thing that created them, straight to the detector,” he explained.

DiCarlo regarded Halzen’s awarded research as a foundational step for further astrophysical application of neutrinos. “These particles are a part of the universe that we know incredibly little about. This just gives us a little bit more information about one of the building blocks of the universe. We know they exist, but we actually don’t even know [information like] how heavy a neutrino is.” He shared a diagram of the IceCube neutrino detector with his modern physics class the day the prize came out, showing his students how “clever and dedicated” the scientist was to make such groundbreaking discoveries.

Instructor in English Julia Sprague, a big fan of Carson’s translation of Sappho’s poetry “If Not, Winter,” learned through online articles that Carson has won. “The main headline was that her amusing response was something along the lines of ‘Oh bother,’” Sprague recalled. For Nobel Prize winners, the excitement of winning can be overwhelmed by unexpected

early-morning phone calls and countless journalists’ interview requests.

For Sprague, Carson’s translation demonstrates how time can shape literature. Centuries of deterioration have erased parts of Sappho’s poetry. Rather than trying to restore the lost parts, Carson preserves the absences. “Time too can author meaning, and Carson gives room in her translation for that meaning to appear,” Sprague said.

By reading Carson’s translations of literary works from thousands of years ago, Sprague feels more accompanied, especially when she finds her experiences and feelings resonate with another human somewhere in the world.

By combining poetry, prose, and translation, Carson’s win represents broader recognition for literature beyond novels and non-fiction. Recalling the online backlash when Bob Dylan won the 2016 Nobel Prize in Literature, particularly over whether song lyrics should be considered poetry, Sprague said, “I found that a bit disappointing and am glad when writers [mix] genres and modes of writing.”

The Nobel Prizes also sparked discussions between students all around campus. “I think it’s really cool what Halzen has accomplished,” prep Plearn Devakula Na Ayudhya said. “It would really inspire a lot of students who are interested in physics to follow their path and build on their work.”

Senior Sean Mahdavian, a big fan of the High-Z Supernova Search Team, which won the Nobel Prize in Physics in 2011 for discovering that the universe’s expansion is accelerating, was also especially impressed by this year’s physics prize winner. Mahdavian compared IceCube with the Deep Underground Neutrino Experiment (DUNE) in the United States, praising the low cost of Halzen’s work. “This is really cost-efficient to try and get a deep understanding of the nature of the universe,” Mahdavian said. Compared to DUNE’s approximate \$3.3 billion construction cost for the 800-mile underground neutrino beam from Fermilab in Illinois to the Sanford Underground Research Facility in South Dakota, IceCube

was built in Antarctica for \$279 million, using 1 cubic kilometer of ice about 2 kilometers below the surface.

In a modern physics class with DiCarlo, students discussed the research to better understand how the universe’s fundamental forces work. “This stuff is the research that you know that you are going to learn in your classes. It is the textbooks being read for the first time in the news,” Mahdavian said.

Upper Reya Satam highlighted the value of Deisseroth, Hegemann and Nagel’s contributions to the field of optogenetics. “Cells tend to work in systems, and an important aspect of optogenetics is that we can inhibit or excite specific neurons,” she said. “That can help us learn more about what circuits perform what actions, and how exactly that can translate to certain diseases or functions.”

On the potential applications of this new laboratory approach, Satam continued, “Optogenetics has been used for research dealing with neuropsychiatric disorders, so [it might be able to help us identify] cellular areas that are perhaps driving schizophrenia or other disorders alike. It acts as this bridge between the physical cellular function and actual behavior.”

Satam reflected on how the optogenetics research process shows the importance of creativity in scientific discovery. “I remember when I was first reading about optogenetics, I thought the idea was crazy. You’re taking a gene that codes for this protein called channel-rhodopsin, and you’re essentially performing transgenesis,” she said. “[Something we can all take away from this is that] science can involve lots of creativity. It’s not always about performing standard lab techniques; even though routine and repetition are important for creating results, it also has to do with how far you can go to solve problems.”

From invisible neutrinos to ancient poetry, this year’s Nobel Prizes have given students and faculty new questions to explore. The conversation connects the class materials students learn today to discoveries that will appear in future textbooks, offering a starting point for interests students can pursue.

Sports

» COTW: BV FOOTBALL

Read about Ethan Ali, Brayden Murch, and Jackson Sparks’ leadership on the football field, 13.

» ROCK AWARD

Read about BV Water Polo Captain Henry Wise’s resilience and warm presence in the pool, 13.

» V FIELD HOCKEY

Read about how varsity field hockey secured a close win at Pingree last Wednesday, 12.

XC Community Grapples with Newbould’s Sudden Dismissal, Welcomes Gosztyla as New Head Coach

By TIAGO BILYK, AUDREY KIM, and LYDIA KUHNERT

On Friday, Oct. 15, the girls’ and boys’ cross-country teams received the news that their head coach, Brandon Newbould, would no longer be employed at the Academy. The decision was met with shock, grief, and confusion from both teams, as well as an outpouring of objections from parents and alumni. The athletics department has not disclosed the reason for the departure. Coach Amy Gosztyla will be taking on the role of cross-country’s head coach moving forward.

The Athletics Department informed the team of their decision prior to practice. “We got a message from our captains to meet in the Tad Jones room,” described upper Annika Nystedt. “It seemed like it would just be a normal meeting or maybe a talk from the nutritionist

— it was very casual. We got there and everyone was laughing. We just thought it would be something insignificant.”

Two members of the Athletics Department’s communications and operations department delivered the news thereafter. “They announced Newbould would no longer be our head coach,” explained lower Norah Pratt. “I was confused, I thought he was going to be something like an assistant coach. They continued talking, and it began hitting me. They repeated that Newbould wouldn’t be coaching here anymore, but they didn’t say why at all. It was very vague. I just broke down in tears, because it was such a surprise.”

In the room, members of both teams were visibly distraught. Some left in protest as the message was delivered. Particularly shocking was the unprecedented and

sudden nature of the announcement: “Everyone was really confused because there was absolutely no warning or indication that anything like this was gonna happen,” commented girls’ captain senior Sophia Butler. “We were also all just left to deal with the after-effects. We still had to go for a run. We still have to go on with our schoolwork. We just had no warning signs, or any indication that such a severe and drastic thing would happen.”

The Athletics Department provided no further information regarding the reason for Newbould’s abrupt termination to the team. “Everybody was really disappointed that there wasn’t any explanation,” said senior and boys’ team captain Artur Novaes Ferreira. Nystedt agreed, adding, “Not giving anyone any information or even releasing a statement encourages more speculation. It

essentially disrespects everything Newbould has done for us, the school, and the team. I believe that there was a much courteous way for the school to have handled this to respect the emotions of the cross country community and his legacy.”

Parents of team members shared similar sentiments to those of the runners. Albert Pratt P’29 commented, “Throughout this process, we have lost some faith in the administration of PEA, especially in the Athletics Department. They need to be able to prove to us that they are making appropriate decisions, and as of right now, we haven’t been given reason to believe that this is an appropriate or fair decision.”

However, affirming the department’s policy regarding terminations, Director of Athletics Jason Baseden, wrote in an email to Exeter cross-country families: “Out



of respect for the privacy and confidentiality of personnel matters, we cannot comment on or respond to questions regarding the circumstances surrounding Coach Newbould’s departure.” This has remained the procedure of the department, and at the time of publication, no more information has arisen.

The reaction to the dismissal is particularly charged due to Newbould’s status as one of Exeter’s most beloved coaches. Newbould has coached cross-country at Exeter for the past 18 years, and has significantly contributed to the program’s success. His

NEWBOULD, 14.

Highlight: Varsity Field Hockey

By JUEUN HONG and ARIANA METZGER

Varsity field hockey emerged with a close 3-2 win on Wednesday afternoon at Pingree. The game was back and forth, but the team pulled through to make one final goal, scoring a corner shot after time ran out.

Upper Eliot McCarthy scored the game-winning goal. Upper Arisa Yoshino explained how Clara Cary encouraged the team before the corner. “Let’s score so we don’t have to stay for another 30 minutes for overtime,” Yoshino recalled Cary telling the team.

Lower Rowan McNally commented that the “highlight of the game was Eliot scoring with no time left to cement the win.”

The game against Pingree was a continuation of the team’s winning streak. Coach Sam Fahey credited team spirit: “Having 20 returners, our strength is knowing each other and our comfort as a group.”

Yoshino agreed, adding, “I think that gave us a unique opportunity to really build off of our last season and hone in on our strengths as a team.”

Even with a winning streak, the team is always striving to be the best they can be. Lower Claire Puchalski noted that confidence is an important factor for games. “Sometimes in field hockey, it’s easy to second-guess your next move, but it’s important to just go for it and try to create a good play,” said Puchalski.

Field hockey works to play aggressively throughout their games. The team has improved a lot since last season, but it’s especially important when playing more competitive teams. McNally added, “One of the most important things for us has been keeping our heads up, even when we’re down, in order to come out on top.”

As the team advances, Fahey believes that with the “competitive schedule [that] builds [their] confidence,” the team “[has] the ability to make a statement in the later part of [their] season.” With the winning streak, the team will continue to push themselves into making the season better.

