



THE OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER OF THE BOSTON LATIN SCHOOL

Grinch Versus Santa: Who Will Sleigh This Christmas?

By **Ariel Mura (I)**
Assistant Forum Editor

It's Christmas season, and there is room for only one holiday icon in this school. The Grinch, a character from Dr. Seuss's 1957 book *How the Grinch Stole Christmas!*, must go head-to-head with Santa Claus, whose legend dates back to the third century and the story of Saint Nicholas. Due to his lengthy reign as the father of Christmas, Santa has become an icon of the holiday season for children around the world, symbolizing the happiness contained in plastic and sugar. The Grinch, on the other hand, is an up-and-coming star who is slowly but surely gaining international recognition as a champion of anti-consumerism.

While critics may underestimate the Grinch's joy, he, too, maintains a Christmas spirit, focusing more on letting go of material needs and spending time with loved ones. Bolstered by his ideological soundness, the Grinch is sure to win in this fight. Santa, meanwhile, who relies on his medieval magic and an overworked army of elves, wouldn't stand a chance against the Grinch's knack for modern innovation and the sheer brawn of his faithful puppy Max.

In a world where technology is taking over and tradition is increasingly swept under the rug, nothing can hold the Grinch back from domination. The many gadgets that he builds throughout the book and the movies demonstrate his engineering prowess, as well as the impressive muscle of his loyal dog Max, famously known for being able to pull the



Grinch, his sleigh and the thousands of presents from all of Whoville with ease.

Santa Claus, meanwhile, has yet to update his rusty sled from centuries ago. These factors, however, still do not clearly determine a singular champion, as Santa Claus has built an impressive resume for himself with his years of experience. Thomas Oakes (I) explains, "Santa could use Mariah Carey as a secret weapon and get her to bust the Grinch's ears with her high notes." This would be a difficult injury for anyone to recover from.

But who really is the good guy in this situation? Boston Latin School history teacher Mr. Dominic Rinaldi comments, "Like most all truly villainous individuals, Santa is able to cleverly mas-



Universal Pictures/Getty Images

querade himself as the force of good. [In reality,] Santa is the sneaky henchman of the evil capitalist elite. [He] seems bright and cheery, but is really about exploited labor, addiction to materialism, misguided priorities and toxic positivity."

Santa's tendencies to watch people while they sleep and his history of associating himself with children certainly don't paint him out as the good guy. While Santa is far more experienced than the Grinch, who has isolated himself in his cave for a long time, he relies immensely on his exploited workforce to accomplish anything.

Catherine Zee (I) notes, "Santa Claus [...] has experience climbing up and down chimneys and carrying big sacks

filled with presents, but he is nothing without his magic and reindeer and elves to back him up."

The Grinch, meanwhile, was admirably able to heal from his childhood trauma rooted in abandonment and loneliness, open up his heart to the world and build a new chapter in his life focused on joy and friendship. Mr. Rinaldi adds, "The Grinch is teaching people about the true meaning of the holidays and showing people that they need to be grateful for what they have and to be grateful for one another. [...] [People] need to divorce themselves from consumer culture, materialism and capitalism." The Grinch is, in this way, a role model to us all.

There are some, however, who refuse to be swayed by the Grinch's simple but necessary message. Oakes comments, "The Grinch is a bum who has no happiness in his own life and wants to take it out on the rest of us by ruining the most magical time of the year. [...] [Santa is] probably the hardest working and most charitable person in human existence." While this is a stance that appeals to our nostalgia, it is time to welcome modernity and oppose consumerism, a message that the Grinch champions.

This fight will ultimately be a close one. Mr. Rinaldi, however, is hopeful: "[While] Santa has 'magic,' the corporate overlords, a brilliant propaganda wing and an exploited workforce, the Grinch has morality and a faithful puppy on his side. That is all a person needs in this world." Hopefully, with the help of Max, the Whos from Whoville and all of us, the Grinch will beat Santa once and for all.

Breaking the Stereotype: Athletes at BLS



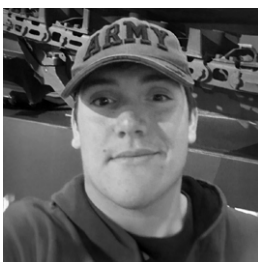
Edwin Prado (I)
Football

"I do consider myself a jock, but I also have a deep appreciation for maps, specifically historical and political maps. Maps are so much more than just tools for navigation that we think they are — actually, they're windows into the past. They tell stories about the world at a particular time, revealing political alliances, cultural implications and even propaganda through the art of map-making."



Quinn Bowles (II)
Wrestling

"When I was eight, my parents got me an electric guitar. I really took to the whole idea of shredding solos like the famous guitarists I looked up to, like Kirk Hammett or Eddie Van Halen. Almost ten years later, I've played in multiple bands and performed live countless times, loving every second of being on stage. Through all the physical and mental challenges I put myself through as an athlete, it's a great outlet after a hard practice for me to do something that I feel skilled at and love doing."



Ethan Sardina (I)
Football, Wrestling

"I have a great interest in military history, particularly regarding technological advancements in warfare, and I build scale models of tanks, planes and ships. I have spent hundreds of hours making them over the last three years. I also like to sail, cook, bake and sing. I've been sailing for about ten years, and I teach youth sailing over the summer. I have worked as a barista and cook at two local cafes for the last four years. I have an interest in music as I have played piano for the last 12 years, I am a member of three choirs and I enjoy a wide range of music types."



Noah Liu (II)
Powerlifting, Soccer

"In addition to powerlifting and soccer, I also enjoy playing the cello, sailing, skiing and learning new languages. Although sports and the arts are often seen as opposite ends of the spectrum when it comes to interests, many athletes including myself take both quite seriously."



Michelle Tossoukpe (I)
Basketball

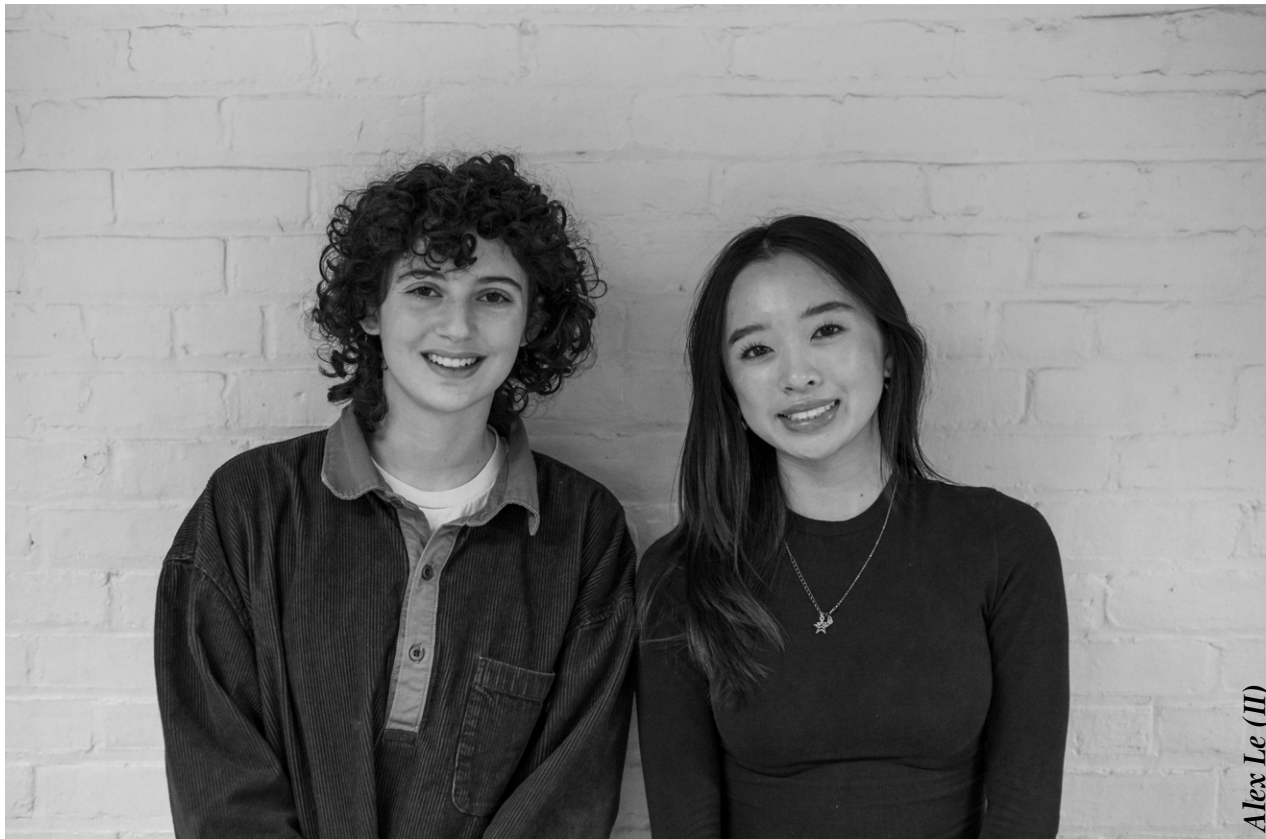
"Everyone has an interest or one thing about them that makes people think, 'Wait, what?'. One of the very many niche interests I have is baking. When not in the basketball season, I bake cupcakes once or twice a week. I find it really fun to try out new recipes and ask my friends and peers what they think. A lot of people know that I bake, so it is not that unusual anymore, but I have been baking for the past three years or so."



Allan Tran (III)
Powerlifting, Football, Wrestling

"The stereotype that the powerlifting scene consists of giant, overly muscular men is completely outdated. Today, you could walk into any powerlifting meet and find anyone short, tall, lightweight, heavyweight, etc. Outside of powerlifting, I love to sew. I love fashion and buying clothes, and one of my goals for 2025 is to make my own pair of jeans."

EDITORS' NOTE



Happy, happy holidays (almost)!

Welcome to the *Argo's* first ever holiday issue and our final issue of 2024! In the spirit of Saturnalia, the *Argo* staff have switched sections to produce this extra-spirited issue. As you flip through these pages, we hope our slightly unconventional articles help you exit this year and enter the next with an optimistic and flexible outlook.

