

The Mustang

Leading the stampede with award-winning coverage

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Mundelein High School, 1350 W. Hawley St., Mundelein, IL 60060

December Issue

Mundelein High School says R.I.P. to using the SAT for state testing

Lia Koski
Editor-In-Chief

Mundelein High School will no longer use the SAT as a form of state testing, which takes place every Spring. MHS, and all other public schools in Illinois that use standardized testing, will use the ACT simply because of the price.

Assistant Superintendent Anthony Kroll said, "The Illinois State Board of Education is required to assess students as a part of their accountability to the federal government's education criteria. Most often that's done in some type of standardized assessment." Kroll added, "For the last eight years, we've been under the SAT, using the SAT as the accountability measure so that the state could show student growth according to the goals that they gave to the federal government."

However, after an eight-year contract with the SAT, the ACT issued a better offer to the Illinois State Board of Education.

Department Chair of Guidance Tom Buenik explained how this process works: "Now ACT has returned the favor and they have undercut SAT with a lower bid. And by law, you have to take the lowest bid. If everything else meets the same criteria, they must take the lowest bid. Even as a

school district, when we do our construction projects, we have to take the lowest bid. So, the ACT came in with the lowest bid, and now we have to change again," said Buenik.

The contract with the ACT will last for six years and after those years pass there will be another bidding that could or couldn't change what MHS uses as standardized testing.

Buenik mentioned why MHS uses yearly standardized testing. "The main reason for us taking this test in April is for our state accountability. Everyone should try to do their best whether they want to take this test because this measures how well our students at Mundelein High School are doing," he said. He added how the students' test scores go on MHS's 'report card.' Possible families moving into the area look at the report card to decide whether or not they want their children to attend the school. The Illinois State Board of Education uses the report card to assess the school as well.

Not only does standardized testing provide MHS and the state with data, but it can also open doors for students.

Senior Daniel Desrosiers has taken both the ACT and SAT. From taking both tests, Desrosiers learned that he preferred the SAT compared to the ACT. He added that

many students might prefer one test over the other, but the only way to find out which is better suited for you is to take both tests.

"I was more successful on the SAT, scoring significantly higher than my ACT score. This is likely due to the way the test is formatted. The ACT is a faster-paced test with easier questions while the SAT offers more time with harder questions. I prefer having the extra time per question as it helps me think questions out more," said Desrosiers.

Despite his personal preferences, Desrosiers said, "I think it is good that the school is switching to the ACT as many students find the test to be [less difficult] due to the questions being easier on average."

Speaking on behalf of the counselors at MHS, Buenik said, "We encourage students to try both tests because they may do better on the SAT or the ACT depending on what exam they prefer." Buenik also recommends that students take a standardized test more than once. If finances are why a student cannot sign up for a standardized test, Buenik said that MHS can provide students who qualify with fee waivers in order to eliminate that barrier.

Buenik further explained how standardized testing can provide students with college scholarships.

Kroll added that students should take advantage of the ACT that the school offers in the Spring of 2025.

"It is a great opportunity for students to get a free standardized test exam and score for whatever post-secondary choices they want to make. It puts a score in every student's back pocket for whatever their future may request of them for that," Kroll said.

As a student who took the ACT, Desrosiers offered some advice: "For students taking the ACT in the spring, I would recommend focusing on refining your English and grammar skills as the majority of the ACT tests these skills. Another key concept on the ACT is to not spend too long on one question as you already have a minimal amount of time per question, so if you don't know it is best to move in a circle and come back to it at the end," said Desrosiers.

Even if the ACT in the Spring may not sound exciting to students, Kroll said that students will no longer have to take the Illinois State Science test because the ACT's science portion will measure the same skills.

Buenik said that the best thing students can do to prepare is to pay attention in their classes and try their best.

Share and improve your writing with the Poetry Slam

Shrushti Shah
Staff Reporter

Writing lets people express themselves through words. The Poetry Slam club at MHS is the place for students to do so.

The club meets on Friday mornings before school and has two different styles of meetings: one meeting is a planning meeting to discuss upcoming writing workshops that they plan and organize, and the other meeting is to share what the club members have been working on and get inspired.

Marsh Covarrubius, the president of Poetry Slam Club described that club members can bring any kind of writing, not just poetry and share to get feedback. However, sharing is not mandatory; club members can also choose to just listen.

The goal of the club is to create a safe

environment for students to be able to talk about their writing, get feedback and make friends. Some people think that the club is only focused on poetry, however, people can share whatever they want; some people even share diary entries as Covarrubius said.