Highlight: Girls’ Varsity Soccer Raises Breast Cancer Awareness

By AVA CHUNG and AZALEA KRASOV

On Saturday, Oct. 10, girls’ varsity soccer jogged up to the field in pink jerseys and ribbons for their game against Milton Academy in honor of Breast Cancer Awareness Month this October. The team showed up and raised awareness for the 1 in 8 women who are affected by breast cancer, as well as transgender men and non-binary individuals affected by the disease.

Wearing pink for Breast Cancer Awareness Month has become an annual event for the GV soccer team. To raise awareness, the girls donned pink jerseys and socks, drawing ribbons on their legs with pink lipstick. This year, the team

had a tight game against Milton, but still had fun while working hard. “The energy the team brought to the field was high, and everyone wanted to be out there competing,” commented upper Annabel Jordan.

Despite the 0-1 loss, the GV soccer team had a lot to be proud of. “We made sure to fight hard when competing and not only to play for ourselves and Exeter but for the other women out there fighting to beat cancer,” said Prep Hannah Kim.

Jordan noted, “I have had a few teachers in my life that have been diagnosed with breast cancer while I was in their classes.” She expressed her sympathy for them and added that she was happy to spread awareness about breast cancer.

Similarly, senior Summer Mansfield also said she had people in her life who battled breast cancer. “It means so much to me that Exeter has teams and a whole community who want to spread awareness about breast cancer. I’m so proud of the team and that we can have games dedicated to such an important cause.”

In spite of the loss, the girls’ varsity soccer team had a great game and fought hard. This game meant a lot to them, and it showed on the field. Whether they were playing for someone they know or just playing for all the women fighting cancer, they gave it their all. “I truly felt honored to be able to have this experience and to represent the community,” remarked Kim.

Exeter Celebrates National Coaches Day

By OWEN SAFFORD and JUNE KOH

Behind every win that Exeter clutches, the grueling early morning practice, and season-defining victories stands a team of dedicated PEA coaches. The coaches are the foundation of Exeter’s athletic programs, the mentors whose impact stretched far beyond the score. While tactics, endurance, and game day strategies form the baseline of Big Red athletics, the Academy’s head coaches view their roles through a much broader lens. They strive to shape character, instill resilience, and most importantly, build commu-

nity. Through these daily lessons, the coaches empower student-athletes to navigate both the demands of high-level competition and the personal growth that follows them long after they step off the field.

Suzan Rowe joined Exeter’s volleyball coaching staff in 2019 as an assistant under longtime coach Bruce Shang. After serving as the interim coach for the girls’ program, Rowe was officially appointed head coach in July 2026.

Rowe’s passion for coaching stems from her lifelong love of athletics, which began with her participation in team sports as a child and continued

throughout high school. These experiences ultimately inspired her to pursue a career as a physical education teacher. “Sports have always been a part of my life,” Rowe said.

For Rowe, the most rewarding part of coaching is watching her athletes develop not only individually, but also as a team over the course of a season. “Seeing a team grow over the season is the most rewarding part of the season,” she said. “Seeing kids play for each other instead of just themselves and appreciating the efforts of their teammates is the most rewarding part of coaching.”

This emphasis on collective improvement as a

whole team is central to Rowe’s coaching philosophy, which encourages athletes to make small, consistent improvements while helping their teammates do the same. “My coaching philosophy is to continually strive to get better a little bit each day,” she said. “I think you learn more by teaching someone else, and that is what I encourage on my court: helping each other get better, 1% at a time.”

While Rowe emphasizes teamwork and steady improvement on the volleyball court, long time Exeter coach Don Mills carries a similar philosophy across multiple sports, focusing on individual growth, persever-

ance, and building connections with his athletes. Mills first joined Exeter’s coaching staff in 2002, bringing experience in swimming, cycling, and triathlon. For many years, Mills coached boys’ water polo in the fall, swim and dive in the winter, and cycling in the spring. This year, with the addition of a mountain biking team at Exeter, Mills took on a new role as the program’s head coach.

Mills’ passion for coaching was shaped largely by his father, who spent many years coaching high school basketball. Furthermore, he noted how his love for coach

NCD, 13.

Beyond the Final Whistle: BV Football Captains



Boys’ varsity football captains Ethan Ali, Brayden Murch, and Jackson Sparks (left to right).

By DOWAN KIM and JUSTIN ZHANG

Whistles cut through the crowd’s roar as Exeter’s varsity football team battles for each yard. Every tackle, sprint, and play requires effort and determination from

every person, and no one knows that better than the heart of the team: captains Ethan Ali, Brayden Murch, and Jackson Sparks.

Despite a challenging start to the season, the varsity football team continues to push forward, driven by a

shared determination to improve. For Ali, Murch, and Sparks, leadership extends far beyond calling plays or motivating teammates before games. Each captain brings a unique personality and approach to leadership, but all three are committed

to building a team grounded in trust and hard work. For Ali, football was always more than just the competition. Starting the sport in eighth grade, he quickly developed a passion for both the game and the relationships he created

Anoushka Sarathy / *The Exonian*

through it. “I started playing football in eighth grade, and ever since, I fell in love with the game and the brotherhood it brought,” Ali recalled.

When Ali came to Ex-

COTW, 14.

Rock Award: Henry Wise BV WoPo



Senior Henry Wise with a rock in his hands.

Courtesy of Brian Muldoon

By BUCHI AKABOGU, TIAGO BILYK, and DON SCHEFFLER

Those who have gone to any boys’ varsity water polo game are familiar with the deafening sounds of water crashing under the weight of strong attackers. Henry Wise, captain and senior in Soule Hall, has been on the team all four years at the Academy and is the latest recipient of the Rock Award.

The Athletics Department states, “The Rock Award honors our student-athletes who consistently go above and beyond, demonstrate what it means to be a great teammate, display strong leadership on campus and exhibit non sibi. Students honored with the Rock are pillars of their teams.”

For Wise, water polo has always been about the game itself. “It’s obviously never about the award,” he said. “I’m happy that

people think I’m a good leader on the team and that they think I’m supportive of my teammates.”

Wise believes in the importance of strong leadership. As team captain, he brings it upon himself to mentor newer students and act as a role model for everyone who sees him. “I think it’s important that leadership doesn’t become a one-time thing,” he said, “but instead is something that’s present every day. Good leadership and teaching should be demonstrated consistently.”

Head coach Meg Blitzshaw shared her experiences working with Wise to lead the team. “Henry’s gonna say something direct, and then show you how to do that,” she said. “When we need to demonstrate something, Henry’s often the player that we’re leaning on to see how it’s done, for others to try and mimic

that behavior.”

Blitzshaw further described how Wise inspires others on the team with his own prowess. “It’s been fun to watch,” she said. “He’s one of our strongest and most precise shooters, and to watch newer players have moments of awe watching him do some of the things that he can do is really special. There have been a couple of times where he’s taken a great shot at the end of a shot clock, a beautiful high corner shot, and the rest of the team can recognize, ‘I’d like to be able to do that.’”

Armed with his many years of water polo experience, Wise continues to inspire and develop the next generation of athletes. “People notice when you’re leading, when you’re taking charge, and when you’re actively trying to help the team and make it better,” he said. “I’m very honored to have won this award.”

NCD Cont.

ing also rose from his “love for watching the development of athletes and teams.”

For Mills, one of the most rewarding aspects of coaching is watching athletes’ dedication translate into results. “The best part for me is to see the kids who have been consistent all year and put in the work and finally see the results at the end of the season,” he said. “Sometimes it happens after a few years.”

To help athletes reach their full potential, Mills emphasizes building individual connections and maintaining an engaging team environment and community. “I try to connect as best I can with each athlete before I feel I can truly push them,” he said. “I also feel it is extremely important to make things fun and to keep kids engaged in the process.”

For Big Red field hockey head coach Samantha Fahey, leadership is rooted in guidance and growth. Inspired to enter the profession by her own collegiate field hockey coach, Fahey took the chance and decided to start coaching field hockey in a different part of the country. She views the tactical side of the sport as just one piece of a much larger puzzle, noting, “The actual field hockey part is such a small entity, right? For me, it’s all-encompassing in teaching them responsibility, teaching them

that they are representing something bigger than themselves.” To foster team unity and daily mindfulness amidst the busy academic schedules, Fahey introduced team rituals such as an intention board and a daily “Take and Toss” exercise. Describing the process, she explains, “Every day, they come in, and they write what they’re going to take good from their day and bring them to their practice, and what they’re going to maybe toss, like a math test or, I’m tired. Well, how can we toss that and move forward together?” Ultimately, seeing her players grow as individuals and build a supportive culture remains the most rewarding aspect of her role.

National Coaches Day serves as a powerful reminder that the true impact of Exeter’s athletic leaders isn’t recorded in scorebooks or banners. Long after the season ends, the lessons instilled on the field, court, and trail, learning to push past limits, working through hardships, and treating teammates and opponents with respect, remain with the student athletes for a lifetime. Through their quiet dedication behind the scenes and their belief in their players, the coaches at Exeter continue to shape not only excellent athletes, but exceptional individuals ready to lead in the world beyond sports.

COTW Cont.

eter as a lower, he was inspired by the older players who welcomed him into the team. “When I got here as a sophomore, my seniors and captains brought me in and made this team feel like a family, and now, as a captain, I look to do the same,” he explained.

Now in his senior year, he finds himself with the opportunity to create the same feeling for the next generation, a responsibility he takes seriously. For Ali, one of the best parts of his final season as captain was watching younger players develop their confidence and find their place within the team.