Now, to guide you through all our equally amazing content, here is a preview of what you can find in this issue's paper:

Is Santa's longtime monopoly on the holiday season over? Turn back to the front page to hear why the Grinch would definitely defeat Santa in a fight.

Wondering about whether or not *Wicked* lives up to the hype? Turn to page 5.

Looking for some cozy tunes for the season? Listen to the songs from the *Argo* editors' holiday playlist on page 7.

Curious about the real lives of Boston Latin School teachers? Flip to page 11 to hear about a day in the life of BLS Director of Operations Ms. Jesse Kwan.

Want to test your word game knowledge? Flip to pages 4 and 8 to try our holiday-themed crossword and word search puzzles.

Bonus: if you find any errors in this issue (grammatical, typos, factual etc.), come find us in Room 207 to claim a special prize!

We hope this issue pumps you up for the holiday spirit and helps transition you into a much-needed vacation. Pat yourself on the back for persevering through this last stretch of exams, and for battling both extracurricular and academic stress. Sleep in, drink hot cocoa and spend time with your loved ones. We hope to see each other rejuvenated on January 6 2025.

While we've all been eagerly waiting for break, we will miss you while we're gone. We hope that this year has been good to you all and manifest that next year will be even better. So, goodbye 2024 and hello 2025 — we can't wait to see what the new year brings us!"

With love,
Mannah

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The Perfect Shot!



All Photos Courtesy of Alex Le (II)

Faculty's Got Talent in Sports

By Alice Li (III)

Head A&E Editor

Imagine this: we are at a basketball game against English High School. The clock is ticking, and it is the last chance for the Boston Latin School team to tie the game. A young player takes the shot ... and misses! That player was Head of School Jason Gallagher, when he was a BLS student.

Gallagher reflects on missing that shot: "It was tough at the time, but luckily, I had good teammates, good friends and good coaches who helped me with that." He comments that sports not only helped him develop a tight-knit group with some of his closest, lifelong friends, but also taught him about resilience and determination. It was overcoming moments like missing that final shot that kept him going in other challenging times.

Another faculty-athlete is BLS English teacher Mr. Kamissa Barry, who was first inspired to pursue martial arts after watching Bruce Lee movies as a kid. He started formally training in the Korean martial art of taekwondo with Grandmaster Jae H. Kim in Boston, earning his black belt after only seven years (so don't mess with him)! Barry feels that studying multiple arts allows for a more complete understanding of one's capabilities. Currently, he also practices aikido, a Japanese martial art.

When asked why he trains to fight, a role very different from his day job as an English teacher, Barry responds, "It's less about fighting [and more about] all the beauty and tradition and discipline that comes [...] with it."

BLS history teacher Ms. Ashley Balbian started roller derby after she stumbled upon a flier at the end of the COVID-19 pandemic. She decided to take a chance in order to get more exercise in a team sport that could be played outdoors. It turned into something more than just exercise and Balbian realized her knack for it. Her derby name is Rosie the Rivhitter, and she is currently a co-captain of the Brockton Bruisers, the first recreational derby league in Massachusetts.

Sports can be a fun hobby to connect with the classroom as well. BLS math teacher Mr. Ronald Ford has been playing pool his entire life, first picking up a cue as a child and continuing to play the game throughout high school, college and adulthood. He incorporates pool concepts into his geometry class as a fun way of illustrating mathematical concepts and showing students some pro strategies for hitting the perfect bank shot.



Ashley Balbian

Ms. Ashley Balbian (No. 3) rolls in as roller derby co-captain of the Brockton Bruisers.

In addition to teaching chemistry and physics, Mr. Conor Fearon coaches the BLS crew team. As a child, he was deeply involved in basketball, skiing and baseball. In high school, he continued to play baseball and joined the crew team after watching his older sister excel in the sport throughout high school. He ultimately decided to commit to the sport and went on to row during college at Penn State University.

Fearon coaches to stay in touch with sports, something that he loves and which keeps his life grounded. He started coaching at his high school right after college and coached at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology before joining the BLS program.

"The things you remember the most are just being in the boat with your best friends and really enjoying that time together," Fearon reflects. "Even if you're doing other clubs, there's nothing quite like being on a sports team. It's just a different animal, the camaraderie that you get from that."

Basketball, martial arts, roller derby, pool and rowing ... you name it! The BLS faculty embodies a diversity of athletics. Just as our teachers found their love for sports, Gallagher hopes students will find something that speaks to them: "Whether it's athletics or arts, [...] I think it's so important that our students get involved in something that they're passionate about."

B.H.I.M.



**By Hayden Cooper-Dupont (I),
Islay Shilland (I)
& Milda Miranda (I),
featuring Ben Choi-Harris (I)**

Creative Consultants and Assistant Photo Editor

hi HIM + B: thoughts on staying in contact w/ your ex?

B: It really depends on each situation. I think it can work but under a very specific set of circumstances. If you truly did both reach the decision mutually and there is no bad blood, then I think you can make it work. BUT, if there was any hint of an imbalance in the decision, I really don't think you should stay in contact. Things will only bubble up until you reach a breaking point. Also, be honest with yourself. As hard as it can be, you need to assess the situation and what's going to actually be best for you, even if it's not what you want.

my ex cheated on me and then broke up with me ... do i go psycho ex gf mode or be the bigger person?

I: I would not recommend going

“psycho ex gf mode,” because that is not going to bring you any satisfaction and it will only paint you in a bad light. It also won't fix the problem; if they cheated on you AND broke up with you, they clearly don't respect you — and acting psycho is not going to help your case. Instead, focus on respecting yourself enough to distance yourself from them.

Is junior year really hard?

M: Honestly, I found that junior year was my best one both academically and emotionally. A lot of people say it's the most stressful year — and don't get me wrong, it was definitely a test of my strength and ability to chug Monster Energy drinks but not more than any other year. If you choose a strong set of classes that focus on your present and potentially future interests (and a class you can de-stress in), you'll begin to enjoy both school and your year a lot more! Plus, you'll definitely start to feel like a laid-back upperclassman, and prom is on the come-up, so there's fun on the horizon, I promise! Best of luck.

I am friends with this girl, who is really toxic and disrespectful to me, but she has few other friends so I feel bad dropping her. I want to prioritize myself, but I also don't want to be mean to her and I don't know how to tell her. What should I do?

I: If she is toxic and disrespectful, especially to her own friend, then that is likely the reason she has so few friends. If you haven't brought it up to her before, you could try having an honest conversation with her about it. If you've already addressed it and she didn't change her behavior, you have the right to prioritize yourself.

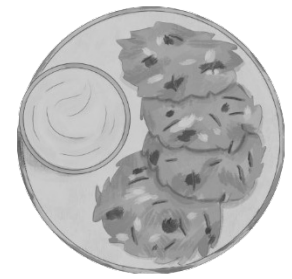
If I like someone who's now in college, how do I reconnect?

H: A reconnection shouldn't be affected by the stage of life that someone is in. Rather than questioning how to reconnect, take the first step and initiate a conversation! In this situation, the worst thing they could say isn't necessarily “no,” but luckily we live in an age of social media and blocking exists! Don't think too much about it, and live in the moment instead of constantly trying to consider what the best possible thing to say is.

College decisions are coming out soon, how do i deal with nosy people and rejections?

B: With nosy people, I think the most important thing is to hold your ground. If you don't want to share something, then be upfront. Most people won't keep pressing. If they do, remember: you don't owe anyone any explanations or information. Rejection is hard. I would say take however long you need to feel sad or disappointed at first and just take the time to wallow, honestly. Sometimes the only way out is through, but you will get through.

Potato Latkes



By Hannah Stoll (I)
Editor-in-Chief

On Hanukkah, it is a tradition to eat fried food in celebration of the miracle of oil. Latkes, or potato pancakes, are one of these foods.

Note: Makes approximately 20 latkes.

Ingredients:

- 4 potatoes
- 1 large yellow onion, peeled
- 1 tbsp fresh lemon juice
- 4 extra-large eggs
- 3 tsp unbleached all-purpose flour
- 1 pinch of baking soda
- 1 tsp salt
- black pepper to taste
- vegetable oil for frying

Directions:

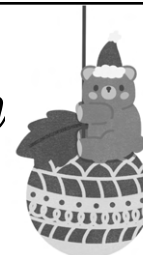
1. Grate the potatoes and onions with a food processor or shredder.
2. Combine in a large bowl with lemon juice, eggs, flour, baking soda, salt and pepper and mix well.
3. To cook, heat 1/8 inch oil on medium in a nonstick pan.
4. Pour batter onto the pan in large spoonfuls. Cook the first side until brown (3-5 minutes), then flip and cook for 2 minutes on the other.
5. Drain on paper towels and serve with sour cream and applesauce!

Students' Holiday Wishes

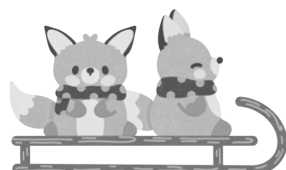
- A White Christmas
- Enjoy a much needed vacation
- For all my friends and family to be happy and successful
- For everybody to be with their loved ones and relax
- For everyone to have a full heart and a full belly
- For my friends and family to be happy
- For my house heating to work
- Him
- Hype holiday spirit
- Lots and lots of sleep
- Lots of snow
- More hours in a day
- Spend time with my hobbies
- To actually have friends
- To eat good food
- To eat lots of cake
- To eat yummy food
- To gain wisdom
- To get a phone
- To get good gifts
- To get good grades
- To grow five inches
- To have good conversations with people I like
- To have a KitchenAid stand mixer
- To ride all the rides at Disney World
- To sleep more (currently have two hours)

Holiday Word Search

By Hannah Stoll (I)
Editor-in-Chief



K J G I Q G V C U B E I L C U U P K P Z
 K E L L W Y J B P O R R V Y B W S N U Q
 F W A U Z P B V X L T N X Q J K M I H U
 H I P P A F P L F I R E V S I A Q U F K
 L N A O G J A R V U R L E I B F T X F W
 A T O L R T E W E G A M N M B L X U L A
 Q R E D K E U L R S E G R F B V I E M N
 S N M E S O T I L F E W D W C N M T P Z
 L S S Y L A N N R Y G N Z U T P T A J A
 E Q U S X C G A I X D X T K E N I L G R
 D T M T H T C H W W A O D S U R Z O L W
 D P E N D S Q Y Y A W B N E Q B E C L A
 I O N E L Q W G L O V E S U U Y G O I B
 N F O M I S T L E T O E T W T J G H G G
 G L R A A N A Z S Y F A J A R S N C H X
 J M A N D E O Q Y V V D B Q O O O T T J
 N G H R G T E U P T J N W J Q L G O S E
 L D U O K O V R S A Q K O B Z T A H X N
 W L I O V R T Q T H S A N T A B J P G P
 X K I Z Y Y A D I L O H S M V C F X X B



Answers: Eggnog, Fire, Gloves, Grinch, Hat, Holiday, Hot Chocolate, Jelly Donuts, Kwanza, Latkes, Lights, Menorah, Mistletoe, Ornaments, Presents, Santa, Scarf, Skating, Sledding, Snow, Tree, Winter

Butternut Squash Soup

By Sophia Fortuin (III)
Head Layout Editor

An easy, creamy and comforting soup that will get you and your family through this cold winter season! Try it, it's truly “soup-herb!”

