



# WHAT'S NEXT?



by THE WARD  
MELVILLE  
KALEIDOSCOPE

At the beginning of this academic year, Ward Melville welcomed the district's freshmen into the school for the first time ever, a large shift that impacted not only classes, but clubs as well — including *Kaleidoscope*. With both sophomores and freshmen being able to join the newspaper, we are thankful for all of the new, talented students who have contributed greatly to our writing community, and we cannot wait to see all that they will accomplish next year.

Throughout this school year, with all of the skilled writing from both new and old members, we were able to publish four print editions, which altogether totaled to 60 pages. We covered a wide range of topics from sports

and club achievements to school phone policies to national events. We've personally interviewed local politicians, covered both local and national elections, spoken with members of the Board of Education and school administrators, and written about district budget proposals and other administrative matters. With each new article, we gain new knowledge, and it is a privilege to share that information with all who read our publications.

Although our writers are of course integral to the publishing process, we could not have accomplished any of it without support from our wonderful advisor, Mr. Oatis, who has guided and helped *Kaleidoscope* for years. Additionally, we extend our thanks to each and every one of our readers — you all are what make our journalism impactful. Please enjoy this year's final edition!

## Coming to a Close

by SARAH WU,  
SCIENCE EDITOR

Most people never realize when they are doing small things for the last time. Whether it is the last walk into a classroom, the last school lunch, the last club meeting, or even the last time hearing a particular teacher call attendance; these minuscule moments hardly ever announce themselves. They pass by in the midst of all the chaos, disguised as ordinary days.

However, for seniors, the end of the year has a way of bringing these interstitial moments sharply into focus. All of a sudden, things that once felt routine become meaningful. Hallways that were rushed through for years start to seem a little different. Familiar faces become memories in the making. A routine that once felt never-ending winds surreally to a close.

Something beautiful happens as a result of this realization: the start of living *in* the moment. It is easy to measure the ticking down of time through milestones — final

exams, graduation rehearsals, and the ceremonies that mark the end of an era. But what really defines a graduating class is often found in moments that are never marked on the calendar.

All of the friendships, lessons, and experiences shared become ingrained in who we are long after graduation. This value of community is not measured by the thirteen years it lasted, but by the impact it has while it exists. All the energy filling up classrooms, teams, stages, and clubs have created an environment that younger students will continue to inherit, and in turn pass on to their successors.

We at *Kaleidoscope* have

been lucky enough to witness that impact firsthand. For that reason, we would like to wish the Class of 2026 a future filled with the same passion, curiosity, and sense of community that they brought to these halls of Ward Melville.

It would not be a proper send-off without giving a special shoutout to our graduating staff members who have contributed a whole lot more than articles and graphics to the club over their years of service — they've invested this same time, effort, and care into shaping a culture of dedication and collaboration that will continue growing year by year.

In particular, we would like to recognize our editors-in-chief

Michael Retakh and Alexandra Potekhin. They have left a permanent mark on this club, but even more so on the people who have had the privilege of working alongside them. As they continue their journeys at Stanford and the University of California, Los Angeles, respectively, we know they will keep making indelible marks on everyone they meet.

Congratulations, seniors. Whatever comes next, hold on to the memories of these final moments and the people who made them meaningful.



Find us online:

Read *Kaleidoscope* at  
[kscopenews.com](http://kscopenews.com)

Scan to visit:

\*Read this edition online at [bit.ly/kscopejune26](http://bit.ly/kscopejune26)



## Budget Fails, Revote Set for June 16

by EMILY KRAL,  
STAFF WRITER

On May 19, Three Village voters rejected the Board of Education's budget proposal for the 2026-27 academic year, signaling disapproval over an unusually large tax increase and extending the district's fiscal challenges. With 2051 Yes votes and 2340 No votes, the budget was defeated by a margin of approximately 6.5%.

The ballot also included a proposition by the Long Island Museum that would authorize an annual tax of \$500,000. Although the district played no part in the measure — with administration and members of the Board stressing that state law required them to include it on the ballot — opposition quickly formed, with lawn signs saying "Vote No" popping up around the district. As a result, the additional tax was overwhelmingly defeated with 1376 Yes votes and 3007 No votes, representing a margin of more than 37%.

Voters also reelected Karen Roughley and Dr. Jeffrey Kerman to the Board of Education, and Kerri Golini won a full term to replace Vincent Vizzo. However, all three candidates ran unopposed, guaranteeing the result. This nature

of the Board election possibly contributed to the large number of blank ballots: with 2706, 2699, and 2771 votes, respectively, none of the candidates received more than 64% of the total. However, this could also represent a broader discontent with the district, with some residents rejecting all three candidates as a symbolic protest.

Out of 120 districts on Long Island, only five failed to pass a budget. Three of those — Bayport-Blue Point, Islip, and South Country — pierced the tax cap, requiring a 60% majority to approve the budgets. Only Three Village and Locust Valley stayed within the tax cap yet were unable to pass their proposals. Superintendent Kevin Scanlon largely attributed the failure to the high tax cap as well as the presence of the unpopular Long Island Museum proposition.

"It is very unfortunate," said Scanlon in reaction to the budget failure. "Based on feedback we had at the numerous presentations on 3VAsk, it seemed that there was support for the budget."

After the budget failure, the district had three options: offer the same proposal for a revote; revise their proposal; or go straight to contingency, which would have required \$8.1 million in cuts. On May 26, the Board of Education met and decided to pursue the second option, pointing to their unsuccessful attempt to put up the same budget after a failure in 2021.

two new AP courses, the Finance Lab became a larger priority.

According to business teacher Irene Littman, the terminals will be used by several courses, including Accounting I and II, Wall Street Finance, Career and Financial Management, and the newly-offered AP Business Finance course. The Intro to Business classes may have the opportunity to use the terminals as well, but this depends on enrollment, scheduling, and several other factors.

The terminals will be located on the right near the entrance of the library, which previously was an area with tables and a BenQ board. (These were primarily used for supplemental seating, new student orientation, and other library-related lessons.) Shelves in the room also housed the fiction books.

With construction underway, the tables have been removed, shelves have been boarded up, and access is restricted. As a result, hundreds of fiction books had to be relocated. For months, it was unclear where they would be placed even as plans for renovations were being prepared. Shortly before the area was roped off, the books were moved to the back of the

Two days later, the District hosted a public "Listening Session" at the North Country Administrative Center to gather community feedback. Residents were also invited to share their thoughts by email in what Scanlon described as a "wonderful" and informative event.

The Board held another meeting on May 29, where they debated various revisions. In particular, the Board was required to finalize the top-line number for the budget. Deputy Superintendent Jeffrey Carlson presented the administration's proposal, which included a \$1.25 million reduction to capital projects, a total of \$2.1 million in cuts, and a reduction of the tax increase to 3.18%. However, five board members objected to the magnitude of capital project funding decrease, with Dr. Jeffrey Kerman arguing that "we have to maintain everything." Eventually, the board narrowly approved a decrease of capital projects to \$2.5 million: Dr. Stanley Bak and Dr. Shaorui Li voted for the administration's deeper cuts, and Kerman voted to keep the amount at \$3 million.

All seven members agreed that the tax levy should be decreased, and they quickly reached a compromise to lower it by at least 1%. The new budget was then set at \$243,390,092, which requires a tax levy of \$185,217,549 to support it. This represents a 3.49% tax increase, which is \$1,379,813

library where the Writing Center is currently located.

Fortunately, the back shelves were already mostly empty due to preexisting plans. Librarian Dr. April Hatcher had long wanted to make the reference collection — which was previously located in the rear corner — more visible to students, as she strongly believes that despite the proliferation of search engines and artificial intelligence, physical encyclopedias and similar resources remain valuable.

In fact, the reference volumes used to be in the front section until about fifteen years ago, when Hatcher swapped them with the fiction books. Although she did not want to confine the encyclopedias to the back, she recognized their decreasing popularity. She explained her decision, saying, "Most of the students wanted fiction books, so it's easier for them to come in, hang a right, and come right to the desk than to walk all the way back here."

Although Hatcher is retiring this year and the next librarian may choose to relocate the books once more, the free shelf space in the writing center will still likely be used for the fiction books. Some concerns were expressed about

below the District's calculated New York State tax cap. However, this required administration to find a further \$200,000 in cuts.

On Wednesday, June 3, the Board of Education held a final hearing to approve the line-item budget proposal. Along with the change in capital project funding, administration reduced five instructional and five non-instructional positions, although Scanlon clarified that this was mostly through attrition. The district also cut co-curricular activities and field trips by a further \$365,000, representing a total reduction of 56.5% from the 2025-26 budget. It is unclear how these cuts would be implemented, with Carlson saying only that central administration would work with building principals to combine small clubs or reduce the number of field trips.

If this new budget is rejected, a contingency budget will be adopted. As a consequence, the tax levy will not be increased, forcing \$6,243,811 of further budget cuts. Along with the complete elimination of the capital budget, extensive additional cuts to programs and services for students will have to be implemented.

The new vote will take place on June 16, 2026, from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. in the Ward Melville High School gymnasium. Voting is also available using early mail and absentee ballots.

using the space: for the last year, it has been off-limits to students due to the lack of visibility from the circulation desk. However, the reference books' future location remains uncertain.

This represents a long-term trend of library repurposing, with Hatcher saying, "When I first started, every room in this library was part of the library." Over the last several decades, shelf space and seating capacity have been significantly reduced as various areas have been turned into a repair center for student Chromebooks, the Writing Center, and now the Finance Lab.

Additionally, a small area in the back of the library has long sat empty, and it is currently roped off. Hatcher sought to develop the section several years ago, hoping to transform it into a quiet board game area. Additionally, the art department or Art Honor Society could have showcased their art and created murals for display in this section. However, Hatcher explained that the plan was never implemented, as New York State law prohibits anything purchased through a bond from being removed until that bond has been paid off.

## Finance Lab Construction Begins

by ALLIE HARRISON,  
OP-ED EDITOR

After delays due to budgetary constraints and questions about final arrangements, construction has begun to build the new Finance Lab in the Ward Melville High School library. Over the summer, the fiction section will be transformed into a home for 12 Bloomberg terminals, which are computers that provide access to real-time financial data. However, their installation will require significant reorganization of library spaces.

Bloomberg is a financial institution, and their terminals are the gold standard for stock market analysis. Many universities already have this cutting-edge technology, and the Ward Melville Business Department has long advocated bringing them to the school, arguing that students would be able to get a head start with important technology they may use in their future careers. With the planned expansion of the department's offerings, including the addition of

## Inconsistency and Confusion Behind Ward Melville Surge in AI Use

by MICHAEL RETAKH,  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF,  
and PRANAV MUKHI,  
STAFF WRITER

The rise of artificial intelligence (AI) technology has been extremely rapid over the past few years. New models are constantly developed, improved, and implemented into every aspect of the digital landscape. Nowhere is this shift more obvious than in schools: tools such as ChatGPT, Gemini, and Claude have become regular parts of many students' and teachers' lives across the country. Serious concerns have been raised about this wave of AI usage and its potential to circumvent work, critical thinking, and crucial skill development.

Over the past year, district administrators and members of the Board of Education have dismissed such worries. During a May 2025 board meeting, President Susan E. Megroz Rosenzweig responded to a *Kaleidoscope* op-ed titled "Three Village Needs A Clear AI Policy", saying, "A clear AI policy for our students does exist. It's very clear." In an interview with *Kaleidoscope* last month, Vice President Karen Roughley said, "I'm not aware of any issues going on with AI in the high school or middle schools. Of course, there's always something going on, but nothing widespread." And when asked for comment for this article, Dierdre Rubenstrunk, Director of Technology and Data Protection Officer, wrote, "Many of the questions surrounding its use are already addressed through established expectations."

Interviews with many students and staff challenged this narrative, and our investigation demonstrated an extensive culture of daily AI reliance. Nevertheless, many interviewees were not surprised at the scope of our discoveries, demonstrating widespread, if unspoken, acknowledgement of the situation. In fact, the vast majority of those we spoke to requested anonymity for fear of retribution; many more only agreed to discuss the topic off the record.

For many students, AI began simply as an additional resource or a fun image generator. Some described their initial use as simply seeking explanations for difficult concepts or brainstorming ideas for essays. Unlike traditional

search engines such as Google, AI tools provide human-like conversation responses that can simplify complicated topics and adapt to a student's needs. "Personally, AI has helped me in so many ways," one Ward Melville student explained. "I used it to understand material that I did not understand in school. It's kind of like a personalized tutor."

The technology's ubiquity has further contributed to its spread and has made it difficult to control. AI platforms are now embedded into everyday life, with even Google searches providing generative summaries. Instead of searching through websites, videos, or textbooks, students can ask AI direct questions and receive immediate answers.

"The school recently blocked Google AI on the Chromebooks," said sophomore John Parkinson. Nevertheless, he explained that AI remains widely available through other outside applications, and even through Google itself. In fact, it remains possible to retrieve an AI summary with one click by selecting "All" below the search bar instead of the now-default "Web." Several others confirmed that limiting access on school-issued devices has done little to reduce overall usage.

Beyond simple web searches, students described a wide range of ways in which they use AI to support their education. Many explained how they primarily relied on it to catch grammar errors or clarify difficult material. However, others acknowledged that some students depend on it far more heavily, using the technology to generate study guides, practice tests, and even complete assignments.

"Students in our school usually need AI to study for certain subjects like math," said sophomore Gordon Khamraev. "In addition to understanding concepts, I use it to grade my papers for English and history before submitting them, utilizing the tool to understand my mistakes and build upon them." Sophomore Ved Patel had a similar experience, stating, "The benefit is that you save more time, allowing you to get more work done effectively." And one senior said that it had been a month since they completed an assignment without any help from AI.

Usage also varies greatly between classes. Although the Three Village Code of Conduct states that "representing ... the work of artificial intelligence applications when not specifically directed to use by teachers" as one's own is plagiarism and assigns corresponding penalties, there are few guidelines that address

when teachers should endorse the technology. Some of this is intentional: Rubenstrunk said, "Its use depends on the learning objective and expectations established by the teacher." As a result, enforcement largely depends on teachers' individual attitudes and willingness to spend time on detection.

English teacher Julianne Marra openly discusses AI, establishing explicit boundaries in her classroom. While she recognizes that "if it were used properly, it could be very beneficial to student learning," she remains skeptical of the technology, saying, "Right now, it's just too detrimental to the learning process."

Even with such a clear stance, Marra still frequently sees work generated by AI, but she claimed that "it is very clear when a student is using AI because their voice doesn't sound like their own. Teachers become familiar with the way students speak and write." However, several students questioned this mindset, saying that they have submitted AI work with no consequences. (None of these students have Marra as a teacher.) One pointed out a flaw in the argument, saying, "If someone uses AI so much that it becomes their voice, how can the teacher tell?" Furthermore, Marra herself admitted that teachers "can't keep up" with the rapid technological advances.

Many teachers agree with Marra, although they do so tacitly. However, some have embraced AI, leading to inconsistencies and confusion. Students are occasionally encouraged to use various models, whether to debug code or to conduct research. For example, health teacher Kristina Rudiger has promoted ChatGPT as a "starting point," including by demonstrating potential uses in class. However, she stressed that "it should in no way replace a professional, and I've always said that. I just want to empower [students] to use it appropriately."

Additionally, some teachers turn to AI to help with their own work. Jacqueline Shaw, one of Marra's colleagues in the English Department, said, "I definitely use it for visuals and to create slideshows." Beyond design features, Shaw also employs the technology "as a sounding board for lesson plans," allowing it to polish her ideas. Others have sent emails to students with AI prompts included, signaling that they wrote their messages using ChatGPT or other models.

In fact, district administration has promoted the use of artificial intelligence despite their public stance, with Rubenstrunk saying, "We encourage staff to

explore ways AI can help them work more effectively and focus more time on students." For example, as previously reported in the aforementioned *Kaleidoscope* op-ed, the district installed the Brisk AI Chrome extension on all teachers' devices. The software is able to complete a variety of tasks, including generating rubrics, writing quizzes, and grade assignments. Although Rubenstrunk clarified that, "AI is not a requirement," several teachers noted a certain discomfort with the district's policy, with one saying that "administration is encouraging AI use for teachers more than many of us are comfortable with."

Outside of Ward Melville, AI has also begun to play a larger role. Magic School AI, a wide-ranging tool made specifically for educational environments, has been widely used at the elementary school level, despite Rubenstrunk's comments that "AI use is very limited" as the district is focused on "developing foundational skills." Some teachers have also generated cartoon images of students to include in classroom displays, raising potential privacy concerns.

Many students expressed anger over what they viewed as a double standard, accusing teachers and district officials of selective and unclear AI policies. One senior summarized this viewpoint, saying, "If we're not allowed to use it, then why can they?" Rubenstrunk acknowledged these claims, writing, "I understand why some students and staff feel that AI use is widespread and that there is a desire for more guidance."

Despite having diverse opinions and levels of reliance on AI, almost all of those interviewed for this article called for clearer policies and a more serious reckoning with the issue. There have been some efforts to discuss these new technologies, including presentations by librarian Dr. April Hatcher to sophomores, but many suggested that this was not enough. One teacher offered their perspective on Ward Melville's AI policies and guidelines: "I think [the district policy] could be clearer as far as what constitutes AI, so that it is hard to get around getting in trouble for using it."

## Midterm Election Overview

by ZAMAAN MALIK,  
STAFF WRITER

On November 3, voters across the country will head to the polls to choose all 435 members of the House of Representatives, 35 members of the Senate, 36 state and 3 territorial governors, and thousands of other state and local officials. The midterm elections are largely expected to act as a referendum on the Trump presidency, despite his absence from the ballot. Broader subjects such as affordability, immigration, and crime are also expected to play a role.

