Montclair State University students are coming forward to report sexual harassment once again. Last week, the Instagram account @montclairstateconfessions posted a student’s experience with harassment on campus. The post has over 800 likes and over 100 comments, where more students have come forward with their own stories.

Similar allegations were raised during the fall semester.

According to Serrano, the allegedly predator aggregated sexually harass him while he was sexually assaulted, prompting her to transfer schools.

“In February of last year, I was at a small gathering in a dorm in The Heights with some friends,” Bailey said. “My assaulter offered to give me my first kiss and I consented to that. Later in the night, he took me to the bathroom and sexually assaulted me. He did it again a few minutes later and he proceeded to forcefully kiss me without consent.”

After filing a Title IX report the following summer, Bailey feels she did not get the resources or support she needed.

“I decided to report over the summer, but [Associate Dean of Students Yolanda Alvarez] told me I had no evidence,” Bailey said. “The school made me feel so invalidated throughout the process that I transferred out. Having to see him walk free on campus and having him in three of my classes was just too much.”

Bailey’s case got moved to a Title IX conduct meeting in March, had a similar encounter with the same alleged assaulter via text.

He did it again a few minutes later and he proceeded to forcefully kiss me without consent.”

After filing a Title IX report the following summer, Bailey feels she did not get the resources or support she needed.

“After I reported the incident, I was sexually assaulted, prompting her to transfer schools.

“Many do not wish to go through something like this and it has caused me so much mental pain. I’m already struggling with panic disorder and after this experience his mental health has been affected.

“I want to be the last one that he does this to,” Serrano said. “Nobody deserves to go through something like this and it has caused me so much mental pain. I’m already struggling with panic disorder and I have panic attacks almost frequently. This was just another thing that has made me so anxious and I just want it to be over.”

Yolanda Alvarez, the deputy assistant dean of students, encourages victims to file a report and receive the support they need.

“We encourage reporting and want students to get the resources they need,” Alvarez said. “If the reporting student chooses, they can be connected to resources immediately. Sexual misconduct reporting has historically been underreported and that remains a challenge across all institutions.”

Bailey, who awaits her conduct meeting in March, had words for her former university.

“I would tell [the administration] to believe their victims.”

To Montclair State [administration], I would encourage them to keep their promises to keep students safe on their own campus... I would tell them to believe their victims,” Bailey said. “I would tell [Montclair State students] that what you went through is not your fault at all, no matter what you wore or how much you drank or how you acted. I wish anyone going through something similar to me healing and justice.”
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Red Hawk Rap Sheet

Wednesday, February 9
Blanton Hall: A student came into Police Headquarters in regards to a report of a theft from a laundry room. This incident is under investigation.

Thursday, February 10
Student Recreation Center: A student came into Police Headquarters to report an incident of theft. This incident is under investigation.

Thursday, February 10
Vandalism: Officers responded to Lot 5 in regards to a report of criminal mischief. Officers were met on the scene by an MSU employee, who reported witnessing an unknown female commit an act of vandalism to an employee's personal vehicle. This incident is under investigation.

Anyone who has information regarding these incidents is urged to call the police station at T-I-P-S (8477).
The long-awaited reopening of Montclair State University’s Red Hawk Diner is finally here. The diner was closed back in 2020 due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. However, it reopened on Monday, Feb. 14 after almost two years and welcomed students back to in-person dining.

To maintain COVID-19 protocols, the diner launched a new same-day reservation system that avoids crowds and allows students to reserve a table for their dine-in visit. The diner also contains QR codes of the menu so students can digitally place their orders.

Tanis Lepore, a freshman undecided, was amazed by the old-fashioned look of the diner and enjoyed her experience, as it was her first time there. “I’m definitely really excited that the [Red Hawk Diner] opened, especially as a freshman who didn’t have this experience before,” Lepore said. “It gives off a very nice ‘Riverdale’ feel and it’s very old-fashioned and I love that. And I got a cheeseburger with curly fries and it was really good.”

Tom Coraggio, a senior film-making major, is excited the Red Hawk Diner is open again. “I love more food options,” Coraggio said. “It’s great to finally be in the diner for the first time. I think it’s great for more people to hang out and eat in now. The staff here is really nice and everyone is so friendly. It’s quite [the] perfect place to hang out.”

Jaclynn Land, a freshman family science and human development major, liked having more of an in-person dine-in experience, rather than just ordering food. “It’s a lot more fun than just taking out GrubHub and going back to your room,” Land said. “The diner is really cute and [I like] how they decorated it for Valentine’s Day. The workers have so much pride in their job and [everyone’s] having fun, so it’s a cute, fun experience to hang out and get food.”

Billy Ibrahim, the director of retail dining at the Red Hawk Diner, is also thrilled to see students coming back and hopes the diner will be open 24 hours of the day, the way it used to be. “We really wanted to have it open, the only thing that stopped us was the pandemic and we’re taking it [slow],” Ibrahim said. “We don’t know what the future holds but we’re looking forward to opening the diner [24/7] the way it used to be. But all in all, I’m really excited to see everyone coming back.”

Lynise Olivacce
Assistant Photo Editor

(The left to right): Rajan Neal and Cirianna Monte, both freshman psychology majors, eat and talk to each other at Red Hawk Diner’s grand opening.

Julian Putnam | The Montclarion

(Lynise Olivacce | The Montclarion)

Seating arrangements were spaced out to keep social distancing.

(Lynise Olivacce | The Montclarion)

(Lynise Olivacce | The Montclarion)

(Lynise Olivacce | The Montclarion)

(Lynise Olivacce | The Montclarion)

(Lynise Olivacce | The Montclarion)
Several students at Montclair State University said they are upset about the strict enforcement of the Recreation Center’s dress code. These students said they are constantly being reprimanded by the staff members about small-scale dress code violations. They are either asked to leave or to put on a different shirt provided by the Rec Center.

Brianna Sheak, a freshman elementary education major and member of the Montclair State Dance Team, described her recent experience at the Rec Center.

“I wore a tight-fitted, white racerback tank top with built-in bra support [to practice],” Sheak said. “It covered my entire stomach and had ‘MSDT’ in red lettering on the front of it, considering it was made by the team’s leaders and was meant to be worn in the multipurpose studios. The rest of the team owns these tops as well and has worn them to practice before without a problem. But, I was the one to get in trouble for wearing it.”

Sheak said an employee at the Rec Center told her that she cannot wear the top and was not allowed past the front entrance. “I feel like this is not just sexist, but a body type issue as well,” Sheak said. “I am bigger chested so I may have stuck out to them more in comparison to women with less curves. There’s a double standard here.”

Multiple other students said they have faced similar experiences since the start of the school year and are now frustrated.

A popular Instagram account that emerged last April named @montclairstatelit has been posting anonymous confessions and complaints by students about the university. Harleigh Macbeth, a junior Spanish and public relations major, came across a post on the account that highlighted this issue and commented.

“My guy friend even got dress coded,” Macbeth said. “We are grown, I don’t even think it’s for the sake of keeping skin diseases down, you’re meant to clean equipment you use but instead, it’s to prevent people being over-sexualized.”

Some upset students understand the situation from a different perspective. Mari Zuniga, a psychology major who works for the Rec Center, replied to Zuniga. “Yeah I work in the [Rec Center] and we have no choice in the matter,” Arruda said. “We have to call it out or address it, or we can get in trouble. Trust me, I don’t want to be going around policing people on what to wear.”

After reading the post and comments regarding the issue last semester, David Bryngil, associate director of campus recreation, and Jared Utterback, assistant director of fitness, responded.

“I can say in terms of my understanding that this policy is driven by skin health exclusive by Bryngil said. “They confirmed there was never a lawsuit or initial issue to begin the enforcement of the dress code. ‘We hear of other issues going on in other university recreation centers, but there was never a skin disease reported within [ours],’ Utterback said. ‘We base our decisions on regional remarks and universally accepted guidelines.’

Both employees emphasized the Rec Center’s priority to keep things clean, safe and beyond the standard for the campus community. They said they are aware of how much of the students’ money goes into the center and they want it to stay pristine and open for all students to use and enjoy.

“I was at another institution where a student said that no patron feels singled out on a day when advised to wear different clothing,” Bryngil said. “It is not fun [to deal with] and can become very serious.”

Utterback added that this policy isn’t new. “We started this campaign, ‘protect your skin at the gym,’ in 2015-2016,” Utterback said. “We really pride ourselves in keeping our facilities clean.”

Bryngil and Utterback wanted every student to know they are always welcome to discuss their complaints with them directly.

“It doesn’t necessarily help us do our job if the students only air their grievances over the internet,” Bryngil said. “Our doors are always open. Come talk to us.”

Bryngil said he is planning to talk about the complaints at the upcoming staff meetings to make sure the rule stays invariable throughout each shift, and that no patron feels singled out when advised to wear different clothing.

“I totally see where a student would feel singled out on a day where staff are not being as consistent with the policy,” Bryngil said. Utterback shared similar sentiments.