Ingredients:

- 1 butternut squash (2-3 lbs), peeled, seeded and cut into medium chunks
- 1 large yellow onion, chopped
- 2 1/2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tsp salt
- 3 cloves minced garlic
- 1 tsp ground ginger
- 2 tsp dried parsley
- 1/4 tsp ground black pepper
- 2 3/4 cups chicken or vegetable stock

Directions:

1. In a Dutch oven, heat the olive oil under medium-high heat. Add the minced garlic and cook until browned but not burned. Then, add the chopped onion and salt, and let it cook covered for around 10 minutes or until the onion is softened, stirring occasionally.
2. Add the squash and all the seasonings. Let it cook for an additional 2 minutes.
3. Add the stock, and cook covered for 20 minutes. Once the squash is fork tender, turn off the heat.
4. Blend with an immersion blender until smooth. Be careful, the soup will still be hot!
5. Serve and enjoy with toasted bread!

Walking in a Winter Wonderland: Snowport is Back!

By Roan Wilcox (I)

Head Forum Editor

The holiday season is upon us, and with it comes the obligatory deluge of Christmas carols, frantic shopping and good cheer that defines the most wonderful time of the year. Not one to be left out, Seaport has re-launched Snowport, a self-styled “magical winter getaway” in the center of Boston. For those seeking reprieve from the stress of college applications and school, Snowport is a fun, wintery attraction — provided you do not mind waiting in line.

When walking from South Station toward Seaport’s waterfront, it is impossible to miss the flagship attraction of Snowport: The Holiday Market. Local businesses commandeered a full city block to construct it, filling the space with cute stalls that scream holiday cheer. Among more than 60 stores, you can find everything from jewelry to body soaps to sock puppets, making the market a prime spot to search for stocking stuffers and holiday treats. Prices range from outrageous to affordable, so do not be alarmed if it takes some time to find the right gift!

Ikra Abbasi (III), a fan of Snowport, notes, “It is a good excuse to go out and spend time with family. Also all the lights and festivities bring everyone together, so it’s nice.”

The Holiday Market can get busy, though, so make sure to plan ahead. Ms. Nicole Yang, head coach of BLS Speech and Debate, recommends going on a weekday: “Even if you pay for timed entry on a weekend, it’s so packed inside that it’s less enjoyable.” For those willing to stand the crowds, Ms. Yang notes that Snowport “is fun, [with] pretty good gift options there.”



Stella A. Gilbert

Visitors walk through the wintery Snowport wonderland in Seaport.

Once you have checked off your holiday shopping list, you can walk over to Harbor Way and embrace your inner Canadian by curling (yes, curling), free of charge. If you are new to the sport, you can arrange a lesson with the North End Curling Club — who knows, it may just become your favorite pastime. If curling is not your thing, then you can engage in large-scale versions of Battleship, Jenga or KanJam, which are surefire ways to have fun.

On your way back to South Station

after enjoying a day in Snowport, you may spot Betty, a pink yeti allegedly from the Himalayas, who roams the area. But no need to be anxious: she is friendly and, unlike Bigfoot, open to selfies.

While the holiday cheer in Snowport is undeniable, so too is the consumerism that looms large over the entire venue. For one thing, corporate sponsorships are everywhere. A concession tent is sponsored by JetBlue; the curling lanes are sponsored by a health insurer (albeit a nonprofit one); and the pressure to spend money is

all-encompassing, something only reinforced by the lengthy lines which make you feel as though it would be a waste to leave empty-handed.

Leo Deng (I), however, believes that this dynamic is not necessarily a bad thing: “It is a way of celebrating Christmas [...] If [people] don’t like that, they can go somewhere else.”

Consumerist or not, Snowport is still a great way to spend a crisp winter day; just be sure to watch your budget, and keep an eye out for yetis!

Defying Expectations: *Wicked* Leaves Us Spellbound

By Juliet McVay (II)
& Dimitra Minasidis (II)

Head and Assistant Sports Editors

On November 22, the movie *Wicked*, starring Cynthia Erivo and Ariana Grande as the main characters Elphaba and Glinda, hit the box office. It has taken over theaters, enjoyed by both lovers of the musical and new watchers alike who are invested in the vocals, storyline and choreography.

Wicked is a fantastical adaptation of the musical “*Wicked: The Untold Story of the Witches of Oz*,” a tale of the Wicked Witch of the West. Elphaba describes how the world of Oz known in “*The Wizard of Oz*” came to be. It uses its movie format to put maximum effort into the costumes, effects and dance. The production was one of experimental freedom; a movie with such extreme changes in set, costumes and special effects — not to mention the editing — transports the audience into the World of Oz, surpassing the limits of imagination like no other.

The movie has a near three-hour run time, surpassing even the original musical. While it is no longer such a shock that a movie could be three hours long, this is only the first part of *Wicked*, with the second coming out in November of 2025.

People naturally went into the movie worrying that the story would drag because of the run time, but Cynthia Francis (II) was too encapsulated by the plot to notice: “It was a three-hour movie so I was really expecting to get bored, but it didn’t even feel like three hours!”

The plot is not the only aspect engaging to the viewer, as the amazing vocals also keep them on the edge of their seat. The harmonies match beautifully, and Erivo’s and Grande’s talents are on full display during

“*Defying Gravity*,” a song which left many speechless, and, as Matilda Sherman (II) confesses, “with chills.”

Sherman, who also saw the musical, notices the remarkable combination of the two mediums. He explains that they did “a really good job of bringing the magic of the stage show to the screen,” something that Sherman claims is “really hard to do well.”

The actors themselves took freedom in their performances and singing. In the song “*Popular*,” Hanna Flynn (II) notes, “Ariana added a few parts that weren’t part of the original recording of the stage musical, which I really liked.”

While the vocals were spectacular, the romance plot, while entertaining, seemed to have flaws. A love triangle wove its way into the story between the best friends, Elphaba and Glinda, and Prince Fiyero, played by Jonathan Bailey, surprising many viewers. In a movie that centers around Elphaba and her development into becoming the Wicked Witch of the West, some find the love triangle to be an unnecessary addition.

Sharing those sentiments, Conor Carlson-O’Fallon (II) states, “The awkward love triangle that they made between the characters made very little sense and contributed very little to the plot.” Francis also voiced that it felt strange to watch the romance form: “I wasn’t expecting her love interest to be her best friend’s boyfriend.” This situation made things awkward at times.

The movie turned out to be a stunning adaptation of the iconic Broadway musical with fantastic sets and costumes that throw the viewer into the encapsulating world of Oz. Even if the romance may be a little unappealing for some viewers, *Wicked* is undeniably an incredible movie that showcases very talented actors of many different skills, both behind and in front of the camera.



“Maybe Christmas Doesn’t Come From a Store”



Everett Collection

The Grinch plots against the holiday festivities of Whoville.

By **Anneliese Yu (IV)**

Assistant A&E Editor

Ever since Dr. Seuss debuted the classic character, the Grinch, he has become deeply ingrained in our culture as the antithesis of the Christmas spirit. While the Grinch’s villainization has provided an entertaining backdrop for contemporary Christmas celebrations, it may be time for society to reevaluate its relationship with the holiday through the Grinch’s perspective.

In *How the Grinch Stole Christmas!*, a lonely and spiteful Grinch attempts to ruin Christmas for the citizens of Whoville, a festive town overcome with overconsumption and similar pressures faced by our society today. Just as the Grinch’s appreciation for Christmas grows as he and the Whos, the residents of Whoville, reflect on its meaning, our society also needs to reflect on the true spirit of the holiday.

For several decades, the spirit of Christmas has been co-opted by an un-

relenting media barrage that promotes holiday festivities and consumer activities with a nonstop rotation of carols and romcoms on television, radio and social media. Without all of these vibrant and often incessant reminders, the modern spirit of Christmas would be diminished.

Greta Elliott (IV) believes that social media has played a particularly large role in promoting holiday festivities in the 21st century. While she enjoys participating in holiday celebrations, she says, “I feel like those *Instagram* accounts that post about Christmas every day are really excessive. I know that it’s probably ironic, but it’s like, wow, you really love Christmas.”

As the Grinch himself attests, these festivities and the pressure to participate in them can become overwhelming. The expectation that one should enjoy being involved in all of the holiday celebrations can exacerbate stress and loneliness for those who do not want to participate. A study conducted by the American Psychological Association in 2023 found that “two in five [U.S. adults] said their stress increases during [the holiday season] compared with other points in the year.”

It is easy to criticize the Grinch for disparaging the festivities of a beloved holiday, but one could also commend him for refusing to give in to the pressure to present himself as falsely mirthful throughout the holiday season. The true spirit of Christmas is not encapsulated

in the saccharine slogans of a Hallmark card or cable television special, but in true joy that comes with celebrating the positive aspects of Christmas.