“My favorite part of the job is spending time with the guys,” Ali said. “Football is a very demanding sport, and you spend a lot of time around the same guys, so you get very close. Seeing younger guys develop and start to feel like part of the team is a great feeling.”

However, Ali also recognizes that leadership is especially important during setbacks. During a recent bye week that followed a difficult loss against the Williston Northampton School, Ali, Murch and Sparks noticed the team’s practice intensity decrease. Rather than allowing the frustration to continue, the three captains directly addressed their teammates.

“My co-captains and I spoke to the team and addressed it, and we went on to have what I felt was one of our best practices of the season so far,” Ali recalled.

For Ali, moments like that show the responsibility of being a captain; they must hold their teammates accountable, even when it requires uncomfortable conversations. “I think the big-

gest thing that we need to do is hold each other accountable, because nothing’s going to get fixed if we don’t address it up front,” he explained.

The level of commitment Ali dedicates also comes from his memories of playing under previous captains. His favorite moment at Exeter was winning a New England bowl game during his sophomore year, where he helped the seniors finish their football careers with a victory. Now approaching the end of his own high school football career, Ali hopes to give his teammates a similarly special final season.

For Sparks, his journey to captain was different.

Growing up in a small town in Nova Scotia, Canada, Sparks began playing football in a community where the sport was far less popular. After two years of playing for his previous high school, he arrived to Exeter as a new upper and faced the unfamiliar demands of American football, academics, and boarding school life.

“When I came to Exeter, I was really new to the style of academics and also football, so my first year was a big adjustment,” Sparks recalled.

Adjusting to a new country, managing Exeter’s academics, and learning a different style of football, Sparks initially struggled to step up for himself on the team. He described himself as quieter during his first year and often focused on adapting rather than taking charge.

Now as a captain, Sparks has become one of the leaders other players look up to for guidance.

“Because I’m all adjusted to the style of the game here at Exeter, I’m now able to step up and be a leader in my team,” Sparks explained. Now that he is a captain of the team, Sparks wants to help new teammates “adjust the same way that [he] had to.”

For Sparks, being a captain is less about the title that comes with it and more about setting an example for his teammates. “A good captain, in my eyes, is someone who leads by example and not just words,” he explained. During training sessions in the gym, Sparks makes sure that he is the one who puts the most effort. “If my teammates see me taking reps off, then they’re also going to take reps off,” he observed.

As a defensive back, Sparks believes every practice is an opportunity to set an example, especially when players are tired or frustrated. “A good captain, in my eyes, is someone who leads by example and not just words,” he explained. Sparks holds himself to the same standards he wants from every other teammate.

“If my teammates see me taking reps off, then they’re also going to take reps off,” he said. “So I just have to lead by example.”

His leadership also extends beyond the field, where his faith and discipline are central in his relationship with his teammates. Commenting on how his religious drive motivates his determination, quarterback and senior Jackson Faila explained, “Sparks is very faith-driven; his devotion connects him with a lot of people, and that keeps him grounded and centered.”

Although Sparks is now a crucial component of the team, he hasn’t forgotten the difficult moments that

brought the team closer together. He recalled Exeter’s loss to Choate in last year’s bowl game and this season’s narrow defeat in the fourth quarters against Williston as experiences that show the character of the team.

Sparks pointed to the way his teammates responded to those defeats. “Just seeing how our team bounces back from adversity is a big moment that I hold close to my heart,” he said.

For Murch, bringing energy to the team is one of the core parts of his leadership.

Murch is the engine of the team, motivating the players and helping them recover both mentally and physically after matches. “After a tough loss, we just have to pick each other up and move on to the next day.” He ensures that the team stays disciplined, making sure that teammates show up to practice every day and “put in a 100 percent effort.” Faila explained that Murch is “one of the toughest competitors,” while also helping the team mentally recover after losses.

Murch endeavors to connect with new players and build a healthy team chemistry, often being one of the first to welcome new players and prospective teammates. Faila recalled only meeting Murch twice during a spring visit. Despite the two barely knowing each other, the two soon spent a week together in Pittsburgh after Murch traveled there to visit him. “We got some training in and it just [showed] how he gets along with people,” Faila explained.

For Murch, building those relationships has become especially important as half the team was new this season. “I think one of our biggest strengths is how close we’ve become as a unit,” Murch explained. “Earlier in

the year, I feel like we were on different pages, but we’ve got the ball rolling now.”

Although Ali, Murch, and Sparks all have different styles of leadership, their influence is united by the goal of strengthening the team and preparing the next generation of Exeter football players.

Faila emphasized that all three captains lead by their actions, always setting an example during practices and conditioning sessions. “They’re always out front setting the tone and making sure everybody’s doing what they’ve got to do,” he explained.

Now as seniors, Ali, Murch, and Sparks hope to make the most of every remaining practice and game with their teammates.

“Me personally, and I know I can speak for all the rest of the seniors; it’s one last ride,” Sparks said. “So we’re just going to show up every single day and compete to win.”

Three years ago, Ali was a younger player trying to find his place on the team. Two years ago, Sparks was adjusting to a new country and unfamiliar approaches both in and outside football. Now with Murch, they have become the seniors responsible for holding the team together and welcoming the younger generation into the team.

As the final whistle blows and the crowd starts to disperse, the impact of the three captains extends beyond what every spectator saw on that field. Years from now, when a younger player welcomes a new teammate or when the team finds the strength to keep going, the Exeter varsity football team will continue to feel the legacy of Ali, Murch, and Sparks.

Newbould Cont.

indelible impact is evidenced by multiple athletic titles: Newbould has led the boys’ varsity team D1 NEPSAC championships for the past consecutive seven years, and helped many runners through the collegiate running recruitment process, sending athletes to schools such as Yale, Princeton, Stanford, and Harvard, among others.

Amongst the current students, there is widespread anxiety about what the future holds for the culture and previous camaraderie of the team. “Newbould is Exeter cross-country,” emphasized Novaes-Ferreira. “He brings about the being of the team.”

For many, Newbould was more than a coach. Pratt explained, “He was one of the only adults on campus, who I could truly be honest with. He’s a true friend, leader, and equal at the same time.”

For members of the class of 2030, the dismissal of Newbould represents the loss of one of their primary supporters. Prep Bronson Levy recollected, “At the Hopkinton race, I set a personal record and felt good about it, and I remember afterwards Coach Newbould came up to me and went, ‘Bronson, man, that was crazy!’ And though it was a brief recognition of my accomplishment, it just really meant a lot to me, because it felt like someone really cared about me as a runner. It was the first time I ever really felt proud of my

running progress.”

Similar messages were relayed to The Exonian by several alumni. Van Van Cleave, class of 2013, wrote, “[Newbould]’s wisdom guided me through the greatest grief of my life: the death of my brother during my senior spring — and the immense depression that followed. He was kind, professional, and humble, and many of the pieces of advice he shared shaped the values I hold as an adult. I continue to regard him as someone who saved my life.”

A member of the class of 2014, Samuel Gray emphasized how Newbould transformed his experience at Exeter: “The culture that Newbould has created in the cross country and distance track programs is one of care, personal discipline, camaraderie and pride in being a little different. I cannot overstate the impact that being an athlete on his teams has had on me.”

Ethan Benenson, a former captain and member of the class of ‘26, noted, “The way he trains running is unique. [Newbould]’s not just trying to build people who are physically strong, but very mentally strong as well. That’s what sets the program apart from, honestly, any other in the Northeast or any of our competitors that we go against, because the mental factor is so important to him. He teaches us how to love

running.”

Since the news of Newbould’s departure, there have been repeated calls for the reinstatement of Newbould from students, parents, and alumni alike. It was reported to The Exonian that, at a Zoom meeting held by Baseden on Monday Oct. 19, this sentiment was met with an influx of positive reactions from the crowd. There, some parents and alumni repeatedly emphasized that to correct what they see as a gross mishandling of the situation, both the dismissal itself and its delivery to the team and broader Exeter community, would require returning Newbould to his old role.

Baseden replied that under no circumstances would Newbould be reinstated.

On the evening of Tuesday, Oct. 20, Gosztyla held a meeting with both teams. Upper Ved Reddy described the event: “[The] meeting was essentially a place where the team could ask the new head coach... questions. We discussed things like what the new training plan would look like going forward [as well as] the continuation of team traditions.”

At the meeting with the team, the coaching staff also reviewed instructions regarding future contact with Newbould. Reddy remarked “During the meeting on Friday the administration told us we weren’t allowed to contact Newbould with the reasoning of protecting his privacy. This was brought up in the meeting [on Tues-

day] and one of our assistant coaches, Coach [Nick] Unger, informed us that he had spoken to someone in the administration and clarified that we were allowed to contact him now.”

A change of this magnitude enacted in the middle of the season is unprecedented within recent memory. Both teams are anticipating their most high-stakes races, including New England Interschols, in which Exeter will still be participating. Butler explained, “[The dismissal] leaves a huge hole in our team. We [the girls’ team] are probably in the best shape we’ve ever been, but everyone’s grieving from this loss, and running is a sport where it’s very important to be emotionally connected, because they can seriously show up in your performance. I’m pretty nervous about how this will affect our performance going forward.”