“We want our students to feel comfortable,” Utterback said.

The land, initially known as Lenapehoking, is the traditional and expropriated territory of the Lenape tribe of New Jersey. This is the first step to a formal acknowledgment and it is being brought to university President Jonathan Koppell for consideration.

This effort began in 2019 during the presidency of Susan Cole, where tribal leaders and activists have been pushing to have the university acknowledge the sacred lands the school occupies. Montclair State joins other institutions such as Michigan State University, Northwestern University and the University of British Columbia in acknowledging the lands they occupy.

Erik Jacobson, president of the Senate, explained why he thinks land acknowledgment gained support in the Senate. “I think the reason it found support in the Senate is that people wanted to both recognize the history of expropriation and recognize the current realities of Indigenous communities, in all their complexity,” Jacobson said. “I believe the statement can play an educational role and it invites reflection that hopefully leads to action.”

Jacobson added that the statement will be read at certain meetings and events to spread awareness. “This includes at the start of a semester or class, before public meetings and performances,” Jacobson said. “We are also recommending that copies of the statement be placed in a few public spaces around campus, both indoor and outdoor. We believe this will increase its visibility and impact. Andrew Mees, the university spokesperson, said the university supports the Senate’s efforts.

“The university is supportive of a land acknowledgment, and we will work with the University Senate to develop a statement sensitive to the issues rightfully raised by the tribes,” Mees said. Dr. Elspeth Martini, a history professor focusing on Native American history and the chair for the Land Acknowledgment Committee, helped lead the university to make these changes.

“The process has taken so long because rather than having a token statement to be read out at campus events etc., we wanted it to be a commitment from our institution to working with and for [New Jersey] Native communities,” Martini said. Martini explained what steps will be taken once the statement is approved.

“Once the statement is finalized and approved, there are various plans underway to have it appear on the screens throughout campus and maybe have a reflection garden, [too], along with a more general publicity blitz,” Martini said.

Daine Ocampo Martinez, a senior linguistics major and moderator of a meeting related to the land acknowledgement back in November 2021, believes there is more that can be done in the linguistics department related to Indigenous heritage. “I think the next step should be adding more classes about Indigenous history and culture that are written and told by Indigenous people,” Ocampo Martinez said. “Even working on Indigenous language classes [would be great]. We have to learn Euro-American languages. Why not a language that is native to this land?”

The university had issues with Indigenous sensitivity in the past. In January 2021, artist Emily Johnson wrote on Medium about an abusable work environment involving the executive director of Peak Performances related to Indigenous heritage.

In 1985, the university changed its mascot to a Red Hawk after controversy over the use of an Indigenous caricature for a mascot. The school briefly mentions the athletic department’s adoption of a new mascot in a timeline available on the school’s website but does not explain why this change was made.

The move to create a land acknowledgment is one that some feel has come too late, including Mari Zuniga, a senior communications and media arts major. “It’s far too late, but at least they are trying to change things,” Zuniga said.

The acknowledgment, as well as minutes for meetings, are available on the University Senate website.
Members of Montclair State University's Environmental Club got together to help clean up around the university on Feb. 9.

Charlene Ramos, a junior business administration major and Environmental Club president, was the head of the group. Ramos said the reason why she wanted to get the club together to clean was because of a tree that was spray-painted and decorated with glass bottles back in November. Located right outside the entrance to Bohn Hall, the tree is allegedly part of a project in which a professor granted students permission to spray-paint it, claiming the rain would wash it away, according to Ramos.

“The jars are broken now, so there's broken glass surrounding this vandalized tree and this can cause harm to our surrounding wildlife and it can enter our waterways if it were to enter through sewage drains,” Ramos said. “We believe that whoever was behind this must be held accountable and be responsible enough to clean up the area that they damaged by cleaning up the broken mason jars and making sure that the paint does wash off as they had claimed.”

Deputy Chief of University Police Kieran Barrett said the Montclair State Police Department received a report back in November detailing the incident. The student who spray-painted the tree said it was for an art project.

“This would not be classified as an environmental crime but tant to us because we want students to realize the sheer magnitude of trash that we have littered throughout Montclair State,” Ramos said. “We hope that having this hands-on experience will resonate with the students and make them more motivated to practice proper waste disposal, whether it be recycling or straight to the garbage bin.”

Mason Ricciotti, a freshman business administration major who was at the cleanup, said he's just happy to help.

“Honestly, it's pretty crazy,” Ricciotti said. “This is my first semester doing the Environmental Club, and seeing all this trash, it's just crazy.”
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ROOM 2035, SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA IN
UPPER MONTCLAIR, NJ, 07043
A portrait of a family dressed in formal attire. The father looks proudly straight ahead, one hand on his son’s shoulder and the other on the chair his wife is sitting on. The wife’s gaze is calm, cool and confident as she sits on the cushioned chair, her legs crossed. The son looks ahead with a nerdy gaze, glasses on his face and his tie askew.

A painting like this may seem ordinary until one notices the black paint that has dripped from the top of the canvas down. Not to mention the dark smoke at the bottom of the painting. Together, these two elements frame the painting in an ominous, glooming way.

This was no accident on the part of Ajamu Kojo, the artist of the piece. This painting and many others like it are part of the Brooklyn-based artist’s exhibition for the George Segal Gallery at Montclair State University. The exhibition, titled “Black Wall Street,” focuses on the Black excellence that was prominent in Oklahoma’s Greenwood District before the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre.

Originally from Little Rock, Arkansas, Kojo’s inspiration for this project was sparked when he saw a film called “Rosewood,” which was based on an event similar to the Tulsa Race Massacre. He then did more research about Black Wall Street, eventually seeing one of the last living survivors of the attack, Dr. Olivia J. Hooker, speak in person, whom he based one of his pieces on.

“Ten years later [after watching that movie], I came across a video of Dr. Hooker,” Kojo said. “She was recounting her story with somebody, and I knew that I had to meet this woman. So, I dug deep and found out she was actually giving a talk. I went to go see her and listen to her talk. I went to go see her and listen to her talk. I went to go see her and listen to her talk.”

Some of the most visually interesting aspects of this work are the black drip marks and the smoke on the paintings, which are also some of the most meaningful.

“The dripping at the top of the painting [is] significant of the wealth that rested underneath the land,” Kojo said. “It basically put the wheels in motion and allowed them to create their own commerce within the Greenwood District.

But, it also gives a sense of foreboding of the massacre that is to come.”

Kojo explained what the smoke at the bottom of the canvas meant and how it tied together with the black drip marks, given that the white residents of Tulsa had burned Black businesses to the ground.

“Beneath the paintings, I’ve created a faux finish technique that I learned as a scenic artist [for] fire damage, which is a representation of the massacre itself and the destruction it caused for the people in the Greenwood District,” Kojo said. “I use these two elements as a means to frame the work themselves without having to actually frame the work.”

Kojo’s purpose behind his exhibition is to bring attention to the Black excellence that was present in the Greenwood District before the massacre took place, and how events like the massacre have severely impacted the progress of the African-American community.

“That state of emotional upliftment was interrupted by jealousy, bigotry and prejudice,” Kojo said. “So, the message I’m sending is [that] these are things that Black people can do. We’ve done it before and we can do it again.”

Megan C. Austin, the director of the gallery, said as soon as Kojo had told her about his project, she knew it was perfect for Montclair State.

“As an educational university or gallery, the perfect place to have this discussion,” Austin said. “To bring all these works together and to look at the issues being addressed in the work from as many angles as possible and to not only celebrate Black excellence but also educate people about Black Wall Street.”

Tommy Robert, a sophomore fashion studies major at Montclair State and a student worker at the gallery, said Kojo’s message struck home with him as a Black student.

“As a Black student, as a Black man, as a Black kid [and] as a Black creator, it means so much more because I feel like it just represents so much for us [and] so much of our past and future,” Robert said. “It represents our perseverance, our determination and it represents all our joy that no matter what Black people go through, we always end up coming up on top.”

The exhibition opened on Feb. 15 and will be on display until April 23. You can find the George Segal Gallery by the entrance to Red Hawk Deck.
Dr. Rob Gilbert Celebrates 30 Years of His ‘Success Hotline’

Samantha Bailey
Feature Editor

From Australia to Canada and back to the United States, we are all looking for ways to become more successful.

Dr. Rob Gilbert, an associate professor of sports psychology who has worked at Montclair State University since 1979, has been inspiring people from these locations, and beyond, through the creation of his ‘success hotline’ for the last 30 years.

Gilbert started his success hotline on Jan. 22, 1992. Then, Gilbert only taught graduate-level classes that met once a week. Looking for a way to connect more with his students outside the class, he started the hotline originally as a place for his students to call and receive the “100 secrets of sports” throughout the semester.

“How can I meet with my students every single day for a whole semester if I only see them once a week?” Gilbert said. “[I came up with] the idea of putting messages on an outgoing phone [of a] phone-answering machine.”

The hotline was only supposed to run for the entirety of the semester, but Gilbert was surprised by just how many people were calling.

