

# The Elephant In The Room

## Unified Track and Field Unites MHS Students

By MELINA ZULLAS

Suddenly a hush comes over the crowd. Tension rises as the opposing teams gather on both sides of the court, field, or rink, ready to do everything they can to succeed – which usually means working together to run faster, skate smoother, pass quicker, and ultimately score the highest in order to defeat the other school.

This is often what comes to mind when a student hears the words “game,” “match,” or “tournament.”

On Monday, March 6, at the first MHS Unified Track and Field meeting of the season, Vanessa Bettencourt, Christine Martinelli, and the veteran partners—or experienced team members without an intellectual disability—made it clear that many more fun, life-changing experiences make up this team.

Milton created its Unified Track team in 2019 intending to give students with and without intellectual disabilities the ability to train and compete as a team.

According to Bettencourt, who is coaching the team for the first time this year, “the idea is to include everyone.”

This idea of inclusivity seems to be becoming increasingly integrated into professional sports. On March 20 of last year, 21-year-old Chris Nikic became the first person with Down syndrome to complete the Ironman, which consists of a 2.4 mile swim, a 112 mile bike ride, and a full marathon run. This past November, 33-year-old Kayleigh Williamson made history as one of the first wom-



Members of Unified Track sport HOKA gear.

en with Down syndrome to complete the New York City Marathon.

Bettencourt believes that “inclusion starting in high school is very important” because it allows all students at the high school to see themselves in sports in the future.

Bettencourt, Martinelli, and the veteran partners also stressed the significance of maintaining a positive mindset to inspire the intellectually disabled team member they are partnered with every week. This includes listening to their needs, always being kind and supportive, and helping to keep everyone focused, which Bettencourt added is “one of the most important and difficult parts of competing.”

Something else Bettencourt plans to prioritize is allowing all partners and athletes the opportunity to complete their daily goal every time they come to practice, even if that

Photo courtesy of Mrs. Bettencourt

goal is just showing up.

Specifically, she described how having partners help their athletes establish a distinct goal daily allows them to best “know what to expect and how to support them.”

Keeping all of this in mind, the partners met with their athletes for the first time on Tuesday, March 19. This first practice included a visit from Tono Tovar, an ultra-marathoner and representative from the sneaker brand Hoka, who will eventually be putting together an adaptive stretching training for the team. The brand is also giving the team members the chance to provide feedback about changes that should be made for their next lines of shoes.

Additionally, Martinelli has already put together a team playlist with all of the partners’ and athletes’ favorite songs to keep everyone motivated as they workout.

After several Monday and Tuesdays practices, the team of about 20 partners and 12 athletes will complete one meet a week, starting on April 10, participating in the shot put, javelin, the running long jump, the relay, the 100, 400, and maybe the 800.

But the athletes and the partners won’t be going home as soon as they have raced because as Bettencourt remarked at the meeting, “I think that one of the most powerful things about sport is eating afterwards.”

Staying true to this statement, she is encouraging partners and athletes to bring some snacks so the team can “tailgate” after the meet “to celebrate our shared experience competing together,” whether that means celebrating their successes and/or failures.

In short, as junior and experienced partner Riley Bergin puts it, participating in Unified Track and Field is “so much fun. Everyone is so supportive. Everyone has the same goal to build an inclusive, fun team.”

And, fortunately, spring is not the only Unified season at MHS because, along with the MHS adaptive gym classes and Best Buddies club, brand new Unified Art and Music classes are being offered next fall. Furthermore, there will be an MHS Unified Basketball team starting this fall! Make sure to stay tuned for more opportunities to create a more welcoming environment for all of the students at the high school.

## How Juniors Really Feel About Their AP Classes

By LAWSON BEAUDOIN

Milton High is a part of the 90% of Massachusetts high schools that offer AP classes, which the College Board defines as “College-level courses and exams that you can take in high school.”

The idea of impressing colleges with a high GPA and rigorous courses sounds appealing to many. This common sentiment is why so many juniors have decided to enroll in three, four, five, or even six AP classes, an extremely challenging course load.

Of course, ambition to succeed in these courses is something felt by many, who walk in on the first day of school ready to earn an A in all of their classes.

Yet it is common for people to look over “burnout” when it comes to academics. Many just assume they can work through it, and that the same momentum they felt in September to achieve in their AP classes will last them to the end of the year.