English Teacher Meredith Teuber, one of the club sponsors and Covarrubius both agreed that it is a welcoming environment; everybody is really kind to each other. The club is for those who enjoy writing, want to grow it and build relationships.

"I really just hope that people are able to find a sense of community... I know I have found some of my best friends through the club so I hope other people get the same experience," Covarrubius said.

The club encourages expressing emotions through spoken words or writing.

"I had a student who I ran into at a store

and they said that they were inspired to continue to write and when they went to CLC, they started a writing club there; we want people to be life-long writers and this club gets people to be it," Teuber shared.

Covarrubius shared that they are looking for open mic opportunities in the future. They have done open mics in the past few years but they want to make it some place where club members can go on a field trip. They mentioned Area Coffee and some places in Chicago that they are looking forward to hosting an open mic at.

Sylv Pacis, a club member, added, "We've been wanting to do open mics for a while and actually tried contacting some local businesses, but we have yet to find a time that works for us."

Teuber added that Poetry Slam had been hosting wellness workshops each month which students can sign up for in the Well-

ness Center; it takes place during the fifth period this year. They talk about why people should write.

"I love writing workshops. It is a great chance to get some writing practice in a low-stress, friendly environment," Pacis added.

In the past, open mics were held during all lunch periods; people signed up for those through QR codes and links in flyers and emails the club sent out. At the open mics, those who signed up, listened to other people's written pieces and shared their writing with others.

Covarrubius said, "Writing harnesses the emotions in a way that turns a feeling into something beautiful."

Join the Remind if you are interested in the club or want to get any information on their open mics and/or wellness workshops. Text @g94akd to 81010.

The new Wicked film is wickedly good

Lia Koski
Editor-In-Chief

The new blockbuster movie “Wicked” made history with the highest box office sales ever for a musical adapted to film. I understand why people worldwide including myself are cramming the movie theaters to see this production.

As someone who has never seen the Broadway show Wicked, I thought the movie itself was spectacular. However, I did my research before watching the film to learn the backstory of the musical and who originally starred in it. The Broadway cast featured Idina Menzel and Kristin Chenoweth. From learning this, I recognized the hidden jokes that the producers put in the movie that hinted back to the musical, making it even more fun for a viewer. For instance, one scene included both Menzel and Chenoweth to show appreciation to the Broadway cast of Wicked.

Even though I researched Wicked beforehand, I would not say that it was necessary to enjoy the film and that someone should not be intimidated to watch the movie because they haven’t seen the musical or don’t know anything about it.

Overall, the acting, singing, and dancing were showstopping. Grande specifically impressed me, and I enjoyed seeing her take on a new vocal role that wasn’t pop. Erivo’s vocal abilities also kept me on the edge of my seat and the edge of tears during her performance of “Defying Gravity.” I’m still holding space for the lyrics

from that song. As for the dancing, I appreciated how the choreography differed from the typical musical theater style often produced in musicals. The choreography in the film had a more contemporary style to it with unique movements that mirrored the whimsicalness of the story.

My only critique was the length of the movie. Being almost three hours long, Wicked is not a quick thing to fit into a busy schedule, but rather an investment of your time, for after watching Wicked, every viewer can be left with a meaningful experience or lesson. While watching Wicked, the time flew by for me; however, my family commented on how it felt long for them. So when you watch it in your local theaters, be comfortable and bring a snack with you.

Finally, after watching Wicked, I felt empowered and oddly reflective. The movie hints at several political issues in our world, and the ending message truly hit home for me. In the last scene (spoilers ahead), Erivo’s character Elphaba realizes that the wizard in charge of OZ is powerless. Instead of using magic, he uses scapegoats of the animals to unite the people against a common enemy that isn’t an actual enemy. This method is used often in our political world, especially after the latest election. I hope that every person who watched Wicked or who plans to watch Wicked knows that this is so much more than a movie, it is a warning for our society—teaching us that we shouldn’t always believe what others tell us, that sometimes the “bad guy” isn’t the evil one.

The climate crisis in Winter

Sunday Daniels
Staff Reporter

The lack of snowfall, unexpected hot days, and the dryness in the air have not gone unnoticed. These changes that the earth is experiencing, may be the consequences of such weather that could threaten our agriculture and, ultimately, our entire world.

Climate change refers to effective and enduring alterations in the typical weather patterns of the Earth, predominantly driven by human actions such as the burning of fossil fuels, which release greenhouse gases that trap heat in the atmosphere.