“I started doing it just for my students,” Gilbert said. “And then, much to my amazement, people from all over the country started calling it. Somebody told somebody [else], and by the end of the semester, I had so many people calling, I decided never to stop. So, I’ve been doing it ever since.”

For the last 30 years, Gilbert has recorded a motivational message for his thousands of callers to listen to. Some days it may be a story and other days it may just consist of general advice.

How does someone come up with 30 years’ worth of success tips? Gilbert attributes his ability in college to helping him find ideas.

Gilbert graduated from the University of Massachusetts Amherst, in Amherst, Massachusetts, where he began his technique of being able to find unique ideas worth talking about. He was trying to find ideas for a graduate project regarding cardiovascular disease and decided to carry a blank manila folder everywhere he went, in case he got an idea and needed to jot it down.

“I realized something, and it’s almost like a law,” Gilbert said. “Nature hates a vacuum. So, if I gave you an empty birdcage, somebody [else] would give you a bird because they know it’s not complete.”

Just like that birdcage and manila folder, Gilbert now had an answering machine he needed to find ideas to fill. He soon realized once you open yourself to new ideas, they never stop coming.

“See, it’s called selective attention,” Gilbert said. “Once you have this, you’re attentive to the three-minute opening, and things will happen to fill up the space. It happens every single day.”

While Gilbert admits not every message is unique in sentiment, he has never repeated the same message twice. Two long-time callers, Thomas Boud and Rich Kennedy can attest to this.

Boud is a Montclair State alumnus who graduated in 1999 with a master’s degree in French, although he didn’t start calling the hotline until 2005. Since first calling, Boud has had many pieces of wisdom bestowed upon him that he’s been able to apply to his life.

“My favorite is: ‘If you shoot for the moon and miss, at least you’ll be amongst the stars,’” Kennedy said.

Both men agree that calling the hotline every day is something students should make a habit of.

“College is not difficult. It’s time-consuming. If you’re willing to put in the time, you do not just succeed, you can excel. One of my favorite quotes is, ‘Excellence isn’t an expected effort. Excellence is extra effort.’”

To hear more of Gilbert’s motivational stories and advice on success, make calling his success hotline at 973-743-4690, part of your routine. Sometimes all you need as a key to success is a phone call.

“[My favorite is]: If you shoot for the moon and miss, at least you’ll be amongst the stars.”

And Gilbert doesn’t just leave messages for his listeners. He also allows them to leave him messages, too. He’s received messages from all over the world, and if you leave him a call-back number, sometimes he’ll return your call with even more advice.

“I’ve gotten some messages with people crying,” Gilbert said. “[I’ve gotten] some of the scary messages, [too]. [Like] people who are suicidal. But if people want me to respond, I respond.”

Gilbert leaves Montclair State students with one piece of advice.

“There’s no difficult college, no difficult course, no difficult major [and] no difficult professors,” Gilbert said.

“Excellence isn’t an expected effort. Excellence is extra effort.”

Dr. Rob Gilbert is an associate professor of sports psychology and founder of his success hotline.

Photo courtesy of Thomas Boud
From ensemble cast of authors former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, former Google CEO Eric Schmidt and MIT’s Daniel Huttenlocher comes “The Age of AI: And Our Human Future,” an exploration of how artificial intelligence (AI) is already changing our world and how it may someday change the very nature of the human condition.

AI will affect everything from the way we make scientific discoveries to the way warfare is conducted, the authors predict. It has already surpassed the world’s greatest chess players, and it won’t be long before AI algorithms are the safest drivers on the road, the sharpest medical diagnosticians or the most prolific artists and writers.

But, uncontrolled, AI also poses nightmarish dangers to society: producing hyper-realistic fake speeches or videos of events that never happened, AI-driven warfare spilling over into the civilian sphere, or, most disturbingly, a future where the most significant decisions about the fate of the world are not made by humans.

While I had some familiarity with the subject of AI, I was excited to develop a well-rounded understanding of it from this title.

“The Age of AI: And Our Human Future” is dense with explanations, predictions, opinions and fears about AI, and also encased in difficult and, at times, repetitive language. It lays out rough outlines for national and global committees that should determine AI’s uses and limitations across industry, academia and governments, in what feels like a stream of consciousness narrative.

Because this book is based on actual conversations between the authors, it felt at times as if I were being hit with the conclusions of many hours of thought without the time to reason through it all myself and keep pace.

But the abstruse wording and repetitive statements weren’t the biggest obstacles to getting through this book. Instead, it was the deeply thought-provoking points made by the authors that regularly sent me spiraling into reflection. The authors did succeed in what was perhaps their primary objective: to instill in the reader a sense of the significance of AI and the need for discourse about it.

This book ambitiously attempts to walk the reader through as comprehensive a summary of AI as can be fit in 143 pages. This book has convinced me that AI will span far beyond the domain of science and technology, infiltrating every aspect of society and changing nearly everything about the way we live our lives.

Although I expected to come away from the reading somewhat satisfied on the subject, I was left asking more questions than I could find answers for in these pages. Though it was my first book on the subject, it will certainly not be the last.

This book may not be the singular text about artificial intelligence that I was hoping for, but it’s worth reading nonetheless. It’s a guidebook for the kind of considerations we should be having about AI: how it will impact the economy, law, warfare, diplomacy and what it will mean to be human in a world dominated by nonhuman intelligence.

At its core, this book is meant to start a conversation — perhaps what will soon be “the” conversation. As a new, AI-driven epoch of human existence looms on the horizon, this is a subject everyone needs to take the time to familiarize themselves with — the sooner, the better. To that end, one need not look further than “The Age of AI: And Our Human Future” to do just that.
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BACKGROUND IMAGE BY SVSTUDIOART
Who would play you in a movie?

By John LaRosa & Hannah Effinger

Zendaya
“She’s mixed [race] like me and I feel like her personality is kinda like me.”
Nyalah Abasali
Sophomore
Chemistry major

Isabella Gomez
“She’s a Latina actress that I really like, and she’s in a Cuban American sitcom that I really like.”
Claudia Martillo
Freshman
Journalism major

Tom Cruise
“He’s the only actor in my head.”
Sion Hwang
Junior
Film and Television major
Keanu Reeves
“He is really good, dude is sexy as hell, but I always liked him with shorter hair.”
Kevin Steinmann
Junior
3D Animation major

Viola Davis
“She’s just a powerful girl. Ooooh, also Zendaya.”
Dahana Lundy
Freshman
Undecided major

Nina Dobrev
“She kinda looks like me, I’m naturally brunette. She also has a really good range, specif-
cally in ‘The Vampire Diaries.’ I feel like she could play the different sides of me really well.”
Elena Yared
Freshman
Public Relations major
PART-TIME BABYSITTER

Seeking a babysitter/mother’s helper on Mondays in Teaneck from 4pm-8pm to help me with an infant, 5yr old and 8yr old. Responsibilities may include feeding/holding the baby, playing with my older kids, and helping with homework. We are looking for someone fully vaccinated and with excellent references. Experience with an infant is a plus.

Please reply to 516-241-7616 if interested.
PUZZLES

‘Avatar: The Last Airbender’ Day Edition
By Kayla Carlamere

Across
2. In the episode “The Ember Island Players,” we learn that the playwright got his information from “singing nomads, pirates, prisoners of war, and a surprisingly knowledgeable _______ ______.”
6. This airbending master and monk served as Aang’s mentor and father figure before the events of the Hundred Year War.
7. Appa, Aang’s animal guide and companion, is what type of animal? This species is also acknowledged as the original airbenders.
8. This waterbending master and instructor from the Northern Water Tribe initially refused to teach Katara because of sexist customs, but eventually changed his mind and went on to teach her and Aang. He was also a member of the White Lotus along with Uncle Iroh, King Bumi and others.

Down
1. This so-called “impenetrable” capital of the Earth Kingdom is fortified by a massive wall and is one of the biggest cities in the ATLA universe. It is also recognizable by the famous quote “There is no war in ______.”
3. This eerie and illegal sub-skill available to advanced waterbenders on a full moon allows them to control people like puppets.
4. This two-player game, played with a board and tiles, most famously the white lotus tile, gave name to the secret society known as the White Lotus. Membership of this organization is also communicated through this board game.
5. A traditional firebending duel fought for one’s honor. Zuko got his scar in one of these duels, against his own father, and also fought his sister in one of these duels in the penultimate episode of the series.

Sudoku

1 2 3
2 5 6
7 9 2
8 6 5
9 4 1

Word Search

Across
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Three Cheers for 62 Years of Parking Woes

Back in September of last year, The Montclarion published an editorial regarding the egregious state of the parking situation on campus. We are unhappy to report that not only has it not improved since then, but it has also arguably been made worse in light of recent developments.

Over the last three years, Montclair State University has made over $1 million off of parking tickets alone, mainly from ticketing students who did, in fact, pay for parking permits. All of this money conveniently goes right back into the Parking Services budget. Apparently, this astoundingly doesn’t cover the the operational cost of much-needed security cameras in CarParc Diem. This issue has been raised by students many times, especially in the wake of the parking ticket uproar.

