“To make music with such a fine group of singers and instrumentalists is a dream come true,” Ryan said. “I couldn’t have been happier with the concert.”

“The Breath Of Life” was one of Ryan’s new favorites. “[In the new piece], Forrest captures the poetic sentiment beautifully,” Ryan said. “It has a beautiful piano part, so I enjoyed playing it. The thick choral writing was perfect for the big choir. [It was] sumptuous and warm.”

Customary for conductors, Dr. Heather J. Buchanan was the last to enter. As she bowed, the audience clapped, and soon everyone held their breath.

With a wave of her hand, the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra Chamber Ensemble began with the chorale following soon after. A slow, somber piece of music soon filled the air. Yet not one member of the audience wept. In fact, several were grinning ear to ear. The music was the perfect welcome back to an audience that had an immense rough couple of years.

“The Breath Of Life” had three movements (plus epilog), each more beautiful than the last. The piece paired an electrifyingly mystic and magical sound with profoundly beautiful text, together creating, what is to me, one of the best classical pieces written in the last few years.

The audience was practically clinging to every note until the end of the piece, to which they reacted with a joyous uproar. The amount of talent within the chorale’s ranks alone is enough to fuel the entire music industry for years.

The piece’s vocal soloist, Montclair State’s own Taylor Amato, who is currently completing her master’s degree in vocal performance, was the cherry on top of an exquisite sundae. Amato’s classically trained voice can be best described as unforgettable and technically marvelous.

Night at the Winter Ball

Clara Allen (right) and Joshua Crockett (left), a student couple, dance together.

‘Rejoice!’ is a Triumphant Return to the Stage

Drew Eldridge
Guest Writer

Montclair State University held its Winter 2021 Choral Concert, titled “Rejoice!” on Dec. 4 at Alexander Kasser Theater, a performance featuring the Montclair State University Singers and Montclair State Chorale.

The audience anxiously awaited the start of the show. As the chorale made their slow descent onto the stage, the audience cheered. It soon became clear the love in the room, for the art that had been sorely missed over the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, far outweighed any nervousness there.

The night was sure to be historical, as the score, “The Breath Of Life,” was receiving its northeast debut performance from composer Dan Forrest.

On piano was Steven W. Ryan, an extremely accomplished musician. Ryan felt the concert was a joy beyond belief. “To make music with such mental health somewhat worse. In that number, 68% of people found they were feeling financially stressed while 66% reported feeling lonely.

Many people have decided to spend the holidays on their own instead of risking exposure, leading them to feel isolated and alone. The feeling of loneliness can affect one’s mental health and create a negative holiday season atmosphere.

For those who don’t have a tight-knit family and spend the holidays alone, the season can be hard for them. Not being around loved ones it seems like the rest of the world is can be detrimental to someone’s mental state.
Tuesday, November 30

Fraud: The Office of Criminal Investigations received a report from a university employee in regards to an incident of fraud. This incident is under investigation.

Thursday, December 2

Sinatra Hall: Officers responded to Sinatra Hall in regards to a report of a student trespassing. The student was escorted from the building and issued a special complaint for defiant trespassing.

Thursday, December 2

Fraud: A student came into Police Headquarters to report an incident of fraud. This case is presently under investigation.

Thursday, December 2

Machuga Heights: Officers responded to Mills Hall in regards to fight between two known persons in the past. This case is presently under investigation.

Sunday, December 5

Bohn Hall: Officers responded to Bohn Hall in regards to a report of criminal mischief. This incident is under investigation.
Student Life at Montclair (SLAM), a subgroup of the Student Government Association, held its annual Winter Ball on Nov. 30. After signing a waiver, students packed into a coach bus to an undisclosed location. Unknown to students prior to the event, the events of the ball unfolded at The Grove, a banquet venue in Cedar Grove, a neighboring town to Montclair that found itself to be the backdrop for a night of alcoholic indulgence (legally, of course).

Upon arrival, students were greeted with a coat check, followed by a faux red-carpet experience with interviews being conducted by both Montclair State’s Newslab and nationally-recognized radio station WMSC. The entirety of the night was energetic and jubilant. With an entire generation of college students unified by pandemic and economic downturn-fueled social deprivation, it comes with no surprise that such an event would carry widespread joy amongst the Winter Ball guests.

Afrobeats, dembow, Jersey club and Brooklyn drill were just some of the genres on the dance floor on Tuesday. Between a popular palate of music, friends sharing elegant moments and a collective stress-consciousness in regards to finals, the night ultimately led to proving itself to be one thing: a resounding success.

A pair of guests dance closely together toward the end of the night.

A sharply dressed student wearing sunglasses as he dances.

A banquet server named Kaisha holds a conversation with a guest during cocktail hour at Winter Ball 2021.

Students crowd together while waiting for the doors of the dance floor to open.

Two guests take advantage of a lobby mirror before festivities begin at the Winter Ball 2021.

Despite it being a Tuesday night, there was no lack of energy in sight amongst guests at Winter Ball 2021.

Night at the Winter Ball

Continued from Page 1
Christmas is making its way to Montclair State University and students are getting in the festive spirit. The Center for Student Involvement (CSI) has been curating events just in time for the holiday season. CSI held a holiday-themed event on Dec. 4 where students played “Minute to Win It” Games and wore ugly Christmas sweaters.

The night started with Christmas music playing such as “The Christmas Song” by Nat King Cole as students talked amongst one another. Students participated in activities such as cup tosses, cookie face-offs, bopping balloons on their heads and wrapping each other in wrapping paper.

Jess Parnas, a senior business administration major and the event assistant for CSI, expressed how happy she was about the turnout of the event. “I was happy with the turnout that we had,” Parnas said. “Everyone was just having a good time, which is our main goal. My favorite game was probably the cookie one on your forehead because the game goes back really far with me.”

Levi Morici, a sophomore theatre design, technology and management major, enjoyed getting to meet new people at the event. “I thought it was really fun seeing faces I have never seen before and just kind of connecting with people that I didn’t even know their names to start with,” Morici said. “My favorite game was definitely the gift wrapping one.”

Adam Burger, a senior business administration major, explained how much joy he felt getting into the Christmas spirit on campus. “I thought this event was really fun,” Burger said. “CSI always hosts the best events on campus so definitely come check out CSI.”

To close off the night, students played a game of who could wrap each other the quickest. Megan Flood, the graduate coordinator of weekend programming for CSI, felt the Christmas spirit and enjoyed the turnout of the event. “I thought [the event] was really fun, it was a small group but it was a good time and the different activities got people excited,” Flood said. “I liked the present wrapping game because it was really hilarious to see.”

As the night came to an end, tickets were raffled. The winners of the night were chosen and won gifts such as an Echo Dot, an Amazon Fire Stick, books and more. The “most wonderful time of the year” has commenced, and one thing’s for certain; students are bringing it all here at Montclair State.
Paul Thomas
Staff Writer

Montclair Hillel, the student organization for Jewish life at Montclair State University, held their final event of the semester “Chanukah Shabbat” on Dec. 3 to celebrate both the sixth night of Chanukah and Shabbat.

The president of Montclair Hillel, Ella Oren-Dahan, a junior visual arts and mathematics major, discussed what students were celebrating that evening. “Today is both the sixth night of Chanukah and Shabbat, and so when Chanukah and Shabbat overlap, we start with the Chanukah prayers which means we light the menorah and have blessings, and then we move on to lighting the candles for Shabbat,” Oren-Dahan said.

The night started with games of dreidel and a story from Rachel Serviss, a junior English major and vice president of Montclair Hillel. She talked about Rabbi Shammai and Rabbi Hillel’s disagreement over how to light the menorah during Chanukah. Rachel explained the differences between the two. “Rabbi Shammai believed we should start with all eight nights on the menorah and light them that way,” Serviss said. “However, Rabbi Hillel believed the miracle was so great that as the miracle went on, he brought more light, so he believed we should light one on each night starting with the most recent.” Serviss took a vote on whether to light the menorah in Rabbi Shammai or Rabbi Hillel’s way. Rabbi Hillel’s way won.

The group then gathered around to light the menorah and sing their prayers and blessings. This was followed by lighting the Shabbat candles. After the Shabbat candles were lit, everyone said the Kiddush and Motzi prayers.

After this, everyone got to eat. There was a spread of food that included donuts, a huge pretzel menorah and of course, lots of Kosher options.

Emily Kohlenstein, a senior music therapy major, shared her favorite childhood tradition. “One thing I remember from when I was younger was my entire dad’s side of the family gathering and going over my aunt’s house,” Kohlenstein said. “We would light the candles and we would have a big dinner. My aunt also has an indoor pool at her house, so a bunch of my cousins would all go over [there] in the middle of winter with our bathing suits and swim in it. We would do that after we lit the candles and then come back in and exchange gifts.”

