

The Seattle Prep Panther



The Holiday Issue

THE PANTHER

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Celebrating the Life of Father Fitterer

LUCIE RUETTGERS '27
Staff Writer

On October 15th, the beloved former Seattle Prep president and priest Fr. Paul Fitterer passed away at the age of ninety-four in Los Gatos, California. During his time at Prep, he was known as a loving figure who made a lasting impact on the community. Since his passing, the Seattle Prep community has been reflecting on his presence at school, especially the faculty and staff who knew him best:

“He was just everybody’s grandpa. He would always take time for you and make you feel the most important when he was around,” head of Community Ministry Brian Mack described. During the entirety of his time at Prep, Fitterer was known for being extremely involved in the community, never missing the opportunity to support a student or lead others.

“It was never about him. He just wanted to have a moment of peace and watch some basketball. So, he’d just come in and do that” former girls’ basketball coach Brian Elsner said, who was a student when Fitter-



Prep’s long time priest, Father Paul Fitterer passed away on October 15. Fitterer is remembered for his kindness and his infectious smile.

er was president and later worked alongside him as a teacher.

Fitterer’s presence extended beyond the campus, however, and he was known for his love of Prep retreats. “Towards the end of his career when he was in his 80’s, he

those who knew him best: his smile. “When you were talking to him he would be kind of serious and then his whole face would break into a smile; it was like light parting through clouds” described his longtime coworker Jen Dotsey.

Though his death is an immense loss for the community, those grieving his loss can find comfort in the ways his spirit still exists on campus today. “When I heard that he had died, I was sad of course, but I also felt like that is a guy who can’t die because he is so alive in so many people and in so many communities. How can you not feel hopeful knowing that kind of goodness has existed and for sure does still and for sure will again?” Dotsey said.

“You can’t walk two steps in Seattle without somebody knowing who he is and being touched by him, so it’s a big honor to be able to celebrate

him at Prep” said Mack when asked about hosting the reception for Fr. Fitterer’s funeral on Prep’s very own campus.

The memorial for Fitterer was held on Nov. 22, 2025 at St. Joseph’s Church, with the reception taking place at Seattle Prep.

JRP Gets Rewrite, Moved to Fall, Made Standalone Unit

ANDRE MATHEW '27 &
TUCKER PUNKE '27
Staff Writers

Between AP exams, SAT study, and sports, Prep juniors are swamped in the spring. Once a staple of second semester, the Junior Research Project (JRP) has been moved to November to alleviate some of that stress. Additionally, it has been made a standalone unit, meaning that no history or English curriculum is taught during the JRP writing process.

The JRP gives students a chance to write a long historical paper, which is something that is not offered anywhere else in the Collegio curriculum. It gives students the opportunity to ask a question about anything in United States history, which they answered in the form of a multi-page essay. The JRP requires students to cite at least eight sources, including one book, ensuring that students research a variety of perspectives.

Mr. Elsner, Social Studies Department Chair, believes that the JRP is an important opportunity for students to write a longer-length research paper. Although se-

would continue to go on every retreat, and even hike and beat students on the Senior Pilgrimage” Mack described.

Among the many anecdotes and kind words used to describe Fitterer, there was one consistent trait that came up among

niors have the option to take in-depth writing classes, such as AP Literature, Elsner believes that it is important that all students are comfortable with finding and analyzing primary and scholarly sources.

“It’s important for students to write a longer historical research paper during their Collegio life,” Elsner said. “We don’t really do a history paper anywhere else in the whole curriculum. The research process is really important to prepare students for what they’re going to see later.”

Although the JRP has usually taken place around April, the change to November helps students to strengthen their historical analysis skills to prepare them for second semester., which features challenging units surrounding the Civil War and Vietnam War. Having the experience of doing historical research can help to adequately prepare students.

While students still must complete a significant portion of research for the paper outside of school, pausing other work during the JRP lightens student workload so they can turn their full focus to writing the paper. Mr. Hogan, current junior Col-

legio teacher, has noticed a marked difference from last year. The workload is more manageable for both teachers and students.

“Previously we were reading both Beloved and studying slavery in the Civil War, which was too much stuff all at once,” Hogan said. “We have more class time to do work and talk to students.”

Elliott Hogben, ‘27, agrees; the extra focus on the JRP has given him the time and teacher focus he needs to be successful.

“I appreciate the focus on JRP this year,” Hogben said. “I think it’s allowed me to dive deeper into my topic than I would’ve otherwise and enjoy the process of learning.”

Additionally, the librarians, who are a common resource for JRP help, typically help students with the freshman Refugee Project and sophomore UN during second semester. Moving JRP has spread out the librarians’ workload more evenly across semesters, making for more personalized help for students.

“Juniors should be happy about the changes,” Hogan said.

Fighting the Winter Wear-Down At Prep

PEYTON REMINGTON '26
Social Media Editor

Have you noticed your energy starting to drain as temperatures drop and days become shorter? Recognizing that these winter blues might be more than just a dislike for cold months can help students and staff identify seasonal affective disorder (SAD), a clinically recognized depression linked to seasonal changes. According to Mental Health America, about 5 percent of the U.S. population experiences SAD, and Seattle’s northern location increases this risk, since prevalence generally rises the farther a region is from the equator.

SAD is mainly caused by a lack of sunlight, which disrupts the body’s circadian rhythm and causes imbalances in key brain chemicals. Reduced sunlight can lower serotonin levels, which influence mood, and increase melatonin, a hormone that pro-

motes sleep. Millions of people nationwide experience depression, low energy, trouble sleeping, changes in appetite, loss of interest, and difficulty concentrating during the colder months. The Prep Counselors noted that they often see behavioral changes during this time of year. While these changes are considered informal because counselors cannot formally diagnose students with SAD, they make sure to watch for changes in attendance, grades, and other signs of stress during the holiday season.

Seasonal affective disorder can put added strain on Prep students’ already packed schedules, increasing stress levels, weakening the quality of academic work, and potentially impacting grades. The question remains: how can high schoolers manage a condition driven by changing seasons and uncontrollable weather?

Sources suggest that simple lifestyle adjustments can help reduce the ef-

fects of SAD. Increasing light exposure, getting regular exercise, and maintaining a nutritious, balanced diet all can make a difference. Maintaining a consistent sleep routine, avoiding both oversleeping and under sleeping is key, as is trying to stay socially connected with friends and family to help reduce symptoms. These strategies can empower students and staff to take proactive steps during the winter months.

Prep currently offers several resources to help manage depression, low energy, and concentration issues during winter. Counselors are available for check-ins; the Student Resource department provides opportunities to meet with mental health dogs; and other activities are designed to boost spirits and reduce stress on campus. By recognizing the signs and using the resources available, Prep students can navigate the darker months with resilience and find brighter days ahead.

TEACHERS' STUDY TRICKS FOR FINALS

Doing a headstand to increase blood flow to the brain.
(Frau Khouri)

Use the compounds on the periodic table! Caffeine is a stimulant and eating sugar could give you that extra needed sugar rush!
(Ms. Alokalaro)

Deep breathing during a test to maximize the oxygen getting to your brain.
(Mr. Chen)

Make up songs or create acronyms to memorize things like the periodic table or Krebs cycle!
(Mrs. Tordillos)

Have someone quiz you while you are doing something active- juggling a soccer ball, jumping on the trampoline, dribbling a basketball.
(Ms. Matthews)

Creating audio flash cards of yourself reading material and play them while you're sleeping, doing dishes, or exercising!
(Mr. Mack)

Holding an ice cube to wake yourself up, and you can't drop it until you've memorized the term.
(Ms. Hardy)



Graphic: FAITH ADAMS

Ignatian Family Teach-In for Justice Turns Persecution into Perseverance

KATELYN FREDETTE '27
Managing Editor

The Ignatian Family Teach-In for Justice (IFTJ) is the largest Catholic conference in the United States. It is hosted every year in the nation's capital, Washington D.C. For the past four years since COVID, a group of Prep students and teachers fly to the capital to participate in breakout sessions, learn the stories of others, meet with Washington senators and representatives, and reflect on how to make their communities better.

The conference began in the 1990s as a protest to remember the lives of six Jesuits and their two female companions who were murdered in El Salvador on November 16, 1989.

"They were assassinated because of their work for justice," Ms. Miller said, the director of the Magis Service and Justice Program. "These Jesuit priests at this university were part of the community that was pushing for accountability for the government protection of human rights and higher quality of life for the poor and the marginalized."

Over the years, what started as a protest evolved into a conference where students are given the opportunity to learn about injustices in our country and around the world.

"We learn about what people around our country are doing to address these issues and be invited to think about what we can do and what our role is." Miller said.

The theme of the conference this

year was "Pressing On". The participants at the conference were invited to reflect on where they have been and where they are going. They encouraged participants to think about the role each of them is called to do and what direction they want their communities and country to steer to.

"I got to learn stories and perspectives when it came to migration or immigration; stories about how individuals have been impacted in their life, how that has shaped their identity, what they have become today and what they truly advocate for" Junior Mahta Teamrat said.

Students also went into breakout rooms to learn about topics meaningful to them. Ruth Aedao '27 and Paige Remington '27 both went to a breakout sessions about Jesuit slaveholding. It was led by a teacher from Gonzaga Prep who had learned about the history of slaveholding with Georgetown University and the Jesuits after leading his students to learn more about the history of their school.

"There was a lot of connection between the school [Gonzaga Prep] and Georgetown," Aedao said. "They researched and realized that Georgetown exists because of slavery."

The Jesuits had owned about 275 slaves and sold many to acquire the money to build Georgetown; others were used to build the school and maintain it. Another shocking revelation is that some slaves were sold in order to pay to educate Jesuits. "It was really eye-opening to learn that they have a darker history," Aedao Said. "It is important and something that should be taught in school."