Polling, the results of last year's November elections, and several upsets in special elections have suggested a strong performance for Democratic candidates this year, reflecting the president's unpopularity due to aggressive immigration enforcement, the war with Iran, and broad economic anxieties. Indeed, analysts widely predict that the Democrats will regain the majority in the House, and some consider control of the Senate to be a toss-up despite Democrats needing to gain 4 seats to win the chamber. This follows two historical trends in midterm elections: victories for the party out of power in Washington; and

overperformance by Democrats in non-presidential elections given their greater reliance on high-propensity voters.

These elections have also been characterized by the absence of many incumbents on the ballot. Dozens of Republicans in Congress decided not to run for reelection, an expected outcome of a bad national environment for the party. Nevertheless, a wave of unusual mid-decade redistricting — which began in Texas at Trump's urging, spread as Democratic governors responded with maps of their own, and was supercharged by the Supreme Court decision in *Louisiana v. Callais* that dismantled key sections of the Voting Rights Act — has left several representatives without a viable seat to run in. Furthermore, a retribution campaign by the president against those he views as insufficiently loyal has led to several primary defeats for sitting members of Congress, most notably Representative Thomas Massie of Kentucky and Senators Bill Cassidy and John Cornyn of Louisiana and Texas, respectively.

New York State is not fully immune from these trends, although it has not redrawn its district lines for this election cycle, nor are there many prominent Republican officials who could draw Trump's ire. Furthermore, it is difficult to make accurate predictions about New York races

County executive in 2021. Despite a national and local blue wave in 2025, he was reelected by a large margin, demonstrating his popularity in the county and raising Republicans' hopes of winning the governor's mansion for the first time since 2002.

Hochul automatically won the Democratic nomination: her opponent and former lieutenant governor, Antonio Delgado, failed to qualify for the ballot at the state convention. He also attempted to appear on the Working Families Party ballot line, but they refused to endorse him. Because Hochul avoided a primary, she entered the general election with her funds largely intact.

Blakeman's path to the Republican nomination was more dramatic. Congresswoman Elise Stefanik, a strong ally of President Trump, was originally the only Republican candidate. She was endorsed by many Republicans and affiliated organizations, and she was widely expected to easily advance to the general election.

However, on December 9, 2025, Blakeman joined the race. Just 10 days later, Stefanik withdrew from the race after Trump refused to endorse either candidate. Seeking to avoid a fractious

primary that would have depleted valuable time and resources and potentially concerned about Trump's lack of reciprocal support, Stefanik ceded the nomination.

Surprisingly, one day after Stefanik left the race, Trump endorsed Blakeman, praising him in a Truth Social post and calling him "MAGA all the way." Blakeman soon said that he was "grateful and blessed" to have the president's endorsement.

In the general election, perhaps the greatest disagreement between the candidates is immigration. Blakeman has repeatedly declared Nassau a non-sanctuary county, framing the issue as one of public safety rather than immigration. As County Executive, he closely partnered with federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) operations, with Nassau County police detaining roughly 3,000 people for ICE last year. Furthermore, he created a "citizen deputy" program that authorized armed volunteers to be mobilized in cases of emergency, and he has relied on this program to assist local and federal agents.

On the other hand, Hochul has proposed banning 287(g) agreements — precisely the same contracts that Blakeman used to

allow formal police cooperation with ICE — arguing that local officials should focus on local crime. She has also said that immigrant communities become afraid to report crimes when police double as immigration enforcers.

On the economy, both candidates acknowledge the lack of affordability in New York but disagree on why. Blakeman argues high taxes and heavy regulation are driving residents and businesses out of the state, while Hochul blames Trump's federal cuts to Medicaid and education. Nevertheless, affordability remains a weak spot, and a state budget that was passed nearly two months late has given her opponent a line of attack.

Beyond these two main issues, the candidates disagree on a variety of subjects, from crime to unions to LGBTQ+ rights. The entire campaign is underlined by a fundamental difference in political identity: Blakeman is a strong Trump supporter, campaigning on cultural issues that follow the national Republican playbook. Conversely, Hochul has focused on opposing Trump, trying to turn his federal agenda into a liability for Blakeman — knowing that in New York, that's usually a winning argument.

recent graduate of Stony Brook University. Murray's campaign is focused on protecting the environment, reducing inefficiencies in the court system, and promoting voting rights, and he has been endorsed by the Working Families Party. Bham's primary issues are housing affordability, medical costs, and the protection of immigrant communities.

As for the State Assembly, most of the district is located within District 4, represented by Rebecca Kassay since 2025. She won the seat by only 1.4%, or just over 800 votes, signaling another competitive election. Kassay is likely to run on her successes during the past two years, most notably her securing of an additional \$3.75 million in state aid towards the reconstruction of the Stony Brook Mill Pond dam. Her opponent is William Sussman, a 26-year-old engineer and adjunct professor of computer science at Yeshiva University whose primary concern is fighting against antisemitism. Suffolk County voters have three methods to cast their votes: in-person, either at one of the designated 28 early voting locations or on primary election day at their polling place; by sending in a ballot by mail; and, for eligible military personnel and overseas voters, through an absentee ballot.

On the economy, both candidates acknowledge the lack of affordability in New York but disagree on why. Blakeman argues high taxes and heavy regulation are driving residents and businesses out of the state, while Hochul blames Trump's federal cuts to Medicaid and education. Nevertheless, affordability remains a weak spot, and a state budget that was passed nearly two months late has given her opponent a line of attack.

Beyond these two main issues, the candidates disagree on a variety of subjects, from crime to unions to LGBTQ+ rights. The entire campaign is underlined by a fundamental difference in political identity: Blakeman is a strong Trump supporter, campaigning on cultural issues that follow the national Republican playbook. Conversely, Hochul has focused on opposing Trump, trying to turn his federal agenda into a liability for Blakeman — knowing that in New York, that's usually a winning argument.

Beyond these two main issues, the candidates disagree on a variety of subjects, from crime to unions to LGBTQ+ rights. The entire campaign is underlined by a fundamental difference in political identity: Blakeman is a strong Trump supporter, campaigning on cultural issues that follow the national Republican playbook. Conversely, Hochul has focused on opposing Trump, trying to turn his federal agenda into a liability for Blakeman — knowing that in New York, that's usually a winning argument.

## Blakeman Challenges Hochul for Governorship

by AMBER YU,  
STAFF WRITER

Governor Kathy Hochul is running for re-election against Republican challenger Bruce Blakeman in the most high-profile election in New York State this November. Despite New York's status as a blue state and a favorable national environment for Democrats, the race has the potential to become competitive due to Hochul's low approval ratings and a closer-than-expected gubernatorial election in 2022.

Hochul ascended to the governorship in 2021 after the resignation of Andrew Cuomo due to allegations of serial misconduct. She is seeking a second full term, highlighting her record and presenting herself as a defender of the state against the Trump administration.

Blakeman slowly gained traction in New York Republican politics over the past three decades until he was elected as the Nassau

## LaLota Runs for Third Term

by MICHAEL RETAKH,  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Nicholas LaLota, the representative of New York 1st Congressional District since 2022, is running for a third term. He is considered the favorite to win the November election, with the Cook Political Report rating the race as “Solid Republican.” However, Democrats are hopeful that a strong national environment and President Donald Trump’s unpopularity will offer them a chance to represent the district for the first time since 2014, and a January survey by Public Policy Polling — albeit sponsored by the Democratic-aligned House Majority PAC — showed LaLota leading Democratic candidate Chris Gallant by only 3%.

As a result, LaLota is expected to run a spirited campaign, and he has already repeatedly highlighted what he views as his signature accomplishment: an increase in the state and local tax deduction (SALT) cap. In 2017, the Republican-controlled Congress passed the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, capping the deduction at \$10,000, or \$5,000 for married couples filing separately. Since then, many members of Congress representing Democratic-leaning states have strongly advocated raising the limit or eliminating it entirely, as their constituents pay higher state and local taxes and therefore benefit more from the deduction.

LaLota is no exception, repeatedly pledging to raise the SALT cap since his first campaign. According to the congressman’s written responses to our questions, he “supported efforts to raise the SALT deduction cap” as Republicans prepared what would become known as the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA). After calling a proposal to change the ceiling to \$30,000 an “insult,” he agreed to support the bill after the amount was amended to \$40,000. However, once it passed the House, the Senate reverted back to the original \$10,000 limit: in response, LaLota released a statement, saying, “While I support the President’s broader agenda, it would be hypocritical for me to back the same unfair \$10k SALT cap I’ve spent years criticizing.”

The bill was returned to the House, and as the chamber’s leaders sought to ensure the bill’s passage, they acquiesced to the demands of many blue-state Republicans and reversed the Senate’s changes. LaLota voted for the final bill, and on July 4, 2025, Trump signed the OBBBA into law.

LaLota has touted the legislation’s provision since then, calling it “one of the most significant tax relief measures Long Islanders have seen in years,” and often citing a *Newsday* analysis that claimed that “the average middle-class Long Island family will save about \$2,860 annually.”

Even so, there are some restrictions on how the change is implemented. For filers with incomes greater than \$500,000, the SALT cap is gradually reduced; those with incomes over \$600,000 are still subject to the old \$10,000 limit. Furthermore, the increase is currently set to expire in 2030.

LaLota also places an emphasis on his environmental preservation efforts, writing that “protecting [Long Island] beaches, bays, drinking water, parks, and open spaces is essential to our economy and way of life.” He has taken credit for “securing millions of dollars for clean water infrastructure, PFAS remediation, stormwater management, flood mitigation, and coastal resiliency projects throughout Suffolk County,” as well as helping to preserve Plum Island.

However, outside analyses point to a more mixed record on such issues. On their congressional scorecard, the pro-environmental League of Conservation Voters gave LaLota a 2025 score of 12%. Additionally, by voting for the OBBBA, he approved the elimination of clean energy tax credits and several other eco-friendly statutes.

Finally, he has strongly supported his predecessor Lee Zeldin’s tenure as Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). In that position, Zeldin has led efforts to roll back climate regulations, including by reversing the long-standing finding that greenhouse gas emissions damage public health. LaLota has not publicly criticized any of these actions, and he did not respond to a question about the issue.

Another key part of LaLota’s political identity is his self-described bipartisanship. He often promotes the Lugar Center’s Bipartisan Index which ranked him as more bipartisan than 85% of members of Congress in its 2023 iteration. He also repeatedly mentions several bills that he sponsored or cosponsored and which passed the House with wide majorities, most notably the DETECT Fentanyl and Xylazine Act. (The Biden-era legislation expanded federal efforts to detect fentanyl and several other illicit substances.)

However, the congressman has voted with his party’s position 98% of the time, leading opponents and constituents to question his commitment to bipartisanship. He has also broadly supported the



Trump administration’s actions and policies, most notably the aforementioned OBBBA. Among other provisions, the sweeping law implemented a regressive tax structure; enacted significant cuts to Medicare, Medicaid, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; appropriated \$170 billion to various immigration enforcement operations; and is estimated by the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) to increase the deficit by \$3.4 trillion.

In the past, LaLota has campaigned on fiscal responsibility, writing in March 2025 that “runaway debt means higher taxes, rising inflation, and more financial strain.” However, he did not respond to questions about the OBBBA’s deficit increase. He also did not address the regressive nature of the tax code changes, focusing instead on the SALT deduction cap.

On healthcare cuts, LaLota claimed that “the legislation did not cut Medicare benefits, and it fully protected Medicaid for seniors, children, people with disabilities, and those who truly need the program,” a statement at odds with the bill’s language. The CBO estimated that federal spending on Medicaid will be reduced by more than \$1 trillion, and that \$490 billion would be cut from Medicare.

As for immigration, LaLota has long supported the president’s aggressive policies and tactics, including his attempts to redefine the 14th Amendment and limit birthright citizenship. He frequently praises Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids on Long Island, claiming that the agency “helps deport the Worst of the Worst safely and efficiently” in a February social media post. Through focusing on particular ICE operations, he has not addressed the fact that 70% of ICE detainees have no criminal records, and he has remained largely silent over controversial actions such as mass raids and detention centers.

In particular, after the killings of protestors Renee Good and Alex Pretti in Minneapolis,

LaLota refused to condemn ICE or any of its agents, even as his New York Republican colleagues Mike Lawler and Andrew Garbarino did. Instead, he implied that both protestors were engaging in unlawful conduct despite video evidence contradicting such claims. LaLota did not take advantage of an opportunity to retract his statements.

The congressman has also maintained his strong support of the U.S. war against Iran. He has largely dismissed concerns about the resulting inflation, and he has repeated many of the administration’s claims about the impact of the strikes and the status of the Strait of Hormuz. He has also voted to reject any resolution to rein in Trump’s actions, choosing to defer to the executive branch on military matters that had previously been decided by Congress.

Furthermore, LaLota has been extremely reluctant to speak out against the leader of his party. In addition to the aforementioned example with regards to events in Minneapolis, the congressman did not issue a statement about the president’s widely-condemned social media post depicting Barack and Michelle Obama as apes; did not comment on the president’s threat that the “whole [Iranian] civilization will die tonight”; and has not publicly mentioned the now-defunct “Anti-Weaponization” \$1.8 billion fund that would have compensated Trump supporters and January 6 rioters, and that drew unusually widespread anger among congressional Republicans.

Along with these issues, LaLota’s Democratic opponents often criticize his lack of engagement with the district. Despite pledging to do so in both of his campaigns for Congress, he still has yet to host an in-person public town hall, choosing instead to conduct such events via telephone.

*Congressman Nick LaLota was not available for an interview, and he provided only partial responses to emailed questions. We do not offer a full transcript of his responses.*

## Gallant Seeks to Flip NY-1 Seat

by ZAINA KHAN,  
NEWS EDITOR

Christopher Gallant is running for Congress in New York's 1st Congressional District. He is the favorite to secure the Democratic nomination against Lukas Ventouras in the June 23 primary. If he advances to the general election, he will seek to unseat incumbent Representative Nicholas LaLota. Positioning himself as a pragmatic and bipartisan outsider, his primary goals center on addressing the rising costs of living, improving fragile infrastructure, strengthening social welfare programs, and creating a safe environment where the community can thrive.

Gallant faces an uphill battle to capture the seat: the district has not elected a Democrat since 2012, and it is not seen as a major target for the party in its quest to take control of the House. Nevertheless, he expressed optimism at his chances, saying, "We think that this is the year. If there was ever a year to actually flip this seat, this is it." He pointed to "momentum across the board" for Democratic candidates and claimed that "people are very excited about this race both locally and nationally."

He also suggested that his campaign is different from previous unsuccessful challengers. "I'm the blue-collar guy from Long Island that is relatable and can talk to people really easily," Gallant said as he outlined his political identity. "People genuinely feel that it's a good conversation."

Although Gallant has made his lack of political experience a plank of his campaign, he has nevertheless emphasized the importance of his prior public service. As a New York Army National Guardsman, he has flown two deployments overseas in Black Hawk helicopters, most recently from 2022 to 2023. He has also worked as an air traffic controller, a volunteer firefighter, and a union leader.

"With my background in both the military and the fire department, I think this is just the next calling to change the uniform and serve my country in a different way," Gallant explained. "It's given me the ability to bridge gaps and come up with real solutions."

It is precisely this attitude that he says separates him from Ventouras, noting that there are few issues that they fully disagree about. Instead, he claims to have "a much more pragmatic approach to certain things" than his opponent in the primary. As an example, while Gallant supports a Medicare for All program in principle, he does

not believe that it could be implemented immediately, saying, "We have to get there." For him, that process would begin by expanding Medicare to cover vision, hearing, and dental care, and he hopes to eventually transition to "a hybrid system where employees still have the option to get an employer-provided program."

Gallant also offered a preview of a potential general election campaign, asserting that LaLota "creates problems to try and turn around, fix them, and appear bipartisan." He also attacked the congressman over his support for the president, saying, "He's often-times voted in line with Donald Trump without actually voting for things that really matter to the district." Additionally, Gallant argued that the Republican is celebrating temporary fixes rather than real solutions and drew attention to the temporary nature of the changes to the cap on the state and local tax deduction cap.

However, his anti-LaLota messaging has primarily focused on his claim "that he doesn't show up, that he doesn't talk to his constituents, and that he doesn't hold any town halls." (Although LaLota has organized several town halls during his two terms in office, he has yet to host a public, in-person town hall.) In contrast, Gallant has pledged to represent "not just Democrats, not just independents, but Republicans as well." He added, "Listening is half the job."

As part of this commitment, he wants to "hold a town hall somewhere in the district at least once a month," hoping to offer everyone the opportunity to attend. For those who are unable, he plans to host general Zoom meetings to keep voters updated and learn about their concerns. Finally, to measure his success and ensure he is addressing the needs of the district, he noted that he already collects feedback on social media and floated the idea of releasing broader surveys.

Beyond the political issue of accessibility, Gallant has focused much of his campaign on cost-of-living increases and the need for affordable housing, saying, "It's just too expensive." He mainly wants to support high school and college-age students, arguing that "they are the ones who are struggling the most." In particular, he lamented the fact that "a lot of younger adults are leaving here" because of high costs, pointing out that this leads to problems such as a lack of volunteer firefighters. He supports various policies that would lower housing prices and limit out-migration, most notably a tax rebate for current students to afford their first homes.



Photo courtesy of Team Gallant

Gallant also believes it is necessary to repair or modernize much of Long Island's infrastructure, saying that many structures "are starting to crumble. They've aged out." If elected, he aims to direct federal dollars towards infrastructure improvements across Long Island, including the electrification of the Long Island Rail Road. He also wishes to increase the number of trains going to the East End of the island, suggesting that he would work to "add more areas where rail cars could pass each other."

For him, the issue is inseparable from that of climate change, as he believes that "Long Island is not prepared for the next hurricane." He has noted that rising sea levels pose a threat to Suffolk County, and he supports clean energy tax credits — which he pointed out were gutted by the Trump administration and the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, which LaLota voted for — to encourage a transition away from fossil fuels.