Evan Gruber, a freshman accounting major, said one of his favorite things about Chanukah is the surprises that come with it. “My favorite part about Chanukah is spinning a dreidel and the fact that every night is a new surprise; every day is a new present,” Gruber said. “Every day, I was excited about opening up the present and getting something new.”

Montclair State students came together to make cheerful and creative holiday cards.

Montclair Hillel Celebrates Chanukah and Shabbat

Aside from being able to cheer up those individuals who are fighting against cancer, those running the Holiday Craft Night and Card Making were also hoping that this event served as a method for students to destress from finals.

“Montclair Hillel is a place we want all students to feel comfortable coming to celebrate Jewish life and diversity on campus,” Adelson said. “While we’re an organization that focuses on Jewish community and culture, we are welcoming of students of all backgrounds and faiths.”
It was mid-morning on a blustery November Friday here at Cole Hall and the first thing that came up in conversation when I sat down in Montclair State University President Jonathan Koppell’s office was a mutual love of vinyl. Koppell has a collection of 45s LPs in his garage back in Arizona, where his wife and kids are located.

“I just couldn’t bring myself to throw out hundreds of awesome 45s,” Koppell said, sitting down in the chair across from me. “I’ve just had that in my garage in Arizona for probably four or five years. I’m [going to] moonlight as a DJ.”

As for the type of music he listens to, Koppell enjoys a wide variety.

“I like ’70s rock, the ’80s. But I also like jazz and classical. I won’t change the channel immediately if Nirvana comes on or something like that. I will listen, [but I’m not that down on a lot of contemporary stuff]. I guess I’m more into melody and in the music than I am the words.”

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But the experience of walking and working with Koppell for two days showed a person dedicated to public service — and to wearing some pretty cool cufflinks.

The books in his office show sincere dedication to public service with floor to ceiling shelves detailing public service and government operations, and a copy of “World War Z.” According to him, the book is far better than the movie with Brad Pitt. In fact, at Arizona State University, back where he was dean, the book was a required reading one year.

“We used that as a freshman read at [Arizona State] one year, which was sort of a fun thing to do, right? You use science fiction to deal with a lot of issues that we have as a society and so on,” Koppell said. “And the book is actually more philosophical, maybe slightly overstating, but it’s dealing with some of these big issues about how society works. And how do you put the interests of everybody versus the individuals?”

It was these little quirks that helped clarify the picture of the newly minted president. For example, he almost always takes selfies.

“I’m not against other pictures, I’ve found that people like selfies,” Koppell said. “The engagement in the picture is higher if you’re the one doing the [picture]. I started doing [selfies], especially at our graduations. Go back and look at my Twiiter, you’ll see that there are lots of graduation selfies. And the students really liked it.” To go along with the lobster cufflinks are equally long arms, Koppell pointed out.

“But yeah, I’m also genetically engineered for selfies because I have really long arms, so I’ve got a built-in selfie stick,” Koppell said.

Koppell mentioned that he would have been an architect had he not gone into public service.
In some ways, what I think I’m doing is designing and how do you design an institution to do certain things? So in many ways, there is an architectural element,” Koppell said. “I like building things. I like getting an idea in my head of what [this could] look like. And then the question is, how do I take the structure here, and rebuild it to accomplish what we want to accomplish?”

In some ways, it did connect to the love of public service fostered in him by his parents. His father was the New York attorney general and a member of the New York City Council, and his mother was a college professor and administrator at Ramapo College. Some of his earliest memories were of walking around the campus with his mother.

“My joke is that I’m the least original person in the world because my father was in politics,” Koppell said. “I averaged my parents and became a political science professor. But the truth is, I don’t remember not being interested in public service. That’s just how I viewed the world.”

The love of public service took him to Harvard University for his undergraduate and the University of California Berkeley for graduate work, where he met his wife. He now has a 17-year-old daughter and a 14-year-old son.

He is also not used to the winter weather of New Jersey. When we were leaving a meeting at the School of Business last Wednesday, he almost forgot his jacket.

“I have coats that I’m wearing now that have been sitting in my closet for 10 years that I’ve not touched,” Koppell said.

But beyond the culture shock lies a sincere desire to get to know the students and the school far better. When he had his job interview for the position he currently holds, he was asked what he knew about Montclair State. “Not nearly enough,” he said.

Despite all the traveling, from New York to California to China to the band room on the second floor of John J. Cali School of Music for a President’s Club donor reception, Koppell finally found a home in Montclair State.

“I feel so confident that I ended up at Montclair State University,” Koppell said. “It is the perfect university for me [and] I believe so strongly in what this university is about.”
As we embark on another holiday season, it can be tricky to come up with a dessert that combines all our favorite flavors with some added holiday cheer. I came across this recipe when I was thinking of a way to use my peppermint-flavored Hershey’s Kisses. Since childhood, they have always been one of my favorite parts of this time of the year.

These chocolate peppermint blossoms are a different take on my peanut butter blossoms that are sure to leave you just as satisfied.

For these cookies you’ll need:
- 1/3 cup softened butter
- 1/2 cup packed brown sugar
- 3/4 cup white sugar
- 1 egg
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract
- 1 1/2 cup flour
- 2/3 cup cocoa powder
- 1 tsp baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon salt

For cookie toppings, you’ll need:
- Hershey’s peppermint flavored kisses
- Red sanding sugar or sprinkles
- White sanding sugar

As with any cookie, it’s important to cream your butter and sugar together to start your recipe off. While you let them beat at a medium speed, preheat your oven to 350°F.

When your butter and sugars are evenly creamed together and fluffy, add your egg, vanilla extract and milk, and let that beat until the egg has been evenly distributed throughout.

In a separate bowl, add your flour, cocoa powder, salt and baking soda and whisk them together. I whisked until the cocoa powder was evenly distributed. Now, it’s time to add your flour mixture into your wet ingredients.

At a low speed, add the flour spoonful by spoonful. Stop the mixer and scrape down the sides of the bowl when you’ve added about half of your flour. Continue spooning in your flour until you have none left.

The worst part about baking cookies is the fact that you should always chill the dough after you are done making it. The reason for this is so that you can allow your flour to properly absorb the moisture from all your wet ingredients. It makes the dough much easier to work with and less sticky. I left my dough in a plastic-covered bowl in the fridge for about two hours.

After your dough has chilled, remove it from the fridge and get your cookie toppings ready. Grab your cookie scoop, and scoop about 1 tablespoon-sized ball of dough to roll. I like to roll all my cookies out first and then roll them in the sugar. This way, I can portion out all my cookies to be the exact same size before I coat them.

Depending on the size of your cookies, this recipe should make 28 to 34 cookies.

Once you have your dough balls complete, roll your dough in your mixed-together red and white sugars. If you don’t have red sanding sugar, you can just use regular sugar. I chose red and white sugar because they matched the peppermint Hershey’s Kisses.

Place your sugar-coated dough balls about two inches apart on a parchment-lined cookie sheet to bake. They should bake for 10 to 12 minutes.

While they bake, unwrap your peppermint Hershey’s Kisses. To limit waste, count how many dough balls you have before placing them in the oven and only unwrap that amount. But, if you want to “waste” a few for a taste test, I won’t judge you.

Once your cookies are done baking, remove them from the oven and let them cool for one minute. After the minute passes, press your Hershey’s Kisses into the centers of the cookies. Let them stand for about five minutes on the cookie sheet before moving them to a wire rack to cool.

These cookies were a blast to make and a twist on one of my personal favorite recipes. The red and white sugar sprinkles bring the perfect holiday touch. There’s nothing I love more than chocolate and peppermint during the holidays and I hope you enjoy these just as much as I did. Until the next bite.
There’s nothing I love more than sitting by the fireplace around the holidays with a festive drink in hand and my favorite pajama set on. But if the opportunity arises, I love dressing up as well. Whether dressing up for Friendsgiving, a holiday gathering or New Year’s Eve, there is no wrong way to go about it.

I never allowed the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic to change how I dressed for the holidays. Doing so gave me more of a purpose since I was already grateful to be healthy and surrounded by family and friends. To me, it’s always important to keep comfort in mind, but that doesn’t mean you cannot still have all the glitz and glam, too.

My favorite holiday outfit for Christmas Eve includes a silk mini dress, sometimes paired with tights, a bold-colored pair of lace-up heels or boots depending on my mood, all paired with silver jewelry. Wearing something like this truly boosts not only my mood but my holiday spirit. However, there is nothing wrong with taking the cozy route if that brings you joy.

Meguire Hennes, a senior fashion studies major, agrees that being comfortable at your holiday gathering should be your top priority.