In the beginning of the school year, a handful of juniors were interviewed on how they were feeling about their AP course load, and for most, those same sentiments remain. Junior Jacque Timmins said, “I love my AP classes and the teachers. I took three and I thought it was the perfect amount.”

Junior Kevin Gomes also explained, “I don’t regret any of my AP classes. I’m never really bored and I’m always looking forward to the more complex ideas and concepts associated with AP classes.”

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## Milton Voters Reject MBTA Law: School Funding at Risk

By GRIFFIN ANGUS

On February 14, Milton voters chose to reject a zoning proposal to comply with the MBTA Communities Law by a roughly 55-45 margin. The law, passed in January of 2021, requires multi-family housing to be built near MBTA service areas.

The law was passed unanimously in the Massachusetts state senate by a 143-4 margin. It was then signed into law by then-governor Charlie Baker.

Massachusetts Attorney General Andrea Campbell said in a press release, “The MBTA Communities Law was enacted to address our region-wide need for housing, and compliance with it is mandatory.” By voting to reject the zoning ordinance, Milton is not in compliance with the law.

As a result, Campbell filed a lawsuit against Milton on February 27, which “seeks a court order to require Milton to come into compliance with the law.” So far, the state has rescinded over \$140,000 in funding that would’ve been used for a seawall, and the town is no longer eligible for MassWorks and HousingWorks grants.

The proposed zoning was developed by the town’s Planning Board and approved by the Town Meeting with a two-thirds majority, however, No vote supporters requested additional review of the proposal by the Planning Board and Select Board.

Those behind the No for Milton campaign predominantly dis

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# FEATURES

## Lainer Takes on New Role as English Teacher in Ashland



Mr. Lainer Photo courtesy of Mr. Lainer

By MELINA ZULLAS

Since September, Mark Lainer, the hostage who kept his hands up throughout “Free Guy,” has been working at Milton High.

Working as a substitute, the actor has been spotted in countless classrooms helping to ensure that every student is safe and respectful towards one another.

He said that although a substitute’s job is to ensure that whatever the teachers require of the students is properly carried out, he never wants to be harsh. He explained that he gets “no pleasure in that.”

However, March 22 was Lainer’s last day of helping to supervise MHS students.

So what is next for the actor? Ashland High School recently offered Lainer a position to teach English to 9th, 10th, and 11th graders, which he gladly accepted. He hopes to “give back a bit,” as he puts it, after making a living on-screen for over 30 years.

On the other hand, Lainer is not super thrilled to leave MHS. He said that he “will miss being here. It’s really nice.”

He also mentioned that “the students here are terrific,” calling them “very smart” and “kind.”

Now helping students out will be part of the actor’s long list of roles.

“And who knows maybe someday I’ll be back here,” he added, though he hopes to find success as a teacher in Ashland, because he is excited to teach “Macbeth,” “Fahrenheit 451,” and “Animal Farm,” to young aspiring engineers, teachers, biologists, historians, basketball players, and even actors, like himself.

*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](mailto:mhs.eitr@gmail.com). Thanks for reading and see you next issue!*

Sincerely,  
The Elephant in the Room staff



## Borde Ready to Kick Back and Retire After 31 Years

By MACY BURNS

After 31 years of teaching in Milton, social studies teacher Brian Borde is retiring at the end of the school year.

Growing up in Trinidad, Borde didn’t always know that he wanted to go into education. While studying at Eastern Michigan University, he was the captain of the soccer team and planned to work in business. Teaching was the furthest thing from his mind.

In college, Borde was involved in the Olympic Development Program, a youth soccer organization. It was there he realized his passion for teaching and coaching, and in his junior year, he switched his major to education. He went on to get his masters in education at Concordia University.

Borde began teaching in Milton as an 8th grade U.S. history teacher at Pierce Middle School.

Today, at Milton High, Borde continues to teach social studies because it is a subject that he is truly passionate about. He explained, “It’s the one subject I think that gives you the opportunity to talk about all areas of our lives.” He feels as though it gives him the ability to interact with a variety of students, sharing their diverse perspectives on life.

Although Borde primarily teaches U.S. History II, he also teaches several electives such as Contemporary Issues, Comparative Cultures of the African Diaspora, and The Fourth Estates: Government and the Media.

While he loves all of his



Mr. Borde Photo by Macy Burns

classes, Comparative Cultures is his favorite. He created the course, which discusses the Caribbean and Central and South American way of life.

