

# THE Claw

Issue 2  
Winter 2022

## Calendar of Events

**Apr. 8:** Marking Period 3 Ends & Self Care Day

**Apr. 11–18:** Spring Break

**Apr. 25 – Apr. 30:** Camp Mason Trip

## Footloose: The Musical Debuts on UMS Stage

By Chloe Doyle & Ashna Dubey

This year, UMS made its' first foray into live theater after two years with its' production of *Footloose: The Musical*.

Viewers of this year's production experienced the story of Ren McCormack, a rebellious teen who moves to a new town, Bomont, and decides to take a stand against the restricted dancing laws of his new home.

The talented and hard-working cast and crew had worked on the show since December 2021, and it was evident from the smiles on everyone's faces that their hard work had paid off.

Finn O'Brien, a 7th grader who played Ren, shared his experience of

being part of the cast of *Footloose*. He said, "This was also the best musical I've ever been in. It was just so amazing to be in. I loved the role of Ren McCormack. This cast was also the best cast that I've ever been in. They are not only so amazingly talented, but they are the nicest people I have ever in my life done a show with."

Ms. Talbot-Coyle, the director of the musical, shared with the CLAW what it was like directing the first UMS live theater show in two years. She said, "It was truly such a joy to see so many students bringing musical theatre back to live audiences on and off stage! The cast and crew did a phenomenal

job. They were so professional throughout the entire process that I had to remind myself that they were in middle school!"

The directors were an important part of making the show great. 8th grader Yumna Juha, who played Rusty, explained, "[The directors'] patience, resilience, and lighthearted spirits made the environment so enjoyable during rehearsals! I owe my entire time to the directors because if not for them, the show



The cast and crew of *Footloose: The Musical* gave UMS its first live theater performance in two years. Source: Chloe Doyle

wouldn't be nearly as good as it was."

Similar to Finn O'Brien, Yumna also had a wonderful time being part of the cast. She said, "I thought the show was amazing and the experience was once in a lifetime. Personally, I found it extremely successful! Many people seemed to enjoy it and I'm glad that I was able to create an exciting en-

vironment for the audience.

However, it wasn't just the cast and directors that made the night a success; the stage crew helped a lot, too. 7th-grade student Aarushi Nair, a crew member, gave some insight on how the stage crew worked together with the cast. "It was a fun

*Continued on page 4.*

## Students Compete in MATHCOUNTS Competition

By Pranav Karthikeyan & Dilan Mehta

The MATHCOUNTS chapter contest took place virtually on February 17th, 2022.

Ms. Donovan, who is the coach for the school's MATHCOUNTS program, explained what it is. She said, "The top 12 students out of the 60 MATHCOUNTS students in grades 6-8 are chosen to compete. The students compete in two different competitions: Sprint Round (no calculator) and Target Round (calculator). Since it's virtual, all 12 students are on the Google Meet with me and as their coach, I have access to their progress throughout the compe-

tion."

Mrs. Donovan shared that the students prepared for the contest by completing two online practice competitions. They also met in person on Wednesday, 2/16 to prepare for the competition the next day.

COVID-19 has impacted the competition in many ways. She said, "Prior to COVID-19, the chapter competition would take place in person at Mercer County Community College. Also, 10 students were invited, whereas this year 12 students can participate. The students can still compete in the Sprint Round and Target Round, but unfortunately, the Team Round has

been removed. The Team Round consisted of the top 4 students working together on 10 challenging word problems for 20 minutes. Now with the competition being virtual, the Team Round does not take place. The



The top 12 students in MATHCOUNTS competed in a contest on February 17, 2022. Source: Ms. Donovan

Countdown Round is also removed. The Countdown Round would be the top 10 competitors

*Continued on page 2.*

## Marking Period 2 Ends with Self Care Day

By Angelina Busch & Lois Oppong

After a difficult marking period, many students need time to relax and recuperate after many tests and projects. This prompted the beginning of self-care days at UMS, which started during virtual learning in 2021.

With many opinions on the organization of the self-care days, one of the teachers involved with the planning, Ms. Mannion, shared that she enjoys planning these events. She also said, "In terms of how this was different from last marking period [it was] pretty similar except that we incorporated more student choice." The student choice was incorporated using a Google form to decide what movie to watch, as well as choosing where you want to go for an activity at the end of the day.

For a more energetic activity, students could go down to the gym to play volleyball or play four square in the cafeteria. If students wanted something more calming, they

could go to the media center for mindfulness activities, such as crocheting, coloring, and reading. Spending time with friends is a great way to relieve stress, and that is what happened in the F wing, where multiple rooms were open and students could go in and play board games with each other. Peer leaders from MHS were here during this time, and they helped students have fun and enjoy their day.

The second self-care day of this year gained a more positive response than the last marking period. Maya Flores, an 8th-grade student, said, "My favorite part was when we had the choice activities, because you had the options, and I had time to be with my friends."

Some students believe that there were some changes that could have been made to



Students had many options to choose from during the self care day. Many choose to play volleyball to distress.

Source: Lois Oppong

make the self-care day even better. Jiya Patel, an 8th-grade student, said, "I would add more time to the free-choice activities because they felt really short."

Even with some feedback, the self-care day still provided a restful day for UMS students and is sure to find a new home at UMS.

## MATHCOUNTS Competition

Continued from page 1.

from the competition based on their Sprint and Target Round scores, going head-to-head (one-on-one) to answer word problems - best out of 3.

According to Ms. Donovan, the students felt very prepared

for the chapter competition. She said, "Ms. Yip from LMS and a high school student, George Cao, visited UMS to help the 12 students prepare." This boosted the team's morale and confidence before the competition.