Gosztyla, who is new to Exeter this year, comes from many years of experience coaching at the collegiate level. Most recently, she led Yale’s women’s cross-country team while simultaneously serving as assistant coach for both the men and women’s track and field teams. She currently serves as the head coach of the Big Red track and field program and works as an instructor in Physical Education.

The team has supported her as she transitions into her new leadership role in the cross-country program. “Coach Amy is wonderful,” noted Novaes Ferreira. “She

is very experienced in what she is doing, very well versed in the world of running... [Regarding] skill and ability to make the team faster, she is one of the best substitutes we could have asked for.”

In his email to cross-country families, Baseden emphasized, “With her expertise in the sport, proven experience of developing student-athletes, and genuine enthusiasm for working with our students, we have the utmost confidence in Amy’s ability to provide strong leadership, guidance, and support for our students.”

However, Gosztyla must also deal with stepping up to the role of a beloved Exeter coach. “She’s very understanding of how difficult it is for everybody,” remarked Novaes Ferreira. “And she really wants to help make the transition as smooth as possible.”

As athletes navigate the transition to a new coach and its effects on the team atmosphere, they are still keeping in mind their long-term goals. Senior Owen Cosgrove emphasized the importance of acknowledging the emotional impact of the coaching change without losing sight of why they compete: “it’s a priority to deal with everyone’s feelings and mental health, and to get through the grieving process, we shouldn’t just brush that off.” Cosgrove said, “But at the same time, I think going forward we can’t lose sight of the fact that we’re not running for a coach, we’re running for ourselves.”

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Trans People Have Always Existed

By FIONA LIU ‘29

On Jan. 29, 2025, nine days after President Donald Trump was inaugurated for the second time, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) was required to take down its webpage regarding transgender and gender diverse persons. If you try to visit the page now, you will see a declaration at the top of your screen: “Any information on this page promoting gender ideology is extremely inaccurate and disconnected from truth. The Trump Administration rejects gender ideology due to the harms and divisiveness it causes.”

This is just one of the many examples of the current administration’s politicization of transgender identity. In White House press releases, this so-called “gender ideology” is also referred to as “Democrats’ ‘Transgender for Everybody’ Insanity,” “radical leftist ideology,” and “an ongoing and purposeful attack against the ordinary and longstanding use and understanding of biological and scientific terms.” All of these portrayals depict transgender identity as boldly subversive, perhaps even exclusively crafted by modern-day leftists to use as a political tool. In accordance with this viewpoint, the administration has treated trans people as though they were ideological enemies. They have restricted public schools from gender education or even referring to students by their proper pronouns and barred anyone with gender dysphoria from serving in the military. (Trans people, by the way, are two to three times more likely than their cisgender counterparts to have done so according to a study by UCLA.) Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth has even used transphobic slurs to refer to these individuals, who have volunteered to risk their lives for our country, in

several highly publicized speeches to the military.

This framing of gender identity is as pervasive as it is dangerous. For all the Trump administration’s talk of indoctrination in the school system, not many people truly understand the long and fascinating history of transgender or gender non-conforming people. If it hasn’t been made clear already, I am a very trans-inclusive person, but even I used to subconsciously think that “gender ideology” was something modern, or at least never nearly as accepted as it is now. This is patently untrue.

If there ever is discussion about a historical “third gender,” it is usually about Two-Spirit people, an English umbrella term created to describe a diverse group of Indigenous Americans who did not fit into a Western gender binary. This word creates a false impression that all these individuals felt they were simultaneously male and female. In reality, different Indigenous nations have different terms for a vast variety of gender identities and sexualities. While degrees of acceptance also varied, these were generally well-established identities and some even had special ceremonial roles.

Another historically gender-nonconforming group are the hijras of India. The history and status of this group is somewhat complicated. They are mentioned in the Ramayana, a Hindu epic that has roots from 750-500 BCE. When the hero, Lord Ram, is exiled to the forest, the people of his kingdom followed him because he was so well-loved. But Ram did not want his people to suffer with him, so he asked all the men and women to leave. When he returned fourteen years later, he was shocked to see a group of people still living here. They explained that they were neither men nor women;

they were kinnar (similar to what we would understand as transgender or intersex), and did not want to leave without his permission. Ram was touched by their devotion and proclaimed that they could now bestow powerful blessings upon others. However, the status of kinnar began declining when they merged with hijras, who were Muslim eunuchs. While not necessarily persecuted in the same way trans people are today, they were still slaves and looked down upon. Things got even worse when the British arrived in India. They viewed hijras as degenerate and outlawed them. While hijras are recognized today, making India one of the few Asian countries where it is completely legal to be trans, and their status as blessing givers remains, they are still alienated and harassed. No one will hire hijras, relegating them at an early age to begging or sex work.

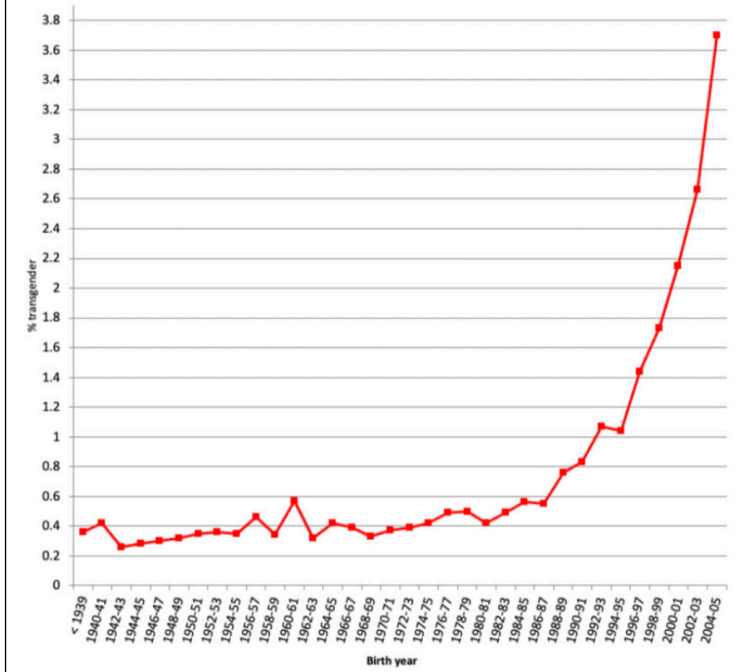
An understanding of trans people more similar to contemporary Western categorizations can be found, shockingly, in Imperial and Weimar Germany. Although homosexuality and cross-dressing were illegal, it was possible for people assigned male or female at birth to obtain “transvestite passes” from the government that would allow them to present as they preferred in public. This is particularly interesting to me, as the current administration advocates for “LGB without the T.” The passes were advocated for by Magnus Hirschfeld, an activist who also founded the namesake Hirschfeld Institute for Sexual Science. When the Nazis came to power, the passes were no longer used, and much of Hirschfeld’s research was destroyed.

Even contemporary medical procedures began development shockingly long ago. In 1930, two years after the discovery of

TRANS, 17.

Percent of U.S. adults identifying as transgender, by birth year.

Source: Behavioral Risk Surveillance Survey, CDC.



Scrolling Away Literacy

By ADAEZE ACHOLONU ‘29, ARIALE OSEI ‘29, and SOLEIL POMMERAUD ‘29

Long before a child is taught to spell their own name, they learn the precise velocity required to swipe down on a screen. The mechanics of how to construct a comment, seamlessly mastering the art of finding the emoji that best captures a raw feeling. It is a world where children know how to dance to viral 15 second loops on TikTok instead of running freely in their backyards. At the moment, this “digital fluency” feels cute, rewarding, even contagious, but it is venom wrapped in velvet. Walk into any restaurant today, and you will see the same contagion at play: a toddler throwing a tantrum, silenced not by emotional regulation or by human comfort, but rather by a glowing rectangle encased in a pink studded cover — placed into their hands like a digital sedative long before they can memorize time tables.

“Honey, watch Bluey, don’t cry.” Convenient, right?

This heavy reliance on technology has completely reshaped our society’s means of emotional regulation and cognitive performance. The bar has been placed so low that reading is now viewed as an exceptional, rewarded activity rather than a baseline expectation for the youth. By using tablets as digital pacifiers to soothe tantrums, parents are inadvertently feeding children overstimulating content that actively rewires their brain to reject the quiet, productive nature of boredom. Who would have thought a tiny box could be so destructive to our thinking ca-