Surviving The Stretch to Winter Break

MARGUERITE BINDEL '26
Visual Editor

As winter break approaches and the semester winds down, many students find themselves running on fumes. The holiday season brings excitement, but also pressure, deadlines, and the balancing act of school, work, sports, and family. Santiago Rodrigo '27 and Sydney Wagner '26 shared their helpful strategies for staying motivated, staying close with loved ones, and bouncing back after a tough semester.

How can I stay motivated when I'm so close to winter break that my brain has already checked out?

For many students, the weeks before winter break feel like a sprint where the finish line keeps moving. Rodrigo said that for him, the key is thinking long-term.

"Finals season is when I remind myself that if I want to get into a really good school, I have to push through these last few weeks," he said. "Winter break almost works like a reset button. Once you get to January, you can start fresh, but you have to finish strong first."

Another student, Sydney Wagner '26, took a more practical, but very relatable approach:

"Every time I finish an assignment, I take a break to do Christmas shopping" she said. "Also, Christmas break is way more relaxing when you go into it with no schoolwork, so that motivates me to get everything done before break."

She also noted how the early sunsets affect productivity:

"With the sun setting earlier now, it's important to focus immediately when I get home from school. Otherwise, I know my schoolwork won't get done."

Between school, work, sports, and everything else, how can I stay close to my family during the holiday season?

"Every winter we go to Las Vegas with my mom's side of the family, my uncles, cousins, everyone," Rodrigo said.

"We never used to meet up, but the last few years we decided to start this tradition. My mom is a lot closer with her

brothers now, and I've gotten to know my cousins. Family time is really important." His advice?

"Put the phone down. Let your grandparents tell you stories. Really engage with people, you get to feel more connected and understand your roots."

Rodrigo kept it simple: "I like to talk to my family about their wish lists or ask them to go shopping with me. It's a great excuse to talk and spend time together."

What's the best way to start fresh next semester if this one didn't go great?

If the first semester wasn't perfect, you're far from alone, and you're not stuck.

"Winter break is a perfect dividing point," Santiago explained. "The first couple weeks of second semester sets the tone. If you want to change your habits, that's the time."

For him, academic improvement came from intentionally changing his environment.

"I used to sit in the back with my friends and not get anything done," he admitted. "Last year I promised my math teacher I'd sit in the front, alone, and actually take notes. And I ended up getting an A!"

Beyond seating charts, he recommends using office hours, study hall, and actually talking to teachers.

Wagner took a more analytical approach.

"The best way to start next semester strong is to use last semester's performance as data," she said. "The classes I struggle with most are the ones I plan to prioritize the next semester."

Whether you're trying to stay motivated to the finish line, struggling to balance family and responsibilities, or hoping next semester will be better than the last, the advice from fellow students is clear:

Be intentional. Use the break to reset. Spend time with people who matter. And don't be afraid to change the habits that aren't working.

Winter break isn't just time off, it's a chance to reboot the entire rest of your year.

One of the important aspects of this trip is the meeting that the students have with the offices of our Washington State senators and representatives. This gives students the opportunity to share their experiences and address an important issue to them with the people who represent them in the nation's capital. It can be a daunting experience for the students, but an impactful one because young voices are the voices of the future.

"They were so kind and attentive and put their phones away and took notes on what we were saying," Aedao said, who had helped lead a group of students who talked about toxic waste clean-ups in Washington. "They really care about what the younger generation has to say."

"If you look around your community, your city, your state, your country and there's something that fires you up or that breaks your heart or both, I think the teach-in is a place to find and meet people who share that with you." Miller said.

"I really enjoyed it," said Teamrat. "I got to connect with students from other schools and learn about what Catholic social teachings and Jesuit values mean to them and how they use it in their daily life."

Since the beginning of the IFTJ

it has been carrying out its mission every year: making an impact. It calls on students to bring the lessons they learned during the conference back to their communities and make them better. The IFTJ helps mold the voices of students into the voices of future leaders.



Photo: DOMINIC FEENEY

Seattle Prep students at the Ignatian Teach-In standing in front of the Lincoln Memorial

SPREE Auction Marks 57 Years of Community, Fundraising, and Student Support

ANNABELLE BOWMAN '27
Staff Writer

Seattle Prep's annual SPREE (Seattle Prep's Reach for Enduring Excellence) auction has grown into the school's most significant fundraising tradition that has shaped student programs, campus spaces, and financial aid efforts for nearly six decades. Director of Advancement Courtney Barker explained, "The SPREE auction was started 57 years ago" and has become "our largest fundraising event of the year." The funds raised "help to support all of our students, our teachers [and] programming," along with each year's targeted fund-a-need. Last year's designation supported the Kathy Kruger Student Support Fund, while this year's focuses on "reimagining all of our community spaces: the great room, the commons, and the cafeteria."

Planning SPREE requires months of organizing, coordination, and community engagement. Assistant Director of Advancement Bridget Toomey described it as "just about a year-long process, a solid nine months that go into planning," involving theme selection, item procurement and

communication efforts. "There's a huge community part, getting the community excited and an opportunity for students to volunteer."

Auction items are gathered through a wide network. "We have an awesome and very robust procurement committee," Toomey answered, noting that families from "different grade schools, parishes, and different parts of Seattle" help ensure desirable items.

Barker emphasized that donor support also comes through Prep Partners, a sponsorship program that "sponsors all of our events" and helps support SPREE so that "more money [goes] back to Prep."

Despite its long history, each year brings new challenges. Organizers explained that the event is well organized, yet "always the little spokes in the machine cause different levels of stress," said Barker. The lineup of auction items often shifts, sometimes dramatically.

"You'll think you have this whole lineup and then you get this amazing item, and it changes the whole flow of the night" Toomey added. Because of that, "you always have to be ready to pivot."



Photo Courtesy of Seattle Prep Development Office
Photo taken at Seattle Prep auction showing Mr. Jordan talking.

Students play a visible role at the event, contributing energy and helping with logistics. "Our students are volunteering, grabbing bid packets, selling raffle tickets [or serving as] auction runners," Toomey stated. Their presence helps attendees "understand why we're all in the room together."

Barker emphasized that SPREE

offers multiple ways to participate, with "an online auction, an almost live auction, and then a live auction" so that "we have something for everyone to be engaged." Above all, the night reflects the strength of the school community. "Everybody [is] believing in the mission of Seattle Prep and Spree is a night that just shines" Barker said.

A Very Merry Jesuit Christmas

PAIGE REMINGTON '27
Staff Writer

As Christmas time rolls around, it is usually a time to celebrate Christ's birth. But for Prep's very own Fr. Moodie it is not just celebration, but also a time for reflection, community, and service. Fr. Moodie shared, "Christmas, for me, is a time of joy and family. It is a celebration of the birth of Jesus, a reminder of God's great love for us."

While the holiday is universally joyful, for Jesuits; it is also a time to pause, reflect, and reconnect with the deeper spiri-

tual meaning of this season, especially since many Jesuits are on break during this time.

A central theme of Christmas for Moodie is community. "There's a certain sense of fraternity that deepens the meaning of Christmas," he recalls, remembering a holiday spent with fellow Jesuits in a cabin in Missoula, Montana. For Jesuits, Christmas is more than personal celebration. It is about coming together in faith to reflect on Christ's birth.

Christmas also invites moments of quiet reflection. "During Christmas, I experience God's presence through the peace-

ful moments that allow me to reflect on the mystery of the incarnation," Moodie explained. These times of solitude help deepen his connections with the profound love of God revealed in the birth of Jesus.

Service is another key aspect of Jesuit Christmas. "Jesuits serve during Christmas through a variety of ministries, often focusing on the poor and marginalized," Moodie said. Whether organizing meals or offering pastoral care, Jesuits use the season to share the joy of Christ's birth with those who need it most.

Moodie's favorite Christmas tradition reflects the season's joy. "One of my favorite carols is 'Gaudete,'" he speaks. He

appreciates the uplifting Latin hymns. He also cherishes shared meals with fellow Jesuits, focusing on community and spiritual connection over festive indulgence.

When asked to sum up the Jesuit spirit of Christmas in one word, Moodie picked "joy". For him, Christmas is about experiencing joy, reflection, community, and service. "We celebrate the birth of Christ, and as Jesuits, we experience joy in the community we share and in our service to others."

Ultimately, Christmas for Moodie is a time of peace and purpose. It is a season that calls Jesuits to embrace both the joy of Christ's birth and their mission to serve the world with love and compassion.

Seattle Prep Retires Sno-Lo Dance

ANDREW ARNOLD '27
Staff Writer

Seattle Prep's winter dance, Sno-Lo, will not be returning this year after the Associated Student Body (ASB) voted to discontinue it. The decision was mainly a result of the low turnout of students at the dance. Over time, Sno-Lo has become viewed as a dance strictly for Seattle Prep's underclassmen. ASB has found

it difficult to encourage juniors and seniors to attend Sno-Lo.

To avoid reinforcing a culture of poor attendance at spirit events, ASB is shifting their focus to different activities including plans for winter activities that will be more engaging and available to students. While the dance may return in the future, ASB members say this is unlikely with a lack of students voicing their desire to have

the dance in recent years.

ASB Junior Executive Nicholas Macha shared that several new winter plans are already in development, though details remain confidential. He confirmed that the replacement for Sno-Lo will not be another dance, but rather a set of fun, school-wide activities around Christmastime meant to engage the entire student body. ASB is also considering a new spring event with the money saved by the removal of Sno-Lo.

Despite the school year having one

less dance, ASB is driven to bring more school spirit to the already thriving Prep community. "We are called the Associated Student Body because we are here to bring together the entire school and promote school spirit," Junior Executive Macha said.