Furthermore, by stealing Christmas, the Grinch would counteract the prevalent and normalized overconsumption in modern celebratory culture. Today, the focus of holidays such as Christmas has shifted from spending valuable time with friends and family to merely purchasing and exchanging physical gifts.

Emmanuella Gustave-Paul (IV) admits, “I love a good gift, but I think connections [between loved ones] are more important overall. It’s very materialistic to think that presents are what Christmas is all about.”

By stealing all of the Christmas presents from the residents of Whoville, the Grinch made the Whos realize that it is more valuable to connect with one another, than to worry about the presents they would receive. Our society also needs to detach from the materialistic aspects of this holiday and replace them with the traditional holiday values of love and appreciation.

While it would be easy to blame the Grinch for ruining Christmas, it is more productive to recognize the value of the opposition to fraudulent values that have overtaken the holiday industry. Society needs a hero like the Grinch to provide a reset in holiday culture and redefine true holiday spirit.

Secret Santa is Superb!

By **Ailin Sha (I)**

Head News Editor

55 gallons of heavy duty diesel engine oil. Chocolate mint patties. A Tolkien cookbook. Stuffed animals. A Playstation 5 console. At first glance, the items above seem completely random, but they are all picks appearing on students’ Secret Santa wishlists this season.

Secret Santa is a beloved holiday tradition where participants give gifts to each other anonymously during the holiday season. Although some students may feel awkward if they aren’t familiar with their assigned gift receiver, Secret Santa is a fun activity that strengthens community, encourages thoughtfulness and spreads joy to everyone involved.

At Boston Latin School, many extracurricular activities and friend groups have participated in Secret Santa. This year, BLS German teacher Ms. Heidemarie Floerke organized an optional event for her Class I homeroom students. Interested students signed up through *Google Forms*, and then drew their assigned names from a hat.

Ms. Floerke explains that Secret Santa is a meaningful way for seniors to honor and celebrate their time together: “This is two years with the same group of students. [...] Despite all their feelings and thoughts right now, they will miss each other and their bond. This is just one more sort of farewell — recognizing each other in the class, and that every morning you spend ten minutes together.” For seniors in particular, participating in an anonymous gift exchange is a wholesome way to commemorate their last holiday season spent with fellow BLS students and reminisce on their memories together.

Favour Ndah (I), a member of Ms. Floerke’s homeroom, expresses, “There’s a bunch of mystery behind it. Overall, it’s just a fun way to give gifts. It’s different. It’s unique.” Instead of getting gifts from close friends, whose gifts are often predictable, Secret Santa opens up the possibility for quirky gifts from people with different senses of humor and creativity.

Senior Math Seminar also held a Secret Santa exchange. Seminar student Iris Tian (I) organized the event using *drawnames.com*. Tian explains her reason for organizing: “I wanted something that could bring out the spirits of people in our class, especially during these stressful times. I think it’s a really fun way to break the academic mindset that we always have, and just think about something fun.”

In recent years, websites such as *drawnames.com* have arisen to serve as digital spaces to organize Secret Santa. On *drawnames.com*, participants can curate their wishlist of items they hope to receive, from candy to stationery to toys. Each participant is randomly assigned to a gift-giver who remains anonymous, and who buys items from their wishlist.



Meilin Sha (IV)

Jacob Shi (II) shocks Kanav Vashishth (V) with his Secret Santa gift!

It culminates in a day where gifts are exchanged, identities are uncovered and laughter is shared. Andrew Xue (I), another Senior Math Seminar student, adds, “I think it’s fun. [...] It’s a nice surprise.”

Students, however, often may not know their assigned gift receiver well enough to determine what to give them. Gideon Neave (I), both a student in Ms. Floerke’s homeroom and Senior Math Seminar, reflects: “I definitely overall like Secret Santa; I think it’s fun. But I think in certain settings and certain groups that can be a little awkward.” Although not knowing one’s recipient well may decrease the excitement of Secret Santa, it is nevertheless outweighed by the anticipation of selecting a gift and the fulfillment of giving it.

In some cases, students receive wishlists with pricey items such as a car engine or a water fountain, far exceeding the set budget. They then face the dilemma of choosing a gift that is not on the wishlist, but that is still significant enough to the person so that it will be valuable. This can cause unnecessary stress for the student trying to pick the gift, as they may worry if the recipient will like it.

Neave expresses, “I would be anxious about if they would like the gift I got. There’s more risk, because they might not, or they might already have one, so I appreciate genuine wishlists.” Students should, however, keep in mind that their assigned person chose ridiculous gifts in the first place as a joke, and there is not a lot at stake — the fun is what counts.

Secret Santa is also an ideal system for large groups of friends. For many students, there is a pressure to get gifts for everyone because just gifting a couple friends will make the others feel bad. By offering a concrete wishlist and assigning everyone to one recipient, students can focus their efforts on getting the best gift for their friend without having to spend an exorbitant amount of money. Secret Santa balances the best aspects of gift giving without the restriction of feeling pressure to buy a gift for everyone.

As winter break approaches, students are eagerly anticipating the gift exchange, both to receive their gifts, but also to reveal their identities to their gift recipients. Secret Santa ultimately is a fun activity that everyone should participate in!

En Pointe: Boston Ballet's Nutcracker

By Annie Dai (II)

Assistant Forum Editor

On November 29, Boston Ballet premiered its annual rendition of *The Nutcracker*, a seasonal delight for audience members and performers alike at the historic Citizens Opera House.

This two-part classical ballet follows the story of Clara Silberhaus, who receives a nutcracker doll as a Christmas present from her uncle, Herr Drosselmeier. At midnight, Clara awakes to find her living room filled with mischievous mice. To rescue her, Drosselmeier appears, magically growing the house and turning the nutcracker doll into a life-size prince.

The thrilling battle between the Nutcracker Prince and Mouse King is widely regarded as a highlight of the first act. The choreography for the Nutcracker Prince's tin infantry is the most technically advanced in the show for non-professional roles, as the soldiers behave true to an authentic regiment and travel as a singular unit across the stage. Performers must meticulously balance intricate timing with synchronized movements.

Petra Brackett (II), a Boston Ballet dancer and *Nutcracker* soldier for the past three years, explains, "Normally, music is counted in sets of eight, but the music of the battle scene is peppered with random

twelve, nine or eleven counts. This makes it super hard to stay on time and know your cues, so the soldiers actually whisper-count out loud on stage to keep track of the music. If you look close enough from the audience, you can sometimes see their mouths moving!"

In the second act, Clara and the Nutcracker Prince arrive at the Kingdom of the Sweets, reigned over by the Sugar Plum Fairy. Boston Ballet exhibits a diverse range of international heritage, weaving mesmerizing, albeit slightly stereotypical cultural performances into Act II of *The Nutcracker*, including the French Marzipan, Chinese Tea and Arabian Coffee dances.

Another adored scene in *The Nutcracker* is the final *pas de deux* between the Sugar Plum Fairy and Nutcracker Prince, which captures hearts through five components. Firstly, the entrée, in which the couple arrives onstage, quickly transitions into the *adagio*, featuring slower tempos and grand overhead lifts. Next, the variations allow the characters to present their individuality. The Nutcracker Prince displays several upbeat jumps and turns, whereas the Sugar Plum Fairy exemplifies her pointe work by performing many difficult small steps and a series of graceful turns. Finally, both performers return for the coda, energetically concluding the *pas de deux*.

Accompanying the visuals are melo-

dies written by renowned composer Pyotr Tchaikovsky, who blended exquisite notes into beloved, recognizable pieces like "Waltz of the Flowers" and "Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy." The Boston Ballet Orchestra, the second-largest orchestra in New England and led by music director Mischa Santora, skillfully recreates these compositions with a talented array of string, woodwind, brass, percussion and keyboard instrument players.

Craftspeople from across the country also contribute to *The Nutcracker's* production, particularly award-winning scenic and costume designer Robert Perdziola, who illustrated over 40 sketches that later served as the production's sets and over 350 costumes.

Lorelei Currier (I), a Boston Ballet dancer, says, "There is such a variety of music, styles of dancing, costumes and scenery in the ballet that it has something for everyone. Ballet is very joyful, and I think *The Nutcracker* helps non-dancers to see that."

Preparations for *The Nutcracker* began with auditions in late September and rehearsals in early October. Company members are largely familiar with almost every part of *The Nutcracker*, regularly switching roles between shows according to rank. Ballet students must audition annually and hold separate rehearsals from

the company's until merging in November. They also have one day of blocking at the Opera House to become accustomed to entrances, exits and theater blocking. Company rehearsals are opportunities for the conductor to practice musical cues, and tech rehearsals allow the lighting and stage department to establish lighting cues and set changes. Shows finally begin shortly after dress rehearsals for each cast.

The entire process of facilitating *The Nutcracker* involves an extraordinary amount of teamwork and organization, emphasizing the Boston Ballet's incredible cooperation, effort and supportive community.

Spellbinding performances like *The Nutcracker* allow communities to connect over beautiful forms of art, showcase stories and dances to broader audiences and preserve ballet traditions.

Ballet dancer Vivien Poftak (I) shares, "The story is so classic and fun, and if you're someone like me who has grown up with it, it's definitely a very nostalgic piece. As much as modern dancing has come so far, looking back at the ballet roots of contemporary styles of dance is so important to examine and learn technique and movement quality."

In spirit of the holidays, Boston Ballet will continue holding productions of *The Nutcracker* until December 29!

The Argo's Holiday Wrapped

Ben Choi-Harris (I): "Underneath the Tree" by Kelly Clarkson

Kelly Clarkson's vocals are amazing in any performance, but "Underneath the Tree" truly showcases her skills. It became a popular new Christmas song after many years of covers, making it a banger for any holiday party and the entire winter season.

Hannah Stoll (I): "If It Be Your Will" by HAIM

A Leonard Cohen classic covered by the three HAIM sisters (Jewish icons!) in a 2019 compilation album *Hanukkah+* features various artists covering classic Hanukkah songs. This is a beautiful and spiritual rendition of the song that is perfect for bringing some light to a cold and dark night.

Andrew Zheng (I): "Last Christmas" by Wham!

