

The Elephant In The Room



Milton High's Student Newspaper

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Beyond College: The Call of Duty for Seniors Enlisting in the Military

By AIDAN SADLER

When you're a high school senior, you have to face an overwhelming amount of choices that will dictate the course of your life. One of these choices is whether or not to join the military.

Around graduation time every year, military recruiters travel to high schools across the U.S. to convince students to pursue a career in military service.

Milton High is not free from this phenomenon; this year, like every year, military recruiters have set up a booth right outside the cafeteria. The program has been successful in recruiting several seniors, including Mickey Paquette and Andrew Miskell.

When asked why he decided to join the military, Paquette responded, "I'm a very patriotic person, I love America. It's a great country, and I'd do anything to protect it."

The Elephant in the Room is always looking for feedback! If you have suggestions, feel strongly about an article, or think there's anything The Elephant in the Room should address, feel free to submit a letter to our editors. Email your letter to mhs.eitr@gmail.com. Thanks for reading and see you next issue!



Miskell added, "I joined the military because I didn't know what I wanted to do in college." He went on to describe the benefits of being paid while figuring out his future instead of going into a major he may not want to pursue.

As of 2024, American military service is at its all time low. According to a survey conducted by the Defense Department, more than half of young Americans believe they would develop health problems as a result of joining the military (57%).

These concerns are not unfounded. According to a report by Pew Research Center, veterans typically have a difficult time adjusting to life after their service, and the rate of injury during service is alarming—one out of ten veterans alive today got seriously injured during their service.

When asked about what he thought about these statistics, Miskell said, "They make it very clear that when you join, you're putting your life at risk."

Paquette will be working as a wheeled vehicle mechanic and said he is "looking forward to working on all sorts of diesel vehicles, discipline structure, just common life skills that you should know and practice."

Miskell has yet to decide on his job but is planning on going to basic training in Texas.

Military recruiters point to the life skills you learn as part of the military, which was something that both Miskell and Paquette emphasized quite a bit. Recruiters also highlight the benefits the US gives to veterans who have served a certain number of years as a result of the G.I Bill.

Seniors certainly have a lot to consider before they leave Milton High, although joining the military is an increasingly less popular option. However, it is still a viable career for those who don't seek to follow the traditional path.

Miskell made one thing clear: "I think that the idea of college is that if you really know what you want to do, then it's a place you can be." He continued, "There's options out there. I mean, you can join the trades if you don't want to join the military. There's just many ways to go about life. We're told societally that college is what you do, but there's just other ways to go about it. So think about your options."

Our Seniors



Rory Martin, our Managing Editor, will be attending College of the Holy Cross.



Aidan Sadler, a writer, will be attending HZ University of Applied Sciences.

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MHS Puts the "Lit" in Financial Literacy

By GRIFFIN ANGUS and MACY BURNS

One necessity for all high school students is to learn about money management. Whether it's investing in a house, buying your groceries, or getting a haircut, everyone should learn to be responsible with their money, and students got a taste of this at the Financial Literacy Fair.

The fair was held on Friday, April 12 in the MHS Fieldhouse. It featured an array of companies, ranging from national businesses like Men's Wearhouse and AAA to local businesses such as Mackie's Barber Shop and Boheme Hair Boutique.

All businesses were eager to be a part of the fair. Carolyne Evaristo of Brookline Bank said, "The average student doesn't get this. It's the first thing you need when you're on your own; understanding finances is going to help set yourself off on the right foot."

Students were tasked with filling out a full budget plan based on the



Students at the Financial Literacy Fair.

Photo courtesy of Mr. LoPresti

salaries of jobs of their choosing. They visited each table, where they talked to representatives to establish costs for different necessities and personal expenses.

The idea of bringing the fair to Milton started when new business teacher Joshua Hamermesh worked with Early Investors, a company with the goal of spreading financial literacy to younger people, and brought in co-founder Nislo Galvao as a presenter and guest in his classes. Galvao returned multiple times with lessons on how to budget and invest your money. Hamermesh then applied for a grant to bring the fair experience to the students at MHS.

Hamermesh added, "A big part of the Milton High business curriculum is understanding budgeting, finances, and managing money. This fair is a great way for students to practice those skills and connect with business." He also said that he plans to try to bring the fair back in the future and stressed that all students should be exposed to financial literacy.

Hillary Deshler, founder of Boheme Hair Boutique, said, "I think that this [fair] is the best idea ever and really important for students to learn this, and is also a good marketing opportunity for us as a business." The representatives were able to take the fair as an opportunity to form connections while making impacts on the community.

"Everything is sugar-coated, but at least having a little bit of knowledge will help students to get their foot in the door," said Evaristo, "There are so many expenses you don't think about that all add up quickly, and you don't actually know what you're going to end up making."