“It’s completely up to you if you want to dress up or down for the holidays,” Hennes said. “The holidays can be a difficult time for some people, so wear what ever makes you feel confident in your body, your emotions and your overall well-being. Wear something that makes you feel beautiful, whether that be a red slip dress or Grinch pajamas.”

Hennes mentioned how this year, she will be ditching her normal sweatpants and jumpsuits. It is a family tradition to wear matching pajamas with her sisters on Christmas Day and New Year’s Eve. But on Christmas Eve, she wore a dark blue velvet jumpsuit with a tie around the middle just to cinch the waist and paired it with navy boots to elevate the look.

Mackenzie Sanczyk, a senior fashion studies major, enjoys dressing up for the holidays when away from Montclair State University. Although her rotation of items for this time of the year includes a cozy sweater, pants and boots, she also likes to play it up a bit.

“My favorite piece to wear for the holidays is a sweater dress,” Sanczyk said. Sanczyk wore a classic look last holiday season. It included a light gray, cropped turtleneck with a black leather skirt, paired with black stockings and black booties.

Lucy Sanowski, a junior fashion studies major, enjoys wearing dresses and sweaters with some kind of gold or shimmer details for the holidays.

“This past holiday my outfit consisted of a mock neck sweater with a light puff on the shoulder area, and gold shimmer threads on the edge of the sleeves,” Sanowski said. “My bottoms were pink/beige-colored plaid pants with a flare at the bottom. I paired it with simple gold jewelry such as small hoop earrings and gold rings.”

Sanowski always dresses up this time of year and is no stranger to having the best of both worlds when it comes to mixing glam and comfort while dressing for classes. As stated by all the interviewees, the most important thing you can do when styling yourself this holiday season is to make sure you feel comfortable. Take the opportunity this holiday season to try an outfit you’ve always wanted to. Fashion is a great way to keep your spirits up and spread holiday cheer while you’re at it.
Montclair State’s Photography Club Host Their First Gallery Exhibit

Assistant Entertainment Editor

Montclair State University’s Photography Club wrapped up the year with a celebration as they hosted their first gallery exhibit in Calcia Hall on Dec. 1.

Montclair State’s Photography Club was first approved in December 2020, but due to restrictions from the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, they had to meet virtually for the spring 2021 semester. The fall 2021 semester was their first time gathering and creating work in person.

President of the photography club, senior molecular biology major Marissa DiFulco, said the club’s purpose is to bring photography lovers together.

“Our club strives to bring together photographers or other people interested in photography to create work, share it, talk about it and make new friendships along the way,” DiFulco said.

This first gallery is the K. Schnitzer Gallery, a gallery dedicated to showing work produced by Montclair State students throughout the semester.

Stephane Arango, a senior biology major and treasurer of the club, initially had no experience in photography. But, once she became part of the executive board, she learned plenty of high-quality and creative skills that helped her produce captivating photos.

One was based around the popular coffee shop, Starbucks.

“My picture illustrates three different Starbucks drinks with a solid green background that gives it a really good contrast,” Arango said. “I also used a filter that gives it a higher saturation which allows it to reflect more.”

Vincent Daniels, a junior justice studies major, first discovered Montclair State’s Photography Club on social media.

“I was looking for more outlets to join since I am a transfer, and when I saw the photography club, I was highly interested,” Daniels said. “I recently got into photography since my grandmother gave me a Nikon, and I just decided to go at it and capture different moments.”

Throughout the semester, Daniels created several pieces including a photograph with naturalistic elements.

“When capturing this [photo], it really gave me a sense of destressing because life is complicated, and that’s the name of the game every single day,” Daniels said. “But at times, life can be very simple as long as you persist and try to make it that way.”

Rachel Mondelus, a senior television and digital media major and theater minor, discovered the club through her photography class. Her professor encouraged her to look at other people’s work and take a gander at the exhibits throughout campus.

Although not fully a member, Mondelus does assist club members in developing their photos during her lab hours and believes this club offers many opportunities.

“It allows you full access [to photography],” Mondelus said. “You get to develop film, develop photos and there is a space and equipment to produce high-quality photos. It’s probably extremely helpful for the people that don’t have that at home.”

The club is open to everyone including non-majors and meetings take place every other Wednesday from 3:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. in Calcia Hall, room 131.

Carl Gunhouse, a Montclair State adjunct professor in photography, hopes the club will continue to grow.

“We hope that [our club] extends the community of photography at Montclair [State],” Gunhouse said.

To learn more about Montclair State’s Photography Club, you can visit their Instagram account @msu.photoclub.

Vincent Daniels captures naturalistic elements that illustrate the concepts of peace and tranquility.

Photo courtesy of Vincent Daniels

Vincent Daniels is a junior transfer who finds calm in his photography.

Sekhena Sembenu | The Montclarion
#Focus Disruption

Want to be part of our special #FocusDisruption Edition of The Montclarion?

Pitch an idea to our section editors on how COVID-19 has affected climate, misinformation, education, workplace, and/or mental health.

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Your article can be featured in the special edition of the Montclarion in spring 2022!

Background Image by SVStudioArt
HAWK TALK

Who were your most listened to artists this year?

By John LaRosa, Photo Editor

1. Playboi Carti
2. Kanye West
3. The Rolling Stones

Josh Gralinski
Freshman
Fashion Studies major

1. Taylor Swift
2. Phoebe Bridgers
3. Olivia Rodrigo

Anne Mohan
Sophomore
Dance major

1. Emmure
2. Slipknot
3. Hunt the Dinosaur

Serena Henderson
Sophomore
Animation major
1. Beyoncé
2. Chris Brown
3. Summer Walker

Delaney Haggins
Junior
Business Administration major

1. Lorde
2. In This Moment
3. Beartooth

Skyler Crott
Freshman
Music major

1. Lorde
2. In This Moment
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3. Summer Walker

Delaney Haggins
Junior
Business Administration major

1. Beyoncé
2. Chris Brown
3. Summer Walker

Delaney Haggins
Junior
Business Administration major
Find your perfect next step.
Across
2. A young boy boards a mysterious train on the night of Christmas Eve which takes him to the North Pole, restoring his faith in the magic of Christmas.
5. After Santa Claus falls off Scott Calvin’s roof and Scott dons his magical suit, an elf informs him that he will become the new Santa.
7. A human raised amongst elves discovers his true origins and ventures to New York City to find his biological father, who has no Christmas spirit.
8. After discovering Santa Claus is real, a brother and sister sneak into his sleigh and almost ruin Christmas as the sleigh malfunctions, so they must help Santa save Christmas.

Down
1. A family known for their Christmas parties decides to go on vacation instead since their daughter will not be home for the holidays, much to the dismay of their neighbors.
2. Turbo-Man is the toy every kid wants for Christmas, but when a father forgot to buy one for his son, he must compete with other parents on Christmas Eve, desperately trying to acquire one last-minute.
3. A cynical character, accompanied by his loving dog, goes on a mission to steal Christmas. Instead, he learns to embrace the Christmas spirit as he has a change of heart at the hands of a young girl.
4. When young Kevin McCallister is accidentally left home over Christmas, he protects his house from two burglars.

Word Search

Sudoku

*For answers to the puzzles, please check The Montclarion Facebook page every Thursday.*
When Your Family Takes the ‘Happy’ Out of ‘Happy Holidays’

The phrase “Happy Holidays” doesn’t ring true for many people, and the pressure to feel nothing but sheer joy as the calendar year winds down is intense. Besides the crushing capitalist fervor of gift-buying, one of the most common sources of holiday stress is the prospect of having to see family. What could be merrier than a visit from Aunt Sasha, who literally only talks about her ex-husband’s many failures even though they’ve been separated for almost 12 years? Or your cousin who forces you to look embarrassing TikTok videos with them? How about your grandparents, who once again, unannounced, brought their completely incontinent dog?

While some beloved family members are nuisances at their worst, some might want to be around some people just for the existence, arguably the lowest bar one can set for any kind of relationship. This especially applies during the holidays, a time for togetherness and good feelings all around.

Considering the taboo surrounding the exclusion of family members, it is hard to imagine setting such boundaries without dealing with absolutes. For some people, it may not be possible to avoid such unwanted interactions, particularly if the toxic family members in question are staying at your home for an extended period of time.

Whatever your situation, there are ways to cope and preserve your mental state no matter what the holiday season brings for you. Seeking support from your friends or other support systems leading up to and during the holiday season can be a vital step to take. Ask them to check in on you often and to be available as possible in case you need a moment to vent your rage over FaceTime.