Parking lots at Montclair State are allocated for certain groups, such as commuters, visitors, residents and faculty, but some of the geographical groupings simply don’t make sense. CarParc Diem, the largest commuter-only parking option, is infamously located directly across from a large section of residence halls.

What’s more, the issue of parking at Montclair State has haunted the school for over 60 years. The March 23, 1960 edition of The Montclarion features a cartoon of a crane stacking cars on top of each other as two men look on, saying, “Well, I’m glad to see they've finally done something to solve the student parking problem.” At this rate, students might actually be pleased by that solution; at least it would show some degree of effort or concern on the school’s behalf.

Later that same year, in the Nov. 23, 1960 edition, a satirical column lists the qualifications, trials and potential neuroses of the typical Montclair State commuter, back when the commuter lots were first built. As columnist Patrick Clark puts it, “Some students run up fines that could pay for their tuition.” Sound familiar?

It would be funny if these were simply archival relics, but they’re both still shockingly relevant. For some perspective, Montclair State has been struggling with student parking for longer than it took to build the Great Pyramid of Giza.

During former Montclair State President Susan A. Cole’s 23-year tenure, the university’s enrollment grew from 12,000 to 21,000, fueling a tremendous spike in campus population growth as well as campus infrastructure and program offerings. It is unclear whether parking options received a similarly drastic expansion to accommodate these changes.

One thing, though, is immediately clear: college is not getting more affordable. In the late 1960s, when Montclair State was building a reputation as an affordable, quality commuter college, tuition was a whopping $75 per semester. That’s not far off from the current average parking citation.

Nowadays, a semester of in-state tuition will set you back $6,161.70, not including fees, and out-of-state students pay over $4,000 more.

Given the days of funding your college education with the cash from your cushy summer job at the convenience store, a luxury which no doubt many of the older generations feel grateful for today. So why does the general consensus amongst those same people seem to be that college students have money to throw around? Why isn’t the only community-oriented option for paying off parking citations continued year-round if this isn’t somehow about making a profit?

Montclair State students already pay for parking permits, which some might argue is ridiculous in and of itself. The true absurdity lies in what the parking permit doesn’t guarantee. With no semblance of security and no real sense of convenience, a luxury which many generations feel grateful for, other as two men look on, stacking cars on top of each other as two men look on, saying, “Well, I’m glad to see they’ve finally done something to solve the student parking problem.” At this rate, students might actually be pleased by that solution; at least it would show some degree of effort or concern on the school’s behalf.

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Montclair State students already pay for parking permits, which some might argue is ridiculous in and of itself. The true absurdity lies in what the parking permit doesn’t guarantee. With no semblance of security and no real sense of change in sight, it would seem The Montclarion will be writing about the parking situation on campus for many more happy years to come.
Growing up, I bounced from church to church and other houses of worship, as my family was divided amongst religions. Although I was never forced to believe in anything, I was strongly encouraged to live a life based on the Catholic faith and was constantly battling with the dilemma of following one thing or another.

Later, the pressure of believing in a god or following certain doctrines caused my relationship with God to become more and more distanced as time passed. When I became a teenager, everything I heard seemed like too much work. Suddenly, my thoughts and my actions were now considered bad. I lost all interest in going to church because I simply did not care to listen.

Almost eight years ago, while enduring hardships, I ended up at a church after being invited by my mom. The moment I walked into that church, nothing changed. I was not “on fire,” and neither were any of the other sinners sitting next to me. If anything, I felt welcomed and loved by a blanket of human warmth that makes one feel they belong.

That day, I understood what Christianity is about — and that it takes a humble and willing heart to experience it.

When I first heard there was a group of Christians on campus, I was surprised and eager to hear how they would explain the gospel to others. In my mind, all I could think of was that if it made such a difference in my life, I could only imagine what it would be like for others too.

But, I was quickly disappointed by their actions. Such members of the Key of David Christian Center were only focused on terrorizing students on campus.

One of the first things I learned about being a Christian is that it isn’t simply about memorizing Bible verses and pointing fingers at people. As a Christian, one is to be a follower of Christ. What the Key of David Christian Center does on public campuses does not portray Jesus’ ministry.

Don’t get me wrong, the majority of the sins listed in their signs are and will always be considered sins in the Bible. But, some of them were taken out of context.

Members of the group, for example, were showing off one of the verses in the book of Hebrews, in chapter 12, but they didn’t seem to have read the following verse in Hebrews 12:15, which says, “See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no ‘root of bitterness’ springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled.”

Truthfully, I want to believe their intentions are genuine and come from a place of pure solidarity. But even if that were the case, Jesus did not come to this world to condemn it, but to save it through his death.

They called students “whores,” as if Jesus hadn’t sat with prostitutes. They screamed hateful things as if Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross wasn’t all about love. They made themselves seem righteous while snatching away the possibility of a true relationship with Christ for everyone watching them. They forgot to admit they are also sinners. They forgot to say “I have failed God, too.” They forgot to say Hell is a bad place because it isn’t just a place full of flames and sinners, but because Hell is a place where you are eternally separated from Christ. It doesn’t look like a frat party, it doesn’t look like Dante’s “Inferno,” but I sure don’t want to know what it looks like and I hope you don’t either.

I feel compelled to say what happened on campus on Jan. 25 is not a true representation of Christianity; rather, it was just a rageful and aggressive demonstration of faith. It was disrespectful, hateful and it is definitely far away from the freedom a true encounter with God can give you.

Michelle Coneo, a senior journalism major, is in her second year as a staff writer for The Montclarion.
Gym Anxiety and How To Tackle It

As we enter the second month of the new year, many will be reflecting on the resolutions they haven’t dared to tackle yet. For some, it may be the infa-
mous “going to the gym” resolution. While the gym can be a stress reducer, it can feel like a dark abyss of judgmental looks and unwel-
coming confusion, especially for those beginning their fitness journey. It’s not always a lack of mo-
tivation that causes people to delay their resolution. They might be suf-
fering from gym anxiety.

It may feel like you’re alone when it comes to facing your daunt-
ing gym anxiety, but you’re not. Here are five simple ways you can put
your nerves to rest and get yourself towards your goals:

Dress for Your Own Comfort and Confidence

When you start on your gym journey, you may not feel the most
comfortable in your skin, and that’s okay. It’s easy to feel intimidated
seeing other people in flawless workout sets or cut-off tank tops.

Instead of feeling the pressure to wear something stylish or trendy,
allow yourself to wear a t-shirt and sweatpants. You’ll have a better experi-
ence when you feel comfortable and confident in your clothes.

Bonus tip: wearing a hat can provide a barrier and help you feel like
you have a space of your own.

Listen to Music or Podcasts

Listening to your favorite pod-
casts always helps me get in a good
headspace at the gym. It can be very
therapeutic listening to things that
interest you while working out, and
it actually distracts from any anxious
thoughts or feelings you may have.

As for music, listen to what gets
you in a good mood. Whether that’s
AC/DC or One Direction, there’s no
shame! After all, the gym doesn’t have
to be a serious zone; you should enjoy
yourself while prioritizing your health.

The synthetic zoo and aquarium
entertainment, seem to harbor a similar
reflection of how human error frequent-
tly plays a part in not only the demise
care leads to a destruction of
companionship structures and close
proximity with humans and species
above, increasingly aggressive.
While zoos and aquariums can have
educational purposes, they are geared
more toward entertainment. This is
evidenced by the animal shows, food
stands and fun rides provided for those
visiting.

If humans are looking to edu-
cate themselves on wildlife, they may do
so by establishing proper animal sanc-
tuaries which offer space, wild lifestyles
and sufficient separation between the
animals and humans while providing
controlled tours.

In addition, we can simply turn
on Animal Planet and witness informa-
tive and immersive documentaries.

Let’s be real: zoos and aquariums
are not as vital to humans as freedom is
to the suffering prisoners within them.

While there is not much that can
done for animals that have tragically
behind bars and glass walls, we can strive to
dismantle current zoos and aquariums,
or at least prevent the construction of
future ones.

By replacing them with moni-
tored wildlife sanctuaries and focusing
on rehabilitating animals with the intent
of releasing them back into the wild, we
can help prevent the cruelty these crea-
tures continue to endure.

Ekaterina Zelenin, a senior public relations
major with a minor in linguistics, is in her sec-
ond year as a staff writer for The Montclarion.
Cancel Culture Picks and Chooses Who Gets Away With Being Offensive

Why Isn’t the University Health Center Open Weekends?
“Does it…does it look like her?” He asked. His eyes scanned the painting, cutting through each brushstroke with his deep and anxious gaze. Behind those, analytical yet actively glazing eyes, a sea of thought and wonder spanned the deepest caverns and chasms of untouchable torment.

It was her. She was in front of him, in front of them. He and this incredibly confused museum security guard who knew little of, quite frankly any of the works that filled this exhibition, let alone this singular obscure portrait which sat alone in the back corner. It was away from the eyes of those who may be passing by for some perceivably greater work, but that was perfect for he who looked on with amazement and joy.