With Sno-Lo retired, Seattle Prep hopes the new activities introduced this year will better reflect that goal and bring more students together.

Who is Santa? The History Behind the Magic

SOLIANA FISHATSION '26
Staff Writer

It was a chilly winter night a few years ago, and my dad and I were walking downtown doing some very last-minute Christmas shopping, and we pass a large ad with drawing of Santa Claus holding toys and gifts. I didn't notice it, but my dad stared at the painting, and told me how fascinated he was by the concept of Santa. In the mid-80s, when my dad was 6 years old, he saw a poster of a really fat man in a fur trimmed red outfit on the roof of a store, and him being in Asmara, Eritrea during this time, he had no idea what "Santa Claus" was. "I thought it was the weirdest thing ever," my dad said, "I only realized when I moved to America and a friend explained that it was Santa."

This got me thinking, what truly was Santa, and why has he become such a phenomenon of western Christmas celebrations?

To understand Santa, we have to understand the history of 4th-century Greek Christian bishop Saint Nicholas. Saint Nick is the saint of children, and he became famous for his gift giving and eventually became the methodical Santa Claus. St. Nick's origins in the U.S. came with Dutch settlers in the 17th century New York, and the folklore caught on, with it gaining more mainstream American popularity in the 19th century which was the century with the most Santa related media, pictures, and poems like A Visit from St. Nicholas (year 1823).

Other versions of Santa Claus were popular all-over early Europe, like England's Father Christmas (aka Ghost of Christmas Present) in the 16th century, Sinterklaas in Belgium and the Netherlands,

which was the "gift-giver," but Sinterklaas being very alike Santa is looks, doesn't have elves or reindeer. In Switzerland, Sinterklass is not the one who gives coal to naughty children, but instead is Père Fouettard who is a man dressed in long robes with a whip, stick, and is covered in straw.

The poem A Visit from St. Nicholas, layed the foundation of a lot of things that is associated with Santa, that were not originated by the St. Nicholas folklore the Dutch brought. This poem is said to have started the gift giving culture of Christmas, the eight flying reindeers, and the idea of Santa carrying a sack of toys down a chimney on Christmas Eve.

But the origin of the appearance of Santa Claus is theorized to have come from the god Odin (Wodan), who was a Norse god in pagan Europe. As Europe Christianized, Odin's appearance of a long white beard and riding his horse Sleipnir, turned into St. Nick with a red suit, white beard,

and riding reindeer. Our modern-day depictions of Santa started by Thomas Nast, who drew a heavysset white bearded man as Santa Claus in the 3 January 1863 issue of Harper's Weekly, who was giving gifts to soldiers amidst the Civil War. Thomas Nast could have also started the theory that Santa lived in the North Pole, featuring "Santa Clausville," Santa's home and toy factory in the North Pole "in ice and snow."

Santa Claus as we know it today was finally modeled in the 20th century, where Christmas in the U.S. became about gifts and cheer, and Santa was at the forefront of it. The music, stories, movies, and side characters like Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer, elves, the nice and naughty list, were all formulated during this time.

It is hard to imagine a time where there was Christmas without Santa Claus, but as my dad said "sure Santa was a little weird at first, but I loved it once I saw how much the kids loved it."

Who Will Win the CFP? Prep Predicts a Wild, Wide-Open Playoff

JACKSON DIERKS '28 &
JOE LAUINGER '28
Staff Writers

Who is your pick to win the College Football Playoff this year? This may seem like a simple question on the surface, but it is much more complex than many believe. When Prep students and faculty were asked about it, there was a wide array of answers. From common picks like Texas A&M and Ohio State to underdogs like Indiana and Ole Miss, everyone voiced a unique opinion.

A common answer for many was an obvious favorite, Texas A&M. This is largely due to the “all-around dominance they have displayed throughout the season in all aspects of the roster” as described by Billy Fisk '28. Another reason many view A&M as a title favorite is because of their Heisman-contending quarterback, Marcel Reed. These factors have the Aggies well-positioned to win their first national championship since 1939.

One of the dark horses for the National Championship this year is the Indiana Hoosiers, who have had a meteoric rise the past few years under head coach Curt Cignetti. Cal-Berkeley transfer Fernando Mendoza has been dominating national headlines with his Heisman-level play. He is leading a team that is off to the best start in Hoosier history and “loves adversity in the big time moment,” according to Seattle Prep Foot-

ball Head Coach Aaron Maul. Another team, reigning National Champion Ohio State, is back for another chance at the title. They are undefeated and sit at number 1 in the College Football Playoff Rankings. Freshman quarterback Julian Sayin and star receiver duo of Jeremiah Smith and Carnell Tate lead the way for the Buckeyes. Strength coach AJ Middleton picked them to make it to the National Championship due to their “culture and training background” which has been producing championship caliber teams for the last 15 years.

Six years into a revival under head coach Lane Kiffin, Ole Miss is finally competing for a national championship. Running back Kewan Lacy and unexpected star quarterback Trinidad Chambliss are running the Rebels’ high powered offense. They are a “proven and battle-tested team”, according to Mr. Stricklin, that has played a hard schedule in the best conference in college football, the SEC. Making them a viable pick for the National Championship.

This year’s College Football Playoff has no clear best team, making it one of the most wide-open playoffs in recent history. College football fans across Seattle Prep will be glued to their TV screens from the start of the first round on December 19th to the National Championship Game on January 19th.

Teams Unit with Holiday Sport Traditions

KATE CANNON '26
Online Editor

As prep continues through the holiday sports season, sports teams across campus embrace the chance to build community in ways that go beyond their weekly competition. From festive outings to long-standing team traditions, winter becomes a time for athletes to connect, celebrate, and strengthen their bonds.

For the crew team, the classic game of “White Elephant” has become a cherished part of their winter routine. “Last year we went to the Enchant ice-skating rink, had an ugly sweater competition, and everyone bought a funny gift for the white elephant exchange,” Macy Ferullo '26 said. “At the end of the night you pick a number and whatever number you get is the order you draw for the presents,” she added.

For a sport that demands intense physical activity throughout the winter with long, cold, practices and hard conditioning, this activity serves an important purpose. “It is something that really brings the team together, especially during the winter season. It can be very hard to keep pushing during the harder months,” Ferullo said.

This fun holiday activity also helps to integrate the younger athletes into the team culture. “We include the freshmen as

a lot of time with them during the regular season,” Ferullo mentioned. These opportunities help to strengthen the team as a whole.

For the Seattle Prep Golf Team, the annual Christmas banquet is always a favorite. The team gathers for dinner and celebrates with a lively awards ceremony. Similar to crew, the golf team also participates in a white elephant gift exchange. “It’s a great bonding opportunity since the team loves to mix hard work with lots of fun,” said Sofia Wingert '26.

Beyond the gifts and celebration, the banquet maintains team culture through the off-season. “The banquet helps to build a sense of community, especially when we aren’t in season, because we are able to stay connected with our coaches and teammates, which is super special.” Wingert added.

Whether it’s ice-skating, white elephant, or a banquet filled with delicious food, these moments of celebration help Prep athletes stay motivated and connected. For these teams, these activities are more than just fun; they are a meaningful part of what makes their program feel like a family.

Les Misérables Makes Return to Prep Stage

DIEGO PEREZ '27
Managing Editor

When the winter musical was announced, Mr. Weeks’ room erupted with cheer. “Les Misérables”, one of the most famous musicals ever made, is making a return to Prep’s stage after 14 years.

More than just a captivating and beloved story, Les Mis is a challenge on stage. The majority of the musical’s two-and-a-half-hour runtime is chorus, sung by the talented sopranos and tenors of the theatre program and accompanied by the orchestra.

Boasting a wide cast that ages throughout the runtime, “Les Mis” is unique among other high school musicals. “Playing younger and older versions of themselves. That’s a challenge for actors to show that progression in a two-hour time span.” Mr. Othman states. “We’ll talk a lot

with the students about what it’s like to be a 20-year-old in a revolution versus a 40-year-old. We may add a little gray to their hair and alter other physical characteristics, but it’s mostly on the actor to play that growth.”

Not only will the characters have a chance to display growth throughout the act, so will Othman’s abilities as a director. Since “Les Mis” initially debuted on Prep’s stage, Othman has gained over a decade of experience. “Anytime you direct a show again, you’re able to go deeper. You know the strengths, you know the challenges. Coming in, I’m already thinking about things I had to deal with in the past. And you can dive deeper into details because you just know the show more comfortably.” He explains further, “It’s like reading a book for the second time—you notice more.”

TOP 6
CHRISTMAS
SONGS OF 2025

According to Jazz Band

1

"Santa Baby" - Ace MacLean-Cury '27

2

"Last Christmas" - Mateo Baptista-Allan '27

3

"Handels Messiah" - Mr. Weeks

4

"Someday at Christmas" - Luke Foley '26

5

"All I Want for Christmas is You"- Lucas Robshaw '27

6

"Feliz Navidad" - Dhani Widodo '27

Graphic: SHELTON YUKEVICH '27

THE SEATTLE PREP PANTHER

PAWD
CAST

Hey Panthers! Listen to the newest Pawdcast episode in which Diego Perez '27 and Mason Beckett '27 delve into the world of Prep’s academic extracurriculars and interview Math Team, Science Club, and Healthcare Club. Learn about how they incorporate themselves into Prep’s ecosystem.