"Last Christmas" is one of those songs that you never remember learning the lyrics for but know them anyway because of its popularity and catchiness. The song gives listeners a nostalgic feeling of the vibes surrounding the holiday season that excites anyone.

Alex Le (II): "Jingle Bell Rock" by Bobby Helms

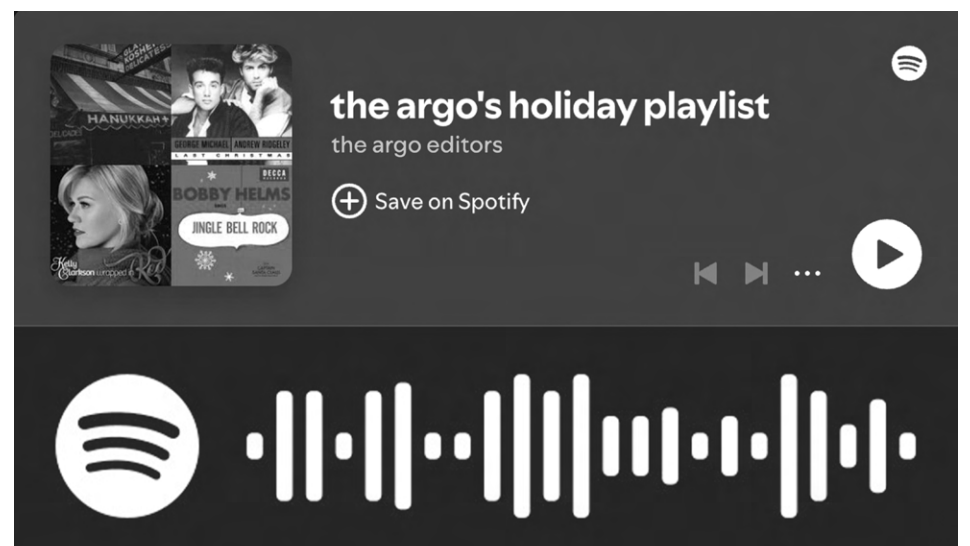
Any holiday playlist needs "Jingle Bell Rock" on it; it is incomplete without the song. As probably one of people's first additions, it is a complete classic for the season, and it would be disrespectful to the song if it is not included.

Ross Wilson (II): "Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree" by Brenda Lee

"Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree" was released in 1958. After half a century, it is no wonder that the classic song is so popular. Even if nobody attending Boston Latin School was alive when the song was released, it still carries nostalgia for many people. The new holiday music would be nothing without the old to support it, so this addition is much appreciated.

Juliet McVay (II): "is it new years yet?" by Sabrina Carpenter

Sabrina Carpenter has a full holiday-themed album and even a new holiday special on *Netflix*, so she is well-versed in the season. "is it new years yet?" may not be a classic choice, but it does have the background jingle of bells and features fun lyrics



about wishing for New Year's, while being tired of relatives and getting annoyed with those pesky happy couples.

Vicky Su (II): "All I Want for Christmas is You" by Mariah Carey

Although no song can be dubbed the anthem of the holidays, "All I Want for Christmas is You" comes pretty close. Everybody who hears this song knows what time of year it is and it never fails to get people in the spirit to both celebrate and dance. Such an iconic

song cannot be skipped when it brings such excitement of winter and festivities.

Anneliese Yu (IV): "Santa Baby" by Laury

This song is a well-loved classic and has been covered by many artists. Laury's cover has a unique style and vocals that give the track her own flare while fitting in with the original classic. The song is perfect for a quiet snowy night during the holiday season wrapped in blankets, next to a fireplace.

The Ultimate Guide to Gift Giving



By Michelle Wang (I)
& Lena Thai (I)

Editor-In-Chief and Head A&E Editor

As the holiday season rolls around, there's only one thing on people's minds: gifts! Though we all love giving and receiving, finding the perfect present can sometimes be the most difficult task on our plates. But fear not, we are here to help. Here is the ultimate guide to gift giving — courtesy: us!

For Friends:

- Stop relying on wishlists, you know your friends better than that!
- Dig into your deepest conversations: the ones that happen at 3:00 A.M. or the ones that take place in random-parking lots. It's moments like these that friends tend to express their hearts' desires.

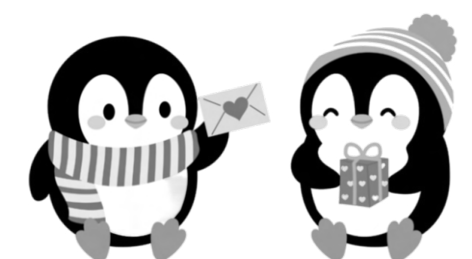


For Family:

- It's genuinely the thought that counts!
- If it feels like there's nothing material that your family members want, think outside the box.
- Remember, gifts don't always have to be tangible objects, they can be unforgettable experiences.
- Breakfast in bed for your mom, going to a sports game with your dad, or tickets to your sibling's favorite artist's concert.
- Parents are suckers for homemade items, so explore some creative enterprises!

For Lovers:

- When you're strolling through a store, take note of when your significant other does a double take or eyes an item extra long.
- We promise it'll seem pricelessly romantic if you can gift something without having to directly ask what they want.
- Heartfelt letters are an inexpensive gift: nothing keeps you warmer than knowing you're loved!



Holiday Issue Crossword

By Alex Le (II),
 Lauren Dong (III),
 Sophia Fortuin (III)
 & Weian Xue (III)

Head Editors and News Staff Writer

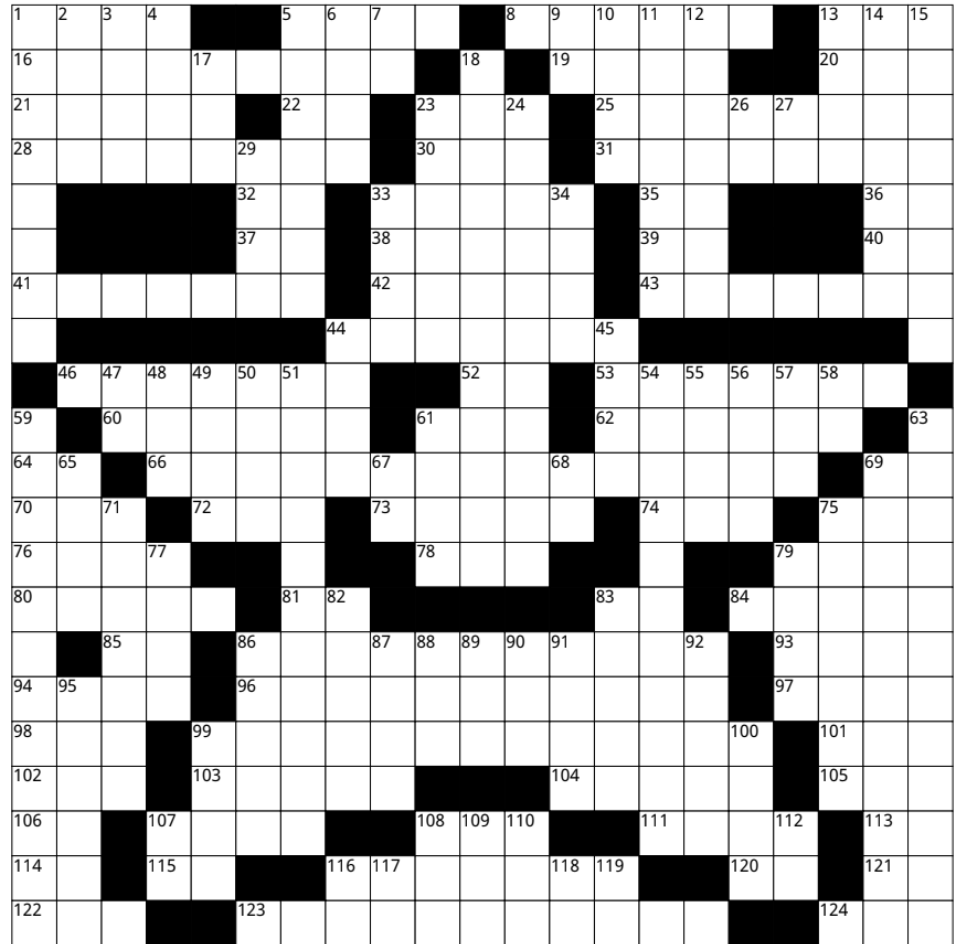
Across

- 1. The exam required to attend BLS
- 5. *Magnum* ____
- 8. Resolve out of court
- 13. Boston Celtics' org.
- 16. Christian holiday
- 19. "Near" in German
- 20. Taxing org.
- 21. Boston College mascot
- 22. Left on read
- 23. ISO 639-2 language code for Cebuano
- 25. Jewish Festival of Lights
- 28. Relating to heartbeat rates
- 30. Bruins legend
- 31. See page 8
- 32. "From" in Latin
- 33. Santa's helpers
- 35. Atomic No. 43
- 36. Prefix "Senior" abbr.
- 37. Terrier college
- 38. A victory hymn to Apollo
- 39. __ Sports
- 40. Double __ major
- 41. Nickname for Springsteen
- 42. "To begin to eat" in Latin
- 43. Pacify
- 44. Reindeer known for her loyalty
- 46. Evil doppelgänger in the *Mario* games
- 52. Haiti's neighbor
- 53. One of a pair of brother sleuths on '80s TV
- 60. Medical attendants at boxing matches
- 61. Island off India's coast
- 62. Hydrated sodium carbonate
- 64. Email response
- 66. Spiced microwave treat
- 69. Peach state abbr.
- 70. Portuguese for "she"
- 72. British bathroom
- 73. Game with scrums
- 74. Kentucky law abbr.
- 75. Evening meal, cutely
- 76. Spanish direction