“Who is…” The guard paused for a moment before looking away from the piece and at the man, “who is she?” This question did not deter his gaze. The man was entranced.

“I suppose technically she, uh…she’s…” The man then finally broke from his haze and looked down at the little plaque presenting information on the portrait, “Duchess Andrea Valencia of Capri Italy.” The guard looked down and then back at the man.

“And you knew her?” Asked the guard, arousing a moderately surprised chuckle from the stoic man.

“Oh god no, she died in 1667,” He looked deeply into her eyes once more, “I just know her, somehow. She reminds me deeply of…"

“Someone?” The guard then interjected. The man cracked a smile thinking of that someone.

“Yeah,” he said somberly. The guard stuck around for a moment before retiring from his position. Even he knew that this moment was not for him. The man didn’t notice the guard’s absence. All of life on Earth could cease to exist and this man wouldn’t take his eyes from her cold yet lively ones which hadn’t been touched by mortal hands since their inception at the sway of some nobleman’s brush.

A tear, a single tear, descended down his cheek. Then, with time feeling as if it stood still, as if no one in this busy existence could see him, he fell to his knees. He wept and he sobbed, sounding as if death had come, scythe in hand, to bring him miles below the dirt and sand.

But no, he was still there, he was still present and he was still alone.
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
Andy Cook is a force to be reckoned with. The Montclair State University freshman filmmaking major has already accomplished what some only aspire to do.

Cook’s creative and hardworking nature was the foundation for the creation of his YouTube channel, eclippz. Eclippz has amassed over 35,000 subscribers with Cook’s comedic videos and streams. Since 2016, the year of its creation, eclippz has garnered 977,921 views across all videos posted.

Cook detailed what he loves most about creating content and crafting ideas.

“[I love] comedy videos where I just mess with people or make myself look stupid,” Cook said. “I love when people make fanfictions about me, and I make videos about it.”

You read that right. People actually write intricate fanfiction about eclippz. “People have made three fanfictions about [another YouTube and I] getting married,” Cook said.

Along with being in off-putting fanfiction, Cook has also found himself in drama with disgraced YouTube star Carson King, also known as CallMeCarson.

“He’s aware of my existence,” Cook said. “He’s called me annoying because I make fun of him for stuff he did in the past.”

Cook has even released merchandise with the meme that started this all, “No Carson.” He has designed and released a series of merchandise for his brand [ctR]. He includes hoodies, shirts, hats and even a tote bag in his catalog.

“In 2019, I was watching Tyler, the Creator perform at his festival, and he was talking about his brand, Golf Wang,” Cook said. “Then I went, ‘I could start my own [brand], that would be so crazy.’ I launched in October 2020.”

Cook, who also records music, revealed his plans for [ctR]’s next drop, which intertwines his albums and his brand.

“I have this record I’m working on right now, ‘H n 4l Hnt-6y.’” Cook said. “It comes out in April. Every album, I do a collection for my brand.”

Cook is extremely hardworking. He manages college, a brand, a YouTube channel and music all at once. It’s easy to say he makes a lot of sacrifices for success.

“I spend five or six hours a day working, editing videos, doing music,” Cook said. “I’m not a party-goer. I just love doing what I do, and I’d much rather spend my time doing something that I love.”

As a freshman studying for a BFA in film and television, Cook detailed how Montclair State and the student body have helped him further his progress.

“I met a lot of people here who have helped me film things with my videos,” Cook said. “I also love the access to New York City.”

One of Cook’s friends and biggest supporters at school is Ian Kean, a freshman film and television major.

“[Cook] was probably one of the first friends I made when I got to campus,” Kean said. “I consider him to be one of my closest friends today. He’s hilarious, has a solid work ethic and is just overall a pretty easy-going guy.”

Cook has even become friends with one of his own subscribers at Montclair State, Peter Di Prospero, a fellow freshman filmmaking major.

“When I first found out about [Cook’s] YouTube channel, I was shocked to see that I was already subscribed to him,” Di Prospero said.

Now that he knows him better, Di Prospero was able to add insight.

“He wakes up every day at 5 a.m. and works until midnight,” Di Prospero said. “He has a fantastic mindset and puts his heart into everything he does.”

Cook has done a lot since September, so what’s next for someone who has already achieved so much?

“In the future, I want to be in New York City and continue what I do now,” Cook said. “I want to make films someday. It would be cool to direct my own thing, be shown in a theater and then people that know me online go and see it.”

The Bergen County, New Jersey native has big dreams for himself. Cook is on a path that will only continue to bring him closer to the top.
In the new film “Marry Me,” Jennifer Lopez plays Kat Valdez, a pop megastar who is about to marry her superstar fiancé Bastian, played by Maluma. But when she finds out he cheated on her with her assistant, she’s stuck at the altar.

Oh, and the wedding is set at a concert being live-streamed in front of 20 million fans. In order for Kat not to feel like a failure or get negative press, she decides to go through with the wedding and spontaneously choose a fan in the audience to marry instead of Bastian.

That fan is school math teacher Charlie Gilbert, played by Owen Wilson, who surprisingly shows no grudges and is easily persuaded into going on stage to marry Kat. They decide to go along with the relationship since it would be good publicity for Kat, but they end up realizing it might not be just for the publicity after all. Throughout the film, we see this new relationship blossom between the megastar and low-key math teacher.

The plot is not necessarily bad, but it is definitely surprising and borderline odd. It does not make much sense as to why Kat would decide to marry a random man and why he would easily go along with it. The beginning of the film is jolting due to the plot, but it gets slowly burned out in a good way as the movie goes on.

Though the film uses many stereotypical and nostalgic storyline elements, in a way it still feels fresh because we have not seen a major rom-com like this in a long time. For a rom-com to happen in 2022, be released in theaters and star two big actors — this is something of an ancient artifact. For something that used to be so common, it feels refreshing to have it back, and it makes sense that it would come back with one of the genre’s former reigning queens.

Not to mention, Kat lives a life quite identical to the one Lopez herself is living now, from her celebrity status to her music career, the emphasis on her dancing and performing and her relationships being in the news 24/7.

Like Lopez, Kat is a hopeless romantic, or as Lopez would call it, a “hopeful romantic.” They are in love with love and will not stop until it works out for real. In the movie, we see Kat attempt to figure out what her relationship with Charlie means, to see if it can really work for both of them before they can come to a conclusion.

You can compare this film to Lopez’s current rekindling with Ben Affleck. It is ironic that even though this film has been pushed back for more than a year, as it was originally slated to come out in February 2021, it is more timely now than ever since Lopez is back in a relationship with the man she was involved with during the height of her rom-com career.

Lopez’s acting is ideal for the film, and surprisingly, the chemistry between her and Wilson is not as hard to believe as you might think. The film thrives on the moments where the two are together privately. Even if it can be awkward, there is a sense of authenticity and charisma in both of them.

Accompanying the film is the soundtrack full of the same type of music Lopez is known for. A few songs featured in the film, if I were to suggest my favorites, are “Marry Me (Kat & Bastian Duet),” “After Love (Part 1)” and “Love of My Life (Marry Me).”

In all honesty, the only reason to watch “Marry Me” is for Lopez, or if you are simply looking for something fitting for Valentine’s Day. It also does not hurt if you are a pop culture fanatic like I am, because then you will definitely appreciate this film for what it is.

Overall, “Marry Me” is a harmless rom-com that is exactly what you would expect it to be, with some fun, modern, nostalgic twists. Lopez is perfectly cast in a role that was made for only someone of her caliber and someone that could relate as much to the character as she does.
Mitski Encapsulates Our Soul Once Again With ‘Laurel Hell’

Joni Mae De Los Santos
Staff Writer

Mitski Miyawaki did it again. Following the unfathomable success of her last release, “Be the Cowboy,” her sixth studio album, “Laurel Hell” was released on Feb. 4. “Laurel Hell” is filled with ‘80s synth and concise gut-wrenching lyrics of vulnerability. A note she wrote to fans stated, “I don’t know you, but knowing you exist, knowing we’re connected through music, reminds me daily to be hopeful, to move with love.”

It makes sense that Mitski tweeted this, considering she just broke her social media detox in 2019. Since then, her songs ranging from her freshman album to “Be the Cowboy” have been included in many TikTok trends that reduce her into “sad girl” music. However, that’s not the case for “Laurel Hell.” There is a reason youth, in particular, are fans of her music. The talent behind Mitski is not just her classically trained vocals or entrancing harmonies, but her ability to break down such complex feelings like uncertainty, imposter syndrome and wanting to be a better human into an indulgent experience.

“Valentine, Texas” opens the album with dark melancholy vocals that all feel familiar to her style. The grandiose instrumentals following her cold vocals dancing around the ‘80s synth make the short two-minute song feel like an emotional rollercoaster.

