

Passion Meets Purpose: How Two Seniors Founded Arthrelief



Arthrelief founders Catalina Abboud and Stephy Dai. Photo by ISABELLE GOBBI

By ISABELLE GOBBI

Over the summer, seniors Catalina Abboud and Stephy Dai launched their own passion project, Arthrelief. Dai describes Arthrelief as a community organization “dedicated to providing care packages which aid in relieving arthritis pain in elders.”

Through this initiative, Abboud and Dai aim to bring comfort and support to seniors living with chronic pain. Arthritis, or the swelling of joints, is a disease that causes pain and stiffness in the body.

According to the CDC, 54% of adults 75 and older are affected by arthritis in the U.S.

Motivated by loved ones affected by arthritis, Abboud and Dai have the mission to relieve: they seek to make everyday tasks easier through their specialized care packages. Each package contains anti-inflammatory gel, no-tie shoelaces,

heat packs, and acupressure balls. Arthrelief is currently partnering with Standish Village, an assisted living community in Lower Mills, to donate an initial 25 care packages to residents. Abboud and Dai hope to eventually expand across the Boston area, with a particular interest in supporting lower-income retirement homes.

With each care package costing about \$26, Abboud and Dai have been working on ways to fundraise their project. From September 16 to September 25, the organization held a raffle to raise money for the care baskets. Local businesses like Steele and Rye and the Icecream Smith donated gift cards for the raffle. With the support of our community, Arthrelief raised close to \$600 in donations.

As a way to raise both aware-

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Has COVID Gone Away?

By GRIFFIN ANGUS and LEO WALDBAUM

This year's senior class is the last group of students who experienced COVID-19 precautions in high school. With that being said, is COVID still a threat? To explore this question, two journalists from EITR attended the Globe Summit, an annual conference of expert speakers hosted by the Boston Globe at the Harvard Club in Boston, to listen to former CDC director Dr. Rochelle Walensky.

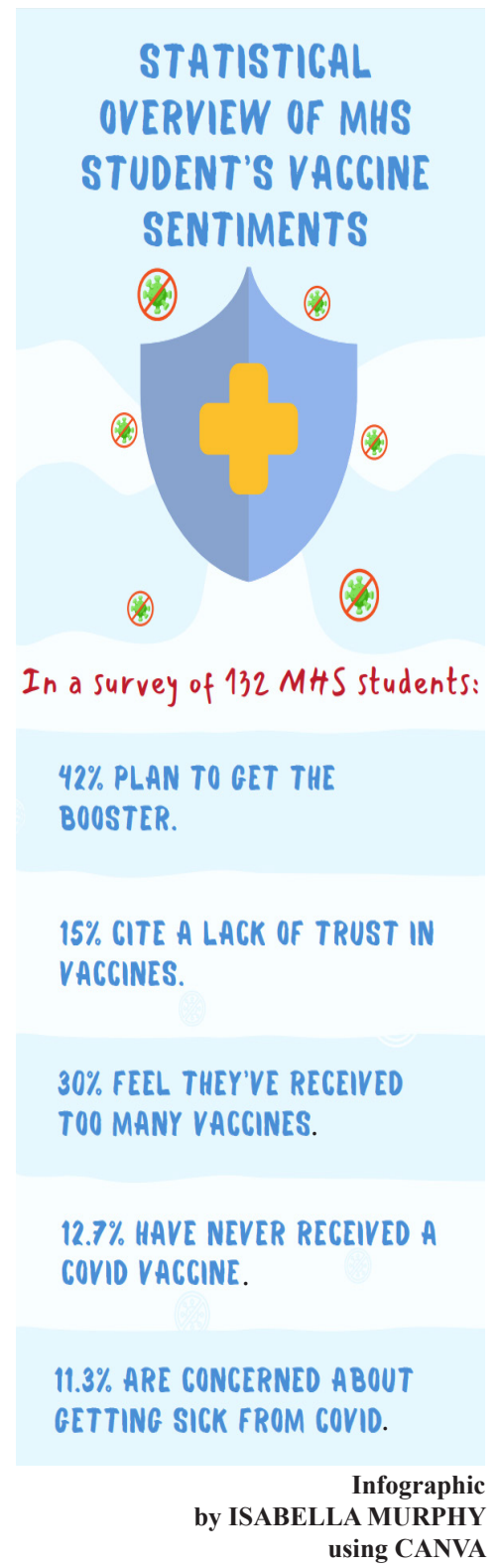
The biggest topic of discussion at the summit was the CDC's struggle—and continuing struggle—to get people vaccinated. While the CDC has worked to provide free vaccines to children through the Vaccines For Children Program, Americans are still not getting booster shots at the rate the CDC wanted.