Gallant also drew attention to the effects of artificial intelligence data centers, saying that they damage the environment and strain power grids. However, he is not fully against the technology, instead suggesting that "net zero data centers would be the ideal thing," using Apple's facilities as an example. And while he maintains that "AI in schools takes away from education," he wants to speak more with experts before coming to any final conclusions about potential regulations.

Safety is another of Gallant's top priorities. With his own background in law enforcement, he strongly supports the police department, saying "I support and back the blue 100%. I work with them

all the time." Even so, he emphasized that "transparency is key," and he supports various accountability measures to ensure officers are properly trained and misconduct is minimized.

In particular, he expressed strong disagreement with the Trump administration's aggressive immigration crackdown and the recent actions of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). "[Kristi Noem] created a police force that essentially attacked our cities. They had ICE agents that had little to no training," said Gallant. "They essentially were hiring people without background checks, without actual schooling, education, or understanding what their job was." He firmly believes that "hearings and holding people accountable for what they've done" are necessary to prevent further abuses of police power.

Overall, Gallant thinks the immigration system itself needs broad reform, saying, "The actual problem is that the clear path to citizenship is not so clear." He noted that the Trump administration has restricted legal avenues for individuals seeking to gain citizenship, including by firing immigration judges.

To read the full transcript of Kscope's interview with Chris Gallant, scan the QR code below or go to [bit.ly/kscope-gallant](https://bit.ly/kscope-gallant).



## Ventouras Pursues Nomination in Long-Shot Bid

by LEWIS WU  
and AMBER YU,  
STAFF WRITERS

Lukas Ventouras is a Democratic candidate for New York's 1st Congressional District. He is running in the June 23 primary against front-runner Christopher Gallant, who has a significant fundraising advantage and has gained support from national and local politicians. In the unlikely event that Ventouras advances to the general election, he will seek to unseat incumbent Representative Nicholas LaLota. At 25 years old, he only recently became eligible to appear on the ballot, and he has presented himself as a young challenger to the political establishment.

A graduate of New York University and a student at St. John's University School of Law, he has had experience working in civil rights law, political journalism, a congressional office, and several political campaigns. He says it was his dissatisfaction with the political system that pushed him toward running for office. "I would have never dreamed of running for office at 25 if I didn't think that we were in a very dire moment that needed very drastic change." Ventouras hopes to offer a different perspective for people, arguing that the country needs "a generational mindset perspective shift."

A central issue of Ventouras' campaign is reducing the influence of money in politics. "I kind of make corruption the crux of my campaign," he said. "Everything is downstream of money in politics." He believes that "in order for a representative to be truly accountable to the people, they need to be unmoored from corporate interests." In particular, he seeks to eliminate dark money from politics, overturn the 2010 Supreme Court case *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, and reduce the influence of corporate donors. Ventouras sees this as a key difference between himself and Gallant, and he emphasized his position as a grassroots candidate funded by small dollar donations.

Despite sometimes being described as a progressive, Ventouras characterizes himself as a "New Deal Democrat." He argues that many policies commonly viewed as progressive, such as universal healthcare or paid leave, are actually more moderate positions that are supported by large majorities of Americans.

Like many Democrats running this November, affordability is a major focus of Ventouras' campaign. On housing, he supports federal investment in affordable housing, assistance for first time homebuyers, and restrictions on private equity firms from purchasing housing stock. He has also advocated for caps on rent increases for large property owners and the repeal of the Faircloth Amendment, a 1998 piece of legislation that limits spending on affordable housing. Ventouras hopes to create communities that are both accessible and livable, and he wants to see city planning that creates more walkable areas. He also adds that Long Island's car-centric nature contributes to the unaffordability crisis. As a result, Ventouras supports expanding public transportation.

To address healthcare costs, Ventouras supports a universal healthcare system. He blames rising costs on pharmaceutical companies and insurance providers, which he describes as "a rapacious middleman" between patients and care. "You deserve the dignity to live and not be quite literally priced out of staying alive," he said. In response to fiscal concerns, he cited research that suggests universal healthcare would be cheaper than the current American system.

On education, Ventouras supports a school district that would encompass all of Long Island, drawing inspiration from the New York City public school system. He views this as a potential solution to his claim that unequal property values contribute to unequal education opportunities. Even so, he recognized that this would not be "entirely achievable in the short term."

More broadly, he believes that the current education system doesn't truly capture students' skills and is instead tailored towards those that are able to be diligent and focused. In particular, he stated that standardized assessments are deeply flawed, arguing that they do not adequately reflect a wide range of talents. He hopes to work with educators to reform testing and the entire education system, and he freely admitted that he is "coming in with not as strong of a knowledge base."

Ventouras speaks from personal experience when it comes to increasing education costs, referencing his own student debt. He criticized rising tuition costs and student loan interest rates as a way to "create a permanent underclass."

He supports free public universities and increased financial assistance for students from middle- and lower-income households. He also criticized college's focus on their endowments, donors,



Photo courtesy of JoAnn O'Loughlin

and financial growth, as opposed to student outcomes and career opportunities after graduation.

Ventouras views artificial intelligence as a way for "the billionaire class to squeeze as much money out of us as possible." However, he does not fully oppose the technology, expressing his support for research and development in areas like science and medicine.

He also believes that climate change has not been properly addressed, expressing frustration that the issue has become less prominent. Although he agrees with building better infrastructure, he views such policies as "merely putting a band-aid on what feels like a bullet wound." Instead, he frequently calls for accountability measures, including sanctions on major polluting corporations, and criticizes companies that have hidden research regarding environmental damage. (He did not specify how these sanctions would be implemented.)

He also supports a "New Deal that is clean energy focused," commonly known as the Green New Deal. The sweeping proposal, which was partially implemented through the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022, includes significant public investment in renewable energy and clean technology.

While discussing public safety, Ventouras emphasized the need to address the root causes of crime. He argues that poverty and inadequate mental health care contribute to criminal behavior, and he supports a comprehensive strategy focused on rehabilitation and treatment. Furthermore, he criticized politicians for "feeding into the hysteria" about crime, noting that many repeat the false claim that immigrants are responsible for more crime than American citizens.

Similarly, he believes that the immigration system needs a broad reform, including a repeal of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996. He asserts that the law permanently traps people in the United States while also "illegalizing

the fact that you're here in the first place." More broadly, he argues that the current immigration system is overly complicated and forces people into difficult situations. To fix these issues, Ventouras supports a "21st century Ellis Island," which would create a more accessible pathway for legal immigration. (He stressed that his proposal does not need to involve one physical point of entry, but rather a "resource where people can go and they can try and immigrate.") He criticized what he sees as the criminalization and demonization of immigrants, arguing that many come to the US to seek better opportunities and to contribute to society.

Finally, as a member of the Gen Z generation, Ventouras noted that many in his age group have become cynical because they feel politicians have failed to deliver meaningful change, saying, "People voted for hope and change. The hope and change did not come." He believes his campaign offers an alternative to what he describes as a political system dominated by corporate interests, and he wants to show voters that "there can be a politician that authentically wants to work for you and has your material interest at heart."

Ventouras ended with saying that it's time for young people "to elbow our way to the table and give ourselves a seat at leadership." He hopes to set an example for young people, saying, "The only reason I'm running is because I want to be the candidate that I never saw".

To read the full transcript of Kaleidoscope's interview with Lukas Ventouras, scan the QR code below or go to [bit.ly/kscope-ventouras](https://bit.ly/kscope-ventouras).



## Mock Trial Wins Fifth in State

by LUCIANA HAYES,  
STAFF WRITER

The Ward Melville Mock Trial team secured fifth place at the New York State Championship competition in Albany, concluding a three-day tournament held from May 17 to May 19. This marks the crowning achievement to the team's many successes this year: under the leadership of coach Douglas Elliot and attorney advisor Joseph Prokop, they also won the Suffolk County Championship.

The team first began practicing in October, welcoming new members and reviewing basic frameworks and strategies. The following month, they received their case packet, a comprehensive document that contains all the information and evidence needed to argue the case as both the prosecution and the defense. Leading up to the season, the team held weekly practices on Wednesday evenings and Saturday mornings each week. However, once they started competing in trials held

every Wednesday, they added an additional practice after school on Tuesdays.

The regular season for Mock Trial took place throughout the month of February. Ward Melville remained undefeated throughout competitions against St. John the Baptist, Patchogue-Medford, and Babylon High Schools. The team finished the regular season in the strong second seed position, and they progressed to the playoffs along with 15 other Suffolk County teams. Ward Melville continued their undefeated streak against Shoreham-Wading River, John Glenn, and Northport High Schools as the prosecution, as well as against Bayshore High School as the defense. On March 30, the Ward Melville Mock Trial team was officially crowned the 2026 Suffolk County Champions.

The Ward Melville Mock Trial team left for Albany on the morning of Sunday, May 17 to meet with seven other teams from their respective regions. The following day, the team departed for the federal courthouse as the prosecution against Abraham Joshua Heschel School in the criminal case of *The People v. Carmen*

Erickson, a criminal larceny case on the matter of stolen used cooking oil. Competing in the trial were attorneys Lila Pessier, Madeline Galeotafiore, and Emily Kral, as well as Carlota Conesa Obiols portraying victim Gale Burns, Olivia Miller portraying eyewitness Terry Johnson, and Grace Hammons portraying investigator Sal Thomas.

The trial lasted several hours, and after a break for lunch, the team returned to the courthouse for their second trial of the day, this time representing the defense against Pittsford Mendon High School. Competing in the afternoon trial were attorneys Galeotafiore, Miller, and Caroline Qian, in addition to witnesses Rebecca Malz representing the defendant Carmen Erickson, Hammons representing alibi witness Bille Stewart, and Nicolas Fidos representing probation officer Bo Kerrick.

The New York State Mock Trial Championship was not only a wonderful educational opportunity but also a memorable and exciting way for the team to build a deeper connection. "It was a fun and rewarding trip," Miller stated. "I am proud to have competed alongside such a wonderful team. When

I leave for college, I will look back on my experiences at Mock Trial fondly." Similarly, sophomore attorney Kral described the competition as "a great experience for us to bond as a team and showcase all the skills we developed throughout the year."

Following the trials, the team attended a dinner hosted by the New York State Bar Association, where they heard Kapil Longani, Senior Vice Chancellor for Legal Affairs and General Counsel for the State University of New York, deliver a keynote address. The results, including Ward Melville's fifth place finish, were announced at the same event.

The team was also able to watch the final trial between the top two finalists, between Hunter College and Fayetteville-Manlius High Schools. The trial, and with it the state tournament, ended with a victory for the former.

"Going to states this year was such an honor," Miller said, reflecting on her year and entire experience in Mock Trial. "Coming back from a tough season and getting to compete well this time around is something I will cherish."

## Ward Melville's 2026 Career Speaker Series

by ALEXANDRA  
POTEKHIN,  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

The 2026 Career Speaker Series was hosted by the Three Village Industry Advisory Board on May 18, welcoming professionals in the finance and healthcare fields to speak with and offer advice to students. While the two industries differ significantly, the broad lessons shared by the panelist guests were remarkably similar.

During the panel on finance, speakers described the variety of opportunities available within the industry. Noting that it extends beyond investing and Wall Street, they discussed fields such as banking, corporate finance, statistics, and capital markets. One panelist — a military veteran who focuses on capital markets and systemic banking failures — explained that while broad knowledge is important early in professional life, advancement requires specialization. In fact, he now develops contingency plans designed to prevent broader economic disruption during periods of financial instability, demonstrating the potential for specificity.

Several experts repeatedly emphasized that careers are not

linear, telling students the importance of remaining curious and open-minded. In fact, few of the speakers ended up exactly where they had expected to: while some achieved success through carefully thought-out decisions, others did so essentially by accident. One professional described beginning with an interest in numbers and investing before finding his passion for mentorship, while another recalled growing up with a love for technology only to later realize the subject's application to finance. Along with several other stories, these experiences reinforced a common theme that students should avoid becoming too attached to a single plan, instead allowing themselves to be flexible and grow.

Similarly, the topic of curiosity repeated throughout the panel's question-and-answer session. Kyle Moeller, the CEO of the workforce development platform Risers, encouraged students to become comfortable using artificial intelligence tools, arguing that AI literacy is becoming increasingly important across nearly every industry. He also recommended developing financial literacy through books and news publications.

Financial advisor Robert Campbell focused less on technical skills and more on personal values. Often invoking his favorite saying, "Curiosity killed the cat, satisfaction brought it back," he urged students to ask thought-provoking questions and actively look

for new experiences. He argued that the strongest careers are built around personal values rather than resume-building, emphasizing that genuine interest and purpose often lead to more meaningful long-term success.

The conversation later shifted toward one of the most common concerns among students considering careers in finance: work-life balance. Rather than presenting a single answer, panelists offered differing views on what success should look like.

Alex Fayed, who currently works for the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, described balance as highly personal, arguing that individuals must decide for themselves how they want to structure their lives. While some professionals pursue success through exceptionally long hours and intense commitment, others prioritize flexibility and family time. He encouraged students to define success before selecting a career path, explaining that salary expectations and lifestyle choice will follow from that personal definition.

Many of the same themes emerged on the healthcare panel, albeit through the lens of patient care. Speakers repeatedly recommended students to gain firsthand experience through volunteering and shadowing before committing to a specific profession, with several explaining that exposure to real healthcare environments often helps students discover both what

they enjoy and what they may wish to avoid. In fact, programs at Northwell Health, Mather Hospital, and other organizations were mentioned as avenues to gain that exposure.

They also spoke candidly about the challenges associated with entering the field. Physicians discussed years of demanding coursework, training, and delayed gratification, emphasizing that healthcare careers require significant sacrifice. However, they argued that those sacrifices become worthwhile only when individuals enter the profession for the right reasons.

Resilience was another major theme on the healthcare side. One physician encouraged students not to become discouraged by setbacks, suggesting that failure provides more valuable lessons than success. Another shared that taking a yearlong break from her studies to regroup and rediscover her passion allowed her to continue her career in a more fulfilling way.

Although the event focused on two very different industries, the conclusions reached by many speakers were strikingly similar. Whether discussing finance, healthcare, or another field entirely, panelists consistently encouraged students to stay curious, stay adaptable, find mentorship, and define success according to their own values rather than outside expectations.

## Prom Preview

by CAROLINE QIAN,  
ARTS AND  
ENTERTAINMENT  
EDITOR

Every June as the school year draws to an end, students at Ward Melville eagerly look forward to the senior prom. The dance, held this year on June 25, is an opportunity for everyone to ditch their everyday uniform of sweatshirts and instead don extravagant dresses and suits.

These outfits, along with the entire event, are often based on a fundamental aesthetic. The monthlong process to finalize the theme began in September, when the Ward Melville Prom Committee met to produce a large number of possibilities. By early December, the committee settled on a shortlist of five options, and this was soon narrowed down to two finalists: *The Greatest Showman*, the 2017 film about the entertainer P.T. Barnum that starred Hugh Jackman; and *The Great Gatsby*, the Jazz age novel by F. Scott

Fitzgerald that famously evokes images of the Roaring Twenties, opulence, and vintage decorations. Right before the winter holiday break, Ward Melville seniors voted to choose the latter as their class's theme.

Many students are putting much time and effort into preparations for the dance. For example, senior Olivia Miller is going the extra mile by hand-altering her outfits to adhere to the prom theme. "The inspiration behind my dress was the 1920s and the flapper era. I got a red dress and have been doing bead embroidery on the corset and into the skirt," Miller explained. "I am looking forward to prom; it's been fun to customize my dress." After a long year of schoolwork, prom will be a chance for students to display their creativity, artistic skills, and unique styles.

While prom may seem like an effortless and glamorous spectacle on the surface, the students, faculty, and parent volunteers of the Prom Committee have worked endlessly for months to prepare the event and ensure everything goes smoothly. Samantha Parrella,



a history teacher and a member of the Prom Committee, stated that one challenge of the planning process included "making sure that the design [of the prom location] that the committee comes up with is something we can realistically ask our parent volunteers to create." Even so, Parrella emphasized that this wasn't a large restriction, saying, "We are so lucky to have so many parents working from March to June to make our vision really come to life. There has rarely been something the parents could not figure out how to do!"

In addition to the iconic car line and prom entrance that

students look forward to every year, there will be some new features added to the 2026 celebration. Parrella offered a general preview, saying, "The committee is really focused on making the prom a full immersive experience, so there are definitely elements that will evoke all senses!" Furthermore, she hypothesized that "students are most excited to see what the halls they walk down are able to transform to."

Prom is one of high schoolers' most cherished celebrations of their school careers, and Ward Melville seniors are ready to celebrate Gatsby-style!

## Senior Assassin Makes Waves

by SARAH WU,  
SCIENCE EDITOR

Every spring, high school seniors across the country take part in a tradition that turns daily life into a game of timing, strategy, and water. Senior Assassin, a student-run competition, involves participants eliminating assigned targets with water guns while avoiding elimination themselves. With more than 200 players and a prize pool of around \$4,000, this year's game has once again become one of the most competitive and entertaining events for the senior class.

Organized and managed by a small group of seniors headed by Tony Gorski, the game kicked off in April. Entry fees of \$15 per person helped build the prize pool, and eliminations are tracked through the Splashin app. Players, who work with a partner to advance in the game, only remain safe when wearing both floaties and goggles, creating a daily struggle between staying protected and taking risks to eliminate their targets.