The album’s single, “Working for the Knife,” dives deeply behind the hell of creative professions. “I start the day lying and end with the truth / That I’m dying for the knife,” Mitski sings. Is it a commentary on the brutal consequential toll of capitalism in the creative field? Following Mitski’s long rest after touring, it seems so.

The solemness in the album is intertwined with hopeful acceptance of her life. A notable song on the setlist, “Everyone,” feels like a jab at her hit song “Nobody.” The duality between the songs from being unseen and lonely, with her sudden burst of fame, is a very Mitski thing of her to do. The lyrics reflect these hardships.

“And I opened my arms wide to the dark / I said ‘take it all, whatever you want’ / I didn’t know that I was young / I didn’t know what it would take,” Mitski sings.

What cannot be ignored is the overarching theme in the album of her inability to connect with others. She is constantly navigating through the uncharted territory of fame and the terrifying notions of becoming her own person. The 31-year-old is still navigating through life, and the album explores her uncertainty of growing, becoming better and accepting the choices you willingly make yourself.

With a modern electric disco that leaves listeners questioning their own existence, “Laurel Hell” cuts deep into the youth’s fear of the uncertain future. Oddly, Mitski’s ability to connect with her audiences in the album relies on her inability to connect with others in the first place. All fans can hope for the future is that she’ll continue to connect and carve herself for the sake of us.

*Photo courtesy of Dead Oceans
*Photo courtesy of Mitski / YouTube
*Photo courtesy of Mitski / YouTube
*Photo courtesy of Mitski / YouTube
‘The Tinder Swindler’ Is a Dating App Nightmare

Darian Mozoo  
Staff Writer

“The Tinder Swindler” is a nearly two-hour documentary that follows Simon Leviev, a supposed millionaire man who lured and tricked women he met via Tinder into giving him immense amounts of money. Throughout the plot we meet three women who fell victim to Leviev’s lies; each one tells their story and the consequences of their ingenuity and good intentions.

The story itself is incredible to listen to, so much so that it seems to be made-up. Leviev is a sweet, charismatic, romantic and funny man with a fortune that allowed him to have all kinds of luxuries. In other words, he was the man many women dream of and aspire to have someday. No one imagined this man’s image was only a mask that perfectly covered his cruel self.

Leviev’s case combines two essential elements to grab the audience’s attention: couple drama and a famous dating app, making the reason for its popularity easy to understand. Simply put, this film is gossip. It’s not an informative documentary. There is no depth of research in any of the topics mentioned nor any psychological research on any of the characters’ personalities. The most that could be seen was a journalistic investigation on Leviev’s real identity, but that’s all.

Both the lighting and the camera focus in certain scenes help you feel a close connection with the victims as if you were in front of each one of them. You can feel the pain and anguish in each of their stories. It creates a feeling of comfort and intimacy as if they are gossiping to you about their love life and the consequences of dating or befriending the Tinder scammer.

For example, when Cecilie Fjellhøy, one of Leviev’s victims, told her story of how she was scammed, her tears and broken voice showed her worry and fear of not knowing how to cope with the trouble she got herself into for saving Leviev’s life.

However, during an interview with Stylist Magazine, Fjellhøy revealed the real reason for making this documentary and sharing her story with the world.

“This isn’t a tale about the dangers of online dating, it’s a tale about fraud, and about trusting the wrong people,” Fjellhøy said.

The ending of this documentary is breathtaking and will leave you either speechless, fascinated or annoyed. The film does not teach you a lesson, but it shows you a story where you can draw your own conclusion and learnings.

It is certainly worth it to watch every minute of “The Tinder Swindler.” Both the documentary itself and the actual case will keep you hooked to the plot until the very end, and you will even want to continue investigating after you wrap the series.
Top Picks to Stream

Underrated Music Edition

‘Magdalene’ by FKA twigs

Released in 2019, FKA twigs’s sophomore album is more than a stunning showcase of the singer-songwriter’s ethereal vocals. The backtracking tracks are often instrumentally sparse but sonically full, creating songs that each feel like their own universe or landscape. Perhaps what makes this album so underrated is that “Magdalene” radiates catharsis, specifically a release of pain.

Of particular note is the haunting, hymn-like opening track, “thousand eyes,” which alludes to the tumultuous reality of ending a relationship in the public eye, and “home with you,” a lilting exploration of the self that feels so organic, it’s hard to believe it was captured as it was. “Magdalene” is not an easy-listening electronic album, but it is a surreal, raw experience not to be missed in its entirety.

- Maddye Below-Boxer
  Opinion Editor

‘misunderstood…still’

In 2022, the genres of R&B and soul seem to be nonexistent. Thankfully though, a queen is here to bless our ears with some pure, natural octaves and melodies. Sensational YouTuber turned R&B singer, Queen Naija, first hit the music spotlight after releasing the go-to breakup song, “Magdalene.”

Naija takes inspiration from icons like Erykah Badu, DeBarge and 2Pac. The seasons always build up to a thrilling climax, but it sometimes takes a while to get there. Not this season, though. From minute one, it is gripping, shocking and does exactly what this show does best—complicate every possible situation.

Just as the Byrdes’ relationship with Omar gets better, we are introduced to his nephew, Javi (Alfonso Herrera), whose bold and brash nature leads him to become a frightening and imposing presence over the family. The cast is just as good as ever, with the de facto lead character, Bateman’s Marty, being just as calm and calculating as he is intense. However, “misunderstood…still” did not get the attention it deserved and still isn’t after almost two years of being released.

Growing up on ’70s and ’90s music allowed Naija to find inspiration from icons like Erykah Badu, DeBarge and 2Pac. The nostalgia is through the roof. It consists of different songs that reflect a majority of Naija’s adulthood experience in the spotlight. Songs like “Too Much to Say,” “Trial and Error” and “Beautiful” exemplify the struggles of facing numerous opinions from strangers while also serenading between domestic violence and the ups and downs of heartbreak.

As Naija belts out notes, her vocals are hard to forget. They range from angelic to soulful and powerful, which leaves you with goosebumps and a tingling sensation.

- Sekhena Sembenu
  Assistant Entertainment Editor

‘Ozark’ Builds to a Shocking Climax in the First Part of Its Final Season

Marty, played by Jason Bateman (right), and Wendy, played by Laura Linney (left), face more opposition and complications than ever.

When “Ozark” wrapped up its third season two years ago, the final minute shocked viewers around the world. It left off with the Byrdes, a money-laundering family stationed in the Ozarks, alive at the expense of their lawyer, whose brains were splattered across the faces of family parents Marty (Jason Bateman) and Wendy (Laura Linney).

The first half of the show’s final season, released on Jan. 21, follows the aftermath and plan to create a deal between the man they work for, drug lord Omar Navarro (Felix Solis) and the FBI. Omar tells them if they can make a deal work, they can return to a normal life free of obligation to him. The premise leads to the best episodes of “Ozark” yet. While this show has continued to get better and better every episode, pacing has been a minor issue in the past. The seasons always build up to a thrilling climax, but it sometimes takes a while to get there.

Not this season, though. From minute one, it is gripping, shocking and does exactly what this show does best—complicate every possible situation.

Just as the Byrdes’ relationship with Omar gets better, we are introduced to his nephew, Javi (Alfonso Herrera), whose bold and brash nature leads him to become a frightening and imposing presence over the family. The cast is just as good as ever, with the de facto lead character, Bateman’s Marty, being just as calm and calculating as he is intense. Ruth Langmore (Julia Garner) continues to be one of the best characters. After working for the Byrdes for much of the show, she left last season, and the rivalry between her and the family is a beautiful thing to behold. One particular scene toward the end of this half features some of the best acting work Garner has ever delivered in this show.

In addition, Linney is the best she’s ever been as Wendy, becoming more unhinged and terrifying than ever as she gets what she wants by any means. Her conflict with Darlene Snell (Lisa Emery), one of the most despicable characters on the show, is excellent here as well.

But of course, with a show that relies on twists and narrative climaxes as much as “Ozark” does, it’s hard to praise it without acknowledging its finale. Without going into spoilers, the ending of this half of the final season is shocking, upsetting and leaves the show in a great place leading into the final seven episodes, which will air sometime later this year.

Netflix’s best crime drama is just as binge-able as ever, and the wait for the final seven episodes is sure to be difficult.

- Aidan Callari
  Staff Writer

Javi, played by Alfonso Herrera (right), proves to be a problem to the Byrdes.

Photo courtesy of Netflix
Netflix released the limited series “Inventing Anna” on Feb. 11, and as a lover of all things scammers, I couldn’t wait to watch. But sadly, I found myself pretty underwhelmed.

“Inventing Anna” tells the incredible true story of Anna Delvey (née Sorokin), who from the years of 2013 to 2017, defrauded friends, banks, companies and hotels out of an estimated $275,000. Delvey made her way into the right social circles by telling people she was a German heiress who would be inheriting a multi-million dollar trust fund once she turned 25. Of course, this turned out not to be true. In 2017, Delvey was arrested and in 2019 she was found guilty of eight charges, including second-degree grand larceny, theft of services and attempted first-degree grand larceny.