BEST CHRISTMAS ACTIVITIES NEAR YOU

WILD LANTERNS AT WOODLAND PARK ZOO -

A LANTERN-LIGHT SHOW WHERE LARGE, ILLUMINATED SCULPTURES ARE SET UP THROUGHOUT THE ZOO. NOVEMBER 14, 2025 – JANUARY 18, 2026 4PM – 9PM

SNOWFLAKE LANE -

20 MIN LONG PARADE-LIKE EVENT IN DOWNTOWN BELLEVUE NEAR BELL SQUARE EVERY NIGHT AT 7PM NOVEMBER 28 – DECEMBER 24, 2025

CHRISTMAS MARKET -

TONS OF ACTIVITIES, SIGHTS, AND 60 ARTISAN HUTS FILLED WITH HANDMADE ITEMS: XMAS DECOR, HANDMADE WARES, FOOD, AND MORE AT THE SEATTLE CENTER ALL DAYFRIDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2025

GINGERBREAD VILLAGE AT SHERATON GRAND -

ELABORATE GINGERBREAD CREATIONS BUILT BY ARCHITECTS AND CHEFS. FREE! NOVEMBER 20TH, 2025 – JANUARY 1ST, 2026

GRAPHIC: LAUREN RANEY '26

Prep's Top Xmas Watches

VICTORIA RODRIGO DERMODY '28
Staff Writer

As the holiday season approaches, the aroma of peppermint fills the air, and a wave of warm nostalgia settles over the city like a blanket. Twinkling lights rim the Seattle skyline, Christmas songs hum from every corner, and festive traditions begin to take shape. But one tradition stands above the rest for many: rewatching their favorite holiday movies.

Whether you're in the mood for a classic Christ-

the movie becomes a reminder that the messiness of the holidays is not only normal but worth celebrating. Watching it each year becomes a moment to laugh at the chaos of life—and to enjoy it.

Others prefer movies that tap into childhood traditions. Home Alone continues to be a beloved pick largely because people grew up watching it. “It is my favorite because I used to watch it every year with my family when I was younger. It is a tradition,” Caitlin Raymond '28 shares. Arielle Thornton '28 enjoys it because “It is real-

mas special or a wintery adventure, there's no shortage of films to get you in the seasonal spirit. And if you're searching for a few recommendations this winter, Prep students have plenty to share.

For plenty of students, humor is what makes a Christmas movie worth returning to. National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation remains a favorite not only because of its plot, but because of the feeling it brings: the shared laughter, the chaos that mirrors real family life, and the comfort of a movie that never gets old. “They all really embrace the chaotic nature of Christmas, and I feel like my family is also like that,” said London Reed '27. For viewers like her,

ly funny,” proving that sometimes all a holiday movie needs to be is fun. While on the light-hearted side of Christmas movies, it also dives into the importance of family and forgiveness, as well as not judging a book by its cover. The movie's humor, warmth, and familiar scenes make it something people look forward to year after year. For others, Christmas movies are all about classic, feel-good element. Maggie Heily '28 chose Elf as her festive favorite: “It's really funny and brings the Christmas spirit. My favorite parts are when Buddy mistakes a short man for an elf and the candy pasta scene.” Since its release in 2003, Elf has become a modern holiday classic. Will

Ferrell's energetic performance as Buddy—raised by elves and suddenly thrown into New York City—creates a story filled with pure holiday joy, memorable jokes, and iconic scenes that fans look forward to every December.

Whether students gravitate toward slapstick comedy or heartfelt themes, the familiar chaos of family traditions is one thing that is clear.

Christmas movies remain an essential part of the season. They bring people together, spark laughter, and help keep traditions alive—reminding us each year of the simple joy that comes from gathering around the screen with the people we love.

Among all Christmas songs, few carry the emotional weight and quiet reverence of Silent Night. Its origin, however, is as humble as it is miraculous. On Christmas Eve in 1818, in the small Austrian village of Oberndorf, priest Joseph Mohr discovered that the church organ had broken just hours before the service. Determined not to let the night pass without music, he brought a poem he had written to schoolteacher and organist Franz Xaver Gruber. Gruber composed a gentle melody for guitar—an instrument rarely used in church services at the time—and the two performed Stille Nacht for the very first time before a candlelit congregation.

Over the next century, the song traveled across Europe, eventually reaching the trenches of World War I. On Christmas Eve in 1914, during the brutal first year of the war, British and German soldiers laid down their weapons and stepped out of their trenches. They exchanged small gifts, shook hands, and most famously, began singing Silent Night—each side in their own language, yet perfectly united in melody. In one of the darkest chapters of history, a simple song written for a broken organ became powerful enough to halt a war, if only for a night.

“Silent Night carries a calm that's hard to explain,” Coach Maul said. “If a simple melody could make soldiers stop fighting, it proves peace doesn't have to be loud to be powerful.”

Its legacy reminds us that peace, even in the smallest moments, can echo louder than conflict.

These songs, now woven into the fabric of the holiday season, began as small stories—born from creativity, necessity, and the quiet hope that music can bring people together. Behind the jingles and melodies we know by heart lie histories that are far deeper and more human than most listeners ever imagine.

Christmas movies remain an essential part of the season. They bring people together, spark laughter, and help keep traditions alive—reminding us each year of the simple joy that comes from gathering around the screen with the people we love.

The Magic Behind the Music: How Christmas Classics Came to Be

KATE SMITH '28
Staff Writer

Christmas music remains one of the most nostalgic and magical traditions of the season. Loved by millions, these melodies carry memories, emotions, and a warmth that seems to glow from the inside out. What many people don't realize, however, is just how rich—and sometimes unexpected—the histories behind these timeless tunes truly are.

Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer

When asked where students believe Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer originated, 9 out of 10 confidently pointed to the classic 1964 stop-motion movie. But Rudolph's story began long before Hollywood ever came calling.

In 1939, a department store copywriter named Robert L. May was tasked with creating a Christmas story that Montgomery Ward could give out for free to families. Grieving the loss of his wife and raising his young daughter alone during the Great Depression, May poured his own feelings of isolation and perseverance into the little red-nosed reindeer who didn't fit in. The resulting booklet touched millions—more than two million copies were handed out that year—and Rudolph quickly became a symbol of the quiet strength found in those society overlooks.

It also touched the hearts of Prep students with Alexis Meagher '28 who said, “Rudolph makes me feel like it's ok to not always fit in or conform to society's expectations.”

The song and film came much later, but the heart of Rudolph's story lies in the idea that even the most unlikely among us can shine brightest when the world needs it most.

Jingle Bells

It may be the anthem of Christmas cheer, but Jingle Bells wasn't originally a Christmas song at all.

Composed in 1857 by James Lord Pierpont in Savannah, Georgia, the song was originally titled “One Horse Open Sleigh.” Historians widely believe it was written for a Thanksgiving program, meant to capture the thrill of one-horse sleigh races from Massachusetts and capture the sound of the horse bells, youthful antics, and seasonal fun. Only later did the song drift into December celebrations, its catchy chorus and sleigh-bell rhythm naturally sliding into the heart of Christmas culture.

Silent Night

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Faculty favorites

Ms. Dotsey's Italian recipe for Lemon Ricotta Cookies:

“This recipe has been passed down for at least four generations. A few years ago, I taught my nephew and niece to make them: chaos ensued, but it all came out delicious in the end!”



Mr. Danielson's “Nana Andriesen” Eggnogg cake:

“We have a family competition about the first family to find eggnog in the store in the fall because we all know that leads to Egg Nog Cake which everybody loves!”



Ms. Tordillos smoked salmon and rice dish:

“My dad's side of the family is part Tlingit (Alaskan), and my aunts will often provide this significant salmon dish. It is a central dish on Thanksgiving and Christmas and I associate it with community and family!”



Ms. Morales' Polvorones (Spanish Almond Shortbread Cookies)

“I don't just love them because they're delicious—I love the way they bring everyone together. My favorites are lemon, cinnamon, and chocolate—they remind me of cozy holiday moments”



Ms. Healy's grandmothers “Party Mix”:

“My mom makes my grandmother's recipe for “Party Mix” every Christmas. She'll even package it up and put it under the tree for me and my two brothers to take home with us. I can't eat store-bought chex mix. I was raised on this homemade recipe!”



GRAPHIC: EMILINE BELIARD '26

A World of Festivities Through the Eyes of Students

ANJALI FEIDER '28
Staff Writer

For many students, the holiday season is a familiar mix of lights, gifts, and long-awaited breaks from school. But for others, the end of the year becomes a bridge between countries, cultures, and generations. The ways people celebrate are as diverse as the cultures themselves. For students, this diversity is especially visible, as our classmates from different backgrounds bring their own traditions, foods, and rituals into our community.

Two students, Matias Antkowiak '27 and Audrey Trinen '26, share how their multicultural backgrounds shape celebrations that look a little different—full of meaning, memory, and traditions that connect them to family across the globe.

“The biggest thing that all of the parts of my culture emphasize during the holidays is spending time with family,” Matias explains. For Matias, the holidays are never just one thing, they're a blend of Polish and

Argentinian traditions that weave together into a celebration centered around family. No matter where he celebrates, that remains constant.

“Whenever I spend Christmas in Argentina, this is a tradition that I find to be very different from the culture in the U.S. and very exciting,” he says. One of his most vivid childhood traditions comes from Argentina: opening Another Argentinian custom he carries with him anywhere is celebrating the Epiphany on January 6. His family gathers in the morning, opens gifts, and attends church. As a child, he even left water and food out for the camels of the Three Kings—a beloved detail in many Latin American households.

“My polish traditions are also very important to me during the holiday season, and my Polish side is mostly celebrated through food” he adds. His Polish heritage enters the season through food and faith. On Christmas, his family prepares kielbasa along with other traditional dishes. But perhaps the most meaningful moment happens before the meal, when he and his Polish grandmother share opiatek, the thin, communion-like

“Christmas wafer.”