As greenhouse gases (the cause of climate change) continue to build up in the atmosphere, the coldest areas of the planet will experience increased warming, leading to rising sea levels, changes in ocean currents, and disruptions in global weather patterns. These changes are already producing significant impacts near the equator, including the alteration of shorelines and negatively affecting the production of valuable crops.

And rising temperatures are resulting in more precipitation falling as rain instead of snow. Recent studies (CCL) indicate that international snow coverage has diminished since the 1980s, particularly in the United States. In the Southwest and Northeast regions, the snow has declined by 10% to 20% each decade.

This issue extends beyond mere weather patterns. If winters transition to being milder and warmer, it could have signifi-

cant consequences not only for human beings, but also our wildlife and overall agriculture.

AP Biology teacher Jed Doyle explained that temperature changes can disrupt animal migration patterns and breeding seasons, leading to potential declines in certain species. “You’re going to start to see changes in the food webs and the major populations of animals... Sometimes they’re very able to respond and change, but sometimes they’ll go extinct and never seen again,” he said.

Additionally, agriculture also faces challenges such as altered growing seasons, lack of water, and crop failures, which can threaten food security. According to the National Geographic article “Less water will impact farmers and create a rift between those relying on agriculture for their livelihoods and communities who need this water to live. There could be mass migration, too.”

While it may be impossible to completely prevent climate change from causing winters to become milder, it’s important to stay informed about the issue and understand its potential impacts. Being knowledgeable about climate change allows better navigation from its challenges and adapt to the evolving conditions faced in the future. National Geographic in fact states, “Ultimately, we have to stop burning fossil fuels—gas, oil, and coal—and become much more reliant on sustainable energy, transport, food, and ways of living”.

Holiday highlight on Hanukkah and Kwanzaa

Blake Guenther
Staff Reporter

According to the AP-NORC, “This holiday season, 92% of Americans will celebrate Christmas,” another 5% of Americans will celebrate Hanukkah and 3% will celebrate Kwanzaa. Most Americans have likely heard of these holidays, but many are not familiar with the history or traditions.. This article will focus on providing a bit of background to highlight the uniqueness of these two holidays.

According to Chabad.org, Hanukkah “is an 8-day Jewish festival marking the miraculous victory of the Maccabees, Jewish freedom fighters, over the Seleucidian Greek occupiers in the year 139 BCE.” Many Jewish Americans continue to honor this deep-rooted history in their holiday traditions. Hanukkah (or Chanukah) is an eight day celebration. This year Hanukkah starts at nightfall on December 25, 2024 and ends with nightfall on January 2, 2025. Chabad.org states that, “On each of the eight nights of Chanukah, Jewish

people light special menorahs (candelabras), adding another flame each night, until on the eighth night eight flames are burning brightly. The lighting takes place at home, in a doorway or near a window, and is performed after brief blessings are recited.” Modern celebrations have changed from solely within the home to community events. Chabad.org states, “In modern times, communal menorah lightings are often held in public squares, sharing Chanukah’s message of the triumph of light over darkness and freedom to worship God.” Hanukkah celebrations also feature specific foods, such as foods or dairy. Chabad.org states that, “since the Middle Ages, doughnuts (sufganiyot) have been a Chanukah favorite. Among Ashkenazim, potato pancakes (latkes) are also a classic.” Consumption of dairy during Hanukkah is honoring the bravery of Yehudit who served cheese and wine to a Greek general before defeating him.” For more information about the Jewish faith, holidays and traditions, including Hanukkah, visit www.chabad.org.

According to the official Kwanzaa Website, Kwanzaa was created by Dr. Maulana Karenga. Kwanzaa is a “pan-African holiday celebrating family, community, and culture.” Dr. Karenga designed Kwanzaa to reaffirm African heritage and values through seven guiding principles. As outlined on the official Kwanzaa website the principles, “called “Nguzo Saba” (The Seven Principles) include unity, self-determination, collective responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith.” Kwanzaa is celebrated annually from December 26th to January 1st.” The Smithsonian explains the meaning behind Kwanzaa celebrations as, “Each day they light a candle to highlight the principle of that day and to breathe meaning into the principles with various activities, such as reciting the sayings or writings of great black thinkers and writers, reciting original poetry, African drumming. Additionally, “During the week of Kwanzaa, families and communities come together to share a feast, to honor the ancestors, affirm the bonds between them, and to celebrate Af-

rican and African American culture.” According to the Food Network, “the table is often laid with a few symbolic foods: the maza, fruits and vegetables symbolizing the bounty of the harvest (usually foods emblematic of the African diaspora, such as okra, yams, squash, sweet potatoes and bananas), alongside the muhindi, ears of corn representing each child still remaining at home.” The colors of Kwanzaa are red, black and green based upon the Pan-African flag. Red represents the struggle, black represents the people and green represents the future. These colors can be seen on the candles on the Kinara or in the clothing worn. To learn more about Kwanzaa, visit officialkwanzaawebsite.org.