If there’s no escaping the toxic relatives in your home, distance yourself from them as much as possible, not just physically but emotionally. Another family member who you trust can keep you engaged to distract you from whatever pseudo-political nonsense Uncle Howard is spewing.

If possible, choose to spend the holidays with friends rather than visiting home. It may disappoint or anger your relatives, but you deserve to be happy, too, and sacrificing your well-being to make someone else comfortable is never worth it.

Finally, if you’re hosting the holidays at your house and find yourself having to weigh the pros and cons of inviting someone, that is a good indicator they may not need to be there. The degree of explanation you provide for not inviting them is up to you, just remember that “no” is a complete answer.

However you cope, and whoever you choose to spend this time with, The Montclarion wishes you a restful winter break and a happy holiday season!
Our first almost-normal semester since the raging of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, and we are thriving – mostly. Montclair State University students are readjusting to regular life, learning to be regular students again. It's been a bit rough, to say the least, in terms of actually having to attend classes and do work. We've been doing it for over 13 years, but some of us feel fresh out of kindergarten.

After a year of battling demons and isolation, figuring out how to open Zoom links and having to learn the same amount of knowledge as a first-year medical student just to convince Aunt Sharon vaccines won't cause the zombie apocalypse, we now enter the post-pandemic future we've been waiting for. It's safe to say we all need a little more support than usual.

With that, here is Montclair State's fall 2021 semester report card:

Reading Comprehension - Grade: B+

The Montclarion has published several articles voicing the student body's opinions, concerns and feelings on issues here at Montclair State. I'd always encourage those in positions of power at the university to read them. Hopefully soon we start to see more progress in our campus safety concerns in the near future.

Communication Skills - Grade: C

The Montclair State administration might have to repeat this course.

Thumbs Up

Ontario woman donates home to Indigenous community

Rare white sperm whale caught on film off coast of Jamaica

Geminid meteor shower will bring up to 120 shooting stars per hour at its peak on Dec. 13

Promotes a Positive Learning Environment - Grade: A

Our university received a grand total of $140 million in COVID-19 relief funds to help the school and students during a time of financial distress. Amazing, right? Well, it would've been if students knew about it.

Despite the university's efforts to get the word out, many students said they were unaware of the existence of the grants or that they're eligible for them, "The Montclarion reported. The school should have had advisors or other administration speak to students about it and help them through the process. Clearly just an email was not sufficient. Luckily, the school does communicate well about events and festivities on campus. At least I can enjoy Red Hawk Night before my extra shifts to afford textbooks.

Thumbs Down

Quebec dips into emergency maple syrup reserves amid national shortage

Russia moves thousands of troops to Ukrainian border

CEO of mortgage firm fires 900 employees at once on a Zoom call
The stress of who to invite to holiday dinner can also contribute to the gloomy holiday atmosphere. Many people who have immunocompromised family members find themselves under even more pressure to keep the holidays safe. Having a family gathering without a certain family member can be upsetting, especially if you are close with the person missing out.

As someone who is constantly cautious because of grandparents, it can be a tough call. It’s a heavy choice to decide if you want them to come and be at risk, or stay home to keep safe. Before the pandemic, a lot of the stress came from not wanting to have those uncomfortable conversations with family members you barely know or just not wanting to spend the holidays with your family at all.

Now, the worry of someone spreading or catching COVID-19 can cause the holidays to lose their normal excitement and cheer. Although this year’s safety protocols are a little less scary and more mellow than the previous year, the last thanks to the vaccine and low case numbers, festivities can still be intense.

Vaccine debates can be a further cause for turmoil at family events. A lot of people have started to ask their guests to be vaccinated if they want to attend.

This scenario has repeated at weddings, parties and now holiday parties. Asking people who are against the vaccine to get vaccinated for an event can be tough and create tension between families. Additionally, many don’t realize that not everyone adores the holiday season, either. Hearing the constant “Merry Christmas” or “Happy Holidays” can cause those who are suffering from poor mental health surrounding the festivities to feel even worse.

Even though this holiday season might be stressful due to COVID-19, there are many ways to push through. Those suffering with their mental health can find help in many places. Montclair State University has its own Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) for students to use. As for a hotline, you can call the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA) at 1-800-662-HELP (4357).

Amazing Last-Minute Gifts for the Holidays

Disclaimer: This is a strictly satirical opinion piece that does not reflect the beliefs of The Montclarion in any way. We’re all guilty of it: forgetting to buy your friends and family a gift, a rite of passage for the holidays. Take me, for example. I forgot to get anyone anything this Christmas. Maybe it’s because of passage for the holidays.

Homemade Book
Parents love homemade gifts. Anything homemade gives them a piece of you to cherish forever. This holiday, make them their very own storybook! Staple together a couple of pieces of folder paper, draw on a great cover and on each page, write a secret you’ve kept from your parents. This book is a fun way to playfully let them know you were the one who crashed the car into the mailbox or that you threw a rager of a party when they were on their anniversary trip. Maybe even include all the speeding tickets you’ve hidden from them. They’ll love it!

DIY T-shirts
Forget everyone’s gifts for the holidays? No worries, here’s one for the whole family. First, get a plain T-shirt for every member of your family and some fabric markers. Number each shirt for each member, ranking them from most favorite to least favorite. Now, every year they can get a new shirt with their updated rankings.

Love
Do you have a sibling in high school who has a crush on someone who won’t even notice them? Love is one of the world’s greatest gifts, so why not give it to someone else? This year, do your sibling a favor and tell their crush they like them. They’ll be so thankful you took a leap of faith and exposed their undying love to their crush!

A New Pet
Do you have a younger sibling begging your parents for a kitten or puppy this Christmas? Be the hero your sibling needs.

Go out to the woods and get them a wild animal. You also save on dog or cat food because wild animals just eat what nature has given to them. This gift is cost-effective and makes a great addition to the family.

Hope for the Future
Holidays can be stressful with the one burning question asked by your ex-teased family: “Are you seeing anybody right now?” Of course we aren’t! No one wants us, but we can’t let the family know that. It might give grandpa a heart attack. This Christmas, get your family the thing they always wanted most: to see you finally get a significant other.

Then, you can “break up” with them and act devastatingly heartbroken so no one will ask you that question again for at least a couple of years.

Permanent Joy
You may be in need of something memorable, maybe even eternal. What else could bring more joy than a permanent gift for your parent? Grab your youngest sibling — the favorite sibling — of course, and give them a tattoo that says “I love my mom” or “I love my dad!” Make it big and noticeable, too.

This is a gift that can last an eternity and will let your parents know their children love them forever.

Painting
Teenage siblings can be hard to please. All of those hormones, and none of which make them pleasant to be around. You need a gift that will make them super cheerful for the holiday season. Take their vase out from its hiding spot and paint something they would love on it. If you need approval on whether they’re going to like it or not, show mom and dad to get their opinions. Hopefully, this helped you get a few ideas to ease the gift-giving anxiety that comes with the holidays. These DIY presents will truly ensure a calm, peaceful and cheerful Christmas for the whole family.

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Self-Care Tips for Finals Season

Kayla Mulligan | The Montclarion

As the end of the semester draws to a close and the holiday season begins, there is an underlying dread for many college students. That dread stems from the horrible, no good, very bad final exams.

It is very easy to feel overwhelmed and bombarded amidst the assignments, exams and stress. Here are five self-care tips to help prioritize your well-being during the final stretch of the semester:

**Meditation**

Meditation is such an underrated way to clear your mind and be present with yourself. With deadlines left and right, it can feel like the semester is moving at a mile a minute, and your headspace may suffer.

Finding five minutes or more of your time to just sit and meditate can help clear your headspace and quell the stress of finals. It doesn’t have to be anything fancy. There are tons of short and simple guided meditation videos on YouTube that can help with taming stress and finding your inner balance.

**Prioritize Sleep**

Don’t forget you deserve to rest. We have all been in that situation where we have an assignment due and we make ourselves stay up into the late hours of the night to check them off our list. However, being sleep-deprived cannot prove to be a huge setback, especially during finals season.

What always helps me is setting a concrete bedtime for myself and shutting off those assignments at a certain time. What you think you’re accomplishing at 1 a.m. or 2 a.m. could most likely be done better when you are rested and refreshed.

**Develop Organizational Skills**

An essential during finals season is finding how to organize your deadlines in a way that works for you. What helps me is creating a list for each class I have and lining all the assignments I have until the end of the semester in chronological order. This helps me to start working on the bigger assignments or the ones with the closest deadlines first.

It’s very gratifying when I get to cross the assignments and exams off of the lists. At the end of the semester, you can see how much you’ve done and feel a sense of pride.

**Make Time for Hobbies You Enjoy**

It’s so important to allow time for yourself to do things that make you happy. If you catch yourself sitting in front of your computer screen for a length of time and you start to feel like you just want to cry, go and do something you really love to do, whether it’s playing guitar, going to the gym or even just watching your favorite show.