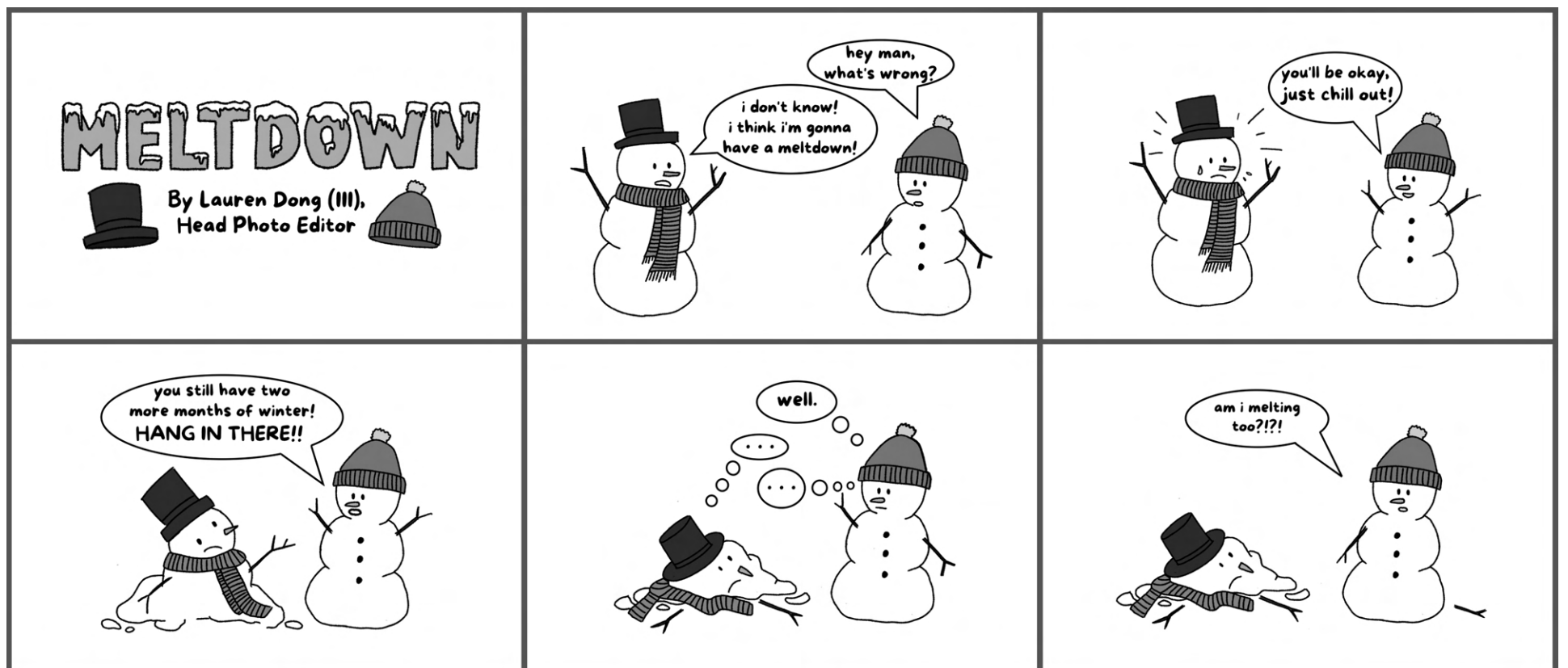
- 78. Triangle congruency theorem
- 79. ____, *vidi, vici*
- 80. Jolly man
- 81. See page 6
- 83. Medical scan
- 84. Katherine of "Suits"
- 85. Opposite of "out"
- 86. Remy's signature dish
- 93. Place to find fjord explorers: Abbr.
- 94. Soviet gymnast Korbut
- 96. "Best thing since" invention metaphor
- 97. Turkish currency
- 98. Main hwy. through Malibu
- 99. Gift packing material
- 101. Two-base hit: abbr.
- 102. Summer hrs. in L.A.
- 103. "Along __ spider ..."
- 104. Court worker
- 105. Historical period
- 106. Clown movie
- 107. 1611 in Roman Numerals
- 108. "Survivor" network
- 111. WWII vessels
- 113. "And" in Latin
- 114. Let's go gambling
- 115. "Toward" in Latin
- 116. Titanic's sinker
- 120. Santa's chuckle
- 121. "But" in Latin
- 122. Student-led LGBTQ+ group
- 123. Chocolate seller
- 124. Poem of praise

Down

- 1. Common winter activity
- 2. ____'s Rebellion
- 3. Crew machines
- 4. "Elite" in German
- 5. "With all men" in Latin
- 6. "Park" in French
- 7. 'Murica
- 9. "In" in Spanish
- 10. ohw? erehw? ____?
- 11. Orange-colored Asian drink
- 12. Shot blocker
- 13. Director Caro
- 14. Orchestra section
- 15. Wood sources for baseball bats
- 17. *The Marvels* actor Park ____-Joon



- 18. Smack dab in the middle of its head
- 23. Dunkin' slush drink
- 24. Hansel and Gretel
- 26. Soo ...?
- 27. Capital of Malaysia abbr.
- 29. I love doing __ in chemistry!
- 33. European public assessment report
- 34. Alternative of "snow" in Norwegian
- 44. ____ Colada
- 45. Used a doorbell
- 47. "And also" in Latin
- 48. Robitaille of the N.H.L.
- 49. Gas, e.g.: Abbr.
- 50. "____ expert, but ..."
- 51. Deli offering
- 54. Place for a pin
- 55. Shape of this crossword
- 56. Rubs the wrong way
- 57. Mexican fast food chain ____'s
- 58. __ a roll!
- 59. Post-Black Friday shopping
- 61. Haitian fudge
- 63. Classic coffee order
- 65. The cold never bothered her anyway
- 67. No more __ nice guy
- 68. Alternative expression for shock
- 69. Winter house material?
- 71. When Santa and the tooth fairy are most active
- 75. The act of killing a god
- 77. Sicilian volcano
- 79. Wedding head garment
- 82. R.E.M. vocalist Michael
- 83. Football shoe
- 86. "ARRIS" scrambled
- 87. American Concrete Pavement Association
- 88. "Linden tree" in Romanian
- 89. Miso dengaku minus "e"
- 90. Urobilinogen: Abbr.
- 91. _nternational _elations and _olitical _cience
- 92. Utopias
- 95. Sports bar attractions
- 99. Boston news station affiliated with ABC
- 100. ____ IRA
- 107. __ Bamba
- 108. UnitedHealthcare victim
- 109. ____ drizzly
- 110. *Mare* in English
- 112. ____ to my fans
- 116. Daughter of Inachus
- 117. Copyright: Abbr.
- 118. Repost but on X
- 119. __ tract



Should You Date During the Holidays?

Yes, You Should Date During the Holidays

By **Mary Deng (II)**

Assistant News Editor

As the air reaches sub-zero temperatures, the festive holiday season becomes the perfect time for relationship-hunting.

“Cuffing season,” a term referring to a yearly trend where single people begin to seek a significant other during the winter months, has been popularized by media like Saturday Night Live’s *Big Boys* and social media microtrends like matching pajamas. Though the term historically refers to relationships that are temporary by nature to ease the loneliness of the winter season, relationships stemming from the trend do not necessarily have to end with the season.

At Boston Latin School, stress — whether from grades, extracurriculars or peer pressure — has become, rather notoriously, a staple of any student’s life. During these times, a significant other can provide a genuine, constant source of companionship and someone to “lean on,” something that family or even friends often fail to replicate.

“People may find it harder to confide something more to themselves when it comes to talking to their family than it is to talk to like a partner,” says Rayne Shen (II). “For example, someone might want to talk about the stress of grades to a partner instead of their parents, so they don’t get scolded.”

Something as simple as a heartwarming message from your significant other can trigger a quick rush of dopamine, the “feel-good” hormone, from the brain, leading to feelings of pleasure, satisfaction and motivation. This hormone is also responsible for improving one’s alertness and motivation — necessary elements for maintaining good grades and succeeding in a high-stress environment.

While some may argue that finding a relationship is simply an attempt at conforming to the expectation of having a partner, this companionship comes with real benefits, both academically and mentally. Students may find themselves bundling up in layers as the winter season approaches. Later in the year, the days become shorter and colder. “These are naturally things that can make you more down, like emotionally. Seasonal depression is very real,” comments Hannah Yu (I). “And I think having a partner can not only distract you from that but [give you] a source of joy that you wouldn’t have if you weren’t in a relationship.”

A relationship also teaches students lessons on communication. When levied with certain boundaries, it can be healthy and serve as a wonderful source of happiness. To spend time with a partner, students must strike a balance between social life and academics, improving their time management skills. Communicating your boundaries in a relationship is usually the first step to alleviating feelings of stress or conflict.

“[Having a healthy relationship] should be like extra sprinkles of ‘goodness.’ It should be something that adds to your life, not subtracts from it [...]. What’s the most important is that both of you understand what the other person is looking for, and mutual understanding is really important,” adds Cynthia Wang (II).

While some may argue that being in a new romantic relationship will detract from already established relationships with friends and family, the opposite holds true. Being in a relationship can often offer new opportunities to form bonds with your partner’s friends and family, especially during the season of gift-giving.

“I really enjoy being in a relationship during the holidays, because holidays are like a time for family and getting together with people you love. And for example, my boyfriend has nice siblings, and I’ve developed relationships with them[...]. The act of exchanging gifts with more people just makes me happy,” remarks Yu.

Who knows? When combined with proper boundaries and healthy communication, cuffing season offers a genuine opportunity to cultivate meaningful connections that may develop into a lifelong relationship.



Lauren Dong (III)

No, You Should NOT Date During the Holidays

By **Olivia Chen (III)**

Assistant News Editor

Joyous sounds ring down the halls as students finish their last exam — the holiday season is finally approaching. The upcoming two-week break is the perfect time to rest and bond with family and friends.

As the weather begins to cool, one should focus more on their own mental health and well-being and not on others. The pace of life slows down, with days becoming shorter and nights becoming longer, making it an optimal time for reflection and deep thought. As such, one should reset and process everything that has happened within the past few months, reflecting upon their strengths and shortcomings.

Leila Ohashi (II) says, “I think that for me, personally, the holidays are a good time to reflect on my personal growth — what I’ve learned, what mistakes I’ve made and what good things I’ve done.”