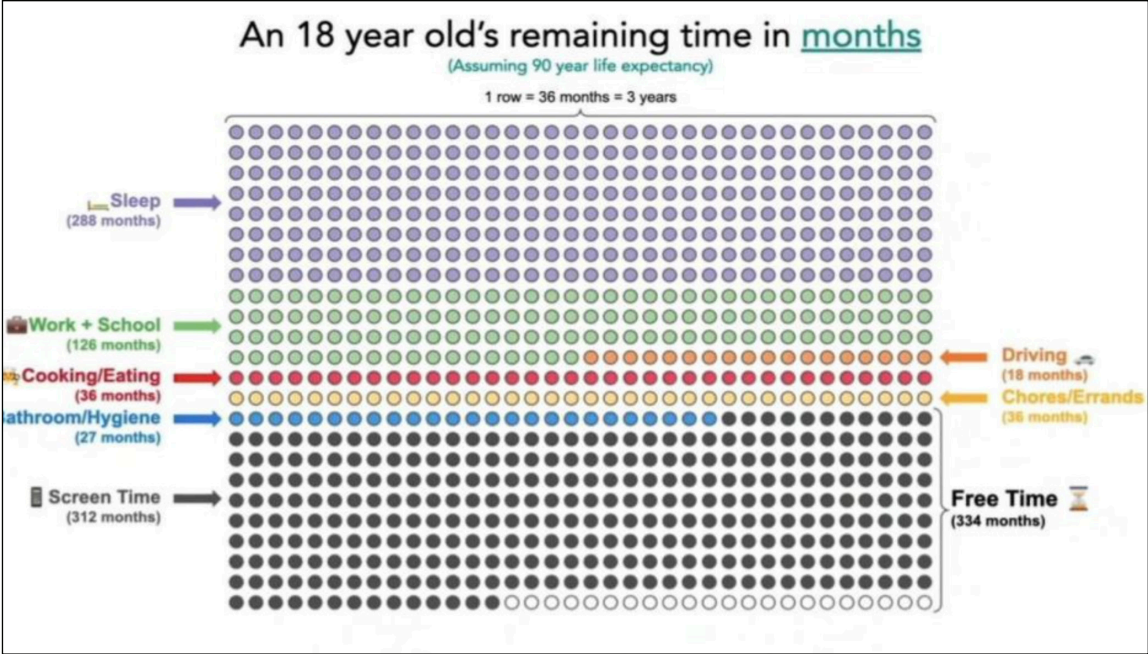
pacities?

Fast forward 15 years. The childhood nostalgic McDonald’s playgrounds have been replaced by monochromatic touchscreens mounted onto the back wall, crafted to display apps that gamify consumption. Our collective vocabulary has collapsed into a series of filler words — like, um, literally, so basically. We didn’t stop reading as a collective; we are slowly, methodically inoculated against the patience required to do it. And that very patience is systematically traded for cheap dopamine.

We admit, as members of the teenage community — we feel partly subject to this illiteracy epidemic. Screen time rates have grown exponentially throughout the years, starting off strong with several minutes and proudly working up towards five hours. The shared reality of mindlessly scrolling for hours on end with no clear purpose or expected benefit is real — news-flash, there is none.

The hidden truth lies in the compelling nature of scrolling. Part of the reason for this compulsion is grounded in the fact that many of us are Olympic-level procrastinators. We are naturally skilled in finding every plausible excuse to justify our screen time instead of opening up our history coursebook to face a daunting 40 page reading assignment. Five minutes we tell ourselves, but in modern times, five minutes is the new 40.

The gap in understanding this situation is rooted in how our brains naturally function. Neuroscience and evolutionary psychology fully support that the human brain evolved to treat information as a reward. In early



human history, acquiring novel information about our environment aided chances of survival and therefore, led to increased happiness. In modern times, we instead rely on the brain releasing small pulses of dopamine to experience joy. Dopamine is not just about feeling good; it is the driver of seeking more, a critical component in the addictive nature of social media.

We must dissect the forces behind this “compelling nature.” Social media apps manufacturers are purposefully creating algorithms that directly exploit this natural neurochemical mechanism; offering highly entertaining videos that we can access with zero cognitive effort.

Misinterpreted illusion of progress: we try to gaslight ourselves — the brain — into feeling satisfied without activating the deeper neural networks required for genuine comprehension or critical synthesis. We think we are learning, but instead, we’re consuming information passively — letting it go in one ear and out the other. To prove it, let’s break the fourth wall: can you explain — in depth — the last 10 videos you watched while scrolling — and bonus—recite

the songs of the audios attached to them? Can you? This content is feeding us with artificial dopamine to simulate the real side effects of literacy and learning. You can’t cheat the system.

If you cannot articulate what you feel, do you truly know what you feel? That is the underlying catastrophe currently knocking at our doors. We tend to reinforce the idea of connecting illiteracy solely to the past — imaging it as an ancient problem where societies, as a collective, lacked basic reading skills or access to books. Yet, a new form of illiteracy is emerging: the struggle to translate our inner worlds into words. We have habitually reprogrammed ourselves to fill the very gaps that are reserved for intellectual curiosity with the noise of entertainment.

In this modern age, it is admittedly incredibly difficult to omit screens and read novels everyday, so the path back to traditional literacy practices will have to come in small steps. Even choosing to grab a book and read a chapter before bed instead of scrolling through Instagram will help reset the mind and feed the brain with productive information instead of the useless dopa-

mine bursts that we have become so addicted to. For the parents, give your kids kindles instead of tablets, so they can learn to read and retain instead of getting hooked onto superficial happiness. Starting a new routine will initially be hard, but the benefits that will be received from it are practically endless.

I know everyone always tells us to just read more and look at screens less, but realistically, being an Exonian, these tips are practically impossible to incorporate. These deep-rooted, technological methods of distraction have been served to us on silver platters since childhood, so it is understandable that no one would want to give them up now. The comfort and escape provided to us through the internet may feel nice, but it is only temporary and we forget it the second we scroll away. We need to realize that living in the present real world is inescapable, and we may as well appreciate it by spending time with our own thoughts and making actual memories instead of mindlessly consuming anything that appears to us online. Pick up a book. Read a chapter. It may seem like a chore now, but you’ll thank yourself in the future.

Inside the Pressures of Fandom

By BLAIR LI ‘28 and OLIVIA WANG ‘29

Content Warning: This article discusses suicide, cyberbullying, and online harassment.

: You are a sasaeng [obsessive, intrusive fan].

: Get out of Ni-ki’s fan community. You don’t deserve to be here.

: Ewww, why is she getting unreasonably skinny?

: Probably just to impress Ni-ki lol [smirking face emoji].

: Yooo Engenes, go watch Ni-ki’s livestream!!! He’s also annoyed by Mina lmaoooo.

These offensive comments flooded 25-year-old Japanese K-pop influencer Mina Chan’s comments on the evening of July 30, 2026, shortly after Mina attended an ENHYPEN concert in the United States. Fans noticed that Mina had tried to give sunflowers to group member Sunoo and asked him to pass them to fellow member Ni-ki.

Later, Ni-ki made remarks during a Weverse livestream that many fans interpreted as a response to the incident. “Live venues are places where everyone can be happy. It’s a shame there was someone trying to get noticed and show off. That’s kinda disappointing to see some people just want attention for themselves. When I see that, the vibe drops. That’s kinda disap-

pointing to see some people just want attention for themselves.” Over the next week, the online harassment intensified. More fans started posting content criticizing all across social media platforms. Mina published an apology on X, but abusive direct messages kept on arriving in her inbox.

On Aug. 5, Mina began a livestream, once again trying to apologize and explain herself. Fans of Ni-ki spammed in her comments, constantly attacking her as a person. The livestream soon alarmed the public, but it was too late. Mina committed suicide. She was found dead in her apartment by the local police.

It’s difficult to make a definitive statement about who caused her death. Her experience, however, exposes the intense pressures that can exist within modern fandom. Indeed, fan communities can be a great addition to one’s day-to-day life, bringing them a role model to look up to, a sense of community, and opportunities for creative expression, but the demand to spend money, prove loyalty, defend an idol, and conform to unwritten rules can transform admiration into competition and belonging into hostility.

The American Heritage Dictionary defines the word idol as “one that is adored, often blindly or excessively.” In the entertainment sector, the word has adopted a derived meaning. Idols, commonly referring

to K-pop or J-pop artists, are often marketed as publicly perfect human beings to appear more appealing to younger audiences.

To some extent, the idol industry offers positive influences in psychological, social, and personal aspects. By admiring an idol’s success in dancing, singing, and creating, fans can push themselves to set higher benchmarks and work harder to achieve personal goals. Admiring an artist also inspires individuals toward active learning, including developing video-editing skills, studying a new language, and exploring artistic hobbies. Moreover, fandoms act as a platform for establishing new connections with people around the globe, crossing cultural and national borders, and building shared identities and initiating worldwide friendships. However, it is important, yet sometimes difficult, to draw a line between healthy engagement in fandom communities and feverish addictions.

Entertainment as an industry is extremely capital-driven. In exchange for community access, fans purchase peripheral products and merchandise, such as concert tickets, meet-and-greet opportunities, artist DM subscriptions, albums, and products from commercial partnerships that the star has with businesses in other industries. As part of a marketing strategy, fans often have to enter a lottery organized by the entertainment company in order to

get an opportunity to build a personal connection with the idol. To increase their chance of winning the lottery, fans purchase up to thousands of copies of the same album, spending over ten thousand dollars just to meet their idol for less than five minutes.

This becomes particularly problematic when it comes to young fan bases. Most teenagers and college students don’t have a stable source of independent income. To pay for their participation in the fan community, they have to ask their parents for financial support. For many parents, these purchases do not bring any material value; thus, some teenagers secretly “borrowed” their family members’ bank accounts to pay for merchandise, concert tickets, or to tip their online idols, only realizing the illegality of their actions after.

In 2020, a teenage boy in the United States drained \$19,870.94 from his mother’s bank account in just 17 days to buy subscriptions to donate to his favorite gaming idols and professional athletes, including popular streamers like Tfue and former NFL quarterback Kurt Benkert. The low-friction setup of online microtransactions and the thrill of getting live, public shoutouts from his idols incentivized him to keep spending. In recent years, cases like this have frequently made global headlines.