By making time for the things you genuinely enjoy, you create a positive balance to any negative feelings finals season can bring you, making the stress much more manageable.

**Fresh Air**

This one might seem like an odd self-care tip, but it is vital. It can be so refreshing to step outside and be able to take a deep breath in the crisp, cool December air.

Taking short walks can change your entire headspace and allow you to mentally reset from any work that is consuming your thoughts. Remember there is a beautiful world outside and take a moment to appreciate it and let yourself relax.

These are just some things I try to incorporate into my routine during the stress of finals season. One important thing to remember during this last stretch of the semester is to be kind to yourself. Know that your finals don’t define you and you are capable of whatever you decide to pursue.

It has been a crazy past two years, and you have made it through. Don’t forget to take it easy on yourself and enjoy the holiday season.

Let My Body Enjoy the Holidays

Lucia Looz | The Montclarion

As the holidays approach, it is very easy to get caught up in the stress of finals season and forget to take time for yourself. It is so important to celebrate yourself. No one can convince you to feed and celebrate your body. It is your job to do that. I reward myself through daily self-care and celebrate the holidays by giving my body the respect and love it deserves.

I am my size.

This makes me lose my appetite even to this day. Everyone only asks about my food, why am I at the table? When you’re plus-sized, you’re either completely in the spotlight or you’re completely invisible. When people do notice you, it’s to ridicule your body, almost questioning why you weigh so much.

During the holidays, people won’t make direct comments toward you, but conversations still cultivate shame. These conversations revolve around everyone’s diets and exercise routines.

Someone is following a strict diet and will only eat turkey. Someone else refuses to eat sugar, so they only serve sugar-free pies if they host.

The other person will announce they are having a quarter slice of a pie, not even half of a slice. Someone else humblebrags about how sore they are from their fitness classes.

Meanwhile, you’re eating as much as you like and quietly listening because you have nothing to offer in the conversation. It leaves you in a weird cause you have nothing to offer position where you respect how other people nourish their bodies, but you start doubting yourself.

And this is the problem. Our culture wants a plus-sized person to feel, like you don’t belong and you should be insecure about your weight. You should prioritize exercise above all else and eat the cleanest meals no matter what.

But, diet culture ignores someone’s mental health and misrepresents physical health because such a mindset only cares about money. You will feel like you’re working toward bettering yourself. In reality, you’re just draining your bank account into a lifestyle that feeds on your insecurities.

I know my worth and my value, and I do not need to follow diet culture to award myself. I award myself through daily self-care and celebrations, and the holidays are the biggest celebrations of the year.

Regardless of what anyone says, I will happily have seconds and thirds because I deserve to feed and celebrate myself. No one can convince me otherwise.

Lucia Looz, a freshman public and professional writing, gender, sexuality and women’s studies major, is in her first year as a staff writer for The Montclarion.
Believing myself a bird,
I have imbibed the gospel of rocks to fill my gizzard
and help me digest all I take in.
Since I feel certain I am a larger bird,
I have chosen stones
from the bed of the stream above my woods.
The crown I wear,
The shifting diadem amassed
from solitary bliss in knowing only what I know for certain,
Swarms shamelessly to frame my face
with abdication unrealized.
Having mistaken myself for a bird,
I find that God wants nothing to do with
my stale, carpeted bones.
The stolen coronet, a bifurcation of flies, swarms,
Divining love between my hemispheres in dotted vomit,
Droning corrosion,
Scarifying down saturated baby fat
From my salted cheeks.
All the locally sourced rocks in the streambed
could not preserve my ephemeral flora
Against the undigestible.

"Into the Garden" - Ruthy Villa

"Why We Turn to Gardening in Hard Times"
- Ian Long

"Nature" — Jeremy Peluso
Lights glimmering off the wet stone
Creatures pass over it
Unaware of the nature enclosing them
The rains fall onto the souls below
Tuning out sounds of the mundane landscape
How do they not see it?
The other worlds spinning around them
Clear as day
But covered in misty fogs
Another species separate from their own
A new One
Part of them
But separate all the same
The wandering beasts do not budge
For they are bound to their nature
Taken victim of themselves
Loss is imminent
Have a thought about on campus or off campus matters?
Write for Opinion!
Email: montclarionopinion@gmail.com

Room 2035, School of Communication and Media in Upper Montclair, NJ, 07043

Parking and Fees

Campus Activities
Even those reading their programs put them down to listen to her performance. It would not be surprising if Amato’s name soon appears in the programs of those at the Metropolitan Opera.

Amato herself felt excited by the return to live performances.

“It felt absolutely amazing and surreal being onstage again,” Amato said. “Singing without a mask again was truly an emotional experience.”

After a short intermission, the University Singers entered the stage, performing highlights from Handel’s “Messiah.” I was skeptical, as the choiral performance was close to perfect if the Singers would hold the same standard.

Not only were they at the same standard, but the energy radiating from their performance was extremely touching. The pure happiness to be singing within a theater again was present in each performer’s voice. There was an indescribable warmth within each phrase sung by the performers, which of course, the audience embraced with the utmost comfort.

One of the singers, Katie Kane, a junior theatre studies major, thoroughly enjoyed the piece and performance.

“‘Messiah’ is one of my favorite pieces to perform, especially with this choir,” Kane said. “The way we blend is just, well, heaven.”

The return to the stage was exhilarating for Kane.

“It feels amazing,” Kane said. “It feels like going back home. I wanted nothing more than to be up [there] again.”

The Singers’ soloists were some of the best vocalists I had heard in years. Zachary Delcamp, an alumni who completed his master’s in music performance at Montclair State, was the first, performing pieces from the third movement, “Behold, a virgin shall conceive.” Delcamp’s countertenor tone was excellently placed, each note sitting perfectly within his register.

If one was not paying attention, you could easily mistake Delcamp for a classically trained soprano.

Following Delcamp, adjunct professor Karen Driscoll began her performances of both the fifth and seventh movements, “Suddenly There Was An Angel” and “Rejoice Greatly.”

Driscoll’s soprano is some of the most alluring and lovely I’ve ever heard. She performed “Rejoice Greatly” with near superhuman precision. Each vocal run is done one after the other with an effortless air. Driscoll is nothing less than a talent powerhouse.

The last soloist of the evening was Jason Zacher, who graduated from Montclair State in 2016. Performing “The Trumpet Shall Sound,” Zacher came to the stage with a confidence to be envied.

Zacher’s silk-like bass-baritone was as glamorous as it was engaging. One member within the audience audibly replied, “Oh, what a voice!” as Zacher finished his solo.

As the performance came to a close, Buchanan took to the mic. She expressed her gratitude to be back in the theater, as well as her excitement for what is to come.

She asked the audience to join the choir in singing their final piece, “Hallelujah.” The audience reacted immediately, standing up and facing the stage as if they were members of the choir themselves.

What happened next was nothing short of breathtaking; an entire audience and choir sang together, grateful and overjoyed with the art they were experiencing, something many will truly never forget.
Bryson Tiller Brings The Holiday Blues With ‘A Different Christmas’

Sekhena Sembenu
Assistant Entertainment Editor

Self-made superstar, Bryson Tiller, is closing out the year with a bang. Tiller released his first holiday EP, “A Different Christmas,” on Nov. 19. The EP contains a tracklist of seven songs filled with R&B, soulful and classic twists that encapsulate the common feeling of loneliness specifically during the holidays.

Joining Tiller’s vocals are Justin Bieber, Kiana Ledé, Poo Bear, Tayla Parx and his 8-year-old daughter, Harley. The Kentucky native blew up after the release of his debut album, “TRAP SOUL,” in 2015 but soon disappeared from the spotlight. His music went unnoticed for years, but this time around, it’s different. This EP has created shock waves throughout the world.

Tiller starts off strong with “Be Mine This Christmas,” a song so catchy it will be playing all year long. It holds classic Tiller love song elements, yet it provides a cozy vibe for the holiday season.

“I thought you would be mine this Christmas / Ring, ring, ring, hear the bells ringing on the Christmas tree / Minnesota winter, snow is glistening, yeah / But I’ll be spending this one different / Checked the fireplace and your stocking’s missing / Hard to celebrate when you’re not here with me / I’m writing from a distance / So, I guess I’ll be alone this Christmas,” Tiller sings.

Thinking about spending the holidays alone while longing for a partner is always a dreadful feeling, and this song demonstrates this exactly.

Following up is a transition, “Cold December Interlude,” that adds a soothing touch. At the beginning of the interlude, one can hear the natural sound of the wind howling, which allows listeners to feel like they are truly in the cold winter of December.