One should prioritize getting as much rest as possible before school starts up again. Resting becomes difficult in relationships due to the large mental capacity they often take up. Relationships drain much of one’s emotional energy as one tries to maintain a healthy bond with their partner. If the relationship is unhealthy, one may be stuck in a loop of self-denial as they fuel more energy into a fruitless situation. Even if the relationship is healthy, it may lead to a constant lack of rest through unnecessary worry.

There are indeed many concerns in relationships. Emily Zhou (III) explains, “If there’s a conflict in the relationship, you could feel stressed over the holidays.” Unhealthy relationships thus cause more anxiety, detracting from rest time.

Moreover, the temporary nature of cuffing season relationships is a cause for concern. Short-term relationships often occur due to the need or desire for a relationship, leading to little genuine connection. This is not a stable foundation because neither party truly wants to connect with the other, leading to only short-term happiness compared to longer-lasting connections with family and friends.

Staying single during this time does not mean that one is lonely. On the contrary, one can spend more time with those whom they are already close to. As break approaches, one has the freedom to travel or stay inside with their family. Staying with one’s family is a great way to catch up with everything they have experienced and gone through so far. It fosters a closer connection with those whom you might not have gotten a chance to talk to in a very long time.

Bonding with friends is another great way to stay connected. Elizabeth Baldes (III) notes, “I think spending time with friends, chatting online, especially when people are indoors or away from holidays or maybe finding times outside the holidays to hang out keeps one from being lonely. Some people [also] do ‘Friendsgiving.’”

On the contrary, if one is not single, then one might feel the obligation to spend more time with their partner, which takes away from family time. This is problematic because the holiday season may be one of the few times of the year when everyone in the family has time to bond and connect with each other.

It is optimal for people to stay single during the holiday season in order to focus on themselves — whether that is their mental health or physical health — and connect with those dearest to them. Remember that no one will be by your side forever, so cherish the bonds you have with them while you can.

Ask the Students: Should you start a relationship during the holidays?

“I’m indifferent. I feel like people can have them. They’re good, I guess.”



Zoe Awa (I)

“It’s better to be with someone [...]. I’ll be alone this December though, hit me up.”



Zubair Hasan (I)

“It depends on what kind of relationship and whether you plan to stay in it after the holidays.”



Ethan Ocwieja (III)

“It’s kind of mean to get into a relationship with someone just for [the holidays], but if you’re already in love with someone, then it’s a lot better.”



Maienna Andersson (IV)

“Just get a family member or a friend. Don’t get into a [temporary] relationship because [...] you [will] just break it off.”



Renee Gu (VI)

Behind the Velvet Curtain: BLS Holiday Concerts



Mr. Anthony Morales leads the Concert String Orchestra in a fiery performance after months of hard work.

By Mark Snekvik (I)

Head Forum Editor

In the evening hours of December 11, 12 and 13, the halls of the Boston Latin School auditorium became a symphony hall, a jazz club and a Broadway stage as students flooded the stage for the annual holiday concerts! Hundreds of students performed over three evenings in choirs, bands and orchestras. The School was abuzz with smiling, proud families, friends and alumni. It was especially exciting to watch the soloists, who bravely shared their musical talents in the spotlight. There was Fran Martin (V), whose bright and soulful tone made “Winter Wonderland” come alive; Maya Bekheirnia (V), whose piano accompaniment for Class V Choir’s “Possibility” created a hopeful, forward-moving mood perfect for the song’s message; Sasha Deras Melendez (V), who would make Laufey proud with the smooth, Bossa Nova melancholy she brought to “From The Start” and Iris Tian (I), who dazzled audiences with her honey-sweet, gravity-defying violin solo during “Russian Easter Overture.” Behind these polished performances lay hours of often overlooked rehearsals, practice and planning. The *Argo* sat down with BLS Visual and Performing Arts faculty Ms. Margaret McKenna (MCK) and Ms. Koriana Lewis Bradford (KLB) to hear about this preparation:

Q: What is one piece you are especially excited about for this concert? Any history you want audiences to know?

KLB: “In Gospel Choir, we are singing the piece “Hallelujah: A Soulful Celebration,” which the late, great Quincy Jones helped produce and arrange. Jones was a musical prodigy who played trumpet and grew up to compose, arrange and produce timeless classics. Most students would recognize his work on Michael Jackson’s *Thriller* album. This joyous, soulful rendition of G.F. Handel’s “Hallelujah Chorus” from the “Messiah” is genius. It’s our honor to pay homage to Quincy Jones in this way. The arrangement is sure to have the audience rockin’ and clappin’ — on the twos and fours, of course!”

MCK: “I’m really digging [...] “Transcendent Light,” a multi-movement piece

by Kenley Kristofferson, a Canadian composer out of Ottawa. He wrote this piece in memory of Ken Epp, a big band director in the Ottawa scene. We’re playing it in reverse. Normally, the first movement is “‘Tis Joy,” and you have this composer who they described as a larger-than-life person, just exuding joy every time you saw him. Then you have a slower movement in the middle, which is normal compositionally. But to end a multi-movement piece on a slow movement, [...] called “In Stillness,” [...] is very abnormal and [...] the composer intentionally did this because it’s the moment of acceptance in Epp’s life. He had accepted what his fate was — he was dying of cancer, and that everything would be kind of still.”

Q: Can you shout out a section that has been crushing it this semester?

MCK: “The trombones [...] are conveying a lot of subtle changes that make a difference in each of the pieces. In “Incantation and Dance,” they have to get the groove and then on a dime have to turn around and go (*she hums the melody*) [...] and they’re doing that very successfully. [...] They’re a really good example of when you have six people locked in. There are other parts of the band that are also doing that!”

KLB: “Class V Sopranos have grown by leaps and bounds in their ability to blend. They are sounding like one voice and it’s lovely. Class V Alto Ones have been holding down the most *insanely* difficult harmonies that are not easy to sing when hearing the melody in your ears. Class V Alto Twos have stepped up to help sing alongside our small, faithful crew of tenors. They have a deep, wide range and are helping bring balance to the sound. The tenors work hard to maintain their part and sing out confidently despite being outnumbered. And the basses have been overcoming their shyness and challenging themselves to sing out louder [...] [so] *everyone* is giving their best effort!”

Q: Let’s get nerdy. Can you describe a favorite moment in one of these pieces?

KLB: “The swelling inverted singing of “amens” in “Total Praise” grips my soul every time in Gospel Choir. [...] In [Class VI Choir], I love “October Twilight.” Its beautiful, unforgettable melody pulls at your

heartstrings, and its message reminds us to be grateful for all that we have, while being mindful to help those who are suffering and in need.”

MCK: “The *crescendo* into measure 24 (of “In Stillness, Transcendent Light”). At the beginning, everything is super *piano*, there’s no real growth musically. Then, you have these trading eighth notes [...] (*she sings*). [...] It will keep building, building, building [...] and then the flutes, oboes and clarinets have these revelatory soaring moments. They have finally done what you expect them to do. He delays this until almost the end of the song. It’s gorgeous. It’s beautiful.”

The *Argo*: “It’s like that idea of chiaroscuro: the light and then the dark.”

MCK: “That’s exactly what it is. When there’s something as tragic as being ill you can still have some bright moments.”

Q: What is one area you’ve focused on with your students this semester?

MCK: “Digging a little deeper into musicality: [...] how to convey an emotion based on tone quality, blend and balance, playing in tune, articulation [and] dynamics. Music needs to be moving, either coming from or going to someplace. It is traveling on an axis. There are little glimmers of it every time, [and] when we’re all rowing together, I get those pseudo-goosebumps. My hairs stand on end.”

Q: What is a challenge you have faced this semester?

KLB: “I’m in a great place mentally this year. I’ve had to overcome tremendous struggles over these last few years; the deaths of my dad, brother and mom, severe personal illness and hospitalizations, all while raising two kids and completing another degree. This year, I feel some of that weight has been released off of me. It was my students who contributed to my healing. [They] bring me so much joy and laughter every day. [...] [They] are maturing and beginning to take ownership of their own learning and musicianship. I’m blessed to be able to do what I love with such brilliant,

The *Argo* also spoke with student soloists about their experiences soloing in this concert and their relationship to music as a whole:

Q: Talk to us about your solo, and have there been any challenges to it?

IT: “I would describe my solo as very free. [...] There’s a harmony of just cellos and violas holding the same note, so I can really [...] take my time. In music, we call it *rubato*. Instead of a conductor just beat-ing you, he actually just lets me play for that part.”

SDM: “One of the [challenges] is passing the mic, because there’s two other soloists in my song, and we have to pass the mic, and we’re trying to get that to be cleaner.”

MB: “I had a very limited timeline, and the song is very high tempo. [...] I did manage to figure it out, but I really had to prepare.”

FM: “Some challenges with this particular solo are that it’s higher in my range. Also, when first singing it in front of my choir, I was very nervous, so becoming confident [...] has also been a bit of a challenge. But after some practice, I think I’ve really gotten the hang of it.”

Q: What do you love about your ensemble or music in general?

FM: “So many of my friends are in this ensemble, and so many of the people in this ensemble are becoming my friends. It’s nice to have a break from the usual academics of the day [...] and come together over our love of singing. It’s also such a joy to learn from someone with such a passion for the arts and conducting. Music is a universal language, and music is healing [...] we can all appreciate music and the musical talents of others, regardless of our differences.”

SDM: “I just like rhythms, because [...] [they] can get you in certain types of moods. [...] It can [...] brighten your day, and make everything more fun.”

IT: “While I’m playing, there’s no other thought in the world. It’s just me and my violin. It’s very freeing, especially because there’s a lot of stress; [...] music is one time to just focus on yourself, your sound, the sound of the orchestra and the people around you.”

Q: Do you have any advice for aspiring musicians? How do you handle nerves?

SDM: “Forget about what other people think and just do it. At some point in your life, you’re not going to have time to sing; [...] do your passion when you’re able to.”

MB: “Try to not give up, honestly. I know that playing an instrument can be really hard, [but] as long as you have the passion, as long as you practice [...] then you can really do anything you want.”

FM: “Start small. Maybe join a local choir at school or in [your] community with [your] friends where [you] feel comfortable, and go from there. Just because the world tells you or you tell yourself that you “can’t sing” or “aren’t the best singer,” doesn’t mean you don’t have something to bring to the table.”