After sending out a survey asking MHS students whether they would get the new booster shot, only 42% said they planned to receive the most recent COVID vaccine.

Walensky said that the “real issue” is a lack of public trust in vaccines, particularly among parents. 15% of MHS respondents who do not plan on getting the booster cite a lack of trust in vaccines as a primary reason.

About 30% of students who do not plan on getting the latest booster say they feel they've already received too many. Walensky refers to this phenomenon as “vaccine exhaustion” —the notion

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A New Season, Same Legacy



The 2024-25 Wildcats.

Photo courtesy of ROY CHAMBERS

By SARAH CLARKE and JACQUELINE SEGALL

On Friday, September 26, the Milton High football team kicked off their season with high hopes against Needham. Following last year's impressive season, which ended in a Super Bowl championship at Gillette Stadium, excitement was in the air.

Despite a tough loss in their opening match, the team quickly rebounded, winning their

next two games against Central High School and Framingham.

Coach Andrew Hunt shared his optimism for the season ahead: “We are very excited about the football team this season. We lost a lot of great players to graduation after last year's state championship, but the team has stepped up in a big way to fill those gaps.”

The leadership of the team's five captains - Patrick Collins, Harry Hinckle, Aidan Reilly, Terren Bly, and

Colin Donovan - has been vital in helping the team adjust. “Our captains are doing a great job of guiding the team by using the experience they gained as players last year,” Hunt added.

After the defeat to Needham, who finished third in Division I last season, the Milton players bounced back quickly, showing their determination and teamwork.

The victories over Central and Framingham proved their resilience and their ability to carry forward

the legacy built in previous years.

Looking ahead, Hunt acknowledged the challenges of their upcoming schedule: “Our schedule is challenging, and we will be tested the rest of the regular season, so we have to continue to focus on us and improve every single day.” Teams like Natick and Walpole could prove to be formidable opponents.

Community support has been a crucial part of the team's spirit. Fans pack the stands at Brooks Field for every home game. Milton's student section, with every grade represented, enthusiastically follows each game's theme — whether it's USA night or a gold-out. Their energy has become a huge factor for the Wildcats, who hope to ride that momentum to another trip to Gillette Stadium this year, fulfilling their championship legacy.



FEATURES

Turning the Pages at MHS: Interviewing Ms. Alpert, the New Library Media Specialist



Alpert and her dog Rosie.

Photo courtesy of JANICE ALPERT

By MELINA ZULLAS

Peace and quiet. Comfortable seating. Rows of truthful stories and eye-opening information line the shelves. The perfect place to escape to in the middle of a busy day. These are usually some of the images that come to mind when one hears the word “library.”

This year we welcome Janice Alpert, who began her job here in August, to the Milton High library space as our new library media specialist. So far, Alpert said that she is excited to be here.

Because the library is officially a “library media center,” there are many more happenings there throughout the school day. In other words, both mornings and afternoons are filled with the Student Technology Assistance Team (STAT) repairing Chromebooks, students rushing in to print their essays, and different classes learning how to research.

This native New Yorker orig-

inally planned on being an English teacher, but soon realized that the job just wouldn't be the perfect fit. After brainstorming other ideas, such as becoming an English Language Learner (ELL) teacher or a guidance counselor, and listening to her mom's advice, Alpert got her master's degree in education at Tufts University and eventually landed at Lynnfield High School where she worked as the school librarian for 25 years. The school is about a 40-minute drive from MHS.

Unfortunately Alpert was forced to leave LHS after numerous school committee meetings resulted in budget cuts. On the bright side, she began a new chapter here, thanks in part to her former LHS colleague and current MHS Athletic Director Michael Bierwirth.

MHS is twice the size of Lynnfield High School and, as Alpert said, “it's not easy being the new kid.” But thanks to the teachers, especially those on the third floor, and the students, who Alpert said, “have been super friendly and kind to me” she has been able to both find her way and to feel welcomed.

In her own words, Alpert's goal has been to make our Library Media Center “welcoming, inclusive, and very representative of the students” and staff of MHS by laying out books just like a bookstore, and by working

with teachers to set up relevant displays. So far, she has worked to set up inviting “Book Tok” and “Hispanic Heritage Month” themed displays.