The third track, “Presents,” featuring Ledé, has a lighthearted tone. The title “Presents” represents the idea of Tiller promising his “presence” for Christmas. It may be the most clever song of the whole album, as it is written like an exchange of text messages between the two artists.

“Baby, I’d love to get away just to spend the holiday with you / No better feeling than when I am home alone with you / Told you I’d be right back here in town, almost missed my flight / But I’m back here tonight / What’s on your mind?” Tiller sings.

Ledé then responds with her flirtatious vocals.

“I can’t wait to get alone and spend a moment with you / Ain’t no better feeling than being home alone with you / Ah, you know that there’s no way / I could get it through it, baby, there’s no way / Why do I feel this way? / I know you feel the same, now,” Ledé sings.

The lyrics flow in such a romantic yet tender manner all while maintaining R&B elements, something many artists cannot accomplish.

Shifting to a more joyful mood midway through the EP, Tiller goes fully a cappella on the iconic “I’ll Be Home For Christmas,” written by lyricist Kim Gannon and composed by Walter Kent. Though some listeners may be disappointed due to the short duration compared to the original, Tiller’s powerful baritone vocals create a warm and gentle feeling.

“A Different Christmas” is truly the definition of different, and while all the songs are brilliant, there is an undeniably noteworthy track. “Winter Wonderland” is a classic Christmas song written by Felix Bernard and Richard Smith, but Tiller adds a little dash of sass with his daughter, Harley.

Together, they construct a beautiful and playful rendition of the classic. In fact, Harley outshines her father with her soft soprano vocals. One can’t help but smile from ear to ear after listening to this duet.

“A Different Christmas” is one of a kind, and if there’s one person that can create a holiday EP all while maintaining their personal touch, it’s Tiller.

Bryson Tiller released his first holiday EP on Nov. 19. Photo courtesy of RCA Records

Bryson Tiller promotes “A Different Christmas” on social media. Photo courtesy of Bryson Tiller / Instagram

Poo Bear, Tiller and Justin Bieber take on an animated form in the music video for “Lonely Christmas.” Photo courtesy of Bryson Tiller / YouTube
**Top Picks to Stream**

**Christmas Edition**

**‘Straight No Chaser’ on Spotify**

Straight No Chaser is a professional a cappella group that started in college. They are extremely talented, and their Christmas songs are usually the first holiday music I listen to at the start of the season.

You can find their songs on most places you’d listen to music, but I’d also recommend checking out their live performances on YouTube. They have many Christmas albums like “Holiday Spirits” and “Christmas Cheer.” Personally, I listen to an album on Apple Music called “Straight No Chaser Christmas Essentials,” which combines some of their best Christmas songs.

They have beautiful covers of many well-known holiday songs, in addition to their original songs. Some of their songs I love the most include “The Christmas Can-Can” and “Who Spiked the Eggnog?” My all-time favorite is “The 12 Days of Christmas,” a medley that combines numerous songs, my favorite is “The 12 Days of Christmas,” a medley that combines numerous songs, which popularized the group in 1998.

From calming songs you can relax to, upbeat ones you can dance to, Straight No Chaser is a perfect addition to the holidays!

- Kayla Carlamere

**‘Elf’ on HBO Max**

It’s not a real Christmas if Santa doesn’t have his elves. Released in 2003, “Elf” follows Buddy, portrayed by Will Ferrell, who was mistakenly transported to the North Pole as a baby after Santa visited his orphanage.

Buddy grows up alongside Santa’s elves, but notices he is quite different from the others as he is fully human sized. With this realization, he sets out on a journey to The Big Apple to find his biological father, Walter Hobbs, played by James Caan.

Shocked by Buddy’s arrival, Walter requests a DNA test that eventually proves their relationship. Although still wary and hesitant, Walter eventually decides to pursue the relationship, but little does he know he is in for a ride full of excessive Christmas spirit.

Festive and heartwarming, “Elf” is a timeless film that will have you, if not already, in the holiday spirit.

- Sekhena Sembenu

Assistant Entertainment Editor

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**‘A Castle for Christmas’ Is Another Holiday Classic**

**Photo courtesy of Straight No Chaser**

**Tiffannie Coy**

**Staff Writer**

Best known for her works in the horror genre, director Mary Lambert is back with a refreshing Christmas movie, “A Castle for Christmas,” just in time for the holidays.

The film follows Sophie Brown, played by Brooke Shields, as she sets out to Scotland to visit the castle her father grew up in. She hopes to write the latest installment of her bestselling series after the previous one ended in backlash from fans.

I was invested throughout the entire film and was especially interested in the landscape of Scotland and the small village the castle was located in. Every time Sophie walked around the village, she was greeted not only with friendly faces but a variety of farm animals and lush green landscapes.

Brooke Shields did an amazing job bringing Sophie to life. Her character was the only part of the film that made it feel authentic and not like just another Netflix Christmas movie.

Sophie is anxious and uneasy after her fans protested the death of the main character in her series “Emma Gale.” But even as she goes through a hard divorce and receives hate from fans, she is a strong character who can take her time writing and fixing the “Emma Gale” series once she goes to Scotland.

During this time, she makes amazing friends who become important story elements for the plot. On various occasions, I found myself tearing up from how close everyone becomes in a movie that’s only 90 minutes long.

The cast of characters surrounding Sophie in Scotland are another standout. The accents from the entire cast are thoroughly enjoyable. No one seemed out of place or put on a bad performance. The movie took Scottish culture and made sure to bring its main aspects to life without overwhelming anything or inaccurately portraying its traditions.

The comedy in the film is a breath of fresh air. Sophie is often seen in the first half of the movie exchanging snarky remarks with Myles Dunbar, played by actor Cary Elwes, the duke of the castle. The two often clash heads over silly things throughout the movie, such as Sophie’s room in the castle or the fact that the castle’s dog likes her more.

The only downside to this film is the very obvious love story between Sophie and Myles. After saying she needed a change in her life, Sophie falls into Myles’ arms almost immediately after getting to the castle grounds in Scotland. Sadly, this cliché love story took away from the main plot of the movie.

Sophie’s bumpy relationship with Myles felt redundant at times. Although the pair would enjoy sweet moments while being in the castle together, they were only really happy for a few minutes of the film. Though the rest of the movie after the first half is not necessarily boring, it is predictable, especially with the “enemies to lovers” trope at play throughout its entirety.

There are a few other details that get lost that take away from the overall story. Viewers do not learn anything else about Sophie or her group of friends, further taking away from the main point of the movie, which was her getting a change and wanting to write the next installment of her series.

Still, “A Castle for Christmas” is a wholesome movie to watch with friends and family as we approach Christmas and winter break. Featuring lush environments and humor for all age groups, it is sure to be another holiday classic.

- Kayla Carlamere

Staff Writer

Brooke Shields plays Sophie Brown in the film.

**Photo courtesy of Netflix**

**Sekhena Sembenu**

Assistant Entertainment Editor

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**Photo courtesy of Constantin Film**

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The only downside to this film is the very obvious love story between Sophie and Myles. After saying she needed a change in her life, Sophie falls into Myles’ arms almost immediately after getting to the castle grounds in Scotland. Sadly, this cliché love story took away from the main plot of the movie.

Sophie’s bumpy relationship with Myles felt redundant at times. Although the pair would enjoy sweet moments while being in the castle together, they were only really happy for a few minutes of the film. Though the rest of the movie after the first half is not necessarily boring, it is predictable, especially with the “enemies to lovers” trope at play throughout its entirety.

There are a few other details that get lost that take away from the overall story. Viewers do not learn anything else about Sophie or her group of friends, further taking away from the main point of the movie, which was her getting a change and wanting to write the next installment of her series.

Still, “A Castle for Christmas” is a wholesome movie to watch with friends and family as we approach Christmas and winter break. Featuring lush environments and humor for all age groups, it is sure to be another holiday classic.

- Kayla Carlamere

Staff Writer

Brooke Shields plays Sophie Brown in the film.

**Photo courtesy of Netflix**

**Sekhena Sembenu**

Assistant Entertainment Editor

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Five Hanukkah Specials to Celebrate the Season With

Adam Kaunfer
Staff Writer

It’s the holiday season, and one tradition for many people is to watch the many Christmas specials set around this time, whether it’s a classic feel-good movie, a stand-alone cartoon or an episode of one’s favorite show. However, as much fun as it is to watch families come together and celebrate Christmas, it is always appreciated when movies and shows give Hanukkah, the Festival of Lights, the spotlight. While specials centering around the holiday are not nearly as prevalent as those of Christmas, there are still quite a few worth giving attention to.