Jason Lu, a student on the

MATHCOUNTS team shared his perspective of the competition. He said, "I felt nervous at first, but as it went along, I felt more confident." He believes that the team as a whole could have improved in some areas. "We could have discussed the strategies more for the team

round," he said.

The MATHCOUNTS competition has been impacted by COVID in many ways, but it hasn't stopped students from doing their best. The students are continuing to work hard and make UMS proud.

### Mr. Accardi

By Eeshika Bhattacharjee, Aadrita Choudhury & Addia Roy Sharma



Mr. Accardi is our school's vice principal. This is his first year in this role.

His first day being vice principal was July 1st, when he began to prepare for the upcoming school year. He taught for eight years prior to that and spent seven of those at UMS.

Mr. Accardi taught a variety of subjects like Special Education and subjects in both seventh and eighth grade like sci-

ence, social studies, LA, and math.

Apart from being a teacher, Mr. Accardi enjoys baking, hiking, and musical theater.

We asked him why he chose to teach and he shared with us a short story. In high school, one of his requirements was volunteering. "I chose to work on projects around teaching and working in schools," he said. He really enjoyed it, and that sparked an interest in teaching.

He shared, "It really taught me about what it means to be a teacher. And for me, that means being a role model and helping young people grow into the individuals that they're going to become, not just about teaching math and LA."

When we asked him what he wanted all of his students to understand, he left us with a strong message that he would

want everybody at UMS to know that they belong. "[Everyone] brings something special into our community, and each one of them is important and valuable," he said.

### Mrs. Grundtisch

By Bhadra Menon



Mrs. Grundtisch is a 7th grade teacher on the gold team, and she has been teaching for seven years now.

When asked about her goal when teaching students, she said, "My goal is always to help students be confident learners and self advocates. I always want my students to know they can trust me and I am here to

support them."

One thing about Mrs. Grundtisch you probably didn't know about her is that she writes A LOT of to-do lists because she has a daughter AND juggles teaching at the same time.

Mrs. Grundtisch also has many good memories from teaching at UMS. She shared, "I have met some of my best friends here. I also have great memories with my students. I love thinking back to the iPlay America field trip and Pumpkin Day, and I always look forward to seeing old students come back to visit, especially as High School Carolers and band members before winter break."

### Mr. Kristovich

By Tyler Basak, Amy Lin & Shashank Prasanna

## Orchestra Offers a Night to Remember at Concert

By Diay Gopan

After 730+ days, the music department was finally able to continue its comeback with their first UMS orchestra concert on January 19, 2022!

Natalie Cheng, a violinist in 8th grade, who has been in orchestra since 4th grade said, "The preparation [for our concert] started pretty much as soon as we got back in-person at UMS." The hard work and dedication certainly paid off because it was truly a night to remember.

Walking into the auditorium, attendees noticed that the place was packed with proud parents and supporting friends. It was great to see so many people coming together for a night of fun and music, especially after everything that's happened in the past two years.

Even though there were a lot of people, everyone was taking precautions by wearing their masks at all times and sitting a seat apart from other people.

The 7th graders started the concert off with a bang. They played three songs that all

sounded amazing! Once the 7th graders got off stage, a select group came on stage. The song they played was very lively, but what really struck viewers was how focused the students looked and how much passion they showed while playing. All of the instruments complimented each other very well, and it seemed so perfectly orchestrated.

Next, the 8th graders entered the stage, and they played a selection of three songs. One of the songs was called "Odyssey" by Soon Hee Newbold, and according to Cheng, this piece was worked on the most. The violinists performed a special entrance that was different from the other pieces, and many viewers found it very intriguing.

Overall, this concert was a fun experience for all, and the audience was glad to see it in person. Ms. Yavorsky did an extraordinary job getting all of the students ready for the concert, and the students worked hard to put on a stellar performance.

## UMS Band Plays In Person After 2 Years

By Sophia Busch & Ella Sun

On December 16th, 2021, both the 7th and 8th grade bands were granted the opportunity to play in front of a live audience after two years of virtual learning.

Both UMS band directors, Mr. Brennan and Mr. Mazurkiewicz agreed that the concert went very smoothly, despite the lack of in-person concerts and split 7th and 8th grade performance times.

When asked if they enjoyed playing in the concert, an 8th grader who wished to stay anonymous shared that while they liked the concert and being with their friends, "It was odd playing in front of so many people again, since everyone could see me."

Families, students, and teachers could all be found in the concert's audience, listening to the students' performance.

The 7th grade band impressed

the audience with "Achilles' Wrath," "At A Turkish Market," and "At Twilight."

The 8th graders played "Balladair," "Antecedium," and the crowd favorite, "Jungle Dance."

Mr. Mazurkiewicz commented, "[My] favorite part of the concert was the long standing ovation that the 8th grade band received after their performance."

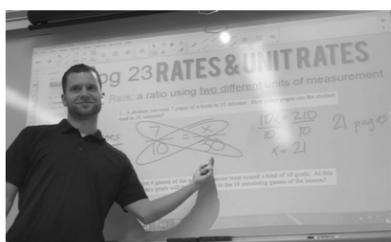
Mr. Brennan expressed that his favorite part of the concert was when "I could see students having fun playing their instruments. To see the hard work that went into the concert followed by students enjoying the performance really made the evening a special event."

Now, the bands will begin preparing for their spring concert, and UMS can't wait to hear more of them in the months to come.



Students were thrilled to offer an in person performance for the first time in two years. Source: Emma Sun

## Spotlight



Mr. Kristopovich is a wonderful 7th grade math teacher here at UMS. He attended middle and high school in Montgomery. He graduated from Rowan University, and he is back again teaching in his hometown.

Mr. Kristopovich describes himself as energized, empathetic, and kind. We think so too!