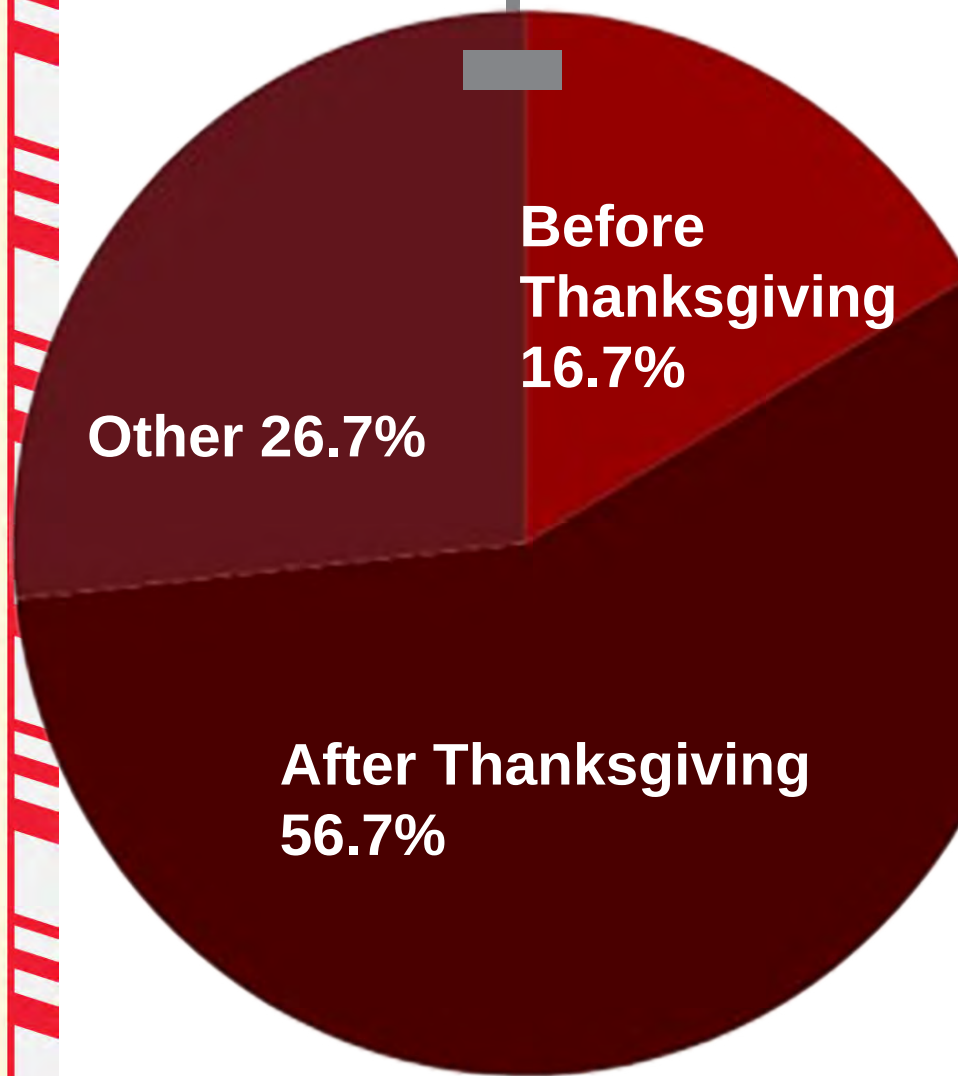
“Recently I have been spending New Year's in Japan,” she says. “I don't get to see my grandma very often, so it means a lot to me to get to do New Year's traditions with her” Audrey mentions. While many Americans stay up late watching the ball drop in Times Square, Audrey's New Year looks completely different—because she spends it in Japan with her mother's side of the family.

“I watch with my mom, my brother, and my grandma in the living room while we wait for the time to get closer to midnight,” Audrey adds. These traditions start on New Year's Eve with Kōhaku Uta Gassen, a massive, televised music competition where male and female artists face off in performances watched by families across the country.

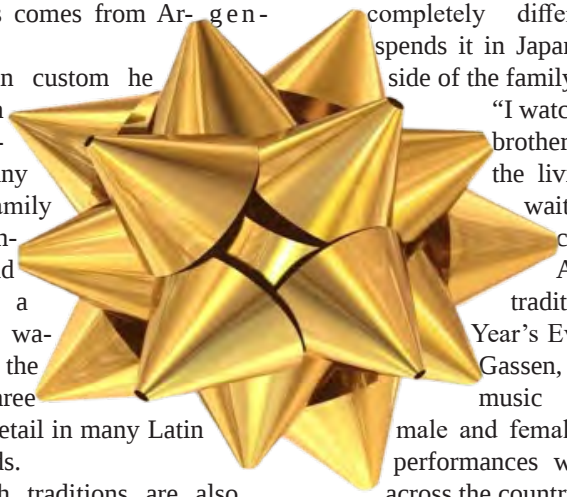
At midnight, they head out for hatsumōde, Japan's traditional first temple visit of the year. “We go to a temple in my neighborhood to pray for a good year,” she says. Afterwards, they drink amazake, a sweet, fermented rice drink associated with celebration and good fortune.

Food plays an essential role in Japan's New Year traditions, and Audrey's fam-

When can you start listening to Christmas Music?



GRAPHIC: CHIARA HOCHSTEIN '29



Freshmen Compete for Varsity Time

AMELIE LAPORTE-MANAHAN '27
Staff Writer

This fall sports season at Prep was an exciting one. Girls Swim and Dive, Boys Cross Country, and Football all made it to state. Boys and Girls Cross Country, Volleyball, and Boys Golf were Metro Champs, and Girls Cross Country also won District Champs. Among these teams, Boys Football and Girls Cross Country had standout freshmen who made a real impact.

Freshmen Jack Erickson, Blake Heeter, Griffin Reed, Brett Taylor, Oscar Morgan, Brooks Odom, and Johnny Riley

were all pulled up to varsity and contributed throughout the football season. High school sports can be stressful, especially when you're a freshman playing against athletes up to three years older. Many agreed the hardest part was facing players who were "much bigger, stronger, and more experienced than yourself" according to Erickson who added that "knowing all of the offensive plays" was also challenging.

Still, being a freshman on varsity came with special moments. Heeter said his favorite part was "the playoff run." Reed loved "seeing the playoff atmosphere and being involved in it." Odom highlighted the team's tight bond, saying, "The culture is

just awesome. Everyone's friends and it's like a family." Taylor agreed, adding, "the Prep culture is one of the best in the game."

Unity meals every Thursday were a favorite tradition. Riley described them as "a family meal," and Morgan appreciated the chance to "meet new people...and have some really good meals."

Girls Cross Country also had impactful freshmen, including standout Ena Sparling. Sparling praised the strong community at Prep, "The environment at meets and practices is always so fun and supportive and I'm really grateful for that."

As the only freshman on varsity, she noted the challenges: "Being a fresh-

man on varsity was really fun but also hard because I was the only freshman on varsity. The practices were harder," and "there was more of a commitment." Still, Sparling enjoyed the entire season, "and especially state."

Overall, this season showed how much freshmen can contribute when they step up, work hard, and embrace the challenge. Whether it was the football team's strong culture or the support within Girls Cross Country, these athletes proved they belong on varsity. Their experiences—from playoff runs to unity meals to competing at state—set the stage for even bigger things in the years ahead.

HEX Credit Requirement Transforms Sports Participation

CHARLIE PETERSON '28
Staff Writer

For many Prep athletes, the start of sophomore year brings an unexpected dilemma: how are you going to fulfill your HEX credit requirement? As freshmen, many students earn one credit through Freshman Football (a no-cut program) and another through their primary sport, like basketball, lacrosse, or soccer. But once students reach sophomore year, there are fewer roster spots available on the JV or Varsity teams, which means many athletes suddenly find themselves scrambling for a new plan. This year, that scramble has pushed interest in non-cut sports to new highs, especially boys swim. Cross country saw a boost, too, but the biggest jump was in the pool. All of which raises the question: did half the class suddenly fall in love with swimming, or is the HEX credit the one doing the recruiting?

The HEX credit requirement essentially states that if an athlete participates in two Prep sports in both their Freshman and Sophomore year, they will be exempt from taking part in HEX classes during their

Junior and Senior year. Achieving the HEX credit requirement is a highly sought after task, and this year, has been the cause for high participation in noncut sports for the Sophomore class.

For many athletes hopeful of achieving the HEX credit requirement, the obvious answer is to choose a noncut sport. With the winter season typically being vacant for many athletes, and swim being the primary noncut winter sport, the choice to join seems clear.

Sophomore Collin Grubbs who is entering his first swim season echoed this reasoning: "I joined swim because I needed to do another sport to get my HEX credit, but I also joined because some of my friends did it last year and they said it was fun."

Still, not everyone is there for the credit. More than twenty swimmers are returning from last season simply for the love of the sport. Sophomore Dylan Pai shared, "I feel like a lot of people are doing it for the credit, but I enjoy swim. I think it's fun and helps build social connections."

With a roster that's grown by

roughly 25 swimmers, head coach Andy Bernard has his work cut out for him. He's prepared for it, and is excited about the rapid growth: "I always love to see more athletes coming out to swim!" Bernard said.

Coming from last year's lower participation, big adjustments are going to have to be made as far as practices and meets. "Certainly in training, it means a bit less individual attention from coaches...On the other hand, as coaches, it takes more planning and organization to make sure that we are structuring practices in a way that maximizes our use of time" Bernard said.

Bernard also acknowledges that the HEX system plays a role: "Absolutely, though I don't think it's the only reason anyone joined. No one has explicitly stated that they only joined to qualify for the HEX credit, but with so many new sophomores on the team, I know it's at least part of the motivation."