Alpert is also planning on teaming up with Ms. Chandler-Blood, who teaches various fine arts classes, to write a grant that will hopefully allow for the creation of areas where student artwork can be regularly exhibited and rotated.

All in all, she believes “the most important thing is just making people feel comfortable and everything else will kind of fall into place.”

“the most important thing is just making people feel comfortable and everything else will kind of fall into place.”

-Ms. Alpert

Especially today, she explained that “with all of the chaos in general all over the world, I think that kindness and empathy are extreme-

ly important.”



Alpert's pets caught reading board welcomes students when they enter the library.

Photo by MELINA ZULLAS

Securly Pass Passes Expectations

By NICHOLAS PULGINI

The days of using paper passes to get around the halls of Milton High School are being shredded into oblivion.

Starting this year, securly.com, a digital hall pass system, has been used in place of paper passes during advisory. It is a continuation of the pilot program from last year, which has introduced a digital pass system to our school. Last year only a handful of teachers were chosen to use the system. However, now it is being used across all classrooms during advisory period.

MHS is following the trend of many other schools in the Boston area that have made the switch to electronic passes. These electronic systems allow schools to collect data on students, tracking their location, how often they leave the classroom, and for how long. Mrs. Jessica Jarboe, Milton High School's technology specialist, stated, “Schools are big, we want students to be safe. Knowing where they are going and coming from.”

Jarboe adds that securly.com allows the administration to do many things that paper passes couldn't. She said, “This way we can approve it, see how often it is being used, we are able to see now what is going on all day.”

The system gives teachers and administrators alike the information needed to keep track of students' productivity throughout the day. Teachers are now aware if students leave their classes continuously and for long periods of time. This allows them to make decisions that will ensure the best use of the student's time during the day, such as denying a pass due to excessive use or abuse of the system.

Advisory was chosen as a way to introduce the new system to the entire school. According to Jarboe: “Advisory is meant for students to move around the building and connect with their teachers.” Additionally, it the exposure needed to introduce the school to the schedule and habits of the

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Abboud's Book “Daisy's Quest: The Tale of The Strawberry Jam Dilemma”.

Image by CATALINA ABBOUD

Arthrelief

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-ness and funds, Abboud wrote and illustrated a children's picture book, “Daisy's Quest: The Tale of The Strawberry Jam Dilemma.” The story follows Daisy, a young kitten on a mission to help her grandmother who is living with arthritis. Thanks to science and perseverance, Daisy is able to help her grandmother accomplish even the hardest tasks—like opening a strawberry jam jar.

“I wanted children to learn about the importance of helping the elderly because they have done so much for us,” explained Abboud. In addition to inspiring children to help those around them, she hopes to teach them the value and importance of science.

Like Daisy, Abboud and Dai hope to use science and research to help others. “We want to see some impact in community homes,” Dai explained. “Even if it's someone telling us ‘this helped make my life easier.’”

The founders of Arthrelief hope to inspire other students to start projects of their own. In Dai's words, “I think this could inspire other people to create something to help others.”

Abboud and Dai hope to continue fundraising, so if helping them assemble care packages interests you, contact the organization on their Instagram page @arthrelief.