1. “A Rugrats Chanukah”
The beloved Nickelodeon cartoon about a group of adventurous babies never shied away from the fact that lead baby, Tommy Pickles, is Jewish on his mother’s side. This episode properly gives the spotlight to the Festival of Lights, as Tommy, his cousin Angelica and his friends, Chuckie, Phil and Lil, are brought to the local temple for a play that teaches them and the viewers about the meaning of Hanukkah. While there, Tommy’s grandfather settles a feud with an old rival.

2. Adam Sandler’s “Eight Crazy Nights”
Famous comedian Adam Sandler is certainly proud of his Jewish heritage and even wrote a song centered around Hanukkah that he has performed quite a few times on “Saturday Night Live.” Released in 2002, this crude animated musical follows the story of Davey Stone, voiced by Sandler, a troublemaker with a dark past who finds himself with a chance at redemption after one strike too many. Over the eight nights of Hanukkah, Davey starts to turn himself around with the help of Whitey Duvall, an eccentric old friend also voiced by Sandler, while coming to terms with his past trauma.

3. “Friends: The One with the Holiday Armadillo”
Throughout its 10 seasons, “Friends” aired plenty of episodes set during Christmas. Season seven, episode 10 features Ross Geller, played by David Schwimmer, wishing to introduce his son Ben, played by a young Cole Sprouse, to the holiday. In true “Friends” fashion, Ross has trouble, as Ben is more interested in the merriment of Christmas. Desperate, he tries to find a Santa suit but fails, instead using an armadillo suit to teach his son about Hanukkah.

4. “Full-Court Miracle”
Released in 2003, this Disney Channel Original Movie tries to bring a modern twist to the miracle of Hanukkah. Centering around a group of boys attending a Hebrew school in Philadelphia, Alex Schlotsky, played by Alex D. Linz, tries to help his friends improve their basketball skills. He comes across a former college basketball star, Lamont Carr, played by Richard T. Jones, who reluctantly agrees to help Alex and his friends. The kids equate Lamont to their own Judah Maccabee, believing him to be the miracle they need to win a tournament.

5. “South Park: Mr. Hankey’s Christmas Classics”
Early on in the popular animated series’ run, a holiday album featuring the show’s Christmas mascot, Mr. Hankey, was released, in which characters from “South Park” sing various holiday songs, both existing and original. An episode based around the album aired in 1999, an anthology of little music videos with Mr. Hankey hosting. The first segment of the episode is resident Jewish kid Kyle Broflovski singing “The Dreidel Song” in an effort to teach his adopted brother Ike how to play the traditional game. Kyle’s friends, Cartman and Stan, arrive and sing their own solos about the dreidel. Kyle’s parents appear and also join in on the song. What ensues is an excellently catchy, memorable tune that includes a healthy bit of early “South Park” humor.
Looking to binge something funny and comforting during winter break? From white elephants to Christmas wishes, “The Office” provides seven top-tier, iconic and hilarious Christmas episodes for viewers to enjoy. The NBC sitcom that ran from 2005 to 2013 gives us the best holiday gift of all — comedic genius. These episodes will fill even the coldest of Grinch hearts with its Christmas spirit. Here are five of the holiday episodes of “The Office” ranked:

4. “Moroccan Christmas” (Season 5, Episode 11)

In an effort to bring some more culture to the office, Phyllis, played by Phyllis Smith, decides to throw a Moroccan Christmas party. As the party goes on, the office workers decide whether Meredith’s, played by Kate Flannery, drinking has gone too far. While all episodes of “The Office” are typically hard to watch, this episode was one of the hardest. The storyline with Michael trying to check Meredith into rehab unwillingly is hilarious but also super uncomfortable. Ending this episode with Phyllis outing Angela and Dwight’s affair to her coworkers left me sitting with my teeth clenched as Angela’s fiancé, Andy, walked in the room unknowingly.

2. “Secret Santa” (Season 6, Episode 13)

This episode is peak “Office” comedy and cringe. The current heads of the party planning committee, Jim and Dwight, set up a Secret Santa for the office. As the new co regional manager at the branch, Jim also lets Phyllis dress up as Santa this year for the office without telling Michael. When Michael shows up dressed as Santa, he flips his costume inside out and turns into Jesus, sabotaging the rest of the party. Michael convinces the whole office to do a Secret Santa with a $20 limit. To show off his “impressive” manager salary, Michael disregards the budget and purchases an iPod as his gift for his Secret Santa, Ryan, played by B.J. Novak. When Michael realizes everyone else followed instructions with the spending limit and he is disappointed by his gift, he turns Secret Santa into a white elephant or “Yankee Swap,” creating chaos in the office. This iconic episode is ranked No. 1 for one reason only: the teapot. This is the first time in the office exchanges Christmas gifts. Some might overlook this part of the episode, but I truly think it encapsulates the random hilarity that is “The Office.”

1. “Christmas Party” (Season 2, Episode 10)

Michael convinces the whole office to do a Secret Santa with a $20 limit. To show off his “impressive” manager salary, Michael disregards the budget and purchases an iPod as his gift for his Secret Santa, Ryan, played by B.J. Novak. When Michael realizes everyone else followed instructions with the spending limit and he is disappointed by his gift, he turns Secret Santa into a white elephant or “Yankee Swap,” creating chaos in the office. This iconic episode is ranked No. 1 for one reason only: the teapot. This is the first episode of “The Office” where we see Jim almost admit how he feels for Pam. How can you look at the teapot he got her and not think he’s in love with her? Watching Pam continuously choose the iPod as her “Yankee Swap” gift is crushing for us as the audience. Then, seeing her redeem herself in the end by choosing the teapot is so gratifying, Pam’s laugh while looking through her teapot and smiling as she tells us, “I think I made the right choice,” is the beginning of the most beautiful relationship in the show.
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Megan Duffy is Proving Her Worth After A First Year Injury

The second year forward is in the midst of a breakout season

Matt Orth
Assistant Sports Editor

When the topic of NBA players comes up, everybody always talks about top players like LeBron James, meanwhile lesser-known players like Malcolm Brogdon often get pushed to the wayside.

As for the topic of women's basketball at Montclair State University, players like senior guard Julia Sutton and junior guard Nickie Carter usually get the press. But this season, more focus should go to sophomore guard/forward Megan Duffy. Or as Matt Bruchez, volleyball commentator for the Red Hawk Sports Network (RHSN) likes to call her, either the Duffy Dagger or the Duffy Dime.

Duffy enjoys the recognition but still gives her teammates a chance to shine as well.

“I like the nicknames. I think they're OK,” Duffy said. “Obviously, everyone likes to score, but if I am not in that situation – if Sutton or Carter are hitting shots – I like passing them the ball and giving them those opportunities [too].”

Before she became a breakout star for the Red Hawks, Duffy dealt with an undisclosed injury her freshman year with the Red Hawks, a unique season due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. In her only game that season, Duffy scored eight points and four rebounds in a loss to the Salisbury University Sea Gulls. Sutton openly talked about Duffy's progression and praised her offensive performance.

“[Duffy] has come such a long way from her injury in her freshman year, and she has made a real impact on this team,” Sutton said. “And, she does this in a big way: she plays a post position but is also a shooter, so she is a major threat on offense. Me and everyone else are so proud of where she is now.”

Going into the seventh game of the season, Duffy has had great plays so far, beating career-highs, intimidating centers in the post as a forward and creating space to shoot from deep as a forward.

There’s no doubt Duffy can shoot the ball from deep; just remember when Montclair State was against Ramapo College of New Jersey, and she shot three of five from beyond the arc.

Duffy clearly played back in high school for the J.P. Stevens High School Hawks, the alma mater where she racked up over 1,000 points in her time with the team. Duffy explains what has translated over from those days to now being with Montclair State.

"Me scoring 1,000 points back in high school showed that I worked really hard to get that, and [that] all my teammates had my back," Duffy said. "I tore my ACL my freshman year of high school, so that motivated me to continue to work hard, keep pushing and remember that good things will eventually come. Now, I am here playing for Montclair State.”

As mentioned before, Duffy is one of the key players on the Red Hawk squad that can grab rebounds on both sides of the ball, and having players like that is crucial for either advancing plays, resetting or getting another chance to slip up the opposing team.

Senior forward Trisha Petron, one of the top rebounders for Montclair State, speaks on how effective Duffy is in this aspect.

“During practice, we put a big emphasis on going and getting the rebound,” Petron said. “I have so much confidence in [Duffy] to get the boards if I can’t get them. I think it’s really great playing defense with her because she has my back on the court.”

With a lot of the season left and a lot more to prove out on the court, Megan Duffy is just one of the many young players looking to propel this program under the head of prestigious head coach Karin Harvey. Duffy is happy with how she is doing and hopes it translates to a better record for the team overall.