When asked why he wanted to be a teacher, Mr. Kristopovich responded, "My mom told me that I've always been very quick to help people. And I think that's why I decided on teaching."

His favorite part of teaching is that moment when he makes

a fun lesson, and all his students are happy and laughing.

Mr. Kristopovich's favorite music genre may surprise you: Metalcore! He is also a big reader. He is currently in the middle of a 14-book series.

Another fact about Mr. Kristopovich is that he was going to major in Graphic Design, but he is now a teacher! One of his most loved hobbies is to make awesome designs on his computer. You may see some of these eye-catching elements in his presentations. In addition to graphic design, Mr. Kristopovich also likes snowboarding.

When asked what message he would give to the hard-working students at UMS, he responded, "Find something that drives and motivates you. Days can feel long when you're just 'making it through'. So find a good support system, and find something that

makes you excited to wake up each and every day."

### Mrs. Moore

By Aneasha Sarkar & Lauren Tucker



Mrs. Moore is a teacher for 7th and 8th graders, who teaches the courses College & Career Readiness, Film and Media, and Digital Journalism.

Mrs. Moore is known for being a very kind and supporting teacher, who is always willing to help out.

She has been teaching for multiple years now at UMS and

is planning to continue her career here, but she didn't originally plan to be a teacher. She originally pursued a career in the radio industry, but decided to follow a different path that she felt she could make a bigger difference in.

She explained, "I wouldn't [have been] a teacher for so long if I didn't [enjoy teaching]. I did not enjoy middle school. I was a rebel, but I learned that becoming a teacher for middle schoolers can help them want to learn."

She also said, "[Teaching] is less about how well [students] do and more about how they learn and grow. I'm not there to tell them what they are doing wrong. I'm there to see how they feel successful and how I can help them improve." She shared she cares more about her students rather than their grades.

## Thundercats Robotics Team Earns 1st Place, Roboclaws 2nd Place

By Siddharth Bellamkonda, Kirtan Chintam & Priyanshu Dasgupta

The North Jersey States Competition for robotics took place on Saturday, December 12th, 2021. In this, our very own team from UMS - the Thundercats - got nominated amongst the 47 other competing teams in the region for the FIRST LEGO League Global Competition.

The Robotics team is a select club that consists of 10 people per team. Led by Ms. Yip, this club started with two teams, but after the first competition, only one team remained.

Their creative and unique idea for an innovation made them win first place. But they did not just happen to succeed because of a miracle; it is solely for their dedicated efforts. In fact, they have a very intriguing story of how the team worked together to get up to this high point.

Ms. Yip, the Robotics advisor and mentor of the robotics team, stated, "I absolutely love working with the kids because they have such enthusiasm for robotics. They truly work hard, value the experience and enjoy learning from each other. The robotics team requires a lot of time and dedication. The students often need to spend extra time including weekends working on the project independently." This shows how much hard work each and every member of the teams put in.

She also told us about the numerous different problems the students faced and how they successfully overcame them. The biggest of which was trying to merge different ideas, since the club was split between two different, yet great ideas.

Additionally, because of their dedicated and joint effort towards glory for UMS in the field of robotics, this team managed to emerge victorious in the North NJ Competition,

winning the 1st place award for the Innovation Project category. This pushed them to get a high enough overall score to advance. The other UMS team, the Roboclaws, managed to secure 2nd place in the Robot Design category but fell short in advancing to the next level.



The UMS Thundercats won 1st place at the FIRST LEGO League North NJ State Competition.

Source: Mr. Accardi

The team had to think of a problem in an industry and think of a way to solve it. Pranav Marrey, a 7th grader of the Thundercats, shared that the team had two very creative ideas. One was called Medbus, which is a medical vaccination bus for developing countries. The other idea was a way to renovate malls to have specific truck spots since trucks don't have proper places to park there.

Marrey said, "Our team was arguing about which idea to do for our innovation idea, and the team was arguing in a debate. We were split 5 to 5 in a vote. But our coach, Ms. Yip, was able to help resolve the conflict and we chose the idea we have now." The innovation they ended up choosing was the Truck Hub, which led them to being nominated for the global competition.

Marrey enjoys being on the Robotics team. He said, "I like the fact that I'm able to build bonds with people...I [also] like the competitive attitude and the challenges. But most importantly...it's definitely the fun times I experience with my team and competing in the competition."

## Global Leadership Attends Virtual UN Trip

By Ronith Kaithi & Maximus Kia

Due to the pandemic, the students in Ms. Lachenauer's Global Leadership classes couldn't attend the annual trip to the United Nations headquarters in New York. However, thanks to the wonderful MMS PTO, the students were able to attend a virtual field trip to the UN.

The students of Global Leadership learned a ton of new stuff. They learned about the different parts of the UN, like the General Assembly, Security Council and the International Court of Justice. Ella DeBruin, a student in the Global Leadership class said, "The trip was very interesting, and I learned so much!"

The students of UMS astounded the guides with their knowledge and great questions about the UN. "The students were very engaged and asked thoughtful and deep questions. The tour guides were impressed at the level of our discussions as we are a middle school group," Ms. Lachenauer said.

The students then learned about the UN's role in the world and how it can enforce rules to

other countries using sanctions and the Peacekeepers.

This trip was very important to the students as it taught them a lot of things about our world right now and how countries come together to make the world a better place. Ms. Lachenauer said, "This field trip allowed students to see the broader scope of all the work that the United Nations does as well as specific initiatives that work towards the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals). It's important to understand how the UN works, so that we can understand how different global change is created so that we can also participate in the creation of change. My goal is to help students to experience a number of different global issues so they can see what is most important to them."

Students shared their feedback on their trip, and it was overwhelmingly positive. DeBruin said, "I believe this is a once in a lifetime experience. I will remember it forever!"