The fair was a great way to learn about real-life experiences, along with complimenting the current business and financial curriculum offered at the high school. Business classes serve as a helpful way for students to prepare for their futures, as they teach the foundations of financial literacy that are needed to be successful in life.

EDITORIALS

Graffiti and Grades

By ADAM CHEAIRS

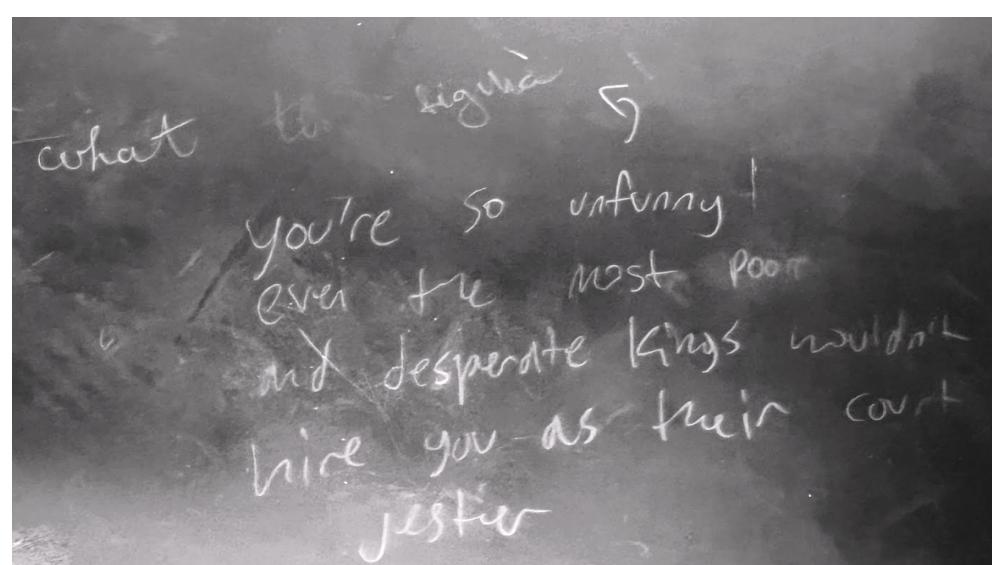
As spring brings its familiar rhythms, high school students nationwide—including almost 400 last year at Milton High School—brace for the annual academic sprint: the Advanced Placement (AP) exams.

In two intense May weeks, students tackle college-level material in diverse subjects, from English and social science to math and computer science.

The College Board, the organization responsible for administering AP exams, explains that these standardized tests are designed to assess students' mastery of the rigorous, college-level content and skills taught in a specific year-long AP course. Milton offers 21, according to leveling guidelines in the program of studies.

Results from last year, reported annually by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, were nothing short of impressive in Milton. Of the 819 exams administered (with students able to enroll in multiple), 83% received scores between 3 and 5.

These exams often dwell on minor details, such as dates for history or differentiation rules for calculus. Preparation can start as early as a month before the exam, with exercises like reviewing course material, practicing past exams, using review



Example of graffiti on a desk.

books and resources, and honing test-taking strategies.

But amid the buzz of preparation, a quieter story surfaces. It's one written not in textbooks, but in the graffiti-scrawled tables of our classrooms.

Though defacing school property is a violation of student conduct in the MHS handbook, these acts of vandalism give a raw glimpse into student sentiment, often written anonymously during moments' revelation or desperation.

What compels these students to leave their mark in this way? Are there discernible patterns or themes within the graffiti that hint at the underlying anxieties or aspirations of the students? And perhaps most importantly, should the school take

Photo by Adam Cheairs

measures to address or preserve this unique form of student expression?

I begin with the familiar plight of a lecture marathon with a history teacher who seems allergic to flex periods—welcome to the long-block struggle. As your eyes drift from the monotonous drone to the desk, you can't help but notice the makeshift pep talks etched into the wood. "Crushin' it," they declare, surrounded by crimson hearts.

There's a hidden gem: "You're so unfunny! Even the most desperate, poor king wouldn't hire you as their court jester." I fought back a laugh because if a slab of wood can yap, there's hope for humor yet in this world.

In one science room, students were preparing for the legendary AP Biology exam that strikes fear into

the hearts of even the bravest.

In the chaos of trying to memorize more facts than there are cells in a petri dish and wrestling with lab reports longer than the DNA strand itself, one student did the simplest of acts: draw tally marks. It was a moment of hilarious desperation. Maybe they're just calculating how many brain cells they've lost trying to understand the Krebs cycle.

Do these 120 tally marks in their seemingly random array hold a lesson for us?