In order to keep things unpredictable and flowing, the organizers occasionally introduced "purge nights." During these hours, all gear-based immunity is removed and players are never safe from elimination, leading to even more tension. In addition, "power-ups" are placed at random

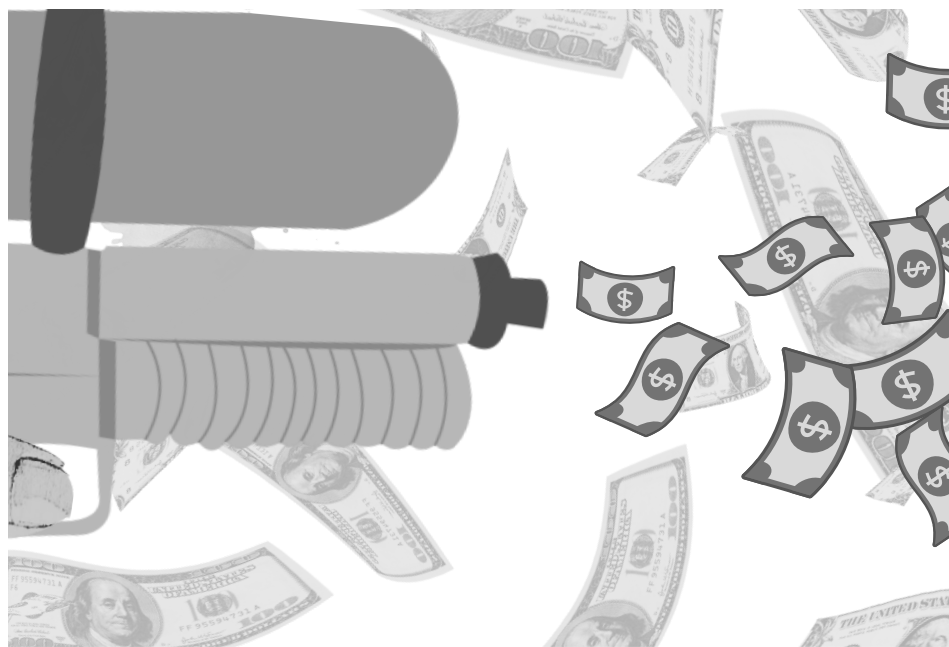
locations throughout the game, giving players the opportunity to gain an advantage. For example, a "power-up" can protect a player from elimination during "purges."

For many, the prize money is far from the only appealing element of the game. It has become one of the final shared experiences before graduation, giving students a chance to have fun and de-stress in the midst of schoolwork and college decisions. In mid-May, one senior described the competition as "a nice way to get a break from all our AP exams. It's just a fun senior activity in general!" That excitement has spread throughout the senior class, even reaching students who didn't sign up or have been eliminated.

This year's competition has already produced several memorable moments, but one elimination has gained particular attention. According to several seniors within the game, player Fardin Sinha believed he still had immunity during an encounter with his assassin, proceeding to argue about his elimination before trying to escape. "The funniest part was when he fell trying to run away," one senior said. "That was really the cherry on top!"

Moments like these have become part of what makes Senior Assassin so entertaining. The game creates a mix of competition and fun, with players hatching elaborate strategies while others watch the results unfold on social media.

There is a large spectrum of different strategies and approaches



to the game. Some players stay extremely cautious, never leaving the house or carefully checking parking lots before getting out. Others play aggressively, hiding in their target's unlocked car, stealing their floaties or goggles, and constantly driving around searching for a good opportunity.

In fact, the game is not always played honestly, with students resorting to trickery — or, as some characterize it, betrayal — to eliminate opponents. In one instance, a player pretended his car had broken down and asked a friend for help, only to fire the water gun moments later. Another incident reportedly involved a player breaking a truce at a party, taking out friends who thought they were safe.

The competition itself has become increasingly intense as more players get eliminated. One senior explained that students have been "camping outside houses,

following targets home, driving in circles to avoid being followed, and even going all the way to Montauk to collect power-ups."

A few competitors quickly separated themselves due to how seriously they take the game, making them potential favorites to win the large prize. Among those most commonly mentioned were Talan Perez and Rocco Gargano, with one senior explaining that "they have spent a lot of time and gas money going after their targets, starting their own purges, and eliminating their friends." However, they were recently eliminated, scrambling predictions. (As of publication, the game is still ongoing.)

After spending years together in classes, sports, clubs, and school events, the Class of 2026 has taken the opportunity to connect in new ways before graduation, creating shared memories that make the end of senior year even more meaningful.

# THE CLASS OF 2026

Abdurahman Abdeen  
 Katie Aberman  
 Dasun Abeykoon  
 Anthony Accurso  
 Emma Achtziger  
 Jaime Adams  
 Ammara Adeel  
 Anne Agnese  
 Joglanio Alcindor  
 Einar Alfredsson  
 Isabella Alu  
 Anthony Anatol  
 Ryan Anderson  
 Greta Anselm  
 Jackson Aplustille  
 Isabella Armato  
 Valentina Arrubla  
 Alfredo Azzam-Stroia  
 Danica Badillo  
 Sophia Baker  
 Ananya Balaji  
 Alan Bangiyev  
 Jaden Baron  
 Justina Barton  
 Tiffiany Bascombe  
 Nicholas Beck  
 David Begel  
 Anthony Bellini  
 Assaf Ben-Shimon  
 Gianna Benedetto  
 Joseph Benedetto  
 Victor Bergamaschi  
 Charles Beylik  
 Kate Biondi  
 Maxwell Blasberg  
 Anthony Bliss  
 Nathaniel Bolze  
 Sofia Bonello  
 Chloe Borch  
 Genesis Borjas  
 Samuel Boswell  
 Kaden Boutcher  
 Bella Brady  
 Noralynn Bragg  
 Riley Brereton  
 Juliet Brittman  
 Audrey Brogan  
 Meriel Bronsveld  
 Maryanna Bronzino  
 Thomas Bronzino  
 Caleb Bruechert  
 Elliot Burgueno  
 John Butera  
 Riley Butler

Anna Cafarella  
 Sophia Campagna  
 Maysum Candan  
 Dasi Cash  
 Abigail Caskey  
 Michaela Cassara  
 Yamileth Castaneda Carrera  
 Emily Castelli  
 Sabrina Catsoris  
 Rocco Cerullo  
 Ayaan Chaudhari  
 Sarah Cherlin  
 Lynelle Chernavsky  
 Katherine Chitkara  
 Bianca Chu  
 Sophie Ciardullo  
 Ashlynn Cicero  
 Savio Cimino  
 Alexandra Cole  
 Brian Comiskey  
 Dominic Comunale  
 William Corbisiero  
 Daniel Cornish  
 Lauren Cosenza  
 Alexandra Cotlet  
 Micah Creps  
 Luciana Crespo  
 Liam Cronin  
 Brayden Csoka  
 Tyler Curley  
 Jemiah Curtis  
 Sasha Dabrowski  
 Indigo Dalton  
 Dylan Damiano  
 Abby De Geronimo  
 Aidan De Marco  
 Joseph DeBono  
 Alexander DeCillis  
 Jack Degen  
 Sophia Del Guercio  
 Samantha Delmage  
 Madison DeLuise  
 Meet Desai  
 Abigail Desimone  
 Isabella DeVito  
 Josue Diaz Nunez  
 Loranda DiMarco  
 Charolette Dmytry  
 Kevin Dong  
 Emma Doyle  
 William Dreyer  
 Natalie Drucker  
 Sydney Duca  
 Matthew Dungey

Zachary Dungey  
 Zachary Dunn  
 Sean Edson  
 Finn Ehm  
 Ziad Elhendawy  
 Jaclyn Engel  
 Michael Ericksen  
 Gabriel Evan  
 Nicholas Failla  
 Xinyu Fan  
 Anthony Fardellone  
 Fatima Faridi  
 Deaglan Farrell  
 Julia Feit  
 Norah Finn  
 Dominic Firenze  
 Delaney Florio  
 Sophia Florio  
 Danica Ford  
 Violet Fortner  
 Emily Frederick  
 Charlette Freeman  
 Benjamin Friedenber  
 Lucas Fritz  
 Cayden Gaffney  
 Madeline Galeotafiore  
 Emilie Gallagher  
 Evan Gargano  
 Rocco Gargano  
 Maria Gavrilov  
 Alexander Gembinski  
 Kayla George  
 Sahil Ghosh  
 Gianna Giancaterino  
 Olivia Gilmore  
 William Giordano  
 Ella Girard  
 Kate Gironda  
 Charlotte Glotch  
 Noa Golan  
 Rowan Golub  
 Sophia Good  
 Caitlyn Goode  
 Anthony Gorsky  
 Brenden Grange  
 Alison Granitto  
 James Greek  
 Jenna Greek  
 Lil Greene  
 Abigail Gross  
 John Guercia  
 Antonio Guevara Nunez  
 Dario Guglielmo  
 Derek Guise

Jeremy Guise  
 Ryan Gutman  
 Stephen Haas  
 Benjamin Haase  
 Carol Halpin  
 Grace Hammons  
 Roan Hansen-Crowley  
 Arhaan Ul Haque  
 Nafisah Haque  
 Joseph Harmon  
 Victoria Harmon  
 Miles Hatcher-Robertson  
 Rose-Majkeane Hector  
 Ava Heller  
 Noah Hennessey  
 Lea Herbst  
 Mathew Hernandez  
 Emily Herrnstein  
 Kate Herrnstein  
 Rachel Herrnstein  
 Lillian Higgins  
 Leah Hoefler  
 Mia Hoffman  
 Catherine Holsberg  
 Ethan Honan  
 Michael Horan  
 Julia Hou  
 Letong Huang  
 Lily Huang  
 Christian Hubbard  
 Matthew Hubbard  
 Grace Hughes  
 Jake Hurley  
 Evan Hurowitz  
 Skyla Huston  
 Mason Hutchison  
 Alyssa Ismail  
 William Janczyk  
 Jacqueline Janny  
 Sarah Janson  
 Luke Jantzen  
 Marellys Japa Urena  
 Yirau Jaramillo Montenegro  
 Jillian Jargo  
 Anbang Jiang  
 Luke Johnson  
 Sophia Johnson  
 Salma Jordan Aviles  
 Ava Justino  
 Bora Karaosmanoglu  
 Ava Karnbach  
 Molly Karp  
 Ryan Karp  
 Dean Kelly

# CONGRATULATIONS

## CONGRATULATIONS!

Emme, watching you grow into the incredible young woman you are today has made us prouder than words can say. Your hard work and big dreams have led to this exciting next chapter at Penn State University Park studying Aerospace Engineering. Keep reaching for the stars and believing in yourself the way we always have. Congratulations on your graduation, we love you so much!

Love Mom, Dad and Ava



EMILY CASTELLI

## CONGRATULATIONS!

Congratulations Caitlyn!!!  
We are so proud of you!!!  
We love you!

Mom, Dad and William



CAITLYN GOODE

## CONGRATULATIONS!

We are very proud of you  
Sean! You're going to do great  
things!

Love ~ Mom & Dad



SEAN TRACY



## CONGRATULATIONS!

Congratulations Olivia!  
We are so excited for  
your next chapter  
at the College of  
Charleston!

Love,  
Mom, Dad and Izzy



OLIVIA TANTILLO

## CONGRATULATIONS!

Hijo de mi corazon me siento  
orgullosa de ti ❤️ Te amo y  
se que vas a llegar muy  
lejos, eres el mejor.

YIRAU HAVIER JARAMILLO



## CONGRATULATIONS!

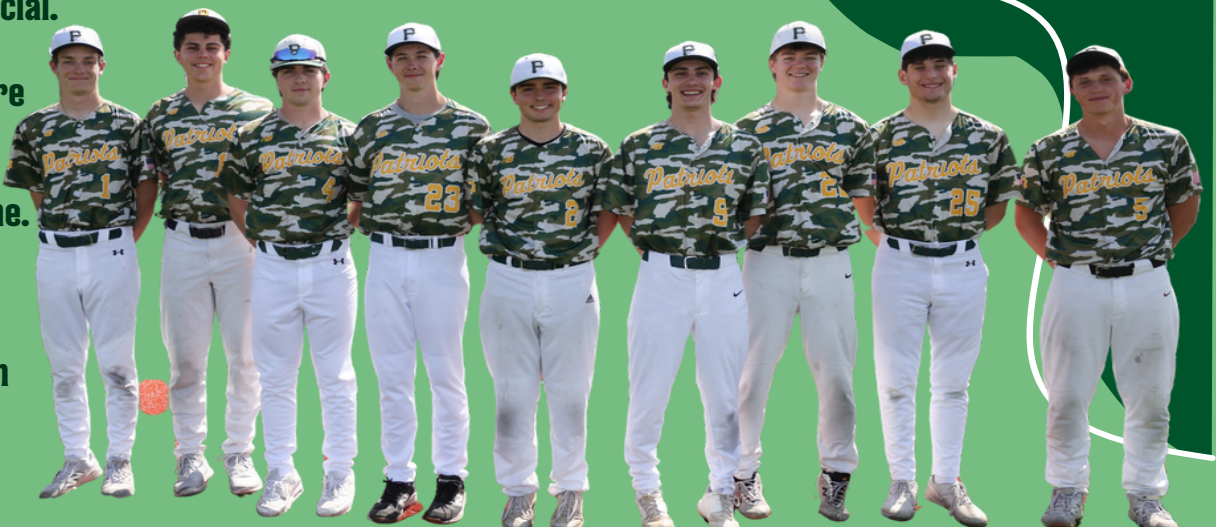
My Dear Arhaan,  
Watching you graduate fills my heart with pride and love. You have grown into an amazing young man, and I could not be prouder of you.  
Keep believing in yourself and chasing your dreams. No matter where life takes you, always remember how deeply you are loved.  
Congratulations, my son. The sky is yours.  
Love always,



## CONGRATULATIONS!

To the Senior Players of WM Varsity Baseball,  
From Little League to varsity baseball, you have grown together, not only as athletes but also as teammates, leaders, and part of something bigger than yourselves. Witnessing your commitment, camaraderie, resilience, and passion for the game over the years has been truly special.  
We are deeply proud of all your achievements and, more importantly, of the individuals you are today. The bond you share was built through countless practices, games, victories, challenges, and memories that will last a lifetime.  
As you embark on new journeys, always remember where it began and the family you created along the way. We wish each of you success, happiness, and endless opportunities in all your future endeavors.  
Once a Patriot, always family.

With love and pride,  
The Senior Parents



WARD MELVILLE VARSITY BASEBALL SENIORS

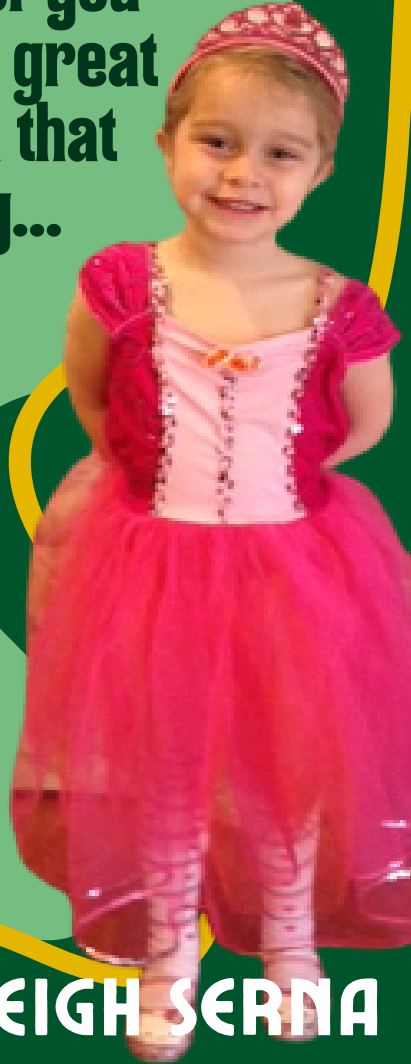
# CONGRATULATIONS

## CONGRATULATIONS!

Charleigh, you are so kind, intelligent, caring and wise beyond your years!

We are SO proud of you and know you have great things ahead of you that will impact so many... congratulations with so much love and pride!

Love,  
Mom, Dad & Rowan



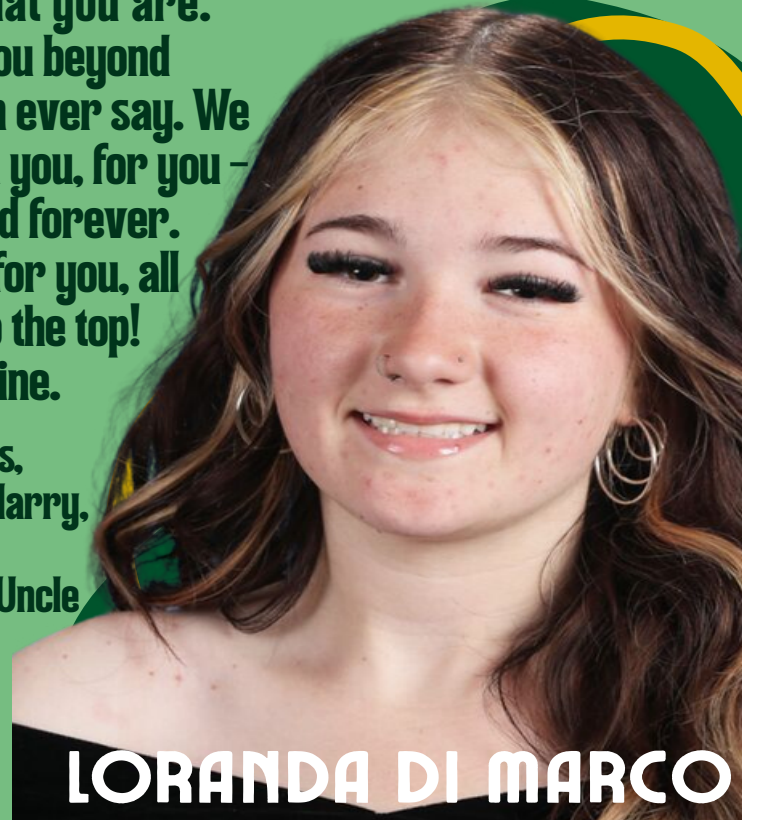
CHARLEIGH SERNA

## CONGRATULATIONS!

To our Dearest Loranda, Congratulations on one of the best days of your life! This is the beginning of a bright future. May this journey lead you to all your dreams and wishes. We are beyond proud of you in every way. Our hearts are so full with joy, happiness and love that you always bring to our lives. We can't wait to see what the future has in store for you. Never forget how special you are !! You make a difference, just being the incredible woman that you are.