Overall, according to a lot of students, the United Nations field trip was a very enriching experience for all of them.



Students in Global Leadership attended a virtual trip to the UN to see how this organization affects positive change in the world. Source: Ms. Lachenauer

## Footloose Musical

Continued from page 1.

experience!" shared Aarushi. "It was interesting seeing our work come to life on stage. I think we worked really well to put on the show. Both the crew and cast did a great job."

This was a momentous occasion

for UMS, as it brought back family and friends to remind us about the joy of theater after two years. We hope that the UMS Drama department brings us another groundbreaking performance next year. Congratulations to the cast and crew of *Footloose*!

## Attention 8th Grade Students!

You DO NOT want to miss the CAMP MASON TRIP!!!

### When? NEW DATES

- Blue/Gold Teams: April 25-27
- Red/Green Teams: April 27-29

### Why should I go?

- You will have a chance to connect with friends outside of the classroom through lots of activities.
- You will also get to challenge yourself and grow through the week.
- You get to room in a cabin with your friends for two nights
- You will be free from doing classwork and homework
- There is a fun team bonfire too (there will also be s'mores!)

**REMEMBER:** Permission packets and money for the trip are both due by March 21st



You can find the forms on the Camp Mason Website (<https://sites.google.com/mtsd.us/campmason/home>)

If you have any questions, please feel free to email:

[campmason@mtsd.us](mailto:campmason@mtsd.us)

## UMS Choirs Give First Live Show Since 2019

By Raaginisree Anandkumar & Nidhi Soppimath

On December 7th, 2021, the 7th, 8th and after school Melodies students had their winter chorus concert. The Choir teachers, Ms. Makvana and Mr. Woodworth directed and presented around 10 songs!

The show started off with the 7th grade choir, who astounded the audience with pieces like the Hebrew folk song “Ma Navu” and the famous “Don’t Stop Believin’.” Three remarkable soloists were featured, Raaginisree Anandkumar, Marina Sangiovanni, and Caitlin Healy, and they performed beautifully.

7th grader, Aarushi Kuila shared how great it was to perform. “[It was] amazing, especially since we [performed] in person.”

The 8th graders touched everyone’s souls with “Who Will Be A Witness” and the Spanish song, “El Vito.” Each listener was star-struck and couldn’t keep their eyes off the beautiful melodies. Talented 8th grade soloists Clement Lacroix and Abby Johnson reached their full potential on stage.

Ms. Makvana pointed out that “After a year without the normalcy of choral rehearsals and having to sing in masks, we think the choirs sound great!” In fact, she spent the next Choir rehearsal praising every student for participating with a smile on their faces.

Mr. Woodworth expressed that learning and singing along with the students was great as “[Ms. Makvana and I] were impressed with how quickly our

students adjusted to the ensemble rehearsal routine,” he said.

Not only did both grade choirs sing, but the after school treble ensemble choir, Melodies performed as well. They meet every week on Tuesdays for only an hour and a half. Even with only less than 10 rehearsals to practice, they surprised everyone with their exceptional performance of “All I Want for Christmas is You,” with Flora Blodgett as the soloist. They also sang “A Distant Shore” and “Riversong.”

To end off of the show, all



The UMS choirs were able to perform live and in person for the first time in 600 days. Source: Mr. Accardi

singers joined together to present “Be the Change,” words said by Mahatma Gandhi, to represent the struggles every student went through and how this was our comeback to happiness. Each chorus worked hard to impress the audience and show everyone that nothing will ever stop the power of singing.

## Super Mario 3D All-Stars Game Review

By Siddharth Bellamkonda, Kirtan Chintam & Priyanshu Dasgupta

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Their creative and unique idea for an innovation made them win first place. But they did not just happen to succeed because of a miracle, but it is solely for their dedicated efforts. In fact, they have a very intriguing story of how the team worked together to get up to this high point.

Ms. Annie Yip, the UMS Robotics Advisor and mentor of the robotics team, states, “I absolutely love working with the kids because they have such enthusiasm for robotics. They truly work hard, value the experience and enjoy learning from each other. The robotics team requires a lot of time and dedication. The students often need to spend extra time including weekends working on

the project independently.” This shows how much hard work each and every member of our teams put in.

She also tells us about the numerous different problems the students faced and how they successfully overcame them. The biggest of which was trying to merge different ideas. Since the beginning the club was split in between 2 different yet great ideas. However, our teams did not succumb to this adversary, but instead grew stronger as a team. Throughout the debate for the better idea, they learned to work together as a team.

Additionally, because of their dedicated and joint effort towards the glory of UMS in the field of robotics, these 2 teams managed to emerge victorious amidst the North NJ Competition. Both teams received an award each. The Roboclaws (one of the constituent teams) won a 2nd place award because of their fascinating Robot design. The Thundercats also managed to win a 1st place award in the Innovation Project category.

Pranav Marrey, a 7th grader of the Thundercats, tells us the story from the beginning. For this season, the team had to

## The Album by BlackPink Album Review

By Meher Choudhary & Claire Yuan

*The Album* by BlackPink has surpassed 1 million pre-orders. They are the first Korean girl group to reach this milestone. The production and execution are to the point of perfection and cater to the audience. From upbeat and cheerful singles to break-up stories, this album has everything. It may be lacking in tracks, but *The Album* truly serves as an interesting approach to a long-awaited debut album.

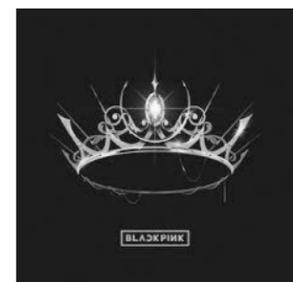
To get to know this album better let's review some of the blockbuster songs. First in line is the upbeat and lifting single, “Pretty Savage.” It opens with piano, but the beat quickly drops with the group’s signature “BlackPink in your area.”