Though the swim team has never seen a jump in participation like this, it has been steadily increasing since the Covid season slump in 2020, when only nine

swimmers were on the team. The 2025-2026 team is now the largest Bernard has ever managed by a wide margin. Through it all, he remains positive and excited: "Even if they're just coming for the HEX credit, I hope all the new swimmers come away with a love for the water and a desire to come back next season."

In the end, all of this raises some big questions many students are asking about HEX credits: Is the current system fair to everyone? Should sports that athletes participate in outside of Prep also count towards HEX credit (like gymnastics, ice hockey, and more)? Should the exemption exist at all, since HEX classes teach health topics that sport teams don't? Does connecting credits to sports add pressure to activities that should be fun and inclusive? There's no single answer, but the conversation is important. Prep students stay active in lots of different ways, and many want a credit system that recognizes that.

Finding Balance as a Full-Time Student-Athlete

CAROLINE AULT '28
Staff Writer

Participating in sports year-round without an off-season is fun, but few realize it's like a full-time job. The difficulties are hardly addressed, and lot of feelings can take place. It takes a lot of passion and drive to do what some of these athletes do and it is a real skill to balance school, sports, social life and family. It is so important to find ways to manage burnout, commitment, and passion. Athletes who devote so much time should be credited and supported more than they are.

Sophomore Mo Richardson is a student athlete who plays volleyball year-round and practices continuously. He is fully committed to his sport and has dreams of playing at the collegiate level. He knows what he wants and is willing to put in the work to reach his goals.

"I think the hardest part about being a full-time athlete is balancing everything you've got going on in your life, whether its school, your social life, and your sports. Once you learn how to do it, it makes everything a lot easier" Richardson said.

Naomi Anderson is a sophomore on both the varsity soccer and varsity basketball team, while still playing club sports on the side. It is clear she has a jam-packed schedule but she has definitely done an ex-

cellent job managing it all with her positive go-getter attitude.

"When I experience burn out, I try to push through it for my team, and I keep going. I have learned the hardest parts of a season can be opportunities and chances for me to grow as a player. Being part of a team sport, I've also learned that supporting your teammates throughout the season is so important. Having teammates that can push me to do better and support me every day will help me get past those hard games and get out of a slump" Anderson said.

Committing to a years-worth of activity teaches you a lot, especially the importance of time management and sacrifice. It is critical to learn how to manage a busy schedule. It is a tough lifestyle to handle, but both athletes in the sophomore class seem to have nailed it.

Staying fueled throughout the year is also important for athletes who are constantly trying to excel in their sport. Nutrition can make or break your mental and physical game. Anyone, athlete or not, should eat breakfast, lunch and dinner and never skip meals. For athletes who are constantly training, this is non-negotiable. Drinking enough water is essential. When hydrated properly, athletes are more energized and focused. A tip for hydration is to divide your body weight in half, and that amount will be the number of ounces your

daily water intake should be. Water is a crucial factor of your fuel and preparation, as it prevents that nervous-dizzy feeling when you hit the field or the court.

At times it may feel impossible to reach eight hours of sleep every night, but here are some quick tips to improve the quality of sleep. First, put any electronic devices in a separate room to eliminate distractions. Next, drink a glass of water or a non-caffeinated tea before bed, it helps to feel calmer and eliminate nighttime cravings. Journaling before bed can help jot worries and thoughts down to avoid spending time overthinking when the focus should be on sleep. Finally, try breathwork or meditation to reduce stress and anxiety.

Motivation is something you cannot teach, although there are ways to channel it. It is the drive to train even when you don't want to. One thing to remind yourself if you are feeling unmotivated is knowing that you are training and improving yourself as an athlete and as a person for your own self-development.

"Whenever I'm feeling overwhelmed, to refocus myself, I try to take three deep breaths before the next play starts. That really helps me get in the right mindset and just kind of forget about a mistake I may have made in the last play. It helps me get past that and prepares me for the rest of the game" Richardson added on.

Don't worry about other people's journeys or compare yourself but do use it as motivation to work hard and push yourself. You grow the most when you push through the hard stuff. Here are some questions to

ask yourself if you are struggling with motivation: What is your "why?" In other words, why do you compete and spend endless time getting better? What is your purpose/your passion? What do you want to accomplish? Why do you do what you do? If you are struggling to stay positive, remember your "why!"

"I would say for soccer and basketball, my why is because I have so much love for my sports and the ability to participate in them at a high level. I also love playing these sports because of the relationships I form from both teams. There are so many memories I have created with people and strong bonds I am able to form with my teammates" Anderson said.

One of the hardest parts of being a student-athlete year-round is maintaining good grades and staying on top of your work. It is easier said than done to find the balance. A big factor in staying on track with both school and sports is your communication. Like nutrition, communication is non-negotiable. It is so helpful to communicate with your teachers, coaches and other supporters so that they are aware of the demands on your schedule.

Staying mentally and physically fit helps maintain a balanced life when juggling between academics and athletics. Students who can persevere through the hard moments while still remembering the light they receive from their sports are preparing themselves to do great things in the future. Mastering these challenges and setbacks now is directing them to become elite.

Basketball Team Manager Finds New Love for Game in Underappreciated Role

BEN SCHWARZ '27
Staff Writer

While every team has its players, some of the most important work doesn't show up on the stat sheet. Milo Magnano '26 has been the boys' basketball team manager since his freshman year, with his job consisting of rebounding for players, running the clock at practices, filling up water, and whatever else people need him to do. Now going into his fourth year, it has become a passion of his. Vital to the program, team managers are often not credited for the work they do to support the team, and all the dedication they bring to the table is what differentiates a good team from a great team. As Magnano said, "It's not as hard as playing, but it's not just a simple 'water boy' job either. You really have to put time into it."

Magnano has always been interested in the ins and outs of basketball, playing the sport up until his freshman year. After getting cut, Magnano had a choice: Leave the game he loved or stay with it in a different role. Ultimately, he decided on the latter,

as Magnano explained "I still wanted to be involved, and I didn't want to do any other winter sport, so I decided to do it. I started as the freshman manager, and about half-way through the season the coach moved me up to varsity manager. I've just been doing it ever since."

While in this role, Magnano has experienced many rewarding moments. Not only does he get a front-row seat at every game, but his connection with the players is something he cherishes. "The fun part," he said, "is being with the team and building relationships with the guys. I've always been a big basketball person, so I love getting into every game for free."

Now in his fourth year, he's a veteran, understanding every ounce of what is required to get the job done. The initial heartbreak of being cut didn't make him hate the game, but rather discover a new passion within the same sport: "When I didn't make the team, I thought it was terrible at first, but a lot of good came out of it. Sometimes you just have to wait it out and go with the flow."



Photo: ALEXIS MARTELINO
Milo Magnano '26 the Boys' Basketball Team Manager helps with the daily flow of practice.

Flag on the Play! How Girls are Taking Over Football



Sophomore Rowan Adkins avoids opposing players during a recent girls' flag football game.
KIKI PUNKE '29
Staff Writer

Since football emerged in the late 1800s, it has been perceived as a men's sport due to its physicality and roughness, but in recent years, women have pushed for greater inclusion and recognition. Many high schools, including Prep, began adding girls' flag football to their

winter sports offerings, promoting equality in athletics. Finally, on April 21, 2025, it became an official Washington Interscholastic Activities Association (WIAA) sport.

Girls' flag football truly began gaining popularity in the early 2020s, as high schools began to consider it for their winter sports options. Additionally, the Seattle Seahawks promoted the sport, caus-

ing a gain in popularity and recognition. It is one of the fastest-growing sports, with a 63% increase in participation from 2019 to 2024.

Seattle Prep also added flag football as a club option in the 2023 -24 season. When the WIAA made it an official Washington sport, it was not only a joyful moment for Washington girls' flag football teams, but an elated feeling for all women, as there began to be more gender equality in sports.

Charlotte Larson '26, a member of the flag football team, said, "[The announcement] was really exciting to hear. It was really cool that the WIAA is acknowledging it, and it's very empowering to see as a woman."

The acceptance of girls' flag football as an official sport is not only a revolution in the football world, but a promising future for more gender equality in sports typically dominated by men.

Megan Lauinger '26, a player on the flag football team, said, "We've always seen how the boys get to play football. So many fans go to the games, and football is just a big part of the Prep culture. Having

flag football as an official sport puts us on equal footing with the boys."

As more promotion of girls' sports begins, it is hoped that there will be more excitement and support around women's sports.

Although women's sports have grown significantly, many professional female athletes still receive far less media coverage and public recognition as male athletes, even when their performance is equally strong or even superior. Eva Cray '26, a member of the flag football team, said, "I feel like [girls' flag football] could change the future by showing how well women can compete, and now that flag football has become an official sport, it will help show how hard people work. Having women's flag football is a good way to contribute women's power into the sports world."

As girls' flag football begins for the first time this year as an official sport, it marks the beginning of a revolution of women's equality in sports. In the first official season of girls' flag football at Prep, it is hoped that the support of the sport will inspire those playing on the team as much as it inspires women at Prep and beyond.

How Fall Sports Team's Unique Bonds Lead to Success

GRACIE HARKINS '28
Staff Writer

Each year brings new faces, fresh teams, and more accomplishments for Seattle Prep sports. This fall, the panthers represented the blue and white on every court, field, course, and pool. What people usually remember are the big moments, the wins or the state runs. However, the real stories of each season are the things you usually don't see. Let's look back on how this year's fall teams made their mark together.

The girl's swim team dove into the season with determination, strength, and a chemistry and community that helped swimmers feel supported and a part of the team. Megan Lauinger '26, recalled that during Senior night, captain Zoe Halfman got her state cut in the 500 freestyle, and "almost every person on the team was behind her lane cheering and congratulating her." The team ended their season strong by placing 5th in State Finals, which is no small feat. However, it was not just their solo successes that led them there. Lauinger added that although swimming is an indi-

vidual focused sport, "you see your teammates getting behind you before your race and pushing you as you're swimming, and this helps you know that you are not alone in this sport."