FEATURES

Milton Takes the World by Storm... Literally

By LAYLA RAYMOND

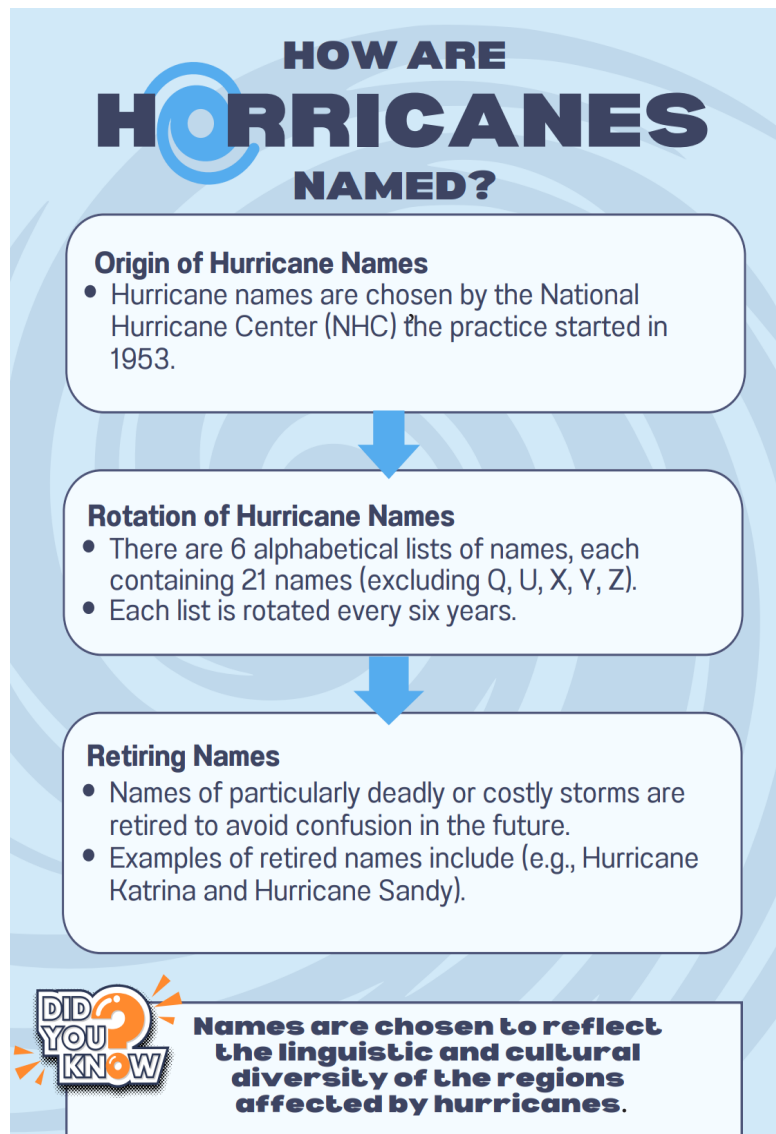
Having your name show up in a math word problem or a short passage can be a common experience, especially for those with names such as John, Max, or Abigail. The moment the class hears your name their eyes are on you. Perhaps you're nervous, shocked, or even prideful.

Interestingly enough, now all the people of Milton have the chance for attention that goes beyond a classroom: our town's name coincides with that of a hurricane.

Over these last couple of weeks, the name Milton has developed from the name of a high school to a hurricane impacting those in the nation's south. Hurricane Milton touched down on October 9th, making its way through the majority of inland Florida in populated areas such as Tampa. It wasn't until the 12th that the storm finally dissipated; however, destruction remained in its wake.

Hurricane Milton began its existence as a tropical storm, forming in the Gulf of Mexico and developing into a Category 5 hurricane. In fact, Milton is the fifth most intense Atlantic hurricane of all time with speeds reaching heights of 180 mph and a pressure of 879 hPa. Though, when the storm made landfall, Milton had decreased to a Category 3 hurricane.

Concerning damage, the tornadoes that followed the storm itself resulted in the most fatalities. In Florida, there have been thirty confirmed deaths, while in Mexico, there have been 3 confirmed ones and 6 unaccounted for. As for property costs, Hurricane Milton is estimated to



Infographic by ISABELLA MURPHY using CANVA

become the 8th most expensive hurricane in the Atlantic.

Students said that the name of the hurricane is quite surprising. Milton High Junior Katie Scott commented on its irony. "I had some family members from

Florida in town at the time," said Scott, "so it was kinda like they were escaping Hurricane Milton by coming to Milton."

Other comments from students describe feelings of shock and even confusion, "At first when I heard the phrase Hurricane Milton, I thought for a second that there was a hurricane going through Milton," one junior said. Although opinions differed among students, one trend stayed consistent: students wondered just how hurricanes are named.

In truth, the names of hurricanes come from a list made by the National Hurricane Center in 1953. There are 6 alphabetical lists of names rotated every six years. It just so happens that the name in the M spot in the list for 2024 is Milton.

However, the National Hurricane Center considers the names of hurricanes with notable impacts, such as Hurricane Katrina, as inappropriate and, therefore, retires them.

Milton was one of many names that have replaced retired storms. Previously, the thirteenth name from this year's list was Michael, however, in 2018, it became Milton. There is a chance that this name will meet the same fate and "Hurricane Milton" will never leave our mouths again.

As hurricane season comes to a close, the East gears up for storms of their own with the possible harsh winter weather; perhaps there will be a time when our blizzards will be named. However, students will be more interested in getting days off of school in the winter season than in any recurrence of Milton in the news.

The Blue Hills' Silent Killer



Healthy Beech Leaves from the Base of Chickatawbut Hill (left) - 10/19/23;

Infected Beech Leaves from Wolcott Hill (right) - 9/3/23.