Rooted fundamentally on social media, fandom com-

munities thrive along with the continuous issue of cyberbullying. Harassment not only targets celebrities, but also fans when the demand to defend their bias becomes “necessary.” The pressure of choosing sides, thus, transforms admiration into hostility.

Fans nowadays are known for their scrutiny and micro-analytical skills. It has been common for fans to overanalyze trivial actions of celebrities. A single frame of a video, a momentary facial expression, or a “liked” post on social media can trigger massive waves of speculation. Political stances, racial comments, and dating allegations can all become subjects of debate. When ambiguous details are treated as evidence of an individual’s character, online disagreements can escalate into personal attacks.

This scrutiny has also created unwritten rules of how celebrities and their fans should act. Idols are expected to remain politically neutral and absolutely loyal towards the fans. During the South Korean presidential election, K-pop idols are pressured to not wear party-associate colors, make number-signifying hand gestures, and use politically related emojis. Some idols also face backlash when their romantic relationships become public due to the intense parasocial relationships from fans’ perspectives. If they do, however, it might ignite massive-scale

Exeter and Sustainability: How Do We Fight Food Waste?

By **SELASIE AMEMASOR ‘28**
and **ANNIE ZHU ‘28**

Chicken breast on request and boiled broccoli all tend to be regulars on the bottom of many Exonian’s lengthy tiered list of Dining Hall menus, solidifying an already stressful day.

Exeter diverts 270 tons of food waste a year that’s about 53% of the food waste on campus. While those are amazing numbers, what about the leftover 47%? Well, the existing 47 percent piles up on the hot dishes piled high on the service lines every time the dining hall doors unlock. There are a number of dishes seemingly deemed unpopular by the general public. Yet day in and day out, they are on the menu, many foods are left on the plate at the end of mealtimes, passing to the other side on the Elm and Wetherall dishwasher-like depressed lumps on a sushi conveyor.

This issue is worsened by the fact that students often go out to eat on weekends or stay off campus. While it is possible for the Dining Halls to account for the decrease in students and staff on weekends, there is no way for the meal prepping to be perfectly exact—there is no guarantee that there will be the same number of people choosing another place to eat every week. It’s neither the students or school’s fault alone. Our staff wakes up everyday and prepares dishes for us. Making meals for 1,100 diverse students is not easy. Some of us are athletes, others are grinding out essays and in need of fuel or just understandably hungry. So what does the school do? They overestimate to ensure that everyone has a meal with all

five food groups.

While chicken parmesan or chocolate soft-serve may be less nutritious than dry rice and meatloaf, their taste pays back equally what vitamins and fibers their unpopular counterparts offer. Very often, hungry students coming back from sports practices, club meetings, or classes will choose the tastier item over the healthier one, leaving unpopular (and often pricier) foods such as cooked vegetables or fresh fruits in baskets to be thrown out in heaps.

Overestimation also plays a role in food waste at dining halls. Students may overestimate how much their stomachs can hold, and heap too much on their plate. This overestimation can also be rooted in insecurity; students afraid of judgement are too embarrassed to go back to the lines for a second plate. An anxious prep for example, may be trying to learn the ropes of dining hall etiquette. As a result, they are willing to overestimate the food they can eat for the first time round. Others with a crammed schedule may not have enough time to sit down and eat; forced to take food to go, students may overcompensate. Athletes may attempt to prove their appetite— which then proves their weight class and performance on the field—by grabbing double of everything and not finishing everything off their plate.

Looking at the data displayed on televisions inside Elm, 5,000 pounds of food were wasted last month. With a population of around 1,000 students at Exeter, this evens out to about five pounds of fresh, prepared meals thrown out by each Exonian every month. Five pounds per person each month is already pushing the

average family of four, but for an institution as big as ours it’s ridiculous. Especially when down the street, there are people struggling to get a meal.

So, what can we do? Well, there are a multitude of options. One of these solutions is addressing these issues head-on. The perfect place for this is Assembly. The intention of Assembly is to invite speakers to our school to speak, as well as let the community be privy to campus concerns. This is a campus concern. Furthermore, there are places in Exeter that would gladly take the donations. The Exeter Community Fridge for example, takes pre-made food all throughout the work week. We as the student body are also responsible. We as Exonians aren’t always responsible with the resources on campus, and it shows. We truly don’t need to waste the amount that we do. It’s up to us to ensure that we hold ourselves accountable.

If we were to face the issue on both the individual and institutional level, chances are we could easily tackle the tons of waste we produce. After all, that’s how all change occurs: when a number of people commit themselves to a cause, they are able to create something bigger than themselves. And that’s what *non sibi* is, isn’t it? Doing something for the interests of people other than themselves. While you yourself may not be affected by food scarcity, others around the world and down the street from you are. Ensuring that there is more for all is such an important part of the lessons you will learn at Exeter, and addressing our school’s food waste is an excellent way to exercise this knowledge.

Fandom Cont.

online backlash. Fans, at the same time, are pressured to defend their favorite celebrities, regardless of context, support every release, and purchase peripheral merchandise.

In Mina’s case, for instance, Ni-ki’s fans sparked massive cyberbullying only for the reason that Mina “asked more than what she should expect.” Such reactions demonstrate another unsaid rule: fans should show more affection and admiration while expecting less in return. Framing Mina as an oddity whose demand is unreasonable, fanatics shift attention away from what she actually experienced to the fact that she has violated the boundaries they silently imposed.

Along with a community of fans comes a constant push to prove one’s loyalty. In teenage social settings, fandom affiliations become a part of their core identity. Wearing a band t-shirt or a team cap functions as a social signal and acts as an immediate conversation starter. “Who is your bias in the group?” Fandoms create a clear distinction between those “in the know” and outsiders. While this can foster deep bonding within the group, it also leads to occasional gatekeeping against newcomers. Within a fandom, especially one with a high proportion of young fans

that lack social experiences, rigid social hierarchies develop. Demonstrating deep knowledge, owning rare memorabilia, or creating fan content elevates an individual’s status within the specific social setting, pushing youth to purchase more exclusive fan merchandise and devote more time to activities in the fanbase.

With the increasing stan wars on the Internet, fandom no longer offers teenagers joy and relaxation, but rather intensifies social pressure and emotional burden. It has become a community where people treat each other with animosity. Instead of opening up new opportunities, it constrains what one can achieve.

We cannot know if a healthier fan community would change Mina’s fate. But what we’re sure of is that she deserves a chance of finishing college life in South Korea, spending her 26th birthday with her mother, and thriving as a person beyond her identity as a fan. Building a healthy and compassionate fandom environment starts with acknowledging a simple fact: behind every account, there’s an individual whose life extends far beyond the concerts they attend, the meet-and-greet raffles they enter, and their devotion to fandom communities.

Trans Cont.

penicillin, the Danish painter Lili Elbe traveled to Germany for sex reassignment surgery from the Hirschfeld Institute. She had been contemplating suicide before learning of this highly experimental new option. In total, she received four surgeries, including a uterus transplant, which sadly led to her death in 1931. Twenty years later, Christine Jorgenson, an American GI, began taking estrogen and received surgeries in Denmark. Upon her return to the United States, she was not instantly ridiculed as one might expect. Rather, she became a celebrity, well-loved for her poise and wit. Jorgenson used her publicity to advocate for trans acceptance, revealing that she had also experienced suicidal thoughts before her surgery. In her autobiography, she remarked that, “The answer to the problem must not lie in sleeping pills and suicides that look like accidents, or in jail sentences, but rather in life and the freedom to live it.”

So there we have it. There have always been trans people, just as there have always been homosexual people, black people, or disabled people. Now, of course, this appeal to nature alone does not “justify” transness. People are also “naturally” quick to shun those who are different from what they perceive as normal, which is why these groups have so often been discriminated against. But we can see from these examples how much unnecessary harm it causes to single out a random trait of humans as ideologically dangerous. In fact, I could have added to that list of persecuted groups a feature that not many of us would think particularly remarkable today – left-handedness.

Cultures around the world gen-

erally associate the left with impurity, bad luck, or the devil. As such, schoolchildren were forced to write with their right hands using physical punishment. We can see today how ridiculous it is to torment children for something they have no control over. But it is what we still allow to happen today by transforming trans children into victims of ideology. We know how much happiness transition can bring. Jorgenson wrote about her surgery, “As you can see by the enclosed photos, I have changed a great deal. But it is the other changes that are so much more important. Remember the shy, miserable person who left America? Well, that person is no more and, as you can see, I’m in marvelous spirits.” Yet politicians who deride this surgery still receive broad support.

There is another similarity between lefthandedness and transness. As the graph on the left (no pun intended) shows, there appears to be an exponential increase in lefthandedness from the 1920s to the 1940s. This same dramatic increase is seen in the middle graph of transness over time from the 1980s to the 2000s. Can we say that left-handedness was a fad, in the same way that people claim transness is today? If we were to expand the scope of the middle graph, perhaps it would look very similar to the one on the left – for most of history, there has been some “third gender” option, with a dip roughly from the 17th to 20th centuries, and lastly a far larger increase near our time.