Delvey made her way into the public consciousness after a New York Magazine article titled “Maybe She Had So Much Money She Just Lost Track of It,” written by journalist Jessica Pressler, went viral. The crazy story caught the eye of producer Shonda Rhimes, who adapted the article into a series with the help of Pressler.

“Inventing Anna” has a lot of strong aspects, namely Julia Garner’s portrayal of Delvey. Garner’s performance is amazing; she mastered Delvey’s mannerisms, and more importantly, her interesting accent that is a combination of Russian and German. I was in awe of how close Garner made her voice sound to Delvey’s, seeing as the character’s voice is so distinct.

On top of that, the wardrobe is great. It showcases the real Delvey’s style and eye for high-end fashion. The hair and makeup are also notably impressive, really transforming Garner into Delvey.

The sets are beautiful. The fashion shows, fancy hotels and luxury apartments captured the glitz and glamour of Delvey’s VIP lifestyle. As she says in the show, “VIP is always better.” In addition, the modern pop and hip-hop soundtrack seems very true to Delvey’s attention to trends. I enjoyed the details put into “Inventing Anna,” which really seemed to capture the character.

However, I just couldn’t get past how the show was executed. The largest issue and my main qualm with the show is its primary focus. Rather than Delvey, it is centered on the fictional journalist Vivian Kent, played by Anna Chlumsky, who is loosely based on Pressler.

The drama unfolds as Vivian is composing her article on Delvey, who the journalist wants to prove is more than just “a dumb socialite.” More so, though, Vivian knows Delvey’s story is groundbreaking enough to save her journalistic integrity. While Vivian is an interesting enough character, the narrative revolving mostly around her causes the show to fall short of what I expected. “Inventing Anna” doesn’t feel like a show about Delvey. If anything, the show could be called “Inventing Vivian.”

The time spent on Vivian’s home life could have been spent further developing Delvey’s character. It would’ve been interesting to probe deeper into her thought process. Her dialogue is quick-witted and compelling, so it’s a shame we didn’t see more of her. With my favorite moments being flashbacks of Delvey, I was disappointed once we were snapped back into reality, as I became so invested in her interactions with characters other than just Vivian. I found myself starting to get bored of the Vivian story, especially with the whole first episode being almost entirely about her. If I’m being honest, it took a few episodes for me to get into “Inventing Anna.” The episodes were too long and felt like mostly filler.

My main takeaway of “Inventing Anna” is the fictional drama is unnecessary, especially given how dramatic the actual story is, and its format is counterintuitive. What the show did right was the attention to Delvey’s personality. Garner’s portrayal of Delvey was so good it made the lack of her presence even more frustrating. Because of this, along with its fascinating story, I still recommend checking out “Inventing Anna.”
Student-Run Game Day Show Is a Massive Success

RHSN hosts their second-ever live game day show at Panzer

Gianna Daginis | Guest Writer

Between a senior day victory, head coach Justin Potts earning his 100th career win and junior guard Nickie Carter creeping up on her 1,000 point milestone, Saturday was jam-packed with success, and not just for the athletes.

When Montclair State University teams get the opportunities to showcase their talents in their home territory, so do the brains and voices of the Red Hawk Sports Network (RHSN) with regular game coverage and weekly programming streamed on their YouTube channel.

For the second time ever, the RHSN hosted a live game day broadcast on Feb. 12, but this time with upgrades. They included a multi-camera feed, sideline reporting segments and interviews with players, coaches and special guests in addition to their usual broadcast booth setup. After its founding a little over two years ago, RHSN continues to assert itself as an organization to watch.

Although Saturday’s broadcast was mostly smooth sailing, it was no light work getting there. RHSN’s team of producers, broadcasters and professors applied all the lessons they had learned from the homecoming show to weeks of preparation and practice leading up to this past weekend’s basketball doubleheader.

Senior RHSN producer Jack Bartek said the first two hours are stressful, but when you get to game time or the start of the show, it all goes away. “You don’t have time to stress, you’re just in it.” Bartek said. “You just go, you work off your instincts and you talk to the players and the coaches and the families, and they show appreciation for that work, it’s worth every ounce of effort that you put into it.”

“If you have any experience in the film or television industries, you already know that nothing ever goes 100% according to plan. To aid in this challenge, senior Jess Liptzin, who has hosted both the homecoming and basketball live shows alongside fellow senior broadcast intern Jon Kociban, highlighted how crucial preparation is when it comes to navigating the obstacles of live production.

“We didn’t just prepare for one rundown this time, we prepared for if it to go sideways and whatever [other] way it [could] go ... We made it more flexible,” Liptzin said.

According to junior RHSN producer Jason Naccarella, the crew was unfamiliar with the provided technology and equipment last time, RHSN production intern and director of the live show Alex Grabiec said the streaming crashed during the first live show, cutting the original two-hour pre-show in half.

This go-around, more time and energy was spent on hard-wiring power using lots of cables so that, as Grabiec said, the producers could “control every element [possible].” The team reported to campus around 8:30 a.m. to set up equipment and give everyone time to review the rundown, and the long day’s work paid off in the end.

Naccarella was excited about the improvements made to equipment, saying they got to use “actual TV cameras from the cage [which] allowed [them] to hardware power and produce great quality picture.” Plus, they switched to software that allowed the production team to use more than two cameras and benefited them with smoother navigation and switching. These advancements made sideline reporting a possibility for the network and also provided alternate angles of the bench to capture team reactions.

Liptzin was confident in the success of the production early Saturday morning, expressing his gratitude for the opportunity. “It’s just about having fun, you know. That’s all I want to do with this,” Liptzin said. “I’m excited to have the opportunity. I’m excited that [Montclair State] gives us the opportunity, and first is the worst, second is the best. That’s the motto.”

In addition to the men’s basketball team’s Senior Day, the seniors of RHSN were also honored before game time, sparking reminiscence conversations amongst those involved. Kociban, one of the hosts of the broadcast, expressed his happiness with the network’s journey to their current product.

“There was a time when we thought we wouldn’t be here at all, it was just a pipe dream,” Kociban said. “When we started the [RHSN], it was calling lacrosse and basketball games, and that was it, but we are so much more than that now.”

This semester, RHSN has converted the highlight show style of “Inside the Nest” into a studio show and is looking to implement more live broadcast events into the schedule for the coming season. In the spirit of growth, there’s only one direction the RHSN can go in, and that’s up.

“We’ve been watching it grow,” Kociban said. “We couldn’t be more proud of what we’ve built and just seeing that it has a bright future ... I’m so excited about where we’re at and where we can go, as well.”

Gianna Daginis | The Montclarion
Hope For Championship Still Alive After Big Winning Streak For Women’s Basketball

Red Hawks have jumped to third place in the conference standings as of Feb. 15

It was a sluggish start to the regular season for the Red Hawks, but after starting 5-6, the Montclair State University women’s basketball team is finally surging in the right direction with the New Jersey Athletic Conference (NJAC) tournament on the horizon.

Before narrowly losing to New Jersey City University (NJCU) on Feb. 12, the Red Hawks rallied off eight straight victories, which put them right back in the mix amongst the top of the NJAC.

With aspirations of claiming their first NJAC title in nearly four years, junior guard Nickie Carter didn’t want this slow start to define the rest of the team’s season.

“Obviously, we weren’t playing how we wanted to and we just kind of had to work through that,” Carter said. “We knew we wanted a championship, so a lot of it was coming together as a team when we were at our lowest and deciding we were going to work harder.”

Sitting at third in the conference and with an overall record of 14-8 (12-5 NJAC), the Red Hawks are confident on the defensive side, leading to them having the number one scoring defense in the entire NJAC, as they are only giving up 53.8 points per contest.

Harvey and all of the coaches, they have a lot of confidence in me and they tell me to shoot when I am open and that’s a really good position to be in on any team.”

For much of the season, Harvey notes, the Red Hawks have been successful on the defensive side, leading to them having the number one scoring defense in the entire NJAC, as they are only giving up 53.8 points per contest.

“Sometimes, we kind of let that get to us and take ourselves out of it. The most important thing for us, [however], is sticking together no matter what, pushing through those runs and just playing our basketball.”

Kelly Smith, freshman forward Olivia Vero and senior guard Annie Walsh. All three players have provided a spark off the bench, particularly Vero, who is currently leading the NJAC in total blocks (36) and blocks per game (2.4).

What also makes this team so dangerous on the offensive end is their very talented backcourt. They are extremely skillful and between Carter, senior guard Julia Sutton and sophomore guard Kendall Hodges, they all have the ability to affect the game as a scorer or playmaker off the dribble.

In terms of scoring, Carter has been in the absolute zone all season. She ranks second in the NJAC in points per game with 17.9. In a Feb. 9 victory against Rutgers-Newark on Senior Night, Carter led the way with a career high of 34.

With her scoring average this season jumping from over nine points from last season (8.6 in 2021), Carter spoke about where this newfound confidence is coming from.