The traditions and celebrations of Hanukkah and Kwanzaa highlight the history and respect of their ancestors. The holiday season does not end on December 25, 2024. In fact, for those celebrating Hanukkah and Kwanzaa, their period of celebration is just beginning.

The gift that keeps on giving: a healthy planet

Darby Schwerman
Staff Reporter

With Christmas lights shining, furnaces keeping us cozy inside, road trips to visit family, and combating the icy roads, the holiday season can lead our environmental impact to skyrocket, but it doesn't have to.

AP Environmental Science teacher Alyssa Wiltjer breaks down some of the leading environmental problems in the winter time and advises on how to avoid them.

The first? Gas. "Your furnace is running more in the winter, and most of us have natural gas furnaces, so you're going to be using up more natural gas. When burned, it produces carbon dioxide and trace amounts of methane which are both greenhouse gases, so we see a spike in greenhouse gases in the winter" added Wiltjer.

An overlooked factor amplifies effects, "plants are not going through photosynthesis and removing that from the atmosphere," Wiltjer explained, making winter a critical time to be conscious of our carbon footprint. Increased driving rates and distances create the same problem.

Something as simple as "reducing your furnace runtime by turning down your thermostat a degree or two. Or if you have a programmable thermostat, turning it down at night when you're sleeping and then it can kick back on in the morning," can make a world of a difference in reducing gas usage, and is easy to do.

Another more demanding, but useful method would be "Clear cellophane to put over your windows to increase their efficiency so you don't have as many drafts.

That air barrier creates another layer of insulation that increases your home's energy efficiency," said Wiltjer.

In terms of roads, not only are we using them more, but they require extensive care in the winter weather. Have you ever walked into school and noticed a layer of white on your shoes? That crust is road salt, and it's not just your shoes it sticks to.

"It dissolves in the water when the ice is melting, and stays there. That water goes through our sewage systems. It's going back into either the Des Plaines River for most of Mundelein, or it's getting into the plants on the sides of the road and we can see that really clearly in the spring when the grass or trees are dying because of excess salt. If it gets into our water supply at high enough levels, we can also start to see it kill off aquatic organisms," said Wiltjer.

Most usage of road salt is done by the state, so it's a bit more difficult to change personally. The best way to combat the problem is by avoiding use of salts on your own driveway.

"There are alternatives to salt," said Wiltjer, "a lot of the areas in Northern Wisconsin, Michigan, Minnesota use sand instead. So while sand has some drawbacks, it's not changing the chemistry of the water." Another alternative to salt is beet juice, "It has sugars in it. So it's a little bit more natural and not as corrosive, and then again you're not impacting that water supply," said Wiltjer.

Another extensive energy sucker specific to the holiday season is electricity, and Christmas lights are one of the biggest perpetrators. This issue is easy to tackle,

as Wiltjer explains, "A solution would be putting holiday lights on timers so that they go on in the evening when it hits dusk, but they're not staying on all night until you wake up in the morning."

Looking to minimize impacts even further? "There are some free programs through the energy companies in the area where you can get things like better light bulbs. So LED bulbs, you can get timers and some more energy efficient electronics to help," said Wiltjer.

However you celebrate this holiday season, your efforts can help minimize the environmental impacts of celebrating, so we can continue to for years to come.



A winter morning outside MHS.

Christmas celebration across cultures: students at MHS

Sunday Daniels
Staff Reporter

In America, the national tradition during this season is celebrated as Christmas. This holiday is not just confined to the United States; it is embraced across the globe in various forms. While many people are familiar with the core elements of Christmas, it's worth exploring how this occasion is perceived by those who do not partake in its celebrations. What does "Christmas" represent to individuals from different backgrounds and cultures?

Sophia Tatevosian, a junior at Mundelein, opens Christmas presents like other Americans who celebrate the holiday. However, on January 6th, following Christmas, she goes to church and listens to an Armenian sermon as part of her tradition. "My family goes to a church, and there's a blessing of the water and then a sermon in Armenian, but it explains the Christmas story and then, we have a big dinner," she said.

According to the Roman Catholic, the date of Christmas was changed from Janu-

ary 6th to December 25th to overshadow a pagan feast for the birth of the Sun. To undermine these pagan festivities, the church designated December 25th as Christmas and January 6th as Epiphany. Armenia has continued to celebrate Christmas on January 6th, honoring the traditions of their forefathers.