Alright, so then why does the graph on the right show a decrease in transness? Is it because the peak of the “craze” has passed? At a cursory glance, this tendency of trans identification rates to calibrate with prevailing attitudes

makes it seem like a trend. But being gender-nonconforming is a far more vulnerable position than being left-handed. It requires shifts in nearly every aspect of our deeply gendered societies – even something as simple as a pronoun in most languages is left to the mercy of other people to use or abuse. It is therefore understandable that percentages of people identifying this way are highly susceptible to changing political tides. The decrease in trans identification corresponds with an onslaught of anti-trans bills passed in 2022 and an increasingly transphobic political environment. It is more a fear of persecution, rather than a desire to hop on the bandwagon, that drives these statistical shifts. It is quite possible that we have not reached the “peak” of trans identification, where everybody who would want to be out could be. Acceptance of gender-nonconforming people therefore necessitates what appears to be a sudden increase in their population, which should be no issue to anyone unless they believe being trans is inherently bad.

As an aggregate, people over the years have largely been the same. It is the institutionalization of this prejudice or another that changes. While I have highlighted some trans individuals and gender non-conforming groups in this article, there are many more with fascinating stories that I would urge you to look into. The number of people who have found the courage to reshape what our majority-cisgender societies find fundamental is truly inspiring, and it reminds us that so much of what is claimed to be immutable and innate is truly not set in stone. I hope I am not being too optimistic when I believe that there will be some day in the future when we view this period of hatred as a fad, as a strange dip in a chart.

Krillion Cont.

accounts I check multiple times a day. Despite being one of the most popular email services in China, it’s rarely an answer outside China. But let’s be clear: that doesn’t distinguish my intellect, but rather my worldliness. My cultural fluency.

The game’s official FAQ explained that some prompts use familiarity data, while others rely on automated assistance and manual review. Some “one in a krillion” answers are selected partly for their satisfying or entertaining quality. The game developers want us to have a good time and find reasons to laugh while playing this game. Which means, sometimes the points we earn are merely a marketing ploy and, again, not an apt measure of intelligence.

Although a high score may not prove how much I know, the game’s real value comes in making me want to know more. And does that curiosity actually result in retention? In real learning? Interestingly, a 2014 study by Gruber, Gelman, and Ranganath used trivia questions to investigate the relationship between curiosity and memory. The results show that participants remembered more answers to questions that they had expressed more interest in, demonstrating how curiosity contributes to learning.

This means our success at playing Krillion is perhaps more a measure of our personal identity (age, gender, race, class, religion) and our personal interests than anything else. What one player knows, either because they find it interesting or because it is familiar, will not resonate with another. We see what we have an affinity for, what we have learned to value.

Learning could happen in every dive. For example, you might remember a name, like a small town in the UK, and look it up later to read more about it. In the end, it might become your next vacation stop. Being there in person to learn about its culture and have real conversations with people adds real-life experience and substance to Krillion’s praise of it as “niche.”

That is not to say it’s wrong to enjoy getting a high score in the game. But we need to distinguish between learning about a subject because we are interested in it and simply trying to impress. A familiar answer that you relate to personally shouldn’t be a sign of mediocrity just because it earns you 10 points. Yet a low score can make a correct answer feel embarrassing, as if personal interest matters less than how many people share it.

That is why enjoyment is enough of a reason to learn. I don’t need every interest of mine to be niche. I want to play the morin khuur because I am interested in it, not because I want to hear people say “that’s so cool!”

The score and percentage will be gone the next day, but the research on the UK town, the usage of the QQ mail, and playing the Morin Khuur won’t be. Krillion helps me appreciate having knowledge outside usual expectations, as long as I leave room for interests that don’t get as much recognition. It’s valuable to find something interesting enough to learn about and follow beyond the first answer.

Humor

» MIDTERM SELF

Read preps Tommy Vondra and Kevin Pepprah’s midterm update, 18.

» MERRY CHRISTMAS

PEA is NOT merry nor in the holiday spirit, 18.

» LETTERS TO THE CCC

Read uppers Sollie Beer and Sean Ricard’s correspondences with the CCC, 19.

Ego Boosting

By LYDIA KUHNERT ‘28 and ARISA YOSHINO ‘28

Lydia: Arisa, what did you get on the Math test?
Arisa: Oh my gosh, I did SO bad.
Lydia: Stop, I know you did incredibly. Don’t play.
Arisa: What did you get?
Lydia: It’s bad. My worst yet.
Arisa: Oh trust me, me too.
Lydia: Let’s say our scores on the count of three. It will help with the pain.
Both: 1...2...3... NINE-TY-SEVEN! POINT THREE!

Silence. It’s tense. The two students stare at each other. Fire burns behind their eyes.

Lydia: Hmm. I see why you’re disappointed with the score.
Arisa: Well, I didn’t use the cheat sheet so...
Lydia: Oh? So you got the extra 2 percent?
Arisa: But you used a cheat sheet?
Lydia: Well, I’m just saying... If we’re thinking analytically, I mean — my raw score is higher.
Arisa: But I relied on my raw knowledge.
Lydia: Hm. I suppose. So are you taking 510 instead,

next term?
Arisa: No, I’m double accelerating this summer.
Lydia: Oh. I wouldn’t have time to double accelerate. You see, I’m interning at Theranos. Yes, that Theranos. The billion dollar company, Theranos.
Arisa: Do you mean, the billion dollar fraud?
Lydia: I think you’re a little confused. Maybe you’re referring to Regeneron?
Arisa: Oh! The Regeneron that you were a semi-finalist for? It was really unfortunate what happened, like the whole fourth place thing...
Lydia: Hm! I remember it being third place, first of all, and secondly — remind me what your “prize-winning” research was on?
Arisa: Po-tay-to, po-tah-to anyways, right? And my research was on something certainly better than rat pheromone types or whatever your research was on.

Lydia: It was on the application of peanut butter to stimulate rat pheromones, and how that ties into blood testing. Whatever. It was good enough for Theranos. It doesn’t have to be good enough for you.
Carol: Hi guys! What did you get on the test? I finally managed to score a 98!

Courtesy of Bloomberg



The Theranos Headquarters, site of Lydia’s internship

It’s *NOT* Beginning to Look Like Christmas

By PIPER CLARK ‘29, HARRISON WALDEN ‘30, and SAM KNEVITT ‘30

It’s beginning to look a-not like Christmas
Everywhere you go
Take a look at good old Front Street
Not even filled up with sleet
That decor makes your anger grow!
It’s beginning to look a-not like Christmas
Tacky to be sure
But the thing that you all should think,
Is if the eggnog that you drink
Tastes a bit premature
A pair of Halloween suits and some candy (not fruits)

Is the wish of Exonians;
Some donuts and cider, right by the fire,
Is the hope for upperclassmen;
And your guardians can hardly wait for you to call again.
It’s beginning to look a-not like Christmas,
Everywhere you go;
There’s a tree in the EPAC Grill,
And there’s barely even a chill,
There are just autumn leaves, not snow.
It’s beginning to look a-not like Christmas;
Soon doorbells will start,
And the thing that will make you scream,
Are the children on Halloween

Looking for SweetTarts
With a pair of ski boots and a sturdy snowsuit,
You’re overdressed for the season;
You’ll set back your clocks and get culture shock,
It’s too early, now, there’s no reason;
Yet all your friends can hardly wait for Christmas to come again.
Ok, It’s beginning to look a bit like Christmas;
Soon it won’t be odd,
To trim Christmas trees,
And eat Christmas cookies,
On McConnell Quad.

Untitled Document 1(9)

By CONNOR CALABIA ‘30 and MARKUS FRIEDBURG ‘30

Sure! Here is a short and humorous article about a new student finding ways to not do their homework:
Oh how I remember the good old days of prep fall harkness, no grade on canvas to keep my heart racing. Oh how they used to treat me, I was a fish in a new pond, everything was so sparkly; but now in my darkest hour with only five minutes until that dreadful class begins I have nothing to say in the slightest. Cruelly, ads for Claude, ChatGPT, and Gemini rush through my brain; how easy would it be to just put one prompt in and redistribute the workload to someone who cares way less than I do. But as sleep takes me one amazing, absolutely fantastic idea rushes to the forefront of my mind: to play the Devil’s Advocate.

No need to come up with these crazy takes just to earn a B, takes that even Steven A. Smith would find crazy. No need to find how syntax affects the speaker’s belief on war; when the speaker is already a war criminal. Just simple opposite ideas, just simple absolute, and unintelligible disagreements.
“The author suggests with a comma, that the speaker actually—”
Um, no the author just used a comma, not some elaborate tool, they just wanted us to take a break; but y’all can’t let us breathe. This harkness thing is performative as heck, just give me a friggin’ packet yo.
“Yeah, sorry to cut you off, but no.”
“No, what?”
“The author didn’t intend whatever you think he did.”
“What do you think he did then?”
“I don’t know, but not

that.”
“What?”
“I’m out, see you... never.”
I am no longer that fool who actually does the homework. How those clowns can sit down and get work done defies me— I shall be getting my beauty sleep. No more fighting for a space, no more quoting, just simple “I don’t think so”, oh how I used to be so innocent. So juvenile to believe that doing the reading actually helped my harkness grade, enough C’s will teach you that is indeed not the case. This new discovery will put me up there with the greats — my new meta will revolutionize the game, sleep will be plentiful and the work minimal. I can’t wait for my 8 a.m. history class! - Connor Calabia (Comma) Class of too thousand and 30
This should encompass what you are trying to say :) Would you like me to continue doing your math homework?