Borde finds it especially interesting because he grew up in the

“If you do nothing, nothing gets done.”  
-Mr. Borde

Caribbean and often visits the area. He also loves the course because more and more Milton students are from these nations.

There aren’t many classes like Comparative Cultures in other schools. Borde said, “I think it’s

a unique class, and also what I like about that class is the experience it brings to the students which is different from the typical daily experience.”

Throughout his career, Borde has seen firsthand how teaching has evolved. When he started, curriculums were more focused on memorization, but today they have developed into interactive activities that engage the student both inside and outside of the classroom.

Borde has evolved alongside teaching, with his main focus being to foster strong relationships with students. He believes that a large aspect of teaching is truly understanding the students. To him, teaching is no longer a solitary exercise but one in which he and his students work together. This allows him to push his students to achieve more than they could have ever thought. He stresses that it is not his classroom but theirs.

Although he plans to stay involved in the Milton community, when asked about what he will miss he said, “The students, I’m going to miss the classroom experience. It’s the students’ classroom but I share a part of that and when you lose that you will miss it.”

He believes that education is a balanced exercise, one in which the community, the school, and the people depend on one another. He hopes to see that balance remain at Milton High even after he is gone.

Finally, Borde leaves us all with some sage words of advice, “If you do nothing, nothing gets done.”

## The Air Purification Mystery

By OLIVIA FEMINO

March marked the fourth anniversary of schools shutting down due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Four years later, classrooms still feature noisy little carts that appeared after quarantine: air purifiers. Besides being distracting and obstructing paths, have you ever wondered what the air purifiers really do?

During the COVID-19 pandemic, summer was coming to an end and school was about to be back in session. Everyone in the world had one thing in common—they did not want to get sick. So as the school year rolled around, all of these air purifiers started popping up in classrooms, promising clean air for students and teachers.

According to Chris Hayden, Director of Facilities of the town of Milton, “The main purpose of obtaining these High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) filters was to help clean the air and to assist in the Air Change per Hour (ACH) rate that takes place in your classroom already by mechanical equipment on the rooftop of the school.”



Graphic by Isabella Murphy

According to Hayden, “In a 30-foot by 30-foot classroom that has 25 students in it, the air should be replaced every 15 minutes.” The purpose of the air purifiers is to make sure that the air coming into the classrooms is clean and sanitized.

But how do the air purifiers remove these toxins from the air? Hayden explained, “It was determined that room air purifiers equipped with HEPA filters would be helpful in office and classroom settings to filter the air of 99.97%

of air particles including virus and bacteria which includes the SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) virus microns.”

Microns are the units used to measure viruses or any kind of air particles. The HEPA filters are designed to remove contaminants up to 0.1 microns in size, so the purifier is entirely able to remove the COVID-19 virus which is 3-5 microns in size, making it a great tool for schools and workplaces.

One of the big problems

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# EDITORIALS

## Running Helped My Mental Health

By LILA ASANZA

Everyone knows there are benefits to exercise. It’s one of the best things you can do for your body! In the CDC’s article, “Benefits of Physical Activity,” exercising manages weight, reduces the risk of disease, and overall betters your ability to do daily activities.

Exercise can also reduce anxiety and depression and improve self-esteem. Whether you like it or not, we all should exercise somehow. I prefer running, as it not only keeps me healthy physically but also mentally.

For the people reading who have no idea why I’d ever recommend running, I understand. I used to hate it as well, the constant lack of breath and sharp pains shooting at your sides are never enjoyable.

But this past year, I’ve grown to love it. As a high schooler, I have a full plate. Keeping my grades high, going to practices, finding time to spend with my loved ones, and everything in between. Not to mention the worries and self-consciousness I struggle with already.

It seems my troubles were similar to those felt by many Milton High students have as well, with “major increases in numbers of students reporting feeling anxious, depressed and even having suicidal thoughts,” according to the Milton Times in their article, “Youth Surveys Raise Continued Concerns for Students.”

It’s easy for stress and anx-

iety to take over during the school year and before this year I had no idea how to manage it.

When running earlier this fall, I would do it as if it was a chore. Fall sports had ended, and I would go home after school every day and do nothing. I ran because I felt like I needed to do something productive.