Keep counting those victories, big and small, because maybe it's the tally marks we doodled along the way that actually level us up to conquer the final boss.

In another room, a three-leaf shamrock etched on a desk caught my eye. Clearly, one student's subtle cry for help before the AP exams. If the Celtics can turn an 88-85 nail-biter into a 113-98 victory with less than 10 minutes to play, surely a bit of that luck can help ace those exams!



Tally marks on a desk.
Photo by Adam Cheairs

The Need for Sports Psychologists

By SADIE RUTH

Music blasts from the back of the bus as my teammates sing along enthusiastically. As much as I'd like to join in, I'm stuck anxiously fidgeting with my hands, mentally going over my race plan as I listen to my comfort playlist.

The bus finally pulls to the side of the road and we all hop off, heading inside. Once I step inside the doors of the Reggie Lewis Center, its signature scent hits me and my stomach drops.

I find my place in the bleachers and attempt to relax. I watch the other races and crack jokes with my friends, though all the while, my knee won't stop bouncing.

When it's time to warm up,

the pit in my stomach grows. I try to breathe, I try to loosen up, I try to remind myself that it's not all that important. Except to me, it is.

My race is called and I line up on the track. I scout the nearest trash cans, feeling like I'm going to throw up. Toes to the line, arms in position, head down. I'm terrified.

As a student track athlete, this is my experience every meet. Being a soccer player for most of my life, I decided to take on track in high school.

While I expected grueling workouts, personal records, races won, and races lost, I was entirely unprepared for the anxiety attacks, stomachaches, and stress that accompanied my running.

Track exposed the competitive anxiety that I had never addressed. Every meet, I fight the mental battle of prioritizing my love for track over the dread I feel leading up to my race.

My experience is far from unique. Student athletes train tirelessly, coached to reach optimal physical fitness. Schools provide athletic trainers, expansive facilities, and expert coaches. However, despite the abundance of funding poured into sports by high schools every year, there is rarely consideration or support provided for the mental toll athletics take on young athletes.

According to a study pub-

lished by the National Library of Medicine, 91% of high school athletes reported experiencing stress related to sports. If statistics clearly point to the issue of sports performance anxiety in high schoolers, why are mental health resources for athletes so minimal?

Oftentimes, it's a matter of stigma. Sports, by nature, are aggressive, tough, and gritty activities. In a pastime that values strength, it's common to dismiss the vulnerable topic of mental health. Schools would rather spend money on concession stands and fancy uniforms, instead of recognizing that athletes require genuine support to thrive.

At Milton High School specifically, the budget for athletics in the 2023-2024 school year is \$715,169. Though 1,952,748 additional dollars are attributed to school counseling, none of that money is allotted for sports-specific mental health professionals.

What high schools need are sports psychologists. As defined by the American Psychological Association, sports psychology "uses psychological knowledge and skills to address optimal performance and well-being of athletes, developmental and social aspects of sports participation, and systemic issues associated with sports settings and organizations."

In a time when a student's athletic success holds the capacity to determine their college, career, and future, access to these athletic mental health professionals is crucial to ensure they are mentally equipped to compete to the best of their abilities.

The barriers that prevent athletes from succeeding extend far beyond physical obstacles. Just as a torn ACL can destroy the sports career of a student, mental illness can do the same.

It's unrealistic to expect student athletes to perform at high levels when crippled with the weight of nerves and expectations.

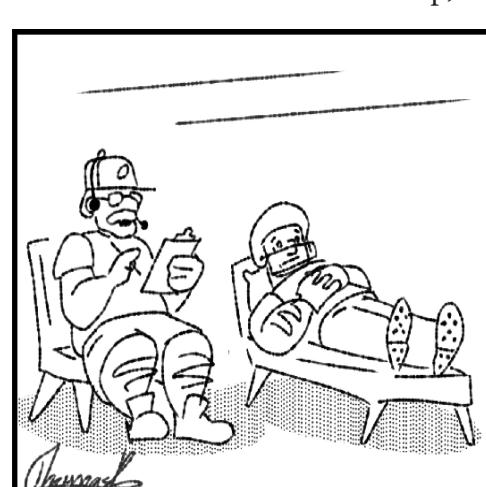
The assistance of coaches and athletic trainers with no mental health training can only help so much. In my experience, the advice of "just breathe" or "relax" from my coaches has failed to prove constructive.

Sports define the American high school experience. So let's take the steps to protect the student athletes who epitomize American culture. In other words, my teammates and I deserve to have a sports psychologist available in school.

Have a great summer vacation MHS!



See you next school year.



It seems your problems started out early in the game when you made a terrible defensive decision.

Graphic by THOMAS HAYDEN