“A lot of that is a thank you to coach Harvey and all of the coaches, they kind of gave me the green light,” Carter said. “They have a lot of confidence in me and they tell me to shoot when I am open and that’s a really good position to be in on any team.”

For much of the season, Harvey notes, the Red Hawks have been successful on the defensive side, leading to them having the number one scoring defense in the entire NJAC, as they are only giving up 53.8 points per contest.

“I think they really bought into playing some team defense,” Harvey said. “They worked really hard at it and I think defense and rebounding have made the difference.”

Hodges stressed that their team defense has become such a focal point during the season, they actually dedicated full practices to almost only that end of the court.

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Hodges stressed that their team defense has become such a focal point during the season, they actually dedicated full practices to almost only that end of the court.

“We have a lot of different weapons,” Harvey said. “I think a lot of different people can do things for us at different times and we can be a great rebounding team.”

Although there were not any significant lineup changes throughout this season, Harvey has a lot at her disposal. With such a deep team and options everywhere, they can beat their opponents in many different ways.

If the Red Hawks meet a situation where it calls for different lineups, they are well-equipped with senior forward Kendall Hodges is averaging 9.6 points and 3.4 assists per game this season.

NJCU having a relatively down season this year (9-9), they were still able to pull out a victory over the Red Hawks in a tight battle that included scoring runs by each team.

Carter believes their success moving forward will come down to this squad being mentally tough during these seesaw affairs.

“We know all the teams have a pretty good scout on us and that other teams are going to go on runs,” Carter said. “Sometimes, we kind of let that get to us and take ourselves out of it. The most important thing for us, [however], is sticking together no matter what, pushing through those runs and just playing our basketball.”
Montclair State is currently sitting at a 13-8 record this season. The team could have used his offense against Ramapo College on Jan. 26, the impacted that side of the ball. Recently wondering how Callender IV could have been early on in that game, and it left many Defense for the Red Hawks was a problem early on in that game, and it left many unanswered questions. The team had missed opportunities to make key stops when it mattered most. They did it against tough conference opponents such as Rowan University and Rutgers-Newark, and they'll look to continue that philosophy once the New Jersey Athletic Conference (NJAC) tournament begins this weekend.

Head coach Justin Potts spoke on how strong this team is when it matters most. “We tell our guys our season is often decided by five points or less in a game,” Potts said. “They paid attention to that, and as a result, execute in tight situations.”

The team proved that perseverance pays off this past weekend as the Red Hawks defeated the New Jersey City University (NJCU) Gothic Knights in a thrilling 62-59 finish. The Red Hawks were without two of their starters, junior guard Keyon Pryce and Callender IV, due to injury on senior day. The Red Hawks had some dysfunctional moments in the game without their production.

Defense for the Red Hawks was a problem early on in that game, and it left many wondering how Callender IV could have impacted that side of the ball. Recently recording a season-high seven steals against Ramapo College on Jan. 26, the team could have used his off-ball activity to create more chances on the fastbreak. His tenacity on defense can prove to be the key to championship success this season once he returns. Callender IV spoke on how crucial that is for the Red Hawks.

“The coaching staff emphasizes defense,” Callender IV said. “The team, including myself, look to get physical and guard up close, which we have done better the last stretch of the season.”

Though late-game stops were just enough, the team had miscues elsewhere. Turnovers were proving to be costly for the team and it has been like that all season long. The Red Hawks averaged 15.6 turnovers per game, but this past weekend the team combined for 19 of those giveaways.

Though Potts celebrated his 100th career victory on Saturday, the turnovers still crept into his mind. If the team wants to make a deep push, they must limit the mishandling on offense. “We’re trying to win the turnover margin in and night out,” Potts said. “We’ve had moments where we haven’t taken care of the ball like this past game and teams ranked higher in the standings ... but the win proved how connected we are.”

Although the Red Hawks were nearing their fifth loss at home this season, the heroics of Breeze and Jackson proved to be the connection this team needed in the second half. Jackson finished with 23 points, along with three crucial free throws in the game’s final minute.

Not only did Jackson show he can shoot the lights out of the Panzer Athletic Center, but he also gave Red Hawk fans the hope that he can be their prima ry offensive weapon come playoff time. “I’m a proven shooter and coach is go ing to let me take as many shots,” Jack son said. “I had to step up to the plate today and hit big shots for the win.”

The freshman has shown he’s capable of scoring when needed. The challenge for Jackson remains if he can provide that same productivity in the more meaningful playoff scenarios. The spacing Jackson provides could lead to more drives for known slashers like Callender IV and Breeman.

Since returning to the lineup on Jan. 22 after a bout with the coronavirus (COVID-19), Breeman has slowly returned to form after having his minutes limited. He seems to be catching fire at the right time, and he couldn’t have done it at a better time. He portrayed a masterful performance against the Gothic Knights, recording a double-double with 18 points and 14 rebounds.

Breeman expressed how he has been able to feed off Jackson’s performance. “I had to step up to the plate today and hit big shots for the win.”

Breeman, who is one of the vocal leaders for the Red Hawks, has been continuously reminding his teammates of how important they are to the group and to remain focused each game. He also reminds them he wants the ball in late situations like against the Ramapo Gothic Knights, hitting a go-ahead three-point shot in the final two minutes of the game.

Although the group is aware of its flaws, there’s no denying this team will continue pushing until the final horn. Injuries, lack of defensive production and scoring struggles won’t derail this team from making miracles happen.

The Red Hawks look to finish the regular season with a win this Wednesday against Rowan. With a win, the Red Hawks will most likely clinch the fourth seed in the tournament and earn a first-round bye.

“Twas trying to get back in the flow of my game, but I was thinking too much out there,” Breeman said. “I was hurting my team, but we stuck together. Once we all get on the same page, we’ve proven we’re hard to beat.”

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Room 2035, School of Communication and Media in Upper Montclair, NJ, 07043
Former Montclair State Linebacker Sam Mills Inducted Into Pro Football Hall of Fame

The namesake of ‘Sam’s Place’ gets the honor of a lifetime

As part of the NFL Honors show in Inglewood, California, many historic names were called last Thursday, Feb. 10. However, Montclair State football fans were waiting anxiously for a particular player to finally get their long-awaited Hall Of Fame selection.

History for Montclair State athletics arrived late that same night. Rickey Young, who was alongside Sam Mills on the New Orleans Saints with the “Dome Patrol,” gave the welcome for Mills to be inducted in Canton, Ohio. And after 20 years of being eligible — three of them as a finalist — the dream has finally come to fruition.

A formal celebration for Mills’ selection into the hall of fame will happen on Aug. 6 at the Pro Football Hall of Fame facility in Canton, Ohio. And while it is a Division III school and very unknown compared to the rest of the country, one school up in Northern New Jersey did not turn him away: Montclair State University.

Defensive Player of the Year, and four-time New Jersey Athletic Conference All-Star team member. In a game against Southern Connecticut, Montclair State winning 7-6, Mills recorded 22 tackles in a game, which is the most in a game in Montclair State history.

Mills played for Montclair State from 1977-1980. Photo courtesy of Montclair State Athletics

Mills was selected to the Pro Bowl four times and also consistently led the team in tackles. In 1994, Mills would go onto the Carolina Panthers, a newly-formed expansion team at the time, and find a new form of success in the postseason.

Mills stopped Troy Aikman and the defending Super Bowl champions of the Dallas Cowboys in 1996 and was the only Panther in the team’s first three seasons to start every game. He knew how to “Keep Pounding,” a phrase Mills coined and is also carried on with the Panthers and recent Montclair State.

Mills’ tenure with the Saints was phenomenal, to say the least. Alongside being one of the best linebacker cores to ever grace the turf in the NFL, Mills was selected to the Pro Bowl four times and also consistently led the team in tackles. In 1994, Mills would go onto the Carolina Panthers, a newly-formed expansion team at the time, and find a new form of success in the postseason.

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Mills retired from the NFL in 1999. Photo courtesy of Andy Lyons

Mills said. “There are struggles in life that you have to ‘Keep Pounding’ to get through. It means a lot to me, and our program and we will continue to use it every day.”

Mills eventually became an assistant coach for the Panthers and unfortunately, in 2005, passed away due to intestinal cancer. But, he left a lasting impact with the Panthers shortly after, with Nike sewing “Keep Pounding” onto the collars of the Panthers’ jerseys in his honor. Just those two words mean a lot to Carolina, Montclair State and countless other people in the country.

Mills has a dining hall named after him on campus next to Machuga Heights called “Food Hall at Sam’s Place” and also has a residence hall in that same building named after him, as Mills Hall. But for such a legendary player, players like freshman linebacker Dorian Gashi believe more should be done for the late legend.

“I think a statue of the late great [Mills] on the campus would be great to have,” Gashi said. “Not many schools can say that they have an NFL Hall of Famer as alumni. He might even be the first player that went to a New Jersey university to be inducted into the hall of fame.”

While that part is not known for sure, we do know that he is the first-ever Montclair State player to reach Canton. Regardless of him being too “small” for his position.