We love you beyond words can ever say. We stand with you, for you - always and forever. Cheering for you, all the way to the top! Our sunshine.

Love Always,  
Mom, Dad, Harry,  
Grandma,  
Grandpa & Uncle  
Ed



LORANDA DI MARCO

## CONGRATULATIONS!

It feels like just yesterday you stepped onto the school bus for your very first day of kindergarten. We are so proud of the person you have become and of everything you have accomplished along the way. As you begin this exciting new chapter of your life, we know there are so many wonderful opportunities and experiences ahead of you.

Always remember that your family loves you very much, thinks about you all the time, and will always be there to support you no matter where life takes you.

We cannot wait to see all the amazing things you will do in the future.

Congratulations!! And best wishes on this exciting new journey!

With Love: Amma,  
Appachci and Nangi



DASUN ABEYKOON

## CONGRATULATIONS!

Congratulations Liam!  
Dad and I are so proud of you and all you have accomplished! We love you to the moon and back!

XOXO



LIAM ZAKRZEWSKI

# CONGRATULATIONS

# CONGRATULATIONS!



From WS Mount Elementary School to Ward Melville High School, graduating as the Class of 2026!

From those first classroom memories to this exciting milestone, it has been wonderful to watch you grow, learn, and accomplish so much over the years. As you move on to new paths and opportunities, we wish you all the very best in wherever life takes you next.

May your futures be filled with happiness, success, and endless possibilities. Once a Patriot, always a Patriot!

With love and congratulations from all of your families



## CONGRATULATIONS!

Dear Keira,  
It couldn't be any clearer that when you look in the mirror, you have everything inside of you to succeed at BU. Since you were little and sat upon our knee we knew you were destined for more than you could see. You are great and will continue to create a life to celebrate!

KEIRA ANN KENNY

Love Mom, Dad & Pearl



## CONGRATULATIONS!

Congrats Sarah! Class of 2026! We are so proud of you and can't wait for your next journey in life.

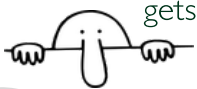
SARAH JANSON

Love, Dad, Mom, Harry III & Lila

## CONGRATULATIONS!

### KAI

We are so proud of you and all the work that brought you here. Pilots usually avoid supercells, but you could end up flying toward them. Return to home base and your flute if your flight gets too turbulent. We love you so much.



mom&dad



KAI NENNER

## CONGRATULATIONS!

Maddi, watching you grow, thrive, and become the incredible young woman you are has been one of our greatest joys. Congratulations on your graduation!

Love always,  
Mom and Dad



MADILYN PREWETT

## CONGRATULATIONS!

Dear Sasha. We are so proud of all that you have accomplished throughout high school. Your hard work and determination have been incredible to watch. As you begin this new journey, always believe in yourself and know we will always be cheering you on. ❤️

We love you so much,  
Mom, Dad, Lila and Alexa



SASHA DABROWSKI

## CONGRATULATIONS TO THE CLASS OF 2026!

**Class of 2026:  
What Comes  
Next**

by **NORA LOZEAU,**  
**STAFF WRITER**

For Ward Melville’s Class of 2026, graduation marks both an end and a beginning. After years spent sharing classrooms, seniors are now preparing to move forward to new opportunities and environments. Some are planning to attend college across the country, while others are pursuing trade programs, music, athletics, or military service. While every student’s future will look different, each graduate is leaving high school with the lessons, relationships, and memories that have defined their time in Three Village.

A vast majority (approximately 85%) of Ward Melville seniors are pursuing further education at four-year colleges and universities, according to a survey by the Guidance Department that collected data from 95% of the Class of 2026. For many students, their next steps towards a college education mark an opportunity to continue their interests that have developed throughout high school.

Additionally, 9% of students are attending 2-year colleges or trade schools in order to enter the workforce sooner, and 2% are entering a field of work directly after graduation.

For some, the next chapter of their lives will take place at some of the most selective and prestigious universities in the country. Students attending Ivy League schools and other highly competitive institutions have spent years balancing rigorous coursework, extracurricular activities, and community service in preparation for the demanding application process. Despite the prestige of these schools, many admitted seniors emphasized that their decisions were ultimately motivated by finding programs and communities that aligned with their personal goals. “I wanted a college environment that would challenge me while also allowing me to pursue the things I’m passionate about,” one senior said.

Student-athletes experience graduation as a culmination of years of discipline and commitment. Choosing to continue athletics on a collegiate level requires significant dedication and persistence, especially for those planning to participate in Division

I (DI) programs. “I have done gymnastics since first grade and did it all throughout high school,” says Lillian Higgins, a student committed to La Salle University’s DI Acrobatics and Tumbling program. “I would usually have gymnastics four or five times a week after school, and my practices would be from 5 to 9 p.m.”

Similarly, some students are continuing to pursue their passions in music and musical theater. “I’ve been involved in theater my entire life,” says Ariella Mossey. “Pursuing theater was always my plan since I was about five years old.” After dedicating countless hours to rehearsals, shows, and concerts, many seniors have built an identity around the performing arts. Jeremias Maldonado-Sanchez, who plans to study music composition in college, emphasized that choosing your career path based on passion is absolutely necessary, because “when you do something you love, everybody can see it reflected in your work.”

0.5% of Ward Melville students will be entering the military after graduation. Enlisting in the military reflects the goal of some students to contribute to something larger than themselves and make an impact on the world while also


gaining experiences beyond the classroom. Sean Tracy, a senior who will begin Army Basic Training just two weeks after receiving his diploma, noted that he was intrigued by the “potential life experiences and opportunities that the Army could provide.”

After being confined to a somewhat rigid high school environment and classroom structure, several seniors at Ward Melville — representing approximately 1% of the graduating class — have opted to take a gap year in order to gain experiences, independence, or clarity prior to their next steps in life. While this path may be considered “unconventional,” these students view the year as an opportunity to better understand their personal and academic goals and prepare for their future.

The wide range of post-graduation plans reflects a group of students increasingly willing to define success according to their values and ambitions. Whether pursuing highly competitive academic programs, careers in the arts, military service, or directly entering the workforce, members of Ward Melville’s Class of 2026 are making decisions based on their personal goals and priorities.

**CONGRATULATIONS!**

**Congrats, Zamaan! Cheers to surviving early mornings, deadlines, and proving that “breaking news” can happen at any time. Don’t stop being amazing — just try to get more sleep. Love you and we’re so proud of you!**



**ZAMAAN MALIK**

Love Mama, Papa, the Little Boy & Amalfi

**CONGRATULATIONS!**

**Congratulations Rachel, Emily & Kate! We are so proud of you, and we can’t wait to watch your next adventures!**

Love,  
Mom, Dad, Michael & Matthew



**RACHEL, EMILY & KATE HERRNSTEIN**

**CONGRATULATIONS!**

**You are the toughest competitor that has a heart of gold. Kindness and compassion are a part of your soul. You always look to brighten everyone’s day and your drive to win in everything you do is contagious. Always be true to who you are and the sky is the limit. We love you and are so proud of all you have accomplished and look forward to what is yet to come. Everyone always asked your favorite sport, and the answer continues and will always be, whatever he’s playing at the time. That’s why you will always remain to us and everyone else ... PEAKATHLETE!!!**



**EDWARD SHIELDS**

LOVE .... THE FAMILY

Jaelyn Kelly	Kallie Micena	Kaitlyn Reingold	James Speciale
Keira-Ann Kenny	Nadia Milana	Jack Rella	Jesse Spronck
Harsukh Khakh	Rizal Millamena	Michael Retakh	Abby Stabile
Jememah Khan	Deirdre Miller	Claudia Retzlaff	Ava Steinhauff
Nataniela Khanimova	Olivia Miller	Alice Revy	Jordan Strazzera
Nicholas Kiernan	Rylie Millett	Ethan Reyes	Gracie Stuart
Jacob Kiersh	Christopher Mingrone	Katharine Richards	Brandon Sturm
Rowan Kiley	Mia Miranda	Kiera Riddle	Yuming Su
William Klein	Sadie Miranda	Allerton Riddle-Hwang	Kaylee Swanson
Serafyma Klyosova	Mia Modica	Thomas Ridge	Alisha Syed
Thomas Knapp	Ayush Mojumdar	Olivia Riegel	Alex Tang
Adam Korneffel	Brianna Molloy	Joshua Risko	Olivia Tantillo
Aditya Kumar	Thomas Monfiletto	Colin Robertson	Jillian Tekverk
Anthony LaGrega	Dylan Moore	Connor Robertson	Sanil Thervil
Matthew Lam	Albert Morales	Olivia Robertson	Naysa Thesatus
Madeline Larsen	Peter Morreale	Paige Roeser	Ava Tomicic
Dilyn Lasak	Brooke Morrison	Cameron Rogers	Wendy Tong
Mason Lasner	Ariella Mossey	Gianna Romani	Hadley Torre
Sam Lawlor	Connor Mou	Carol Rosales	Sean Tracy
Charlotte Lazzarini	Clara Muller	Christopher Rosaschi	Olivia Tramontana
Michaela Legge	Kayla Murphy	Lily Rosengard	Asher Tu
Chloe Leibstein	Kaylee Murphy	Cole Rosenthal	Thomas Tunstead
Jillian Lewis	Reagan Murray	Anja Rosenthal-Vincenti	Tuana Turkyilmaz
Ted Li	Meghan Murtha	Alayna Roseto	Cameron Turner
Ian Licavoli	Lillian Nazaruk	Jacob Rostan	Kaede Urso
Brianna Lienemann	Kai Nenninger	Alexa Roth	Lyla Vassino
Eric Lin	Makayla Nieto	Zoey Roughley	Trinity Vega
Selina Lin	Owen Nossa	Haley Rowett	Damien Velez
William Lin	Julian Oliveira	Isabella Ruehle	Arianna Vero
Quinton Linette-Shortell	Colin Ordonez	Aasiyah Sadiq	Jacqueline Vinciguerra
Cayla Liu	Shannon Orr	Gabriella Salerno	Jineet Vinod
Ella Liu	Sofia Pace	Jack Salgado	Amber Vion
Mia Liu	Josephine Padavan	Mikayla Samuel	Erin Ward
Peter Lizza	Sofia Pagillo	Andrew Samulyak	Daniel Weinacht
Gavin Lohmann	Nicholas Palermo	Loy Saponara	Jonah Weisman
Michael Lopez	Daniel Palmaccio	Harrison Savicki	Chester Weiss
Liam Loughlin	Yash Paranjape	Jessica Scardino	Aaron Weng
Andy Lu	James-Henry Parkinson	Antonella Scarpa	Hazel Williams
Kaylin Lyons	Chase Patrie	Makaila Schaefer	Michael Wolski
Dominic Macchio	Thomas Patriss	Benjamin Schleider	Aida Woreth
Gavin Macrina	Riley Pennino	William Schmitz	Skylar Wright
Kyleigh Makarius	Holland Peralta	Cate Scolaro	Andrew Xie
Jeremias Maldonado Sanchez	Talan Perez	Grace Scolaro	Anna Xing
Zamaan Malik	Lila Pessier	Natalie Scolaro	Tina Xing
Aidan Malone	Karsyn Petoske	Rachel Scott	Ruochen Xu
Rebecca Malz	Anna Pickford	Zackary Seidman	Ronan Youngs
Thomas Mango	Keira Pirozzi	Charleigh Serna	Liam Zakrzewski
Joseph Margulies	Alanna Pisano	Jake Sfakis	Anne Zazzera
Collin Mark	Gavin Plume	Mattea Shank	Christopher Zenaty
Londyn Marks	Jolie-Ann Polzella	Jason Shapiro	Brian Zhang
Diego Martinez	Thomas Poor	Muhammad Sharif	Eunice Zheng
Julien Maurer	Joshua Poppers	Edward Shields	Evin Zheng
Zachary Mauser	Alexandra Potekhin	Natalie Siegal	Eric Zhong
Emily Mc Caffrey	Madilynn Prewett	Samuel Siegal	Edward Zhou
Wyatt McDermott	Caroline Price	Logan Simon	Kevin Zhu
Caitlyn McGee	Javier Prieto	Fardin Sinha	Gabrielle Zorn
Liam McGovern	Christian Puopolo	Theodora Siu	Eric Zou
Kaitlyn McNeil	Brooke Raber	Mikayla Slep	Rachel Zou
Colby Medina	Tanay Rajgor	Derek Small	Arahm Zubair
Katherine Medordi	Rishikesh Ram	Ana Smith	Jessica Zuchowska
Alyssa Meoli	Payton Raupp	Brynn Smith	Natalie Zvokel
Abigail Meschi	Juliana Realmuto	Max Solomon	
Lily Meschi	Jessica Reilly	Noah Spata	

## Two Miles with Eric Zhong, Class of 2026 Valedictorian

by BELLA LI, STAFF WRITER

The afternoon sun cast a glow across West Meadow Beach as a light breeze drifted off the harbor, carrying steady waves of wind toward Trustees Road. As I prepared for my two-mile walk with valedictorian Eric Zhong on a typical spring day, I knew little about the direction our conversation would take. Zhong, who plans to attend Cornell University in the fall as a computer science major, carries himself with a thoughtful curiosity that quickly shaped our discussion. Although he is extremely accomplished in the traditional sense, it is his passion for problem solving that most clearly defines him.

As senior year begins to fade, Zhong expects to spend the coming months balancing old routines with new responsibilities. Reading, tennis, and badminton — activities that provide him both enjoyment and relief from academic intensity — occupy much of his free time. Simultaneously, Zhong is preparing for another milestone of independence: his driving test. “It would be much easier to commute and navigate college with a license,” he stated. Eager for what lies ahead, he is nevertheless appreciative of the moments that will fill this transitional summer.

Zhong traces his interest in computer science back to elementary school. “I began experimenting and testing programs on Scratch,” he recalled, describing how he found himself increasingly captivated by the process of developing games rather than merely consuming. “When I look at a video game, my brain immediately begins analyzing the mechanics behind it,” Zhong reflected.

His appreciation for mathematics developed alongside his central passion, steadily growing throughout the years. He spoke particularly fondly of his time on the Gelinas Math Team under the guidance of teacher Stanley Hanscom, whose enthusiasm left a lasting impression. Rather than viewing math as pure coursework or competition, Zhong reminisced about the creativity and collaboration fostered through weekly activities. Hearing him reflect on those years, it became evident that his connection to the subject stems from a genuine desire to learn.

That intellectual curiosity has remained a defining constant throughout his high school career.

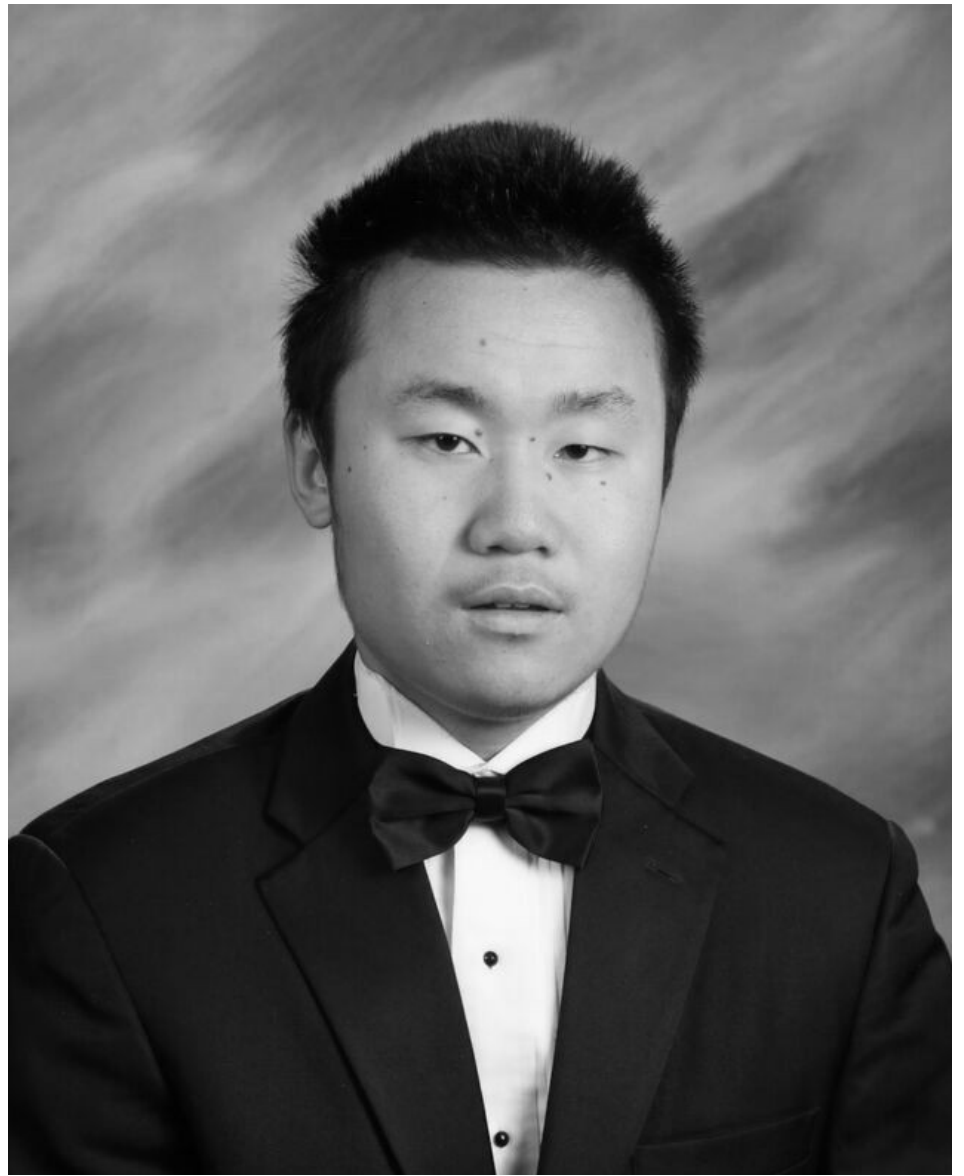
Now serving as president of the Ward Melville Math Team, Zhong continues to foster the same excitement that he encountered. His accomplishments — which include qualifying for the American Invitational Mathematics Examination five times and the prestigious United States of America Mathematical Olympiad once — reflect years of persistence and analytical ability. Yet throughout our conversation, Zhong placed emphasis on the importance of learning rather than the accolades themselves, approaching mathematics as an opportunity to explore and understand.