Even from the start, “Pretty Savage” is not your usual futile k-pop diss track. It is clear to see that many lyrics, in fact, resonate well with the criticisms each member of the group faced.

Next, we had a great change up to the group's usual style of music. “Lovesick Girls” is a catchy synth pop track. It fits perfectly into the 2020’s retro trend with its pulsing synth beats and acoustic accents. While BlackPink is typically known for

its hard-hitting beat drops, EDM choruses, and “empty” lyrics-, this song is different. For those like me who have been critical of the overproduced style the girl group has taken on, “Lovesick Girls” is a step in the right direction.

Following the upbeat style, we have the catchy,



summer sleepover single. Most people know how successful BlackPink’s collaboration with Selena Gomez in the song “Ice Cream” has been. It includes multiple metaphors and a really cute music video. This single has a refreshing and lovely charm. It has attracted all kinds of audiences.

Overall, Blackpink takes an interesting, but typical approach to a first full album. With high-energy bops like “How You Like That” coupled with ballads like “You Never Know,” their album showcases a variety of genres and styles. Although certain tracks tend to be forgettable, it is clear that BlackPink has finally established themselves as versatile artists.

## Hamilton Musical Review

By Giselle Azra Ozan

*Hamilton*, a musical by Lin-Manuel-Miranda, has grasped the hearts of audiences all over the country. This modern twist on America's birth captivated both theatrical fans and critics alike.

Throughout the show, audiences follow the life of Alexander Hamilton and his journey of evolution from an immigrant orphan to one of America's most widely-known names.

*Hamilton* includes many genres, ensuring satisfaction for any audience member. The musical includes jazz, rap, R&B, pop, soul, hip-hop, and even traditional theater.

Lin-Manuel-Miranda, who has also worked on other audience favorites such as *In the Heights* and *Moana*, describes his musical as, "America then, as told by America now."

*Hamilton* grapples with many deep, thought-provoking issues and topics as well as real events that took place in American history. Wars such as the Battle of Yorktown, Hamilton's relationships, and it even works in character flaws, leaving a jaw-dropping experience for all viewers.

The song, "My Shot," one of my personal favorites, really gives the audience a sense of both the timeline and Hamilton's persistence to become someone greater. It also gives the audience a more in-depth view on other important historical figures such as Aaron Burr, Marquis de Lafayette, Hercules Mulligan, and John Laurens. All of whom go on to leave a lasting impression on American history and now theatrical narratives.

"The Schyler Sisters," another favorite

song of mine, depicts what it was like to be a woman in the 18th century, whilst also introducing Angelica, Eliza, and Peggy Schyler. It's also the 4th most widely-

listened-to song in the whole musical following closely behind "Satisfied" which stars Angelica Schyler.

Other notable songs would include, "Right-Hand Man," which introduces George Washington, who appoints Hamilton as his right-hand man, hence the song title.

And of course, who can forget King George? I must say, it was a truly creative and interesting twist making this historical figure a comedic relief character. He sings songs that have become the all-time favorites of my friends, family, and even myself. "You'll be back", "What Comes Next", and "I Know Him" are hilarious, yet intriguing representations of the character and who he was.

Overall, *Hamilton* is a lovable and truly unforgettable experience. It's drama, action, comedy, and even a few tears all tied together in one single musical.

*Hamilton* challenged and changed musical theater in many ways that audiences know and love. If one thing's for sure, it's that *Hamilton* truly leaves you wanting to be in the room where it happens.



Source: wikipedia.org

## No Time to Die Movie Review

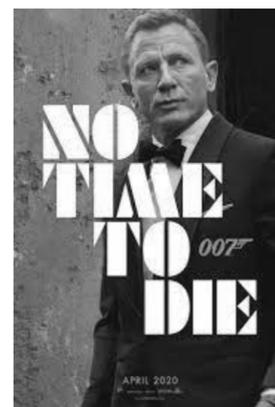
By Diya Gopan & Esha Lobo

It's finally here; the end, the finale, the culmination of the beloved *James Bond* series with Daniel Craig. With Daniel Craig and most of the cast returning for their designated roles and a couple new characters thrown into the mix, the 25th James Bond film, *No Time To Die* is out!

The movie picks up exactly from where it left off, with Bond and Madeleine Swann driving into their happily ever after, or so they thought. The tranquility of the beginning is short lived, as James Bond and Madeleine Swann face old enemies that remained mighty in the past movies, including Spectre and Safin that start to reappear as the movie progresses. The mission to rescue a kidnapped scientist turns out to be far more treacherous than expected, leading Bond on the trail of a mysterious villain who's armed with a dangerous new technology.

In summary, we would have to say this is probably one of the most realistic Bond movies we've seen. There certainly isn't any cheesy or unreal content. The movie shows a vulnerable and older Bond. Obviously, Daniel Craig, like all of us, is getting older and this does show in the film. It's the perfect tone to set the mood for Daniel Craig's exit.

Personally, what we most enjoyed about the



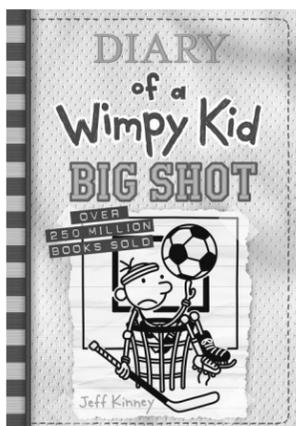
Source: national-news.com

movie was that the plot was like a running race. Event after event, thriller after thriller, everything was constantly in a moving motion, and the plot just kept advancing. You truly never get bored, even though the film adds up to over three hours! This movie brings full justice to the James Bond series.

## Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Big Shot Book Review

By Jason Lu

The new and anticipated *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Big Shot* book came out on October 26th. This marked the 16th book of the book series by Jeff Kinney.



Source: amazon.com

The book is about the pro-

tagonist, Greg Heffley, and his experience with sports. The story is told in first person perspective in Greg's journal. It gives readers a sarcastic view in the eyes of a middle schooler.

The journal started with a flashback about Greg's terrible experience with sports as a kid. His parents suggested to him to give sports another chance. Greg eventually settled with basketball, and made it onto the team because everyone can get in.

Greg's team couldn't win a single game. Eventually, the coach just said that they are free to go, but Greg's mom

wanted to give the team another chance, so she entered them in a tournament. The game endings are just like before, until the ball mysteriously appears in Greg's hands, and he takes a shot that will change the ending of the game. The story ends with a sarcastic thought saying that he finally understands what winning feels like.

One thing that I really like about the book is that it contains a lot of humorous jokes. For example, in his journal, he wrote, "That's why I'd do one of those sports where you're part of a TEAM. Because then, when you screw up, it's harder for

people to tell."

I also like that although it is a humorous book, it also conveys a theme at the end of the story. Everyone can do the things that may seem unachievable. Greg, although being really bad at basketball, managed to get a shot. This also leaves the readers a surprise at the end.

The plot and especially the conflicts and intense moments are also really interesting. This book gives readers a positive theme and a definitely unexpected ending. This is a book that I would definitely recommend.

## Naumoski Family's Hearty Chicken Soup

By Stefan Naumoski

This simple chicken soup will melt your heart as you eat it for the first time. Whether you need a comfort food or are just looking for a healthy delicious meal, this soup is the go-to.

### Ingredients

- chicken Meat (of Your Choice)
- 1/2 cup of cubed Carrots
- 1/2 of an onion (chopped)
- 1/2 cup of thinly sliced celery
- 1 cube of Chicken Consommé (bouillon)

- handful of thin noodles
- few tablespoons of high heat olive or sunflower oil
- Italian parsley (personal preference)
- 1 parsnip (Optional)
- 4 cups of low-sodium chicken stock or broth (optional)

### Directions

1. Heat a pot with oil in it to about medium heat.
2. Sauté all vegetables until onion is translucent.
3. Add meat, then water and bouillon, then season with

salt and pepper to taste.

4. As soon as the pot starts to boil, turn it down low to simmer.
5. Let simmer for 40 minutes to an hour, then take out meat, and chop it up, then put it back in.
6. When ready to eat, bring to boil again and add noodles and parsley, and check seasoning, adding as necessary.
7. Let noodles cook al dente. When they are done, turn off heat.



Source: Stefan Naumoski

NOTE: All measurements are approximate and are subject to personal preference. Depending on which type of meat you use, it may take longer or shorter to cook.

## White Velvet Buttermilk Cake

By Esha Lobo

This is a great recipe to make with your family, and the end result might be even better!



Source: momlovesbaking.com

### Cake Ingredients

- 1 cup unsalted butter at room temperature
- 1 1/2 cups granulated sugar
- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 4 large eggs room temperature

- 1 cup buttermilk room temperature
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 3/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

### Frosting Ingredients

- 8 ounces cream cheese softened
- 1/2 cup unsalted butter, softened 4 ounces
- 16 ounces powdered sugar about 4 cups
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- Fresh cranberries and fresh rosemary, for garnish

### Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Spray 3 (9-inch) round cake pans with non-stick cooking

spray and line with parchment paper. Set aside.

2. In a medium bowl, measure out flour, baking powder and salt. Whisk together. Set aside.
3. In a large bowl, cream butter with an electric mixer until smooth. Add sugar and mix. Add eggs and mix until combined.
4. Add half of the flour mixture and half of the buttermilk, plus the vanilla. Mix on medium low until combined.
5. Repeat with remaining flour and buttermilk. Mix until combined, then continue mixing on medium low for 30 seconds.
6. Divide batter between the three prepared pans. Bake on the middle rack of your oven for 22-27 minutes.

7. At 22 minutes, test one of the cakes by inserting a toothpick. If it comes out clean, they are done. If not, continue to bake for 5 more minutes. Let cool completely.
8. In a large bowl, cream butter and cream cheese with an electric mixer until smooth. Gradually add the powdered sugar with the mixer on low. Once it's added, turn the mixer up to medium high and beat until smooth. Add flavoring and mix.
9. Remove cakes from pans. Place one layer on a cake plate. Add frosting. Add another layer. Frost. Add the top layer. Frost top and sides of cake. Add a crown of rosemary on top and cranberries in the middle.

## Peppermint Bark

By Deven Malhotra

Tis the season to be jolly and what better way than making a delicious peppermint bark for your friends and family! It's simple and comes out minty .

### Ingredients

- 25 mini candy canes
- 4 cups chocolate chips
- 1/2 teaspoon peppermint extract
- 3 cups white chocolate chip

### Directions

1. Start by placing the mini candy canes in a zip lock bag and use a rolling pin to crush them into small chunks. Transfer to a medium bowl.
2. In a separate medium bowl, stir the peppermint extract into the melted chocolate chips. Pour onto a parchment paper-lined baking sheet and spread evenly with a spatula. Freeze for 5

minutes.