Three-Peat! The volleyball team was on the grind this fall, and it showed when they won Metros for the third year in a row. With only 13 girls on the team, they an were extremely tight knit group. Kayli Tran '26, described them as "truly like a family, or even [their] own friend group," and a "motivating and enthusiastic atmosphere."

Girl's soccer met every matchup head on, proving their resilience all season long. The team's energy this season was collective, present during practices, warmups, team dinners, and of course in games. Audrey Torres '26, said "constant shoutouts and encouragement when teammates [were] doing well" was a huge part of their team community, and how

they were able to support each other.

Golf kept things on course, as the boys and girls Golf teams displayed real camaraderie and truly embodied what it means to be a Panther this fall. Ayden Stack '26, recalled that when the team did not perform their best, "everyone decided to wake up the next day and just keep going." The teams also partnered in the Panther Cup, where the girls and boys split into two teams and competed to raise money for kid's golf equipment. Elle Holley '26, described it as "really fun because we get to compete but also give back."

Cross Country was on the run this season, literally and figuratively. The Boys won their 4th consecutive Metro League title, and the girls team won both Metro and District meets, and went on to place second at state. This marked the first year since 2008 that both teams dominated the district. How did they do it? Elise Corr '28, highlighted how close

the team was, and said "I had my whole support system with me when it got stressful or to celebrate me on the good days too ... they make it so much better, because I'm not only running with my team, but I'm running with some of my best friends."

The boys' football team's culture embodied unity and relentless effort. According to Xavier Losh '26, "football is the team sport of all team sports" and their collectiveness, brotherhood, and support not only defined them on and off the field, but served as a key building block to a competitive and successful season. Matthew Riley '26 reflecting on the season, which resulted in a berth in the state tournament, said "I think it is unique to have a team that cares that much about each other and I'm proud we were able to become so unified throughout the season."

Although each year is different, the heart and soul of Prep sports remains the same. It lies in the bonds, not just the games and individual performances. The real triumph is in the family-like atmosphere that builds lasting relationships which shape individuals and strengthens the community.

***"We get to compete but also give back"**
-Elle Holley '26*

How the Digital Age Turned Gift Exchanges into Transactions

CHLOE HORNER '26
Editor In-Chief

One of my favorite Christmas traditions is my Secret Santa exchange with my cousins. There is a \$50 limit, and no sibling gifting is allowed. Last year, I was excited to play Santa for my cousin who is my age, plays basketball, and loves to hike. I wanted to find a unique present that would fit her many interests. Instead, my aunt emailed me a link to my cousin's Gifgly account.

Gifgly is an online platform designed to create personalized wishlists. Users can add links to their desired items directly into the website, then send it to friends and families who may need some gifting inspiration. When a relative purchases an item through Gifgly, it automatically becomes unavailable for another person to purchase, limiting duplicate gifts. Gifgly is designed for convenience, to ease the holiday stress of shopping, but is it truly in the spirit of gift giving?

Prior to the digital age, successful gift-giving required long outings to South-center or Bellevue Square. Planning inconvenient visits to the one American Girl Doll store. Searching desperately for the softest pair of gloves and reading book reviews until the ideal title presents itself. Now, online shopping reduces the time it takes to deliver a gift that your family members really want. However, the satisfaction that comes from searching for the perfect gift is lost.

A thoughtful and unexpected gift can make the recipient feel more appreciated and seen. Then again, gifting from the heart does not guarantee a better reaction. In making a wishlist, people think of the specific items they hope to receive. They set their hearts on a pair of Uggs or AirPods, and personalized gift giving leaves room for disappointment.

Personally, I'm the type who likes a wishlist, but I don't necessarily think that is the right answer. As a recipient, it probably is more fun to get an unexpected gift. But that places a burden on the shopper. It's a lot of pressure and extra effort. A wishlist, at least, eases the stress of the holiday season for both parties.

To answer my question: are wishlists truly in the spirit of gift giving? No, they aren't. While useful, they transform the peaceful and generous meaning of this holiday into a selfish and commercial one. When we accept a link, we trade that tangible, personal investment for convenience and comfort. Perhaps the holiday season doesn't need to be easier; perhaps it needs to remind us that the most meaningful things, like love and connection, always require a little extra work.

Dreaming of a Green Christmas

BROOKE NOWAK '26
Online Editor

This is the Season of people flooding into malls, rushing to place online orders, good deals, and excessive waste. This surge in consumption has become a central aspect of holiday celebrations but also remains a roadblock on the journey towards sustainability. Though the economy is flourishing and everything is on discount, can we afford the environmental cost?

During the holidays, Americans generate more than 25 million tons of waste, filling 63,000 garbage trucks with wrapping paper, food, or decorations. According to Janik Linder, every year, 1 million tons of holiday cards are thrown away, 23 million tons of clothing are discarded, and 1 billion pounds of wrapping paper are thrown away annually. In a season of shopping, giving gifts, and connection, we are distracted from the impacts of our seemingly harmless traditions. Reflecting on my own role in environmental impact, I struggled to consider sacrificing these traditions. When it comes to sustainability, can there be a 'best of both worlds'?

The most prominent habit that can harm the environment is gift-giving, and more specifically, giving items that people discard or have no intention of using. One way to gift-exchange guilt-free is to purchase items that are sustainable, such as new refillable water bottles, items made from recycled materials, solar-powered gifts, homemade baked goods, or experiences, such as movie tickets.

Another solution is to make an effort to shop in stores rather than shopping or returning online. It is more environmentally friendly as it produces significantly fewer carbon emissions.

To reduce waste, aim to wrap three pres-

ents in reused materials, such as magazine pages, towels, jars, or brown paper bags. A Stanford study predicts every American family did this they it would save enough paper to cover 45,000 football fields.

When it comes to messages to loved ones, choosing electronic cards or recycled paper is a better option than traditional glittery cards, which cannot be recycled.

When selecting the perfect Christmas tree for every home, rent a potted tree or visit a tree farm. As they grow, they consume CO2 and release oxygen. Artificial trees contain PVC, which is harmful to dispose of, and trees take thousands of years to break down. Once festivities come to a close, find a holiday tree composting program that will help turn them into mulch.

Holidays do not have to be wasteful to be meaningful. Think about how you can take small steps throughout this season to lessen your environmental footprint. Let's give back to our environment this holiday season.



Graphic: SOPHIE WALTERS

Art(ificial) Intelligence

CAM WELD '26
Social Media Editor



Anyone who has spent time online recently may have seen a new trend in writing on the internet — excessive em dashes, florid vocabulary, and unrestrained use of tricolons. Like a machine that stamps every idea into the same, factory-made shape, the overused similes and metaphors seem slightly out of touch. This writing is a result of ChatGPT.

The widespread adoption of AI throughout culture has affected all forms of art and media. While the giveaways of generated images and videos can be easily recognizable (the blurred text and robotic voices to name a few), picking up trends of AI in writing can be much harder to spot. Whether it be news articles, social media captions, or how-to guides, lately I’ve found myself questioning almost everything I read, wondering if the familiar mode of formulaic writing is ChatGPT or simply the style of the author. Some articles are easier to spot as artificial than others. Usually, they are paired with an obviously AI generated image and a title separated by a colon (for example, “When Machines Set the Tone: The Growing Influence of ChatGPT on Human Prose”).

For other pieces of writing, however, the source can be much harder to pick out. The story is well-written, but the writing is

not compelling. The words may flow, but hints of ChatGPT’s trademark style remain. This could mean two things: more and more writing is being done by AI, and/or human writers are subconsciously imitating AI in their own personal style. The latter is a greater problem.

Since AI is meant to imitate humans, if humans imitate AI, then a cycle of parroting takes place that results in all writing being the same. When this happens, personal style is lost and the human perspective behind writing begins to decline.

This trend should be avoided across all forms of art as well. As a musician, I’m unsure of what the future holds for music and AI. While some alarmists believe that AI could soon replace many artists, I’m slightly more optimistic. I believe the connections created from art are a result of the human perspective behind it. The music I appreciate the most is created by artists who evoke emotions through their unique artistry.

When it comes to AI and art, I don’t think all human creation will become extinct. There will always be demand for human-made writing, music, and videos. However, it is now more important than ever for each individual to maintain their unique perspective. That is what creates lasting art that leaves an impact on society.

Less Stress, More Rest?
Students Weigh in on
December Finals

DHANI WIDODO '27
Staff Writer

As winter break approaches, Semester 1 finals loom over Seattle Prep students. While students should be enjoying a break from studies and stress many are worried about finals. But the timing of these exams has become a contentious issue: should finals happen before or after Christmas break? The answer may seem obvious to students, but Prep’s scheduling decisions tell a different story.

During the 2023-2024 school year, Prep implemented the idea of having Semester 1 finals the day before Christmas break with special allocated days dedicated to them. After Christmas break, there wouldn’t be major finals for other classes but rather short tests on new material until the semester ended. However, since that year Prep has changed this format of having Semester 1 finals at the end of January. This is only a few weeks after Christmas break ends, giving something for students to worry about while they are on break. While this decision makes more sense because of the school’s scheduling and structure, it gives more material for students to study for their cumulative final.

Malaya Burks '27, gives her opinion on which one she prefers and why: “I feel like finals should be before Christmas break because there is a higher chance of people remembering the material in their classes and causes less stress. I also think majority of people aren’t studying during Christmas break and are trying to enjoy the holidays with family.”

“Majority of people aren’t studying during Christmas break and are trying to enjoy the holidays with family.”