Photos courtesy of THOMAS PALMER

By RYAN ZUKOWSKI

For centuries, the Blue Hills has been a sanctuary for countless species of animals, trees, plants, and mushrooms. But in recent years, a threat to its sanctity has been looming behind the scenes: Beech Leaf Disease.

Beech Leaf Disease (BLD) is caused by the *Litylenchus crenatae mccannii*, an invasive species of nematode, a parasitic worm. It is a fatal disease that causes the leaves and branches of the tree to slowly dry up, shrivel, and die, eventually leading to the tree's death.

According to the Boston Globe, BLD can kill "up to 90% of young trees in two to five years" in highly infested areas. It spreads very rapidly from tree to tree and can infect whole forests in a matter of months.

It is this rapid spreading of the disease that makes it such a threat, not how quickly it kills the tree. According to the USDA, "tree saplings infected with BLD usually die within five years of infection," while mature trees can take "several years to die of the infection." While that may seem like a long time, many of these trees have existed in our forests for centuries, so five years is nothing compared to a tree's lifespan.

BLD was first discovered in Ohio in 2012, and it has since spread throughout the Northeast US, even reaching the Ontario province in Canada. Despite the fact that researchers have known of the disease for over a decade, scientists are yet to develop a working cure or prevention for the disease.

Beech Leaf Disease first reached Massachusetts in the Summer of 2020. First discovered in Plymouth, it has since spread to "83 communities in Massachusetts" according to the Department of Conservation & Recreation (DCR). Since then, it has spread to the Blue Hills, where Milton High students in Mr. Young's Exploring Nature class learned of its danger for the first time.

Last Wednesday, the class took a field trip to Hancock Hill to experience the Blue Hills with Mr. Thomas Palmer, the author of the book "Landscape with Reptile," a book exploring the beauty of the Blue Hills, as well as the long history of rattlesnakes in the area.

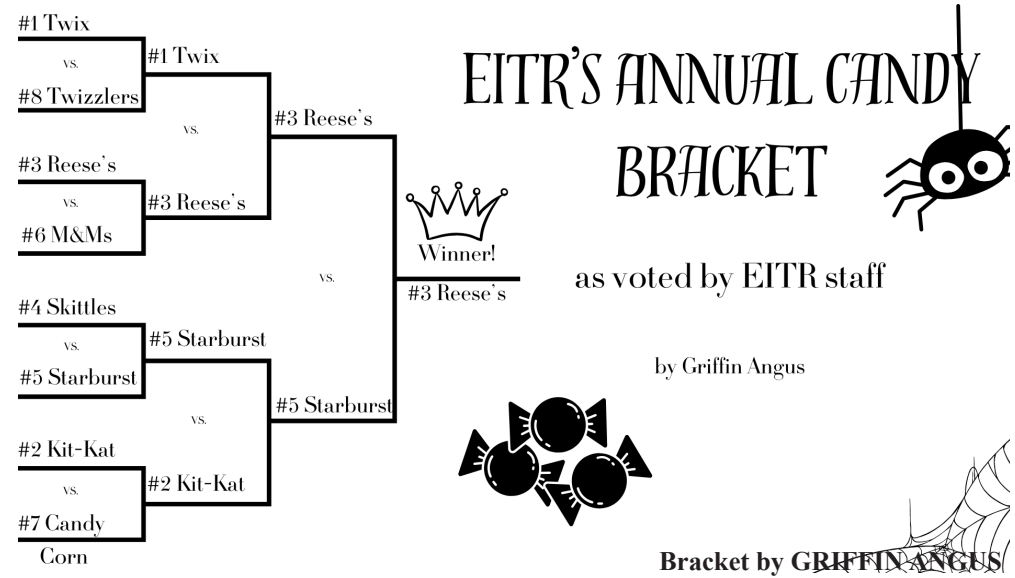
While hiking up the trail, Palmer stopped the class to point

out a seemingly normal tree. He plucked a leaf off of its branches and showed it to the class. "See how this leaf is wrinkled?" he asked. "That's not normal. Normally the leaf would be flat. These wrinkles are a sign of Beech Leaf Disease."

He went on to talk about how large of a threat BLD is to the Blue Hills. The DCR recorded that beech trees are the 4th most common tree species in the Hills, composing over 6% of all trees, totaling nearly 18,500 across the whole reservation. But that number could plummet in the coming years. Palmer told our class that unless a cure is discovered soon, "you guys may live to see the Blue Hills with no beech trees."