Students interested in getting involved in the music programs at BLS should visit the music wing after school or email Ms. McKenna at mmckenna5@bostonpublicschools.org.

Keeping Up With Kwan

By **Lena Thai (I)**
Head A&E Editor

What does a typical day look like?

Boston Latin School Director of Operations Ms. Jesse Kwan starts her day by rolling into campus at around 8:15 A.M. via scooter. She begins by checking the parking lot for interlopers, ensuring that only designated staff are using the space.

"I have a spreadsheet called 'parking tomfoolery.' If I catch them, I leave them a love note."

She then touches base with Mr. Rob Jelley (school custodian), a trained carpenter whose expertise is especially useful in this time of year. He helps Ms. Kwan with various issues throughout the School, including plumbing and heating.

"During this stretch of the year, the central problem is heating, especially in an old building like this. Mr. Jelly and I tag-team."

During the day, Ms. Kwan handles school permits and sends them to the central office, since the building belongs to the city. Here, she finds it important to foster good relationships between all constituents, which include BLS administration and teachers, vendors, plumbers and electricians.

Ms. Kwan believes an often-overlooked part of her job, which is described as "build[ing] cohesive and functional systems" for the School, is the communication and relationship building. She notes that in an academi-

cally rigorous school such as BLS, there are gaps in learning sociability.

At the end of the day, Ms. Kwan puts on her crossing guard outfit and regulates safety along Avenue Louis Pasteur. With the current construction at Simmons University, it is essential that children cross with caution.

From 2:30 P.M. to 3:30 P.M., Ms. Kwan traverses throughout the building with a watchful eye in case students need her.

"[I walk around to see] who's where and what [they] are doing."

What previous experiences built skills necessary for your current role?

During high school, Ms. Kwan babysat and worked in customer service. She continued this during her time at Emmanuel College, working as a nanny. After graduating, Ms. Kwan dove into the restaurant and hospitality industry, managing restaurants throughout the Greater Boston area in her 20s and 30s.

"Working in restaurants, you really see the best and worst of people, you know, people who are hungry and people who are angry. [...] You never know what you'll deal with."

Once she started her family, however, she sought a job that aligned with her son's schedule. She eventually earned her license in elementary education, teaching the fourth grade at Young Achievers, now the Boston Teachers Union School, in Jamaica Plain. This way, she could work while



the school year was in session and enjoy her summers off.

After teaching the fourth grade, she realized she wanted a slight change of pace. She reflects, "I know I wanted to interact with children, but I no longer wanted to teach."

Ms. Kwan also attributes her knack for organization to her time at BLS, where self-discipline is vital.

"Going through six years of [BLS], I know what the expectations are. By going against the best of the best, it teaches you to do better."

What are the highlights of your job?

"I like solving problems; it makes me feel good. And of course seeing kids

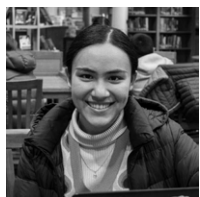
here and there."

As a former BLS volleyball player herself, Ms. Kwan attends as many BLS volleyball games as she can. If her schedule permits, she coaches junior varsity girls' volleyball.

"I just like to go. I like to be an honorary coach because I love volleyball, so when the [fall and spring] seasons roll around, I just think 'I'm going to be there.'"

Lastly, Ms. Kwan believes that it is important to have an Asian woman in an administrative position for students to look up to. During her time as a student at BLS, she had few Asian teachers and believes that it is valuable for students to see someone who resembles them with authority.

Ask the Students: New Year's Resolutions



Maya Koreth (I)

"I would like to read more books [that] I've been meaning to for a long time."



Sofia Griffin (IV)

"My New Year's resolution is to actually turn in work on time."



Linda Guan (II)

"My New Year's resolutions are to have a better sleep schedule and to put myself first."



Tina Ly (IV)

"My New Year's resolution is to get straight A's."



Angela Liang (II)

"My New Year's resolutions are to be more productive and [to] have more self care days."



Charlie Guthrie (V)

"My New Year's resolution is to get better grades."



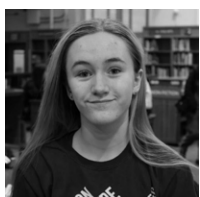
Andy Yu (II)

"This is a continuation of last year's, but my resolution would be to do a muscle-up."



Alex Israel (V)

"[My] New Year's resolution is to drink more water."



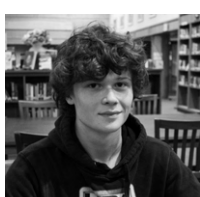
Tallula Sullivan (III)

"My New Year's resolution is to just take better care of myself mentally."



Rae Ruggiero (VI)

"My New Year's resolution is to make it to the finals of one of the Certamen events."



Henry Celli (IV)

"My New Year's resolution is to get more sleep."



Cece Sun (VI)

"I hope to have a really good final science fair project."

'Tis the Season at BLS!



Students ring in the holiday season with a gingerbread decorating event held by the Topol Fellows.

**By Mark Snekvik (I),
Liam Sullivan (I),
& Lena Thai (I)**

Head Forum, Sports and A&E Editors

This holiday season, Boston Latin School's clubs, faculty and sports teams are hosting a wide variety of ways to spread and celebrate the holiday spirit.

In this season of giving, Unity Provi-

sions (BLS FEEDS) invites all who are able to combat food insecurity by donating non-perishable food items. Their drive will run from December 1 to 20, with drop-off locations at the front and back exits of the School.

On December 10, the Topol Fellows hosted a gingerbread house creation event with students and friends to raise money for the Boston Public Schools Alternative Program, whose guidance department creates holiday food baskets for students and fami-

lies who are part of the program. Cookies for a Cause, a BLS student-run club which sells homemade baked goods and donates profits towards charities, also sold cookies at the event.

Hot off three superb pep day rallies, BLS Step Squad brought their spirit and talents to a performance at Northeastern University on December 11. This performance, which took place during the Boston Public Schools' Principal Professional Develop-

ment, was for all BPS principals and featured new steps that encompassed the spirit of Boston and Massachusetts as a whole, rather than just BLS.

BLS CARE, a club committed to supporting cancer research, is hosting a fundraiser for the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute's yearlong Jimmy Fund. On December 3, in honor of the holiday season, Arbella Insurance matched all donations up to \$50,000.

In addition, BLS Black Leaders Aspiring for Change and Knowledge will be hosting a Kwanzaa Extravaganza on December 19. The event is looking for student entrepreneurs and leaders to celebrate the fourth principle of Kwanzaa, Ujamaa, which calls for economic togetherness for the African-American community.

Before break, the Class of 2025 officers have organized two spirit days. On Thursday, December 19, students will wear their ugly holiday sweaters, and on December 20, students will wear their pajamas in celebration of the upcoming break.

BLS Asian Students In Action (A.S.I.A.) will also be holding their 25th annual Holiday Sing-Off event on Friday, December 20, in the Black Box Theatre. Buy tickets from any A.S.I.A. officer for five dollars to see this exciting event, in which a dozen BLS singers and bands will perform and compete for various prizes.

The Michael Giordano Christmas Hockey Tournament will also be held at the Murphy Skating rink in South Boston between December 26 and January 1. The tournament is for both the boys' and girls' hockey teams and is held in honor of Michael "Gio" Giordano, an alumnus of BLS who spent many years working at BLS overseeing Saturday Success School, serving as director of the Exam School Initiative, and coaching both the football and boys' hockey team.

Boston's Christmas Tree Brings Us Together

By Liam Sullivan (I)

Head Sports Editor

On December 5, Santa Claus and Mayor Michelle Wu lit Boston's Christmas tree, a symbol of gratification from the people of Halifax, Nova Scotia, in Boston Common.

Over 100 years ago, on December 6, 1917, upon hearing news of an explosion after a collision between the French and Norwegian munitions ships in Halifax Bay, Boston residents sent medical supplies and rescue teams by train to assist the people of Nova Scotia.

In the years following the explosion that killed nearly 2,000 Halifax residents, the people of Nova Scotia thanked Boston by sending a Christmas tree. Then, in 1971, the city repeated this gesture, and every year since then, a tree has been gifted to Boston honoring the acts of kindness of many Massachusetts volunteers. Benjamin Davidson (I) comments on the value of the lighting, stating, "It's just a great thing Boston does to keep the community intertwined."

In the season of giving, Mayor Wu has sought to increase efforts to support families. According to the City of Boston, this year's annual turkey drive held at Thanksgiving raised nearly 3,100 turkeys and 50,000 pounds of food for households in need.

Mayor Wu seeks to continue programs for families, remarking, "The holiday season brings great joy to our communities, and we want to do our part in lifting the burden for Boston families in need to enjoy a traditional and filling [...] meal."

Apart from the tree lighting, there are many places to explore in Boston during the holiday season. Boston's Snowport in the Seaport neighborhood features over 100 markets and vendors. Boston's City Hall Plaza, moreover, will feature ice sculptures on



Boston Common's annual Christmas tree lights up the city.

December 31 to celebrate the new year.

The city will also hold a range of live holiday music shows. The *iHeartRadio* Jingle Ball on December 15 at TD Garden features a variety of pop performances from Meghan Trainor to The Kid Laroi. Gianna Pergola (I) remarks, "Being able to listen to big-name artists and start the holiday season off with family and friends is always a great time." At Symphony Hall between December 5 and December 24, Boston Pops will also host their annual concerts.

Chabad of Downtown Boston, a Jewish educational organization, will be hosting the annual Menorah lighting on Boston Common between December 25 and January 2. The event will have live music and host local officials to celebrate Hanukkah, another well-known holiday in the Boston area.

Kwanzaa events are being held all across the city. It is an annual celebration created in 1966 that is held between December 26 and January 1 to celebrate the seven

principles of Kwanzaa that call for the unity of African Americans regardless of religion. These principles include unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity and faith.

There are many activities for everyone to participate in during the holiday season. Boston residents can enjoy religious celebrations with friends and family, live music and specialty markets — whatever it is, our city has it to offer.