A Letter To My Midterm Self

By KEVIN PEPPRAH ‘30 and TOMMY VONDRA ‘30

Dear Me (before my life was ruined by this school),

I hate to tell you this, but life is about to get really hard. And when I say hard, I’m not talking that one time you got a 90 on your math test; I’m talking 89s, even 88s! I thought I would send you a letter just to tell you how prep fall has been going, as I am now through the longest six weeks of my life, even though I still have another torturous six to go.
Before you start arguing with me saying that I’m wrong and that this school is easy, let me take you through my average Tuesday, bucko. At 6:30 a.m., I wake up to get ready for the day, drowsy from staying up until 11:30 p.m. studying, then I fall back asleep, as my first class doesn’t start until 9:00. So I wake up again at 8:00 and get ready for my day. Except I don’t, because I use one of my flexible absences, “flex abs” for short (say that if you want to be cool like me), to skip my

math (MAT 11T, kind of a big deal). A piece of advice: if you use one of your flex abs ever, which is already super risky and edgy, be prepared for the teacher next class to verbally (and physically) attack you and for you to find out that you missed half of the lesson material for the entire year. I would know because a senior that I talk to sometimes (yeah, I know, the seniors think I’m super mysterious and nonchalant) told me that that happened to them in “Barrel History,” whatever that is. Then, I have my best class performance by far, biology. Today, we get our tests back, and I think I did super well. I get the test back, and it seems like they operate on a weird grading scale because for some reason, my paper says 10 percent, which can’t be right. Ignoring that, class went well as always; we let out 10 minutes early, and then I had arguably the hardest period of the day: lunch. I have to walk faster than leisurely all the way from the 1st floor of the science building to the Hahn Center to at least get food, finish the food, get

ice cream, and finish the ice cream before the crowds come in. After that, I have only 40 minutes to warm up before the intense physical activity required of me in PE Walk/Run. Right now we are walking, but our teacher said that we might work our way up to a really intense, really exerting light jog by the end of the term. I really work myself to the bone walking around, so after class, I go to the Health Center to take a short and incredibly needed power nap and skip my other two classes (Spanish 11T and Art 202) by telling them I have narcolepsy, and that is my day. Horrible, right?

It gets worse, in the middle of the morning two times a week at 10:00 a.m. to hear people talk for 30 minutes. It’s so long and annoying and I’m squished between two randoms the whole time. And don’t even get me started on after-school activities. Culinary Club has us making these excruciating dishes that require multiple ingredients and intense physical labor. Shortly after, I have a 10-page article to write for the Exonian about topics that I

don’t even know or care about. Meanwhile, in Tea Club, they have us make the tea ourselves. This includes getting the temperature correct, getting our own tea leaves, and getting the accurate ratio of water-leaf. I can barely even manage to make it past ESSO Golf in pouring while carrying a 100-pound golf club.

This really sucks. I just want to go back home and crawl

Tea, what Tommy and Kevin had to make THEMSELVES!



Courtesy of But First Chai

A Revitalization of the 2000s’ “Ask the DC”

BySEANRICARD ‘28

The Exonian’s Favorite Advice Column

Worried ‘Waldian:

Dear CCC,
I have been having a lot of trouble lately with my roommate. On the first day of school, he brought seven humidifiers into the room. Every night is a struggle as I wade in the bog and fog that has become my room — I wake up drenched in sweat, and it’s becoming hard to breathe. I have tried to speak rationally with him, but he continues to be stubborn. Dorm fac and proctors have been similarly unhelpful. What should I do?

Graciously,
A Worried ‘Waldian

CCC:

Dear ‘Waldian,
Grow some gills! As a student of Phillips Exeter Academy, it is your responsibility to adapt to challenges with creativity and ingenuity. This school is a place for intellectual curiosity, not unending complaints about silly spats. We’d like to refer you to the design lab’s 3D printer

for you to explore an alternative breathing apparatus. In the meantime, we’d like to monitor your apparent lack of intellectual prowess.

Voted 8-0: Probation

Skeptical Soulester:

Dear CCC,
Elm Street Dining Hall recently served General Tso’s “chicken”, which after consumption, gave me a bout of food poisoning. This resulted in three consecutive nights spent in the Health Center, and while I have enjoyed the buttered toast, I have missed many classes and assessments. Furthermore, without me to keep him in check, my roommate has not showered for three days, and multiple moldy containers of ramen have cropped up in my room. What should I do?

Spiralingly,
Skeptical Soulester

CCC:

Dear Soulester,
Unfortunately the attendance points that you have accrued amounts to double attendance restriction, and there is no way to make up

your major assessments, so you will receive zeroes. We’d invite you to see the dining experience through a different lens and reframe your narrative—they are trying their best, and they are not responsible for your weak stomach. As far as the “issue” of your roommate is concerned, please refer to our anti-discrimination policies and be careful in your further criticism of his habits. CAPS and a fiber-heavy diet are recommended.

Voted 6-2: Four Weeks of Restrictions

Weary Webstonian:

Dear CCC,
My history teacher must hate me. We are assigned 40 pages of reading each night, despite the fact that I am a prep. We are writing our first research paper, and I am being harassed about the citations. My teacher continues to threaten a conduct response for my unassuming mistakes, claiming academic dishonesty. Meanwhile, the librarians have blockaded the entry to the library, so I cannot attend class. I truly don’t know what I am doing. What should I do?

Impetuously,

Weary Webstonian

CCC:

Dear Webstonian,
Well, thank you for speeding up our deliberation and saving us the trouble of going through a formal process. Academic Dishonesty is a serious offence. We have reviewed your file, and due to your regrettably short stature, it is perfectly acceptable for the librarians to assume you are an unruly toddler who has run away from home. CPS and DCFS notified.

Voted 7-1: Request to Withdraw

Dumbfounded Dunbarian:

Dear CCC,
On a trip to the Academy woods, I was accosted by a snapping turtle that overtook me, causing me to drop my laptop in the river. Furthermore, my math notebook, scattered on the forest floor as a result of the collision, was immediately eaten by termites, rendering it incomprehensible. After the incident, a disgruntled faculty member was walking their Great Dane-Chihuahua-mutt-mix in the woods, and because it was very foggy out, I in-

advertently stepped on the canine’s paw. This faculty member is my current math teacher, and they have threatened to “abolish” my grade. What should I do?

Failingly,
Dumbfounded Dunbarian

CCC:

Dear Dunbarian,
Your profound lack of spatial awareness is concerning to us. Given each student is required to undergo SWAY concussion testing at the beginning of the year, we are now doubting your integrity when doing these tests. We recommend that you reconsider your place at the Academy. I would invite you to think about what may have caused the snapping turtle and termites to treat you this way — very few acts exist in a vacuum. Your continued mistreatment of animals during your next encounter, we believe, are antithetical to the Academy’s values of goodness and knowledge and non sibi. PETA and other animal welfare groups contacted.

Voted 8-0: Request to Withdraw



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The Crossword Corner

By CAROL LEE ‘28

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9		10	11	12	13
14					15						16			
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58						59					60			
61						62					63			

ACROSS

1 Las Vegas
WNBA team
5 Thunders
10 “Do you ___?”
14 Merit badge
holder
15 God, in Islam
16 Melville novel
17 Certified
19 Rare blood
type, for short
20 Vietnam
neighbor
21 Throw again
23 Tom of
“Newhart”
26 It’s
administered
on the forearm
28 Ancient Italians

29 “Artemis Fowl”
author Colfer
30 German cry
33 “___ Grows in
Brooklyn”
34 Corporate
department
35 Singer Carly ___
Jepsen
36 Connections
37 MS. enclosures
38 ___ Bora:
Afghan region
39 Some MIT grads
40 Elaine’s last
name on
“Seinfeld”
41 Part of a
Spanish forest
42 Monopoly
quartet: Abbr.

43 Med school
subj.
44 Iris ring
45 Upscale menus
47 Ancient Greek
coin
48 More towering
50 Editor’s mark
51 Away from the
wind
52 Forms a
crisscross
58 Tolerate
59 Movie for which
Michelle Yeoh
won a 2023
Oscar, to fans
60 Roger of
“Cheers”
61 Nine-digit IDs
62 Smelling ___

63 Actor Penn

DOWN
1 Cool ___
cucumber
2 Purring pet
3 NYC hours
4 Some pet
ponies, for
short
5 Relay sticks
6 Corrida cheers
7 Ancient
8 Yoga surface
9 Diminutive ones
10 Castle
protectors
11 Captcha
confirmation
12 Turndowns
13 Feet, slangily

18 Rhone tributary
22 Poetic dusks
23 Certain
metalworker
24 More like
Cheers
25 Relieve tension
through tidying,
say
26 Afternoon
services
27 Tree trunks
31 King of pop
32 Doctor, ideally
34 Japanese prime
minister
37 Lookouts
38 They pick up
tabs
40 Exposed
41 Partner of

ciencias
44 Houston team
46 Jays and Rays
48 Keep ___ on
(watch)
49 Some beers
50 Airplane
assignment
53 PBS funder
54 Chess champ
Mikhail
55 So-so grade
56 Brewed
beverage
57 Nine-digit ID

The Exonian

We would like to acknowledge the Squamscott/Penacook peoples who were the first peoples of this land. We would like to honor their ancestors, descendants and future generations for caring for this area and allowing us to be here today.

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