But there was one week when I was overloaded with stress. The unit my honors biology class was learning made no sense, I felt lost in math and had lots of homework from my other classes. My

“It’s easy for stress and anxiety to take over during the school year, and before this year I had no idea how to manage it.”

sister came home to me sitting at the dining room table, which was covered in all my schoolwork. That’s when she asked me if I wanted to go on a run with her. I contemplated it, knowing that I’d probably drop out at mile two, while she went on for three more miles, but I said yes anyway.

However, during that run, I didn’t stop at mile two, three, four or five. For the first time, I kept running, and it relieved me of the stress I had before. At the end, I sat on the steps to my house, feeling breathless but refreshed, as if

someone had taken a heavy rock off my chest.

What I experienced during and after my run is called ‘runner’s high’, which according to Johns Hopkins Medicine in their article, “The Truth Behind ‘Runner’s High’” is a short, relaxing, and extremely euphoric feeling after a strong or long run.

The article says as you continue to run, your body releases endorphins which stop your muscles from feeling pain, and produces endocannabinoids, which give feelings of calm and reduce anxiety.

Not only does running have good short-term effects, but also long-term. In the New York Times Article, “Even Short Distance Runs Have Major Health Benefits”, a research review discovered that when adults were suggested two and a half hours of working out every week they had a quarter percent lower threat of depression than the ones who weren’t exercising. Karmel Choi, a psychologist at Massachusetts General Hospital says, “If someone were to start running even once or twice a week, instead of not exercising at all, that’s where we should see the most benefits.”

High school, along with life in general, is hard. Stress, anxiety, and insecurities can take control over you, especially during the school year. But in those times, sometimes it’s best to take a break from your work, step outside, and run.

### AIR PURIFIER MYSTERY

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that comes with purchasing one of these air purifiers is keeping up with its maintenance. For example, if the filters are not changed in a certain amount of time, there is a chance they will break and release all the contaminants collected back into the air. According to Newsin-Health.gov, this can cause respiratory problems such as “flare-ups of allergy or asthma,” making the classroom environment unsafe for some students and staff.

As reported by Hayden, “According to the manufacturer the filters last up to five years before needing replacement. These Austin units were purchased in December of 2020 and installed in schools and were operational in January 2022.”

To cut down on labor costs Hayden decided on the Austin-branded air purifiers considering the filters need to be changed only every five years as opposed to every one year.

It has been four years since COVID-19 began, so are these utilities still a benefit to classrooms? “Essentially, they are beneficial,” said Hayden. “They keep the air within the classroom clean.”

Even though COVID-19 feels over, these purifiers are still important because they keep the classroom environment safe. As they remove toxins from the air, they create an easy-to-breathe environment for students and teachers, making Milton High safe and comfortable.

## The Need for Nurses

By ELIJAH ETHEART

Ever since I was born, my mother was a nurse. Despite being essential in the medical field, nurses are somewhat hidden from the spotlight, and we rarely focus on topics such as their mental health.

La’Lena Etheart, my mother, is now a school nurse working at Blue Hills Regional. She has been a nurse for about 20 years now and has been working in schools for about two.

Throughout those 22 years, Etheart had mostly been an in-patient nurse at Brigham and Women’s Hospital. The switch between nursing at a hospital and a school is not always an easy transfer, however, especially through COVID-19.

In general, nurses have faced countless challenges and stress, which can affect mental health. According to the National Library of Medicine, “Nurses face a higher risk of developing negative mental states, such as depression, anxiety, and stress, due to the nature of their work.”

The work and home life balance is hard for nurses to manage, so many choose to leave hospitals or find a better position with less stress, like my mother who left her position as nurse manager to work in schools.

After 2020, a very hard year for those working in hospitals, Etheart was hired at a summer camp and discovered that she liked working with children.

From there, she worked at Boston Preparatory School as a substitute nurse, and now she



Nurse Aikey

Photo by Isabelle Gobbi

works at Blue Hills Regional. Etheart said, “What I love the most is the kids! I still have kids who are there who ask to see me, or they say, ‘Can they make sure Mrs. E shows up at my graduation’” This shows how much nurses have an impact on students and create a bond with them.

Shannon Aikey, the school nurse at Milton High School, also has had a somewhat similar experience to my mother

Aikey became a nurse in 2011, and worked in long-term care for the next two years. She

worked in a hospital for six years, then took a year off to be with her child, “I wanted a better work-life balance,” said Aikey, who also has children of her own.

After 2020, Aikey found a job at a school helping with testing and masking and then ended up at MHS.