“My family and friends are all very proud of me,” Duffy said. “It felt good being able to get back out there and play well for my teammates and get more wins.”
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Giving Back to Their Alma Maters

Michael Scala and Patrick Duffy: the duo responsible for the promotion and publicity of all Montclair State athletics

Michael Scala (left) and Patrick Duffy (right) have done more to give back to their alma mater than anyone could imagine.

Michael Scala and Patrick Duffy

Montclair State University sports have taken a huge leap in publicity throughout the years. Director of Sports Publicity Michael Scala and Sports Information Coordinator Patrick Duffy have made this a possibility. The pair is in charge of the promotion and publicity of the 18 sports at Montclair State, and do it in a variety of ways.

The two have done their part in publicizing the teams as much as possible. They utilize social media platforms such as Instagram and Twitter along with the Montclair Athletics website to spread information about teams, players, coaches, events and sports content. Scala understands that social media is a fast and effective way to do this.

"Over the years, we've tried our best to use social media to disseminate information out to people so that people know what's going on with Montclair State sports," Scala said.

They also coordinate game procedures such as season and career statistics, live stats and web streaming, game day previews and postgame recaps of every athletic event and more.

The dynamic duo of Scala and Duffy are the encyclopedias of Montclair State athletics, as they have all the records, pictures and key moments in Montclair State sports history engrained in their minds. It wasn't so long ago that these two were students themselves here at Montclair State.

When Scala entered Montclair State, he quickly got involved with the athletic department and got his hands on anything he could. He stepped into what he called the “best situation a student could possibly ask for.”

He came to the university as a computer science major, which quickly changed once he fell in love with the sports culture at the university.

“As a student, I took on more responsibilities than any student would, [as] I was allowed to," Scala said. “I was given that opportunity and ran with it, and it kind of became a passion. Slowly but surely, I turned away from being a computer science major and eventually became a broadcasting major.”

Scala graduated from Montclair State in 1992 and served as the director of athletic communications at Division I Monmouth University for two years. He then returned to Montclair State to continue to build onto what he helped get started.

As for Duffy, he didn’t always have his mind set on Montclair State. His first option was Kean University until his advisor in high school gave him the idea of considering Montclair State because of its strong communications program. He decided to take a visit to the university and instantly knew this is where he wanted to be.

“Once I visited here, I knew it was a fit,” Duffy said. “From the time I stepped on campus, that’s when I was drawn here. People always say college is the best four years of your life and it truly was the best four years ever.”

Duffy graduated from Montclair State in 2010 with a bachelor’s in communication studies with a concentration in public relations. He returned in 2019 as the sports information coordinator.

While they’ve built their own legacies at Montclair State, they look to help the up-and-coming students who are trying to build their own. They work hand in hand with Montclair State’s School of Communication and Media (SCM) and assist students on projects, reporting and getting in contact with the teams’ players and coaches.

Sports media professor Kelly Whiteside loves the way the pair allows students to work on their craft.

“Working with Scala and Duffy has been a great opportunity for the Red Hawk Sports Network and for our students because they treat our students like they would treat any professional reporter,” Whiteside said. “They also have the same understanding that they are here to learn, [so] mistakes will be made, and the reporters they are dealing with are still students.”

The SCM has many clubs, organizations and networks, one of them being the Red Hawk Sports Network (RHSN). The network allows interns to broadcast basketball games and cover games for their weekly show, “Inside the Nest.” RHSN broadcast intern senior Jess Liptzin feels Scala and Duffy have been extremely helpful in helping interns and students advance in their majors.

“Starting off as a beginner broadcaster, they’ve really been able to help me every step of the way [in terms of] giving me good feedback and just making me feel as comfortable on the broadcast as possible,” Liptzin said. “Also as a journalist trying to do stories on athletes, they’ve been really helpful in setting up those connections and making it a really great overall experience.”

Both Scala and Duffy agree that their relationship with the students, athletes and coaches have blossomed over the years, but they believe that their great relationship with the teams is what keeps making this experience the best.

“I think the relationship between us and the coaches and athletes is probably one of the better relationships that we have,” Duffy said. “In the years that I’ve been doing this, the more familiar the athletes are with you, the more willing they are to do the extra stuff. The rapport you build with them is the rapport that helps both parties grow in the long run.”

After being here for quite a while, Scala and Duffy couldn’t say what their favorite Montclair State sports memory is. Scala, who is now in his 20th year as director of sports publicity, isn’t sure if he can have a favorite because “they’re all his favorites.”

However, there is one moment in Montclair State history that stands out to him the most.

“I’ll get a little sentimental and say that my favorite moment in Montclair State history is when I met my wife here,” Scala said. “I have three kids and a wonderful marriage that’ll be 20 years later this month.”

If one thing is certain enough, Scala and Duffy have done more to give back to their alma mater than anyone could imagine.
How Montclair State Athletes Are Celebrating the Holiday Season

Three Montclair State athletes share their favorite holiday traditions

“A holiday tradition of mine is always getting Chinese food on Christmas Eve. My family loves the movie ‘A Christmas Story’ and it inspired us to create a Christmas Eve tradition where we all go over to my grandmother’s house every year and order Chinese food.”

Rhiannon Brown
Women’s Lacrosse
Attack

“My favorite holiday tradition is baking and watching Christmas movies with friends and family.”

Katelyn Monaghan
Women’s Volleyball
Libero/Defensive Specialist

“My favorite holiday tradition is going down to Congress Hall in Cape May, New Jersey to watch the Christmas tree lighting with my family.”

Brennan Ray
Football
Defensive Back
Irving Callender IV Dedicates Final Season to His Late Father

Callender IV continues to succeed on the court in honor of his father

There are several different personalities featured on the Montclair State University men’s basketball team, but few stand out the way graduate student forward Irving Callender IV does.

Head coach Justin Potts agrees. “He’s just a great young man,” Potts said. “A guy that has really committed himself to being a good student athlete. He’s a great son and older brother for his family and a guy that all of our guys like being around because he has such a good personality.”

Callender IV has matured into the player he is now on and off the court through many trials and tribulations, but credits his late father for molding him into the man he is today.

Unfortunately, the man who helped raise him tragically passed away last summer in 2020 due to the coronavirus (COVID-19).

“Callender’s father has had a major impact on his fifth-year forward basketball career.”

Kevin Marrugara | The Montclarion

Callender IV tries to drive past the three-point line during the team’s 2021 home opener against Brooklyn College.

Kevin Marrugara | The Montclarion

Callender IV’s father has had a major impact on the fifth-year forward basketball career.

“I was a role model to me and like my best friend,” Callender said. “I could tell him anything you know? Someone who I looked up to. There is nothing quite like a father-son connection. Callender vowed to bring his father’s most important life lessons along with him. “[He taught me] to never accept excuses. For example, in a game, if you’re tired, don’t use it as an excuse for a missed layup or a turnover,” Callender said. “And even in real life, say, if I didn’t get a job, what are you going to do after that? You have to move forward.”

Before last season, Callender wore No. 4 on his jersey, however, he made the switch to No. 5 in honor of his dad. “That’s more than a number to not just me, but [to] my family,” Callender said. “He wore it in high school and his number was retired. I wear it with pride.”

Throughout most of his basketball career at Montclair State, Callender was especially known for his energy and tenacity on the defensive end, but that all changed after a breakout season on the offensive side.

Ever since Callender switched to No. 5, he has been on an absolute tear. After averaging 12.6 points and seven rebounds, in addition to starting in all nine games last season, he was named Honorable Mention All-NJAC — and rightfully so, Potts adds.

“He’s a little bit of a silent assassin,” Potts said. “He doesn’t say much, but he plays with a great motor and he gives a ton of effort on both ends of the floor. He’s a very committed guy and he just finds ways to help the team win.”

Averaging a career-high of 18.3 points per game and 9.3 rebounds through seven games, Potts says that over the last couple of seasons, Callender has proved to be an extremely important piece to the program and continues to only get better.

“They’re people I can lean on, and they are easy to talk to,” Callender said. “They’re more than teammates and friends. They are like my brothers.”

Life gives everyone battles to fight and in times of need, we need someone to lean on. The Montclair State basketball team provided exactly that for Callender.

“We all took a trip up to his house just to show him we were all there for him,” Pryce said. “It was really touching when I saw everybody hurting, I felt hurt. Me and [Callender] weren’t as close at the time, but he was always one of my true friends. And, when we did go, it was a really warm and touching feeling, and I feel like he’s been my brother since then.”

Ryan White
Staff Writer

Kevin Marrugara | The Montclarion

Callender IV’s father has had a major impact on the fifth-year forward basketball career.