-Malaya Burks '27

Burks made a good point on how a majority of students wouldn’t want to have finals shortly after break as it takes away from their holiday spirit with exams still lingering in their mind. Additionally, many students will probably not want to study over their break resulting in many forgetting the material they just learned. This can cause students to feel behind and unprepared for their finals only a few weeks away when they come back.

A freshman experiencing Prep’s current finals schedule for the first time is Kiefer Schwarz '29 who added on to Burks’ thoughts: “I also think that finals should be before Christmas break because all that information is still fresh in your mind and you can just get over with it.”

Schwarz’s comment perfectly encapsulates how a lot of students will want to mentally close the chapter of their first semester and fully engage with the holidays. Once break ends they return in January with new beginnings and aspirations for the new year ahead.

Both students seem to mutually agree that finals before break is best for student wellness and their capability to perform as best they can for finals. Additionally, they argue that Prep needs to prioritize their stress during Christmas breaks, known as one of the happiest times of the year. Without this wanted change, student wellness and happiness could continue to decrease. The future is uncertain if Prep will revert back to its old format of Semester 1 finals, but one thing is certain that students want this change.

Pay-to-Play Problem of Early Decision

GEORGIA LIMBAUGH '26
Copy Editor

College admissions are often described as a meritocratic process, but the structure of Early Decision (ED) exposes how deeply money shapes access to higher education. As a result, ED has become one of the clearest examples of how higher education policies can appear neutral while systematically advantaging the wealthy.

ED promises applicants a better chance of admission in exchange for a binding commitment. While colleges defend ED as a tool for identifying committed applicants, its real function is to secure full-paying students and to increase their yield rate, or the rate at which admitted students enroll in the college. Students ED primarily to more rigorous schools that are their number one choice.

ED inherently privileges students

who can afford to blindly commit without knowing the extent of their financial aid package and deters many lower-income students from considering this option. For more affluent students, this does not pose a problem as they are flexible to larger price ranges in tuition. Without this problem to worry about, wealthier students are more apt to apply ED and benefit from the higher acceptance rate, deeming the ED application route the more desirable yet harder to access aspect of a two-tiered admissions system in which the division between tiers maps with socioeconomic status.

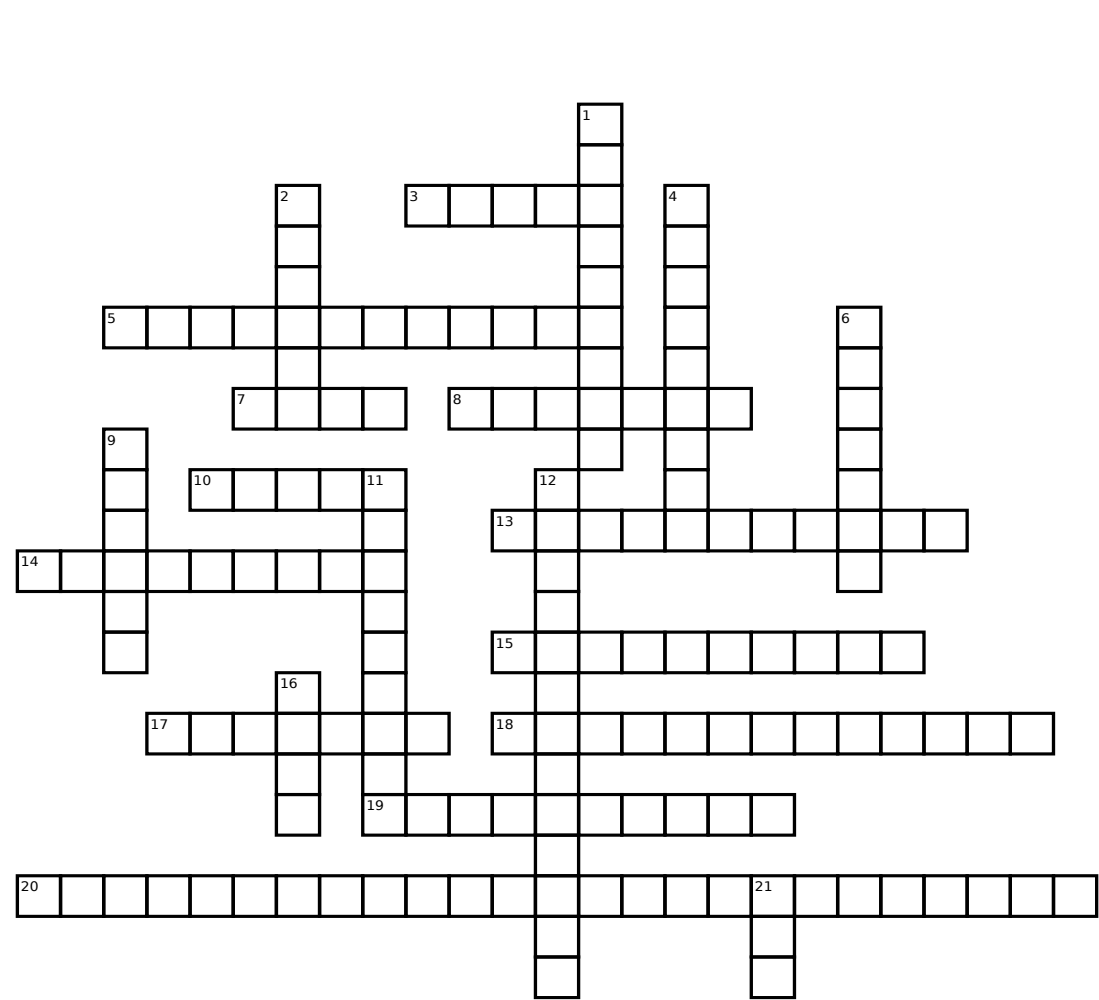
Thirty-two highly selective Ameri-

can colleges are facing legal action for taking these wealth disparities to the next level. The lawsuit claims that these colleges conspired to share their ED applicant list amongst each other in order to gauge which applicants had commitments to other schools. Colleges used this information to disproportionately disperse financial aid. Those with ED applications to a school would, in turn, receive a smaller aid package from the other schools they applied to, regardless of the status of their ED application. This further adds to the broader criticism that ED is less accessible for lower-income students because it creates more



financial risks that only wealthy families are able to overcome.

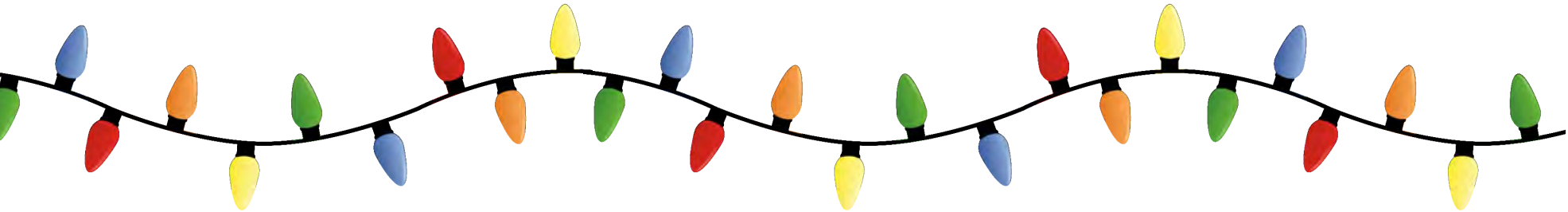
Colleges are also accused of using ED to increase financial security and ultimately raise their tuition for all applicants over time. The guaranteed revenue from ED applicants gives colleges less incentive to offer competitive financial aid packages to all other applicants, which helps them to justify raising the price of tuition each year. ED survives largely because it serves institutional interests, not student interests. The ongoing lawsuit against top colleges and the long-term tuition inflation linked to ED only underscores how deeply this system prioritizes revenue over fairness. If higher education is to take equity seriously, colleges cannot continue defending a policy that magnifies inequality at every stage. ED’s structure is not merely flawed; it is fundamentally incompatible with a fair admissions process. The simplest and most ethical solution is to end it.



Puzzle: MASON BECKETT '27

- Down:
- You stand under this in hopes of getting a kiss
 - Name of Santa's first reindeer
 - Where Santa's workshop is
 - Name of Santa's eighth reindeer
 - Holiday beverage
 - Attended Jesus' birth
 - Animal who says "Bye Buddy hope you find your Dad!"
 - They made the song "Last Christmas"
 - The Grinch's dog

- Across:
- His birthday is on Christmas
 - A perfect drink after going ice skating
 - You decorate this with ornaments
 - Has a bright and shiny nose
 - Santa's helpers
 - Edible houses made of this
 - Striped like a barbershop pole
 - Name of the crooks from Home Alone
 - Is this a Christmas movie?
 - Popular street to visit in Bellevue during the holidays
 - These are dancing around on Christmas Eve
 - Mariah Carey's most famous song



WORD SEARCH

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

WORD BANK:

CHRISTMAS
REINDEER
SLEIGH
ORNAMENT
GARLAND
WREATH

SNOW
HOLLY
CANDLE
GINGERBREAD
NUTCRACKER
STOCKING

MISTLETOE
SANTA
ELF
PRESENT
RIBBON
WINTER

Word Search: KYLIE BARCLAY '28

What's in your bag?

Balin Meza '26 Estee Swan '26

"I always keep sticky notes on me to make to do lists for assignments and upcoming tests."

"My best friend gifted me this charm."

"I bought this scarf with my Mom in Greece and it reminds me of those memories."

"When my feet are sore I use a tennis ball to roll them out."

"I just recently led Kairos so I'm writing thank you letters to my mentor."

"The most important thing in my bag is my charger because I always forget to charge my surface."

"I love my Owala water bottle because it never spills"

"This book talks about sports psychology and performance, helping me with basketball and getting in the zone."

Graphic: AUDREY POPP '26