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Securly Pass

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students and teachers.

Teachers have positively reacted to the new system. Ms. White, the culinary teacher, said: "SecurlyPass helps to keep students accountable for their time and helps teachers identify unproductive behaviors like extended time out of the classroom and overuse of passes. Often these students have identified performance issues. If we can draw the students' attention to the correlation, it could help with their performance." It gives teachers more power to better do their jobs as educators.

However, students seem to be indifferent to the new system as long as they get the pass. Senior Harrison Hinckle said, "I don't really care about the new passes. It doesn't matter to me."

With these positive responses, it would be no surprise that the electronic pass system is here to stay at Milton High.

COVID

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of already having received an overwhelming amount of vaccinations.

In all, 12.7% of students say they have never received a COVID vaccine. Additionally, 11.3% of MHS students are concerned about getting sick from COVID.

Walensky said that while the United States public health system is "deeply frail," industry leaders have made efforts to address a "fragmented" data collection system and a shortage of 80,000 public health workers.

Walensky's key concern is that the pandemic could resurge and become a threat. She explained that while we are better equipped to deal with COVID, it can still lead to preventable deaths without increased coverage by the boosters.

As emphasized by Walensky, COVID

is not going away. Despite public perceptions, she points to steadily high COVID-related death rates across the country and stresses the necessity of updated COVID shots.

Nationally, Walensky is concerned with healthcare equity and new potential pandemics, particularly the bird flu. She is particularly concerned by the underserved public health workforce and outdated data collection systems.

Despite her concerns, she adds that the United States has been using COVID as a learning experience for potential future pandemics. Walensky said incident response teams "flexed deep muscles," and that their resilience can be used as a model for the future. While the United States is "not done with new and novel infectious threats," she believes we are better prepared than before COVID.



From left to right: Waldbaum, Dr. Walensky, and Angus. Photo courtesy of GRIFFIN ANGUS and LEO WALDBAUM

Chocolate Bar Ban

By MACY BURNS

Hilliard's Chocolate bars are a staple of the club fundraising efforts at Milton High School. The small white boxes have always been a welcomed sight whether in class, lunch, or passing time.

But this year they seemed to have vanished. Why? The reason is simple: the chocolate bars do not comply with Massachusetts' nutrition standards for competitive foods sold at school. Foods sold on campus during the school day must be nurturing and nutritious, and the bars are simply not.

The chocolate boxes are also considered a distraction because many students interrupt class and leave advisory to buy chocolate, which is not allowed.

Milton Public School guidelines follow these standards to promote wellness across all Milton schools. Ms. Perez, the director of food services across Milton Public Schools, said, "the only issue is that it is sold during school hours. You can sell 30 mins before or after the school day and then it is not considered 'competitive food.'" Principal Cahill explained further that these guidelines have always existed; they are just being more strictly enforced this year. These chocolate bars can still be sold after the school day is over and outside of school; however, during school hours, it may be smart to think of alternative ways to raise money that are either nutritional or not food-related.

Ways Clubs Can Raise Money Without Selling Chocolate

- Raffle:** Participants can buy tickets or bid on items, with the proceeds going to the fundraising goal.
- Offer Workshops:** Organize events where students or teachers can teach skills relevant to their club for a small fee.
- Car Wash:** Set up a car wash in the school parking lot or a local community area.
- Merchandise Sales:** Sell team-branded merchandise.
- Craft Fair:** Host a craft fair where clubs can sell handmade items.

Infographic by ISABELLA MURPHY using CANVA

New members are always welcome to join!
Meetings are every Wednesday morning at 7:00 in room 212
Join the google classroom: 3hmdlq1



"The only thing open was a Spirit Halloween"
Comic by THOMAS HAYDEN

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!
Sincerely,
The Elephant in the Room staff

Categories!

Instructions: Place the words into 4 groups of 4, each with a similar trait/theme.
Ex. Cat, Dog, Fish, Hamster → Pets

Squash	Black Cat	Princess	Pepo
Wednesday	Gomez	Athlete	Umbrella
Hero	Horseshoe	Gourd	Fester
Jack-O'-Lantern	Zombie	Morticia	Mirror

Answers: Pumpkin synonyms: Squash, Gourd, Jack-O'-Lantern, Can Be Bad Luck; Black Cat; Mirror, Umbrella, Horseshoe, Adams Family; Wednesday, Fester, Gomez, Morticia, Costumes; Princess, Athlete, Zombie, Hero

Game by GRIFFIN ANGUS