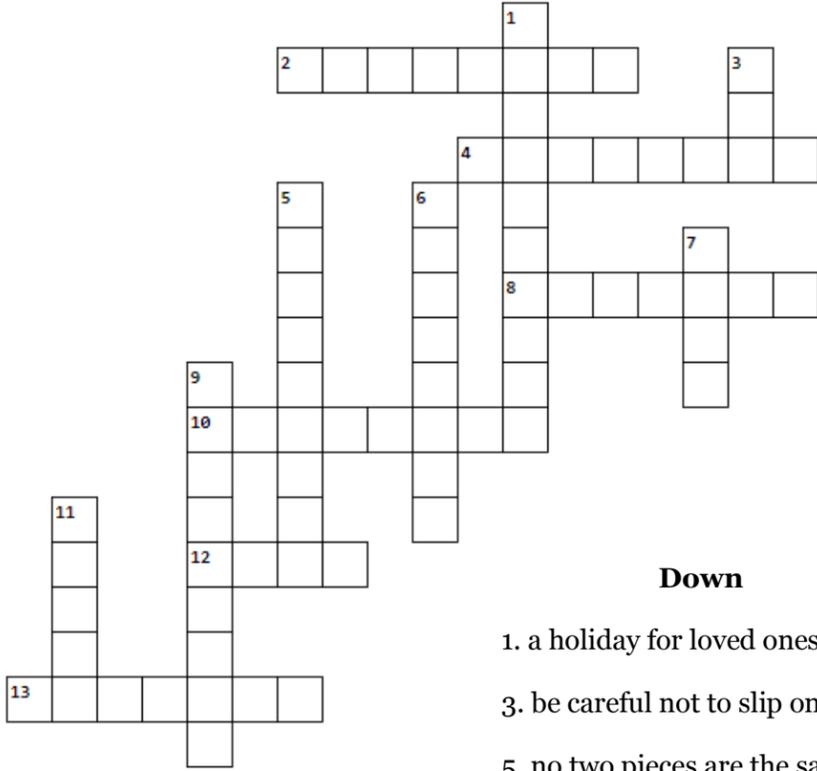
3. Take the pan out of the freezer and pour the melted white chocolate over the chocolate, spreading evenly with a spatula.
4. Sprinkle the crushed mini candy canes over the white chocolate.
5. Freeze for at least 1 hour
6. Remove the bark from the freezer and break into pieces, and enjoy!



Source: tasty.co

## Winter Themed Crossword Puzzle

By Max Kia & Ronith Kaithi



### Across

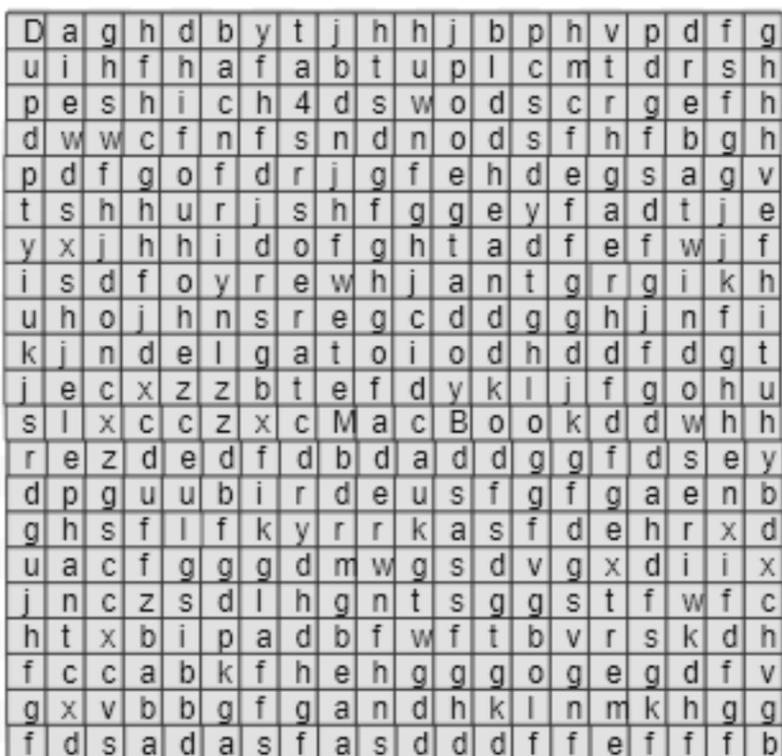
- 2. month that is 2 days short of normal
- 4. holds the shortest month of the year
- 8. the opposite of outside
- 10. a day to celebrate
- 12. you slide down a hill on it
- 13. the first month of the year

### Down

- 1. a holiday for loved ones
- 3. be careful not to slip on it
- 5. no two pieces are the same
- 6. you might get a snow day from this
- 7. the opposite of warm
- 9. a holiday about giving
- 11. he eats your cookies and drinks your milk