Zhong’s interest in technology is accompanied by a thoughtful perspective on the use of artificial intelligence, a topic that inevitably found its way into our conversation. While he is excited by AI’s rapidly growing capabilities, he is careful to distinguish between using it as a tool and full reliance on it as a shortcut. “I think AI can be a great tool when it is used right,” he remarked. However, he is concerned by how frequently students use AI programs simply to complete assignments. “If you are using it to do your work for you, you are missing the opportunity to actually learn the material,” he explained. To Zhong, the crux of the issue is the loss of genuine learning. He highlighted that subjects such as mathematics build upon one another, meaning that missing foundational concepts will create greater challenges later on. Although he is enthusiastic about the future of AI, Zhong emphasizes that artificial intelligence cannot replace true education.

**Beyond the technical side of computer science, Zhong is motivated by its potential to create meaningful change in our dynamic world.**

As our conversation shifted toward the broader applications of technology, he explained that much of his passion for problem solving stems from a desire to “make an impact and help others.” Listening to him speak about artificial intelligence and programming, it was apparent that his enthusiasm lies in imagining what those solutions might accomplish.

Other than classrooms and competitions, Zhong devotes a large portion of time to serving his community through the Long Island Youth Development organization, where he is both president of the math club and a tennis instructor. As the former, Zhong organizes weekly sessions designed to help younger students prepare for various competitions



while improving their general mathematical abilities. Meanwhile, as a tennis instructor, he teaches younger children the fundamentals of the sport through lessons and activities. Though vastly different in practice, both roles illustrate how he gives back to the community by supporting the younger generation.

**“I just like learning... it’s important to enjoy what you do. I guess you could force yourself, but why spend your time doing something you have to push yourself to like?”**

That philosophy carries through into his academic work, where his personal interests often drive his pursuits. Further along our walk, he proudly spoke about his code for the AP Computer Science Principles exam. Although 15 lines of code are technically sufficient, most students write somewhere between 30 and 100. However, Zhong wrote over 550. He simply shrugged and explained the vast difference, saying, “I got really invested in it and I liked writing the code.” His project, a chess game featuring international chess on one side and Chinese chess on the other, became something he spent a considerable amount of time refining. “I’m pretty proud of thinking of doing that. It felt unique,” he added. For him, the project was less about meeting requirements and more about the process. “I think that’s where I naturally tend to,” he said, describing how he found genuine enjoyment

in building and experimenting through code.

That level of immersion also shapes the way Zhong manages his time outside of individual projects. Between academics, extracurriculars, and community involvement, Zhong credits steadiness as a key part of how he is able to balance so many responsibilities. “Consistency is key,” he said, emphasizing that he often organizes his days by prioritizing assignments as soon as possible. “I always complete schoolwork early rather than letting it accumulate.” To stay on track, he also relies on small systems of reminders, such as notes or emails to himself that remind him of important deadlines. Additionally, Zhong says that he is “not much of a procrastinator,” since putting off tasks will never benefit the outcome.

As our walk along Trustees Road came to a close, Zhong spoke optimistically about Cornell and the opportunities that lie ahead. While he hopes to become involved with computer science clubs and explore his interests further, he speaks less about fixed plans and more about continued growth. For Zhong, learning is not just a path towards achievement but something that is inherently worthwhile. Watching the sun sink towards the harbor in front of us, I began reflecting on the quiet curiosity that had guided our conversation since the very beginning. Wherever it leads him next, I know he will meet life’s challenges and opportunities with the same thoughtful enthusiasm that defines him now.



## Two Miles with Kate Herrnstein, Class of 2026 Salutatorian

by CAROLINE QIAN,  
ARTS &  
ENTERTAINMENT  
EDITOR

In the midst of an unusually cool May, it was a very warm afternoon when I met with Kate Herrnstein at West Meadow Beach. Both of us fast walkers, we quickly looped past the two miles of Trustees Road and continued to the opposite end of the beach. Going beyond the average is something that Herrnstein has done throughout her years in high school. Herrnstein never had the goal of being salutatorian: even when she was notified during junior year that she was one of the top students in the Class of 2026, she affirmed that she would simply continue to try her best and be happy with wherever that effort landed her.

**Going beyond the average is something that Herrnstein has done throughout her years in high school.**

Her work paid off. Herrnstein is an incoming freshman at Harvard University, where she plans to major in physics. Beyond that, her other passions range from watching baseball with her sisters to reading *Crime and Punishment*. But present across all of these

areas is Herrnstein's willingness to dive deeply into any endeavor, a trait that is noticeable immediately upon meeting her and her self-professed greatest strength. Even when completing ordinary homework assignments, Herrnstein often finds herself going down rabbit holes of research. What may seem like a twenty-minute chore to others is a fascinating learning opportunity for her.

This endless curiosity is what triggered Herrnstein's love for science. Studying everything from natural phenomena to the derivations of physics formulas polished her ability to dig deep into ideas, whether others' or her own. Given her prospective major, it's no surprise that she has always found physics especially appealing. "When I started learning physics, it matched what I really was interested in because you'll learn that a basic principle can apply to almost everything," Herrnstein said. "You can build up from there and connect to things you learn in other classes too." That reflects her broader belief that life itself is full of fascinating patterns and connections, chief among them the relationship between her love of physics and her love of baseball. A fierce Red Sox fan, Herrnstein draws parallels between their perfect balances of rules and spontaneity.

During our walk, Herrnstein recalled watching YouTube videos on a myriad of scientific topics ever since she was little. While seemingly trivial, they built the foundation for her love of science. She even chose to

highlight these small moments from her childhood on her college applications, reflecting on how significantly they impacted her.

As she grew up, so did the scale of her STEM-related activities. During the summer of her junior year, she completed two internships at Stony Brook University. One was about studying how soil and different additives impacted seed growth, and the other involved working with a civil engineer to explore earthquake resistance. Suddenly, her lifelong curiosity had become a viable career option. In Herrnstein's words, "I always knew I was curious and I wanted to learn more, but finding out how to apply that and see myself in the future was always really important for me."

Although Herrnstein plans to major in physics at Harvard, she's also considering minoring in literature or music. She reflected that "it would be fascinating" to continue exploring some of her other interests beyond STEM in college. In fact, AP Literature and Composition was one of Herrnstein's favorite classes at Ward Melville, and her favorite books include heavy classics such as *Crime and Punishment* and *The Count of Monte Cristo*.

Furthermore, she's happy to engage in the subject with others: for more than ten minutes, we discussed the newest addition to the Hunger Games series, *Sunrise on the Reaping*. (While we're both fans of the original trilogy, we both agreed that the newest installment lacked a plot that could stand on its own.) I was engrossed in our conversation about books and had to force myself to move on to other topics. Our discussion of reading, though brief, displayed Herrnstein's ability to deeply interact with a broad variety of interests.

Another one of Herrnstein's favorite extracurriculars was playing the clarinet in the Ward Melville Wind Ensemble. The ability to contribute to a community through music greatly inspired her. She fondly described memories she formed with her bandmates, including their recent trip to Boston. But Herrnstein's connection with music doesn't end with playing the clarinet. She recalled her friends introducing her to Taylor Swift, whose music she professed to greatly enjoy. "I know she has a lot of haters," Herrnstein reflected, "but to me, she represents a successful female artist."

On top of academics, reading, and music, she also greatly values soccer, a sport she's been playing for most of her life, both on a club team and Ward Melville's varsity team. As part of the latter, she contributed to the state

championship twice during her sophomore and junior years. While Herrnstein confessed that her journey in soccer was at times difficult due to its competitive and time-consuming nature, she looks back on her chapter of high school soccer with gratitude. To that end, she is considering joining a club team in college with the goal of redefining soccer for herself as a more lighthearted and fun activity.

**As a triplet, she has a strong bond with her sisters Emily and Rachel, and they have supported each other through high school.**

Herrnstein also reflected on some lessons she had learned throughout high school. There's a growing pressure in high school to specialize in your interests early in order to be more competitive for college, but Herrnstein offered an alternate perspective, saying, "I think it's okay to be interested in a lot of different things." This philosophy made learning to prioritize extremely important: she recalled the busy start to her senior year, when she was 800 pages into Dumas' magnum opus, in the thick of college applications, and in the middle of the fall soccer season.

Herrnstein also emphasized the importance of resilience. She shared that her first three college applications were deferred, which felt discouraging. It was hard for her to push through, but she did it nonetheless. "Things do work out," Herrnstein added, "especially if you're willing to put in the work."

For Herrnstein, one way to do so is spending time with her family. As a triplet, she has a strong bond with her sisters Emily and Rachel, and they have supported each other through high school. In fact, all three are planning to study STEM-related majors, something Herrnstein attributes to her household environment. Even at a very young age, Herrnstein recalled her family gathered around the TV to watch the latest NASA rocketship launch. Her parents would often take time to explain the dynamics behind these launches, exposing her to science early on and also teaching her to be a critical thinker.

Now, the Herrnstein triplets are all headed to different colleges, a bittersweet yet exciting truth for them. Herrnstein explained that while being apart from each other will be a significant adjustment, they are all eager to branch out and find their own paths in life. She is also excited to start driving on her own more often this summer: while she's been lucky to have her two sisters drive her around during senior year, it's time to begin her own journey now.

*Graduating seniors are often told they are entering a new chapter of their lives: one of independence, freedom, and everything from parties to rigorous coursework.*

*What is mentioned less often is how short that chapter is*

## Farewell to Dr. Hatcher, Knowledgeable Librarian

by ALLIE HARRISON,  
OP-ED EDITOR

In her 30 years as the school librarian, Dr. April Hatcher has been a blessing to Ward Melville. Although she is retiring this year, her mark on the district will remain in her unfeigned care for every student and her passion for the spread of invaluable knowledge.

“I’ve always been a reader,” said Hatcher as she explained her career choice. Although originally planning to go into the museum field, she started working as a clerk in a public library after graduation. Eventually, she decided to go back to school and become a librarian, earning her master’s degree, a school certification, and even a PhD in information studies. Since then, her entire career has involved libraries, working in the children’s section of a public

*for seniors — that’s only said at the next graduation. But given that the transition to just four years, or in some cases two, gets so much attention, we wanted to take the time to recognize another group that is also starting a new chapter,*

library for just four years before deciding to switch to the school system.

Here at Ward Melville, Hatcher has not only run the library’s daily functions, managed and organized the book selection, and helped students find the books they need, but also helped orient sophomores — and this year, freshmen — moving up to the high school.

While doing so, she successfully learned each and every student’s name, making them feel appreciated and providing individualized support.

“Everyone in the school actually matters to her,” said junior Gabrielle Wong, remembering this feat of memorization. “We aren’t all just another nameless student; we are individual people she values.”

Clearly, this sentiment is common throughout the student body and the entire school: several years ago, Hatcher was selected as Teacher of the Year. Hatcher got a spread in the yearbook dedicated to her, a physical memento commemorating her commitment to Ward

that’s really what it came down to. I felt successful at it and it was just doing the job.”

Over more than 30 years, Dillon has taught everything from Algebra I to AP Calculus BC at Ward Melville. No matter the course or its difficulty level, her priority was always to find innovative ways to teach complex problems while instilling confidence in her students. Those looking into her room often saw Dillon circulating around her classroom, checking each individual student’s progress, asking if they needed help, and ensuring that they always had the necessary support. Dillon’s enthusiasm for her chosen subject was easily seen in the animated way that she taught her students.

During her final year as a teacher, Dillon’s dedication to the Three Village community was further demonstrated through her involvement with the Red Cross Club and the Crochet and Knitting Club. Although she was not originally the advisor for either club, she quickly took charge of both after Spanish teacher Lisa Primera-no took a leave of absence, thereby allowing many students to continue their creative endeavors under her friendly and curious mentorship.

*and indeed a much longer one.*

*Perhaps more importantly, Ward Melville’s retiring teachers have spent far more time in the school than the seniors have, and their impact is proportionally felt.*

*Below, Kaleidoscope is*

Melville.

“That was a big honor to me,” said Hatcher, expressing her immense gratitude for this award. “Even though the library is the heart of the school, my position [as a librarian] is not.” The recognition returned her “appreciation of being a part of the community,” reflecting her love of building relationships with students and throughout the district.

Hatcher admitted she was “a little nervous” about retirement at first. After working in Three Village for decades, it will certainly be a significant adjustment to make. Nevertheless, she is excited for post-retirement life. Besides being able to wake up later, she finds herself looking forward to spending time with family, socializing with friends, and traveling the world.

Even so, she sees herself eventually returning to work and finding new ways to stay involved, whether by teaching as an adjunct college professor or by working as a public librarian. (If she chooses the latter, she’ll likely stay away from the children’s section as she

*happy to profile five incredible teachers whose contributions to the Three Village community in their more than 125 combined years have left an indelible mark on Ward Melville and generations of their students.*

seeks new experiences.) After all, she got a doctorate and spent the past 34 years working in libraries for a reason — they are, as she calls them, “a warehouse of knowledge.”

Libraries truly are special, and thanks to Hatcher, ours at Ward Melville has been a particularly wonderful place for three decades. And despite its changing role, her influence will continue to have a positive effect on the library, to say nothing of the entire school, for many more years to come.

Before leaving Three Village and moving on to the next stage in her life, Hatcher wanted to say to everyone that “it was nice knowing you.” The same can surely be said for her.

## Farewell to Ms. Dillon, Magnificent Math Mentor

by REBECCA MALZ,  
CHIEF FINANCIAL  
OFFICER

For the last three decades, Christine Dillon has been a ray of sunshine in the Ward Melville Math Department. As her esteemed teaching career comes to an end, current and former students have reflected on her lasting effect and legacy.

Dillon began her teaching career at Ward Melville in 1993. Although she majored in mathematics while in college, she wasn’t entirely sure of what career path she wanted to pursue. Encouraged by her father to follow in his footsteps as a teacher, Dillon eventually accepted a student teaching position.

“I just loved doing it,” said Dillon, explaining how she realized that math education was where she truly belonged. “I really enjoyed the students and the people, but

Dillon has also been an important presence within her department and among her colleagues. Perhaps most notably, she has served as the Ward Melville building representative for the Three Village Teachers Union, helping her fellow educators navigate complex issues, even if they worked in completely different fields.

For Dillon, some of the most rewarding aspects of her career were the students who reached out to her outside of the classroom. Dillon remembered one particular case, saying, “I met a student when she was in 11th grade, and the student only took math when I was teaching it. It was so special to be able to see her get married.” She also described how “being invited to another student’s graduation party was also touching because it felt awesome to be included.”

For the last 33 years, Dillon has been more than a math teacher. She has also been a consistent mentor, as well as a source of inspiration and encouragement outside of the classroom. Although many students may forget the formulas they learned in class, the kindness and supportive environment she created remain with many students after graduation.

After her retirement, Dillon plans to go on a long European cruise, with destinations including Austria, Germany, and the Hungarian city of Budapest. She will also travel with a friend to Lisbon, Seville, and Madrid, taking time to explore the Iberian Peninsula. Additionally, she wants to spend extra time with her sister through weekends in New York City or at her family’s house in Pennsylvania.

Drawing from her years of experience in education, Dillon offers advice for students builds on what she’s consistently said in the classroom. She summarized it with a short and sweet phrase: “Enjoy your life and enjoy the moment that you’re in.”

Dillon will long be remembered for her dedication, kindness, and positivity that she brought to her classrooms and the entire school community. Ward Melville is a better place thanks to her efforts, and her impact will be felt for years to come.

## Farewell to Mr. Sandolo, Superb Scientist

by ALEXANDRE MAURER,  
STAFF WRITER

John Sandolo, a member of the Ward Melville Science Department since 2001, will be retiring at the end of this academic year. Over the past 25 years, he has played an essential role in the district, teaching subjects ranging from Earth Science to Chemistry. He also served as Dean for five years before returning to his self-professed calling of education.

## Farewell to Ms. Stringer, Empowering Economics Educator

by ALEXANDRA COTLET,  
CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

Megan Stringer is hanging up her teaching hat after three decades in the Three Village Central School District. Known for bringing lessons to life and forming strong connections with her students, Stringer will be deeply missed in the Ward Melville community.

Although the classroom has served as the medium through which she changes lives, she didn't start out planning to be an educator. Her dad, along with a brilliant social studies teacher in 10th grade, pushed her towards the profession.

## Farewell to Ms. Fox, Stellar Support Specialist

by SARAH CHERLIN,  
COPY EDITOR

Special education teacher Teresa Fox is retiring after spending more than two decades helping Three Village students succeed. Throughout her career, Fox has worked with students across Gelinas Junior High School, Setauket Elementary School, and Ward Melville High School, where she has taught in ELA 10 and 11 classrooms and served as a resource room teacher for high school students.

As Fox began exploring various career options many years ago, teaching immediately appealed to her interests. She was initially drawn to pursue a career

Sandolo's desire to give back to his community was what initially attracted him to teaching. He said his favorite moments occur when he witnesses a complex idea finally "click" into a student's head: "It's like a light goes off, and they just get it." He praised students at Ward Melville, stating that he feels fortunate to work with many smart and motivated young individuals, and that it is incredible to watch students learn new material and figure out challenges. Sandolo described feeling a sense of immense satisfaction whenever a student figures out a chemistry topic or makes a breakthrough in their Science Olympiad project.