The change between hospitals and schools is a big one. Aikey explained how working at hospitals, she “only saw patients for maybe a couple of days,” which prevented her from really building a connection with them.

Working at schools, however, allowed Aikey to see students grow and change throughout high school. She explained, “It’s more rewarding,” and that at a hospital, you have four patients, and here you have over 1000.”

Aikey loves the interactions with students, describing it as her “jam.” She described how she enjoys being able to sit down and have conversations with them saying that she loves to “rationalize with them,” saying it’s “better than giving little kids ice packs at recess.”

Personally, I feel like nurses are not just first aid, but help improve the school environment. They are not always appreciated for the effort and work they put in. I may not speak for everyone, but nurses provide that safety, that gentility. So if you see Mrs. Aikey, or any nurse, make sure to show your appreciation for them.



MBTA LAW

*(continued from page 1)*

agree with the proposed zoning, claiming that it could lead to increased traffic, there is limited infrastructure, and that housing would be developed by investors—and would be sold at market rate.


According to the Yes for Milton campaign website, reasons for voting to support the proposed zoning include compliance with the law, keeping state funding, ensuring local control over what ultimately gets built, and alleviating the state’s housing crisis.

Importantly, the Yes for Milton campaign claims that non-compliance means the state could allow the state to withhold funding from schools, including the aforementioned grants for which Milton is at a disadvantage.


Milton is currently dealing with a school overcrowding crisis and has plans to build a new school. No voters were concerned that large numbers of housing, which must be designed to accommodate families, would lead to even more students in the schools.

Should Milton be required to build multi-family housing near MBTA service areas?


YES



The town should comply in order to keep state funding.




Building multi-family housing would help to alleviate the state’s housing crisis.




Milton should comply with the law, to ensure control over what ultimately gets built.


NO



Development would cause an increase in traffic.



Milton’s infrastructure can not support new populations.



Housing would be developed by investors and sold at market rate.

Graphic by Isabella Murphy

However, the Yes campaign argues that some of the state funding set aside for the construction of the school could be withheld.

The state currently has not withheld any funding specifically set aside for schools, roads, or other important items, though it can do

so in the future.

Milton was among the first communities to vote in compliance with the law, and state officials are concerned that Milton’s no-vote could encourage other communities to vote similarly.

Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities Secretary Ed Augustus said in a press release, “The law will forge a more affordable and livable community by removing barriers to creating new multi-family housing in Milton. The Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities is hopeful that we can continue working with Milton to bring the town into compliance and build a stronger, more affordable Massachusetts for everyone.”

Though the lawsuit may be viewed as a threat, According to the Boston Herald and Mass Transit, Governor Maura Healy, Campbell, and Augustus have expressed their intent for the state to work alongside Milton to come into compliance.

AP CLASSES

*(continued from page 1)*

This sense of interest and complexity in AP class curriculums is one of the key reasons why so many students have enrolled and stayed in them. Junior Alyson Truong emphasized, “I’m currently taking AP Lang and AP Biology and I don’t regret taking either. AP Bio is definitely one of the more challenging classes and it’s a lot of work. AP Lang is enjoyable for me, I think it’s been fairly easy, workload-wise, and the class itself is fun.”

This recurring theme of enjoying one’s AP classes represents the idea that if one is willing to work hard, one will achieve. Junior Sydney Burns said, “While taking many APs has been strenuous at times, I personally don’t regret it. I think the balance of APs I’m enrolled in is a good one, and I also think my time management has definitely made it possible to not get burnt out.”

Even for those who are achieving in AP classes, it’s important to know that all classes are beneficial, regardless of the level of it. Junior Ida Zoll said, “I do wish more of us gave ourselves a little freedom and leeway to maybe take a couple honors or CP classes and still feel academically successful.”

Crossword Puzzle

Down:

- April showers bring \_\_\_\_
- Irish Oppenheimer star Cillian
- Famous Scottish/Irish woodwind instrument
- NCAA's March \_\_\_\_
- Capital of Ireland

Across:

- Found in a pot at the end of a rainbow
- One of the two states that does not recognize Daylight Savings
- March 19th marks the Spring \_\_\_\_

Game by GRIFFIN ANGUS

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POP CULTURE CLUB

Meets every other Tuesday

In room 221

DEBATE CLUB

Tuesdays and Thursdays after school

Meets in rooms 229 / 224

Model UN

Every Monday and Wednesday after school

In Mr. Borde's room