## Word Search

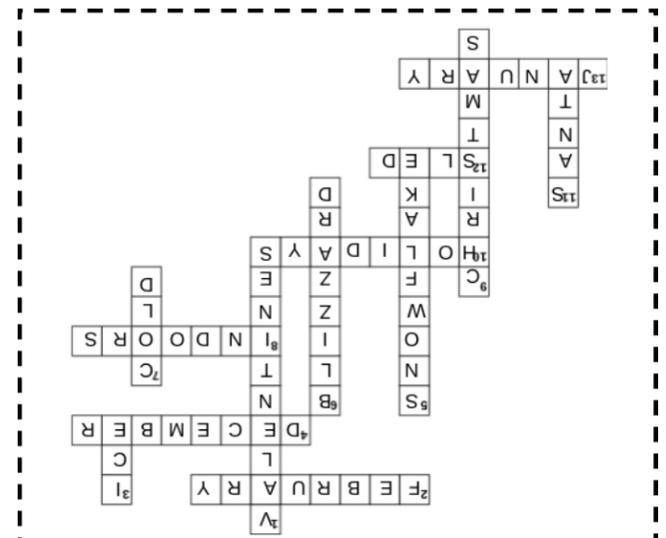
By Eamon MacDonald



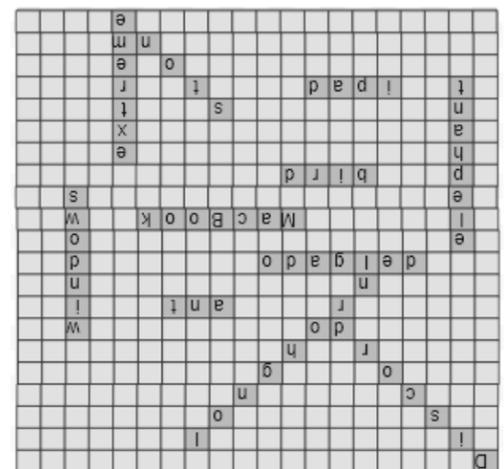
Discord
Longhorn
Delgado
Elephant
iPad
Stone
Ant
Windows
MacBook
Bird
Extreme

## Guess the Teachers without their Masks

By Chloe Doyle & Ashna Dubey



Crossword Puzzle Key



Word Search Key

- Guess the Teacher Key
- Mrs. Kallens
  - Mrs. Lawler
  - Mrs. Tu-O'Hara
  - Mrs. Young

## Boys Basketball Team Makes it to Playoffs

By Stefan Naumoski & Suchir Parikh

The boys basketball team had an amazing season, ending their regular season with a record of 7-8, and they also made it to the playoffs.

In the first round of playoffs, they lost to our rivals, Hillsborough. They placed 5th overall out of 11 teams. Their team consisted of four 7th graders and eight 8th graders. Bringing pride to our school, their hard work has certainly paid off.

After their seventh game, Tyler Sugarman, a 7th grade player, said, "The experience has been great so far. All the players are fun to be around and we work well together, which makes it even better." Tyler also shared that playing under the

team's coaches, Mr. Huelbig and Mr. Mueller, was awesome.

According to 8th grade player Mason Neufield, the season met the players' expectations. They all played really well together. Mason said, "I feel proud knowing how far we got this year, but I do think we could have gone further. We had a very good team and I think we were definitely capable of winning the championship."

Mason also spoke very highly of his coaches Mr. Heulbig and Mr. Mueller. He said, "Our coaches are really dedicated and passionate about coaching our team. I can tell that they both care about [the] players and [our] well-being. Both Coach Huelbig and coach Mueller know a lot about basketball. They are helpful, and I'm thank-

ful that they were our team's coaches.

After reflecting on the season, Mr. Huelbig shared that the team is "very hard-working." He also said that he loved coaching all of the players with Coach Mueller.

Overall, the team worked really hard all season, and they did very well. Every athlete has a



A few members of the boys basketball team warm up before one of their home games. Source: Suchir Parikh

goal to win as many games as possible, but no matter what the score was in the game, the members of the basketball team were determined to improve and develop into better players for the high school.

## Girls Basketball Strengthen

By Aneasha Sarkar & Lauren Tucker

The 15 players on the UMS girls basketball team worked well together all season to stay confident and become a great team of not just athletes, but great friends. They even made it to the playoffs, which was one of their highlights on the season.

When thinking about her season, Quinlan Donahue, a student on the girls basket-

ball team stated, "I [really liked] basketball especially with the people on the team who are really kind and nice. [Our] coach is really good and nice." She is definitely planning on playing basketball in the future because it was a fun experience.

Since Quinlan had a great experience on the team, she encourages others to play on the team in the future. She shared it a great way to build friendships and develop teamwork with others. The players are able to develop into strong players and make new friends.

Another individual on the UMS girls basketball team, Prisha Grover, shared that basketball is her favorite sport and that the

team and Coach Smith are fun and supportive. She added, "I would say that anyone can and should play this sport. If you have no experience and are nervous to start, just try out for the basketball team anyway. From my experience, the Montgomery basketball program is very encouraging."

There are times individual players or the team as a whole do not play their best, but Prisha has advice to share when that happens. She said, "It is vital to realize that when you don't play your best, and others tell you that you can't play the sport, you should keep going and take the mistakes and criticism and turn it into your motivation."

Prisha is another player who is planning on playing basketball again. "I will definitely be coming back to try out for the basketball team next year, and I would like to continue playing basketball into and throughout high school," she said.



The girls basketball team worked hard all season to find successes both on and off the court. Source: Nidhi Gattu

## Growing Season for Wrestling Team

By Abraham Anantha

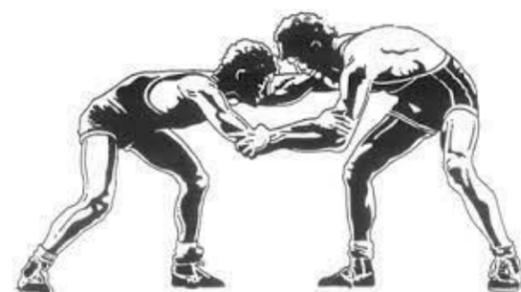
Wrestling is a tough sport that requires the players to be physically fit and have strong willpower. Montgomery has a wrestling team where Coach Milton trained wrestling athletes to try to be the best on and off the mat and in their general lives.

The wrestling team didn't have as good a run this year compared to 2020's run, ending the season 4 to 6. Coach Milton shared his idea on how he thought the season went. He said, "I feel the season went well! There were some tough teams in our league and our numbers were very low to begin with. We had some big wins and

some big losses, but overall every single wrestler improved their skills throughout the season, and for me that is a success!"

There are lot of reasons that Coach Milton thinks that you should do wrestling, but one of the reasons is that it is beneficial to your mental well-being.

He shared, "You can see the impacts of it off the mats too."



Source: all-free-download.com