Indeed, Sandolo has

Then, during her student teaching stint, something clicked. "I knew it was where I belonged," said Stringer. "I wanted to set the bar high and excel."

As she heads into retirement, Stringer looks back at a fulfilling journey packed with growth and amazing memories. But leaving isn't easy: teaching's not just her job, but her whole life. Stringer has done a lot over the years, including teaching different classes and grades, coaching teams, advising clubs, and chaperoning many field trips. Her involvement in the school community and consistent help outside the classroom deepened her connection to Ward Melville, making her departure all the more bittersweet.

Now, as she's wrapping up her career, Stringer is teaching Honors Economics and Honors Criminal Justice — courses she loves. For her, the best thing about teaching is seeing how she can make a positive impact on students' lives. "You get to know them, help

in special education due to her passion for supporting and empowering students across all ages, something she has consistently remained dedicated to throughout her time working in the district. "The opportunity to help students grow academically, socially, and emotionally inspired me to enter the field and has continued to motivate me throughout my career," she said.

Reflecting on her time spent teaching in Three Village, Fox counts working alongside her dedicated colleagues, including to help students achieve their full potential and thrive both inside and out of the classroom, as some of her favorite experiences. Watching students develop and accomplish their goals has been another immensely fulfilling aspect of her career: milestones such as watching her seniors receive college acceptance letters and graduate are especially inspiring each year. "As

dutifully coached the Science Olympiad team for many years, and his commitment to the club has helped to contribute to many of its great successes. Members often attest to his work ethic and its positive results, with captain Amartya Das, a junior, saying, "Mr. Sandolo was absolutely instrumental in facilitating many of our practices over the last few years. We are so extremely grateful for his support." The team will clearly miss him as they turn the page to a new chapter.

During his retirement, Sandolo looks forward to spending more time with his grandchildren. He is also eager to play sports, noting that he is partial to soccer and baseball. He also hopes

them become good people, and prepare them for the future," she added, showing that for her, education is about the students, not just the curriculum.

Indeed, interactions inside the classroom are what she'll miss most. Even if she taught the same lesson repeatedly, each class period offered fresh insights and stories. Her students, she says, played a huge role in her growth as a teacher; she learned from them as well.

There's one memory that sticks out among all the others, offering a glimpse of Stringer's effect on her students. For her wedding, kids from her very first year at Ward Melville showed up to sing for her. Now, even many years later, that moment still means so much to her.

When asked about advice for students, she stressed the value of taking chances and going after new opportunities. "Always be willing to try new things," she said. "There's nothing more rewarding than achieving something you

each school year comes to a close, watching students achieve their goals and walk across the graduation stage remains one of the most rewarding and exciting moments," she said. "It is a fitting celebration of their hard work, perseverance, and growth, and a reminder of why our work is so meaningful."

She also fondly recalls her time chaperoning the annual senior trip. She expressed that each trip has brought her countless unique experiences and unforgettable memories that she will continue to cherish, saying, "I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity to have shared these memories with so many students and colleagues throughout the years. Thank you, Mr. Baumann and Mr. Polak, for giving me the opportunity to be part of such a special tradition."

Looking toward her future, Fox is excited to embrace new opportunities. She plans to continue connecting with and teaching

to have the opportunity to travel the world more frequently and extensively. While he is excited to have more time for these activities, he will look back at his time at Ward Melville fondly. "I'm going to miss working here," he said. "It's a bittersweet reality."

Upon his retirement, Sandolo offered encouraging words of wisdom to students interested in the sciences. He encouraged everyone to work towards their goals and seek out opportunities by working hard. He stated, "You have to try and you have to give it your all. Anything that's worth it, you have to try."

once thought was out of reach." She also hoped that students would remember the importance of kindness and compassion, continuing her career-long expectation that her classroom would be a place where everyone felt respected and valued. "I hope my students know that I cared about them," she shared.

Stringer will stay busy in retirement. She looks forward to getting more involved with the Tunnel to Towers Foundation, a charity that supports families and first responders who were affected by the September 11 attacks, as well as traveling with her family. She even said she might take up educational travel or go for court stenography.

Stringer's educational career may be coming to an end, but her impact will live on through the many students she's influenced over her three decades. "I'll treasure the relationships and memories from my job," she shared. "Leaving Ward Melville, my heart is full of gratitude."

younger generations, working alongside her daughter to build and organize a junior golf league. She also hopes to volunteer at a children's hospital, continuing a lifelong commitment to supporting and encouraging young people. Most importantly, she looks forward to spending quality time, traveling, and creating new memories with her family.

Fox's continuous dedication to helping students improve their skills in Language Arts and flourish as individuals has left an undeniable impact within the halls of Ward Melville. Her ability to uplift students and support their growth has made a lasting mark on everyone who has entered her classroom. Ward Melville will deeply miss such an inspiring and hardworking teacher.

## Ward Melville Alumni Inducted Into Suffolk Hall of Fame

by ARIEL BASSIS,  
SPORTS EDITOR

Two Ward Melville alumni were inducted into the Suffolk Sports Hall of Fame Class of 2026 on May 21, recognizing their illustrious careers and successes in the athletic world. Ken Ericksen, the longtime head coach for the University of South Florida (USF) softball program and former head coach of the U.S. Olympic softball team, and Tom Theodorakis, the 31st Director of Athletics at Army West Point, were among the distinguished athletes, coaches, leaders, and sports pioneers honored during a ceremony at Flowerfield in St. James.

For the Three Village district, the double induction into the Hall of Fame serves as an important reminder of the impact that alumni can have far after graduation. Although Ericksen and Theodorakis — members of the Classes of 1980 and 2002, respectively — pursued drastically different paths

in the athletic industry, both have built their careers by leadership, achievements, and their commitment to helping others succeed as they once did.

Stony Brook native Ken Ericksen has become one of the most accomplished figures in collegiate softball. After a successful playing career as a student at USF, he played fastpitch softball professionally for 13 years. During that time, he won a silver medal at the 1991 Pan American Games as part of the United States men's national team.

He returned to his university alma mater in 1989 as assistant coach. Eight years later, he was promoted to the top position, where he has remained ever since. During his 29 years leading the softball program, he has amassed 1,006 total wins, making him the winningest coach in USF history and the only one to pass the 1,000-win milestone. His tenure has transformed the Bulls' softball team into a nationally recognized program, winning 8 conference championships, making multiple NCAA postseason appearances, and securing a berth in the Women's College World Series in 2012.

He was also named the assistant coach for the national women's softball team in 2002, and

he served as the head coach from 2011 to 2021. Over that time, he has guided Team USA to a silver medal at the 2021 Tokyo Olympics, along with two gold medals at the Women's Softball World Championship, six gold medals at the World Cup of Softball, and two gold medals at the Pan American Games.

Even after decades of coaching, his connection to his roots in Suffolk County and Ward Melville remains strong. Although he did not initially plan to work at the professional level, saying that "I thought I would end up working in the state department in the international areas," he acknowledged the benefits of his Three Village experience. "To have a Ward Melville education and to grow up in an incredible town like Old Stony Brook prepared me very well."

Meanwhile, Tom Theodorakis has established himself as one of the rising leaders in college athletics administration. In February of 2025, Theodorakis was named the 31st Director of Athletics at Army West Point, one of the most prestigious athletic schools in the country. Before joining the Army Black Knights originally as a Deputy Athletic Director, he worked in administrative roles at the Air Force Academy, the University of

Arizona, the University of California Los Angeles, and Harvard University.

Much like Eriksen, he did not expect to pursue such a career in high school, and he did not consider the possibility of jobs in sports administration at such a high level. Even so, Theodorakis emphasized that "sports in general had a huge impact on my life. I believe in the lessons learned on the field."

While their careers have taken them to different corners of the sports industry, both inductees share a common thread that begins in Ward Melville. And for current students at their former high school, they both stressed the importance of perseverance. Eriksen said, "Go for it everyday. Don't be that person that said, 'I should have ...,'" while Theodorakis advised young athletes to "keep going. It's not a linear path. There's going to be ups and downs, but keep surrounding yourself with really supportive people, keep doing your best, keep giving it your all, and good things are going to happen."

Finally, both expressed gratitude to the Suffolk Sports Hall of Fame, saying "it's an honor." Theodorakis added, "It's a dream come true to even be considered."

## Ward Melville Boys Track Qualifies for States

by LAWRENCE SUN,  
STAFF WRITER

The boys' spring track and field season has continued the upward trajectory the team has experienced all year. Last fall, seven top athletes represented Ward Melville at the invitational Nike Cross Nationals, becoming one of the first ever Long Island teams to do so. At the meet, senior Anthony Anatol, who has committed to run for Cornell's Division I program, placed 42nd, while junior Andrew Senf placed 85th.

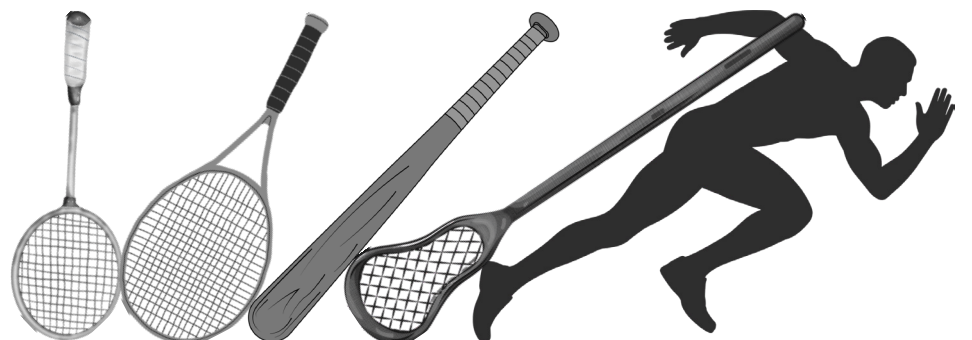
This momentum carried through the winter and into the spring. At the Suffolk County Boys Track and Field Championships on May 26, Ward Melville claimed the title in a dominant fashion, finishing 20 points ahead of second-place Longwood. Senf and Anatol once again led the team, combining to sweep the top two spots in the 800-, 1600-, and 3200-meter events. In particular, Anatol won the 3200 meter run while Senf won the two shorter distances.

Adding to the duo's top results, sprinter Joglanio "JJ" Alcindor won the 100 meter dash and placed second in the 200 meter dash, while Miles Hatcher placed fourth in the discus throw. The 4x800 relay team anchored by Senf and Anatol cruised to first place, and the 4x400 added another fourth-place finish. Finally, Pepe Van Der Velden, Ryan Corey, and Aaron Carrico secured second through fourth place in the 3000 meter steeplechase.

Across all events, the Ward Melville team demonstrated immense skill and impressive depth. This was especially true for distance events, and it proved invaluable to securing the championship. With state qualifiers on the horizon, we sat down with Senf to hear how he is approaching the postseason.

**Kaleidoscope: How has your season gone so far, and what's been your proudest moment and your biggest challenge?**

Andrew Senf: The season has been going really well; everyone's running big personal records and having big moments. My proudest individual moment came at the Loucks Games, where Anthony Anatol and I broke the school record in the 3200 together. The hardest part has been managing schoolwork, training, and still



getting enough rest, especially with AP exams falling right alongside some of our biggest races.

**What are your personal goals heading into the state championship, and how have you been preparing mentally and physically?**

My main goal for counties was to help us win the team title and score as many points as possible. Looking ahead to states, I want to be up there competing for All-State honors in both the mile and two mile, and I'd really like to break nine minutes in the two mile. Physically, we've been putting in the work every day, [taking] no days off, hitting the mileage, and staying healthy. Mentally, the big thing for me is visualization, trusting my conditioning, and executing with confidence.

**How has the team dynamic been this year, and what does competing alongside your teammates mean to you at the championship meets?**

It's special. We mapped out

all our goals together back in the summer and have been grinding toward them ever since. Being able to toe the line with the same guys you've been working with every day makes it all feel worth it. I'm going to miss a lot of the seniors, especially Anthony, who pushed me so much this year. It's really been a privilege to train alongside them.

**Is there a specific moment this season that you feel really defined who you are as a competitor?**

Penn Relays, which is our biggest meet, was a great one. I ran the mile leg of the DMR [distance medley relay] and went out in 2:04, which was the fastest opening split I'd ever run. I was still able to finish hard and set a personal record with a 4:16. It was a mental breakthrough more than anything, it showed me that I can push hard and not fall apart, and that resilience has carried over into everything I've done since.

## Patriots Finish Strong in Spring Season

by ISABEL DE BEI,  
STAFF WRITER

As the spring season comes to an end, several Ward Melville teams have finished up the important part of their year: the postseason. After months of competition, the Patriots have once again competed among some of the top programs in Suffolk County. This spring has produced county championships, top county rankings, and memorable performances.

First up is the girls badminton team that captured the Suffolk County championship after defeating Commack. Entering the tournament as the fifth seed, the Patriots were considered underdogs, but a combination of consistency, teamwork, and resilience pushed them to the county title.

“Every player stepped up when it mattered most and that’s what made this postseason run so special,” said starter Emma Fandrey. For another varsity starter, Atulya Tripathi, the title-securing moment was unforgettable. “As a singles player, being the final match on the court was intense, but seeing the entire team run toward me the second it was over was pure joy,” Tripathi said. “Looking at how proud everyone was reminded me of how huge of an accomplishment this county championship really is for us.”

While the girls team celebrated a championship season, the boys badminton team saw its season end after losing to Half Hollow Hills in the county tournament. Despite the loss, the Patriots remained competitive throughout the year and demonstrated significant growth.

“It was a privilege to represent my school despite the loss in county finals,” said varsity starter Evin Zheng. “I learned a lot from my time on the team and I’m proud of myself for continuing to try despite being outmatched.”

Coaches and teammates stressed effort and growth throughout the season, even during tough matches. The boys lacrosse team also entered the postseason with high expectations. Ranked third in Suffolk County, the Patriots played one of their strongest seasons before advancing to the county semifinals.

Throughout the regular season, the team faced a tough schedule against several top-ranked opponents, which helped prepare them for the intensity of postseason play. The Patriots relied on balanced scoring, disciplined defense,

and strong teamwork throughout the year. In close games, the team consistently showed composure and experience, qualities that become increasingly important during playoff competition.

After a disappointing finish last season, the team entered the year motivated to restore the program’s reputation as one of the county’s top lacrosse programs.

“Everybody doubted us going into the year,” said senior Jack Rella. “With hard work and playing as a team, we ended up with the three seed in the county. We hope to put Ward Melville back on the map.”

Fans and students closely followed the matchups as the Patriots tried to keep their playoff run going. Ultimately, the boys advanced to the semifinals, where they lost to Sachem North.

The girls lacrosse team has been equally impressive. As Suffolk County’s top-ranked team, the Patriots dominated opponents throughout the regular season through a mix of offensive talent, defensive discipline, and strong team chemistry.

The players’ consistency throughout the season made them one of the favorites entering the playoffs, but they understood that postseason games often bring entirely new challenges. “Ward Melville girls lacrosse has been putting in a lot of hard work this season, and it’s really showing as we continue to advance through playoffs,” said junior defender Kayla Lamedica. “Everyone on the team is dedicated, focused, and excited for what’s ahead. We’re taking it one game at a time and hoping to make a strong run to counties.”

Making it all the way to county finals, Ward Melville lost to Huntington High School with a score of 5-6, ending their run. “I am most proud of how this team was able to combine a strong, hard work ethic with joy and lots of fun,” Captain Quinlan Heilbron reflected, “We really loved each other’s company and that is how we were able to positively push ourselves every day and make it to the county championship.”

Another team that competed in the postseason was boys tennis. The Patriots earned the eighth seed and faced West Islip in the first round of the playoffs. Throughout the spring, the team faced several challenging matches that tested both individual skill and overall team depth.

Despite entering the playoffs as a lower seed, the team remained confident heading into postseason play, hoping to keep improving as playoffs progressed. Head coach Erick Sussin believed the team’s depth and dedication

could lead to a long playoff run.

“Although we are going in as an 8th seed, we hope to take a very talented team deep into the playoffs,” Sussin said before the postseason. “We are loaded with strength, and as long as everyone is healthy, we can battle with the top teams in the County. It is really fun to watch these young men compete at such a high level.”

The Patriots ultimately lost in the first round, bringing their season to an end. “Although our season did not go the way we wanted, we will be back and better next year,” said junior captain Aidan Thomas.

The softball team also wrapped up one of its strongest seasons in recent memory. Behind strong pitching, solid defense, and timely hitting, the Patriots achieved their best record in years and made a strong postseason run.

“Our softball team has worked all year long to play the best we can, leaving us with the best record we have had in a long

time,” said three-year varsity starter Makenna Steinberg. “Now, with playoffs off to a good start, we are putting in a lot of work to play every game to win and to get one step closer.”

The Patriots’ season came to an end in a closely contested playoff game against Patchogue-Medford. “We played a close competition game against Patchogue-Medford. We were tied 8-8 going into the last inning, and the other team had a walk-off home run,” Steinberg said. “We ended our season 19-6, which is our best record in 30 years.”

As the regular season concludes, Ward Melville athletics has already delivered an impressive spring filled with memorable accomplishments. With multiple teams making deep postseason runs and a county championship captured by girls badminton, the Patriots have once again demonstrated the strength of their athletic programs.



Elementary schoolers,  
**Have a hobby**  
you want to experience with others?

High schoolers,  
**Want to serve  
the community**  
and earn service hours?



Join a club at LIYD to develop your skills and interests in a setting that fosters collaboration between peers while giving back to the community.

<https://www.liyouthdevelopment.org>  
[contact@liyouthdevelopment.org](mailto:contact@liyouthdevelopment.org)

## The Danger of Commercial News Networks

by ALAN MAO,  
STAFF WRITER

The concept of ideal journalism is regarded as a necessary cornerstone of an effective society. As the voice of the public, it is the ultimate protector from tyranny and government oppression, ensuring that any form of corruption and abuse of power remains in check. In its absolute sense, it is a noble watchdog that ensures that everyone in power is held strictly responsible to the citizens they represent. However, there exists an uncomfortable truth of journalism: when driven by profit-based corporations, it is simply a lot uglier and opportunistic, devoid of all previous integrity, and purely imaginary.

In the modern world, the large-scale commercialized news industry serves as a clear hindrance to the American nation. In the face of a deeply divided political community, mainstream broadcasters

have opted to further fuel the fire instead of attempting to resolve it. With the help of eye-catching headlines, manipulative propaganda, and continuous scapegoating, nearly all popular news networks have betrayed their responsibility and turned into money-grabbing business corporations. Their aim is no longer to educate the public but to ensure that viewers remain angry and terrified, constantly glued to the screen.

This is done intentionally. Instead of informing us with objective truths, these modern networks appeal to our worst tribalism. They misuse or fabricate statistics, misrepresent history, and create outrage daily to push a pre-existing agenda. Once a profit margin becomes the number one priority for these broadcasters, the need for truth falls to second, or even third, on their list. Sensationalism replaces quality content. Daily news warps into an outrageous blame game meant to divide citizens. By labeling every political difference as a catastrophic cultural battle, newscasters are preventing any societal progress or unity by putting their profits ahead of those goals.

But an unflinching analysis of this situation should include one more point: these broadcasting companies deliver us their toxic content because we want to see it. The sad truth is that well-researched, respectable pieces of information often go unnoticed because people prefer watching entertaining arguments slamming the opposition party. People support sensationalism and pay less attention to journalistic works, thereby providing no audience to the latter. By prioritizing our emotions over our education, society is helping itself become more radicalized. We are allowing corporate media to deepen the already existing rift between two completely different realities.

Amongst the corruption within today's mass media industry, the demand for proper journalism remains more crucial than ever before. The utter moral downfall of the mainstream press leaves an empty void that needs to be filled immediately. Instead of succumbing to the aggressive journalism practiced by the big networks, people have to start looking for real, respectable writers to take on

the narrative. Today, society needs journalists who will not stoop to playing the dangerous and profitable game of manipulation; who will be brave enough to form an honest opinion based on thorough research and who will ignore the audience's biases.

To achieve this goal, the press cannot be ignored. Instead, it must be made to return to its core and adhere to its lofty principles. Journalists and editors need to abandon their desire for viral content and commit themselves to writing unbiased, respectful articles that will force readers to look at reality in its raw and uncomfortable entirety. In an age of polarized and corporatized journalism, there is no way to survive without introducing a certain level of accountability in the media industry.

As for viewers, we too must change. Rather than feeding into these beliefs, it remains essential to keep an open eye; to maintain evidence-driven natural skepticism. Otherwise, we will inevitably tarnish society through politics, rivalries, and the death of truth.

## The Timing of Technology

by LILY HUANG,  
COPY EDITOR

For the past several decades, our world has shifted increasingly towards an online environment. In the past two to three years, this trend has only intensified due to the rise of an artificial intelligence empire. Three Village has joined thousands of districts across the country attempting to better prepare their students for this digital age, including by adding a cybersecurity course and expanding its investments in various forms of technology. And while using artificial intelligence to outright complete entire assignments is rightfully condemned, a cohort of teachers and administrators will reiterate that learning to wield AI as a tool instead of a crutch is crucial to career success in today's rapidly changing world.

In fact, the tool of technology has always been at least somewhat present in my classrooms, starting as early as first grade. A core elementary school memory for me is marching down to the computer lab in a single-file line with my classmates, excited to log onto the typing lessons disguised as games. But during my elementary era, there was a staunch separation between technology and "old school" mediums. Even

when teachers began handing out Chromebooks for online assignments in fifth and sixth grade, a prioritization of physical formats of work was emphasized as school-issued technology remained strictly within the confines of the classroom.

Most would agree that this logical moderation is both necessary and beneficial during this developmental period. The consequences of overexposure to screens for adolescents are well known: an increase in sedentary behavior, a decrease in mental and emotional health, and disruption of sleep quality. Screens also present an opportunity for distraction, ultimately decreasing the quality of health and education for younger students. But ever since the COVID-19 pandemic, the norm has shifted. Quarantine and at-home learning necessitated the digitalization of assignments for every grade. But in a post-pandemic world, this reliance on online coursework is persisting to a degree that could become — or already is — detrimental to younger students across the country.

In a survey conducted by the New York Times just last year, 81 percent of elementary school teachers polled said students at their school receive devices for use in class by kindergarten. Meanwhile, measures of academic competence such as literacy rates and math proficiency have declined significantly throughout the course

of the decade. While the growing presence of screens in the classroom could certainly not be the sole contributor to this decline, a concerned question arises: are we too quick to jump onto online platforms in academic spaces?

There are certainly some positives to providing school-issued laptops to younger students, including expanded access to learning platforms for all students. When used sparingly and deliberately, engaging younger audiences with the technological world can help develop basic skills in online safety and technical mastery.

However, the oversaturation of AI in today's online spaces can disrupt the process of constructing foundational skills in basic research, judgment, and critical thinking. AI features remain accessible despite efforts to block them, diminishing opportunities for young students to develop competence in comparing sources and finding trustworthy information.

Online, arguments about the importance of technology for job preparation are commonly found, even when discussing elementary school curricula. The popularity of such ideas reflects a deeper issue in our approach to education, establishing the unsustainable precedent that the main purpose of academia is to create workers, not learners. I'm not arguing that education should not equip students for the ever-evolving, increasingly competitive job

market. But when a child hasn't even hit double digits yet, we should not be concerned about whether their digital proficiency is appealing to potential employers. Instead, we must focus on encouraging our newest students to establish a reliable framework for future success, and that includes building up their physical, mental, and emotional well-being alongside proper academic habits. Unfortunately, the progressively overbearing presence of screens takes away from these crucial markers and milestones on the journey to a well-rounded future.

In today's world, applying the word "normalized" to the overpresence of technology in elementary classrooms doesn't feel quite right: the permanence of devices is too pervasive across our day-to-day lives. But perhaps conditioning children to turn immediately to digital tools that could detract from their betterment should not be the norm. While laptops and computers no doubt serve a purpose in these rooms, their presence should be peripheral — not integral — to the learning experience at this critical stage of development.

## Michael Retakh, Anchor

by ALEXANDRA  
POTEKHIN,  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF  
UNIVERSITY OF  
CALIFORNIA,  
LOS ANGELES  
CLASS OF 2030

The first time I saw Michael was at our music teacher’s annual concert in third grade. I remember thinking he was the best performer there. What I didn’t know at the time was that this would become a recurring impression throughout our relationship. The second time I saw him, we were finally introduced; this time as classmates. It was fourth grade, and he was the only student wearing a collared shirt and dress pants. While everyone else was following the trend of neon-colored Nike sweatshirts and shorts in freezing weather, Michael showed up dressed exactly how he thought he should. Even then, I admired that. He was completely comfortable being himself, regardless of what anyone else was doing. Looking back, that became another defining theme: Michael is unapologetically himself, no matter the circumstances.

Unfortunately, we didn’t become close until our time working together at *Kaleidoscope*. Over the past three years, I’ve had the privilege of spending countless hours alongside someone I consider to be one of the most hard-working and intellectually driven people I’ve ever met. In many ways, we could not be more different, which is exactly what has made our friendship so enjoyable. Whether we are debating the value of classes here at Melville, arguing about the efficiency of our club, or discussing completely unrelated topics during long drives while canvassing, our conversations are never boring. The more time we spend together, the more we challenge each other’s perspectives and expand our own. Some of the conversations we’ve had are ones I never would have imagined having, yet they are the ones I remember most.

Over the last three years, and especially during this past year, I’ve realized that Michael’s greatest defining characteristic is his relentless desire to learn. Many people know him as “the kid who’s going to Stanford,” or “the one who Ubers to classes at SBU after school”; while those titles certainly fit, they don’t explain who he really is. Michael is not motivated by prestige alone — far from it. He is someone who genuinely needs to learn, needs to understand, and needs to solve problems. Curiosity is what drives him. It is the reason he excels in so many different areas and the reason people naturally look to him for leadership.

What makes Michael exceptional is that his intellect is matched by his dedication. When he commits to something, he commits completely. Whether he is tracking down editors for an article, sending what feels like a million emails to secure a single interview, or taking on responsibilities that most people would avoid, he always follows through. Time and time again, I have watched him do whatever it takes to achieve a goal, regardless of how much effort or persistence is required.

Michael is also someone who refuses to do things simply because they have always been done. He questions assumptions and challenges anything anyone says if he disagrees. While this can certainly make for some spirited debates, it is also one of the reasons he is such an effective leader. He does not settle for easy answers or accept mediocrity. Instead, he constantly pushes himself — and those around him — to be better.

When I think about Michael, I keep coming back to the same realization I had all those years ago at that third-grade concert. Somehow, he always seems to be the best one in the room. Not because he needs attention or recognition, but because he approaches everything with an unmatched combination of intelligence, determination, and authenticity. He has accomplished an incredible amount already, and I have no doubt that he will continue to accomplish even more in the future.

Most importantly, though, Michael is a great friend. Beyond all of his exceptional academics, he



is someone who has challenged me to think differently and made even the longest drives and busiest days more interesting. I am incredibly grateful for the friendship we have built over the past three years, and I know that wherever life takes him next, he will continue to make an impact on the people around him the same way he made one on me.

Stanford is lucky to have him. The rest of us are lucky to know him.

## Alexandra Potekhin, Visionary

by MICHAEL RETAKH,  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF  
STANFORD UNIVERSITY  
CLASS OF 2030

Yesterday, as I do almost every evening, I sent Alex a text about something we had to do for this edition. It wasn’t that important — it’s been just over 24 hours since, and I can’t remember what it was. Yet Alex, as she often does, responded to my long, neurotically punctuated message almost immediately. I knew it was her because my phone buzzed for about a minute straight.

Alex’s spontaneity isn’t confined to her stream-of-consciousness texts; it’s embodied in everything she does. When I suggest a near-impossible timeline for a project, she commits to meeting it. When we have to make last-minute changes to an edition, she goes about the job without worry or complaint. And whenever I walk into class, she always has something new to tell me, so much so that I can hardly keep up.

She’s able to have so much energy because of her never-ending joy. Even on the longest, most stressful days, she maintains her effervescence, laughing when I don’t have the energy to or stopping to talk to someone when I just want to leave for the day. She’s seemingly never too tired or too busy.

I don’t know how she does it: perhaps it’s her remarkable honesty. In a world where everyone seems to have ulterior motives, Alex doesn’t. She means exactly

what she says, and she says exactly what she means. If an idea is too absurd or a choice doesn’t make sense, she’ll always be the first to tell you. But she’ll also be the first to offer comfort when something doesn’t work out, even if you think you don’t need it.

It is through this magnificent trinity that Alex has taught me more than she knows, and perhaps more than I know. Of course, there are the pop culture references and the basketball facts — she maintains that asking whether we could write about NBA games in our September edition was one of the stupidest things I’ve done this year. Then there’s the business acumen and the obscure academic references; the innate understanding of people, without which I often tried to act and ended up spectacularly failing; the model of leadership that empowers others to accomplish supposedly impossible tasks; and all the other stuff I can’t quite describe.

Most important of all, however, is her knowledge of herself. I always considered it impossible for someone to have “figured it out” at such a young age, but Alex is someone who may just have done it. Her confidence, always powerful but never naïve, pushes her to embrace challenges and pursue her goals relentlessly. Her intelligence, always substantial but never snobbish, allows her to understand the entire world, and not just a cloistered fragment. Her beliefs, always open to new perspectives but never inconsistent, lead her to success and truth.

Her world will soon expand, as will mine, and she will be forced to grapple with new ideas and possibilities. But I know that something will never change: her joy, her commitment, her compassion, her honesty, her humanity.

Because she is the embodiment of ebullience.

Because she is a paragon of understanding.

Because *civis mundi est*.

And if that’s not who we need in this chaotic world of ours, I don’t know who is.

Thank you, Alex, for everything.

# KALEIDOSCOPE 2025 2026

Editorial board

**Editors-in-Chief**  
Michael Retakh  
Alexandra Potekhin

**Copy Editors**  
Lily Huang  
Sarah Cherlin

**Chief Financial Officers**  
Alexandra Cotlet  
Rebecca Malz

**News Editor**  
Zaina Khan

**Science Editor**  
Sarah Wu

**Arts & Entertainment Editor**  
Caroline Qian

**Sports Editor**  
Ariel Bassis

**Op-Ed Editor**  
Allie Harrison

**Advisor**  
Mr. Oatis

**Business Advisor**  
Mr. Arico

# Counterparts

by **MICHAEL RETAKH,**  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

## ACROSS

1. Superlative
5. Deathly announcement
9. Cares
14. President of Palestine
19. God of the underworld, to the Egyptians
20. Money transfer
21. Follows cause, in Paris
22. How chemicals respond
23. Northern Dutch city
25. Popular valley in California national park
27. Nutritional diagram of interest to a biologist
28. French soul
29. Papa \_\_\_ XIV
30. Spell
31. Scientist who developed theory of evolution
36. Country-wide educational evaluation, abbr.
37. How volcanoes get a rash
38. Between length and volume
39. \_\_\_ mater: what Ward Melville will soon become to many
42. COVID tests
44. Middle East gulf
45. Rightmost utensil
46. Assistant (to the) Regional Manager
52. Mamdani's neighborhood
54. Romanov or Navalny
55. Owner of heavenly belt
58. Seen at the Met
59. Starred group of 50
62. Also, in Spanish
64. Sports network
68. Shakespearean drunk
69. Earthquake strength metric
72. Car help organization, abbr.
73. Notice a stain
75. Musical fish
76. Most of Ward Melville's population
78. Moments \_\_\_
80. French hat
81. Luxury smoking items
82. Historical background
86. American revolutionary incident on a boat
90. Scarlett's Butler
91. Blue order in kitchen
94. What a 80-Across might be
95. Cat's distress call
96. Red or white beverage
97. Jazz count
99. Negative political research, for short
103. Ancient multilingual document used for decipherings
108. Washington cost estimator, abbr.
110. Vocal part
111. Telecom giant, abbr.
112. Primary winner
113. City destroyed by volcano in 79 AD
116. Bring back
118. Cancel
119. Semicircular crown
120. Against

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	
19				20				21					22					
23				24				25					26					
27							28			29					30			
31						32	33			34				35				
36					37					38				39		40	41	
				42	43				44				45					
46	47	48	49					50	51			52	53					
54								55		56	57		58					
59					60	61		62				63		64	65	66	67	
68				69				70						71		72		
73			74		75							76			77			
			78	79			80						81					
82	83	84				85			86			87	88	89				
90						91	92	93				94						
95					96				97	98					99	100	101	102
			103		104				105					106	107			
108	109				110				111				112					
113				114					115				116	117				
118													120				121	
122																		125

121. Have \_\_\_ for (begrudge)
  122. SAT and ACT
  123. Exhaust at dinner
  124. Spanish romantic painter
  125. High-end audio storage format, abbr.
- DOWN**
1. Aficionado
  2. Register
  3. Parodies
  4. Arctic biome
  5. Dominated in game
  6. Hope of a struggling actor
  7. Anger
  8. Perfect score
  9. Dr. Oz or Ottoman sultan
  10. "\_\_\_ Pretty" ("West Side Story" song)
  11. Blockchain collectible, abbr.
  12. Announce bankruptcy
  13. Napoleon's final home
  14. Colosseum, for one
  15. Use Polymarket or Kalshi
  16. Pre-wedding party
  17. Throb
  18. Hades' river
  24. First-person subject pronouns
  26. Spanish greeting
  28. Cleopatra's killer
  32. Ab \_\_\_ condita
  33. Major Linux software seller
  34. Roll of bills
  35. Author Truman \_\_\_
  40. French pronoun
  41. Actresses de Armas and Gasteyer
  42. Vaporization result
  43. 29-Across' favorite sports team

44. Many Indigenous, religiously
45. Data type, in programming
46. German mathematician Carl Friedrich
47. Groundbreaking female conductor Marin
48. Place to dine, for short
49. Phone number addition, abbr.
50. Small
51. Shrinking Asian lake
53. Resort city Cabo \_\_\_
56. Baby deliverers, abbr.
57. FBI background check system, abbr.
60. Before, to Keats or Milton
61. Natural bandage
63. Put away
65. Capital of Yemen
66. Gloria \_\_\_
67. Ronaldo's club Al-\_\_\_
70. Honest president
71. Teach, especially in Sunday school
74. Kind of tale, perhaps from a child?
77. Cell-growing protein, abbr.
79. Receive
82. What Jesus did in the shortest Bible verse
83. "Well, well, well!"

84. Neonatal patients
85. New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut
87. Away to death
88. Idle Python
89. Forever
92. Mother of Claudius
93. College research opportunity, abbr.
96. Testament to one's resolve
97. Image file type
98. Carpenter insect
99. Ear infection, medically
100. Party target
101. In verse
102. From \_\_\_ to the other
104. Transports by truck
105. Pacific island country
106. Ancient Greek region for which a sea is named
107. Monthly symptoms, for some
108. AI model in casual conversation
109. Follows Va or Nota
114. Share of profit
115. Scarf
116. "The Entertainer", for one
117. Rock producer Brian

REACH EVERY THREE VILLAGE FAMILY

**YOUR AD HERE**

CONTACT [KSCOPEWM@GMAIL.COM](mailto:KSCOPEWM@GMAIL.COM)

 **KALEIDOSCOPE**