Tatevosian finds Christmas "materialistic" in the way that it's celebrated, "It's about the spirit of giving... it's about being with your family," she stated.

Jaxon Ramirez, a junior at Mundelein, has his traditions the day before Christmas on Christmas Eve. His family participates in a Secret Santa tradition, but there is also a secret tradition that wasn't well-known until later.

"We get a bunch of tiny little papers, and write each other's name on it. Then we pick a name and whoever gets it picks a gift or exchanges it for someone else's," he explained.

But during January his grandma's birthday would come around, and her most important day to spend time with her family

was Día de Los Reyes.

"I didn't know that it was an important day (holiday) until I was much older... and we never brought her a cake just this circle cake where it had a little baby and if you got the baby you'd have to make tamales," said Ramirez.

In Mexico, Día de Los Reyes celebrated on January 6, honors the Three Wise Men and marks the end of the Christmas festivities. This holiday has significant meaning beyond gift-giving, featuring culinary traditions like the "Rosca de Reyes" (King's Cake).

Shaped like a crown, the Rosca contains a small doll representing baby Jesus. The person who finds the doll must host a party on "Día de la Candelaria" (February 2), where tamales and hot chocolate are traditionally served.

Ramirez believes that Christmas is a time for freedom more than uniformity "It's their choice, their decision to celebrate however they want," he says.

The Mustang Staff

The Mustang is a student-produced publication published in print about every six weeks and also online by the journalism students of Mundelein High School, 1350 W. Hawley St., Mundelein, IL, 60060, phone (847) 949-2200. The Mustang provides accurate and objective coverage of events and topics that are interesting and relevant to high school students. The staff welcomes signed letters from readers for possible publication. These letters can be submitted to the Journalism Room A101.

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Things to do over Winter break: markets, malls, movies, and more

Shrushti Shah
Staff Reporter

Winter is full of Christmas celebrations. It is the time for people to take a break from daily activities to spend time with their loved ones and enjoy themselves. Malls have Christmas deals and Chicago has Christmas lights. Every street is lit!

Lincoln Park Zoo

According to a survey asking, "What is MHS doing in Winter 2024?" 22 percent of MHS students and staff responded saying that they like seeing the Christmas lights in Chicago every year. One option to see these lights in Chicago is at the Lincoln Park Zoo until January 5, 2025. With an admission fee of \$7-\$10 per person, you can enjoy photo taking opportunities, hot cocoa, s'mores, and singing along with carolers. With some additional fees, you can experience a ride on their ferris wheel, Endangered Species Carousel and Lionel Train Adventure. Monday shows at the Lincoln Park Zoo and free with registration, from 4:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. On Wednesdays, Thursdays and Sundays, the show goes from 4:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. with a \$7 ticket. On Fridays and Saturdays, the show goes from 4:30 p.m. to 10 p.m. for a \$10 ticket. It is recommended to get the tickets for the show in advance.

Shopping

In the same survey, 16 percent of MHS students like shopping during winter break. Many stores offer New Year sales. According to an online article, "The Best Days to Shop in 2024," winter clothing, linens and towels are great things to buy around New Year's Eve.

Around January, retailers move winter clothing on sale to bring in spring clothing.

Home goods stores like Kohl's, Pottery Barn and Macy's traditionally hold bath and bedding items on sale in January. According to an Investopedia article called, "6 Things to Buy After Christmas," consumer electronics, fitness products, decorations, food, toys and small gifts go on sale. Consider keeping any eye out for sales on these products at retailers like Amazon, Walmart and Target who generally hold sales around New Year's Eve.

Food

Food can bring life to any holiday. As you go to see the Christmas lights in Chicago, visit Molly's Cupcakes and try their mouth watering center-filled cupcakes! Some of their most popular flavors include Creme Brulee, Samoa, Boston Cream, Peach Cobbler, Tiramisu and Cookie Monster. One of their shops is at Molly's Cupcakes, 419 E Illinois St Suite 120, Chicago, IL 60611, but they have many more locations.

Movies

Snuggling into a blanket and watching a fun Christmas movie is a common tradition; 23 percent of the responders of the survey showed interest in watching movies over winter break. Operation Nutcracker premiered on Oct 25, 2024 and it's a holiday movie starring Ashley Newbrough, Christopher Russell and Darryl Hinds. An antique nutcracker from Warby family's charity auction goes missing and a Warby heir(Christopher Russell) and an event planner(Ashley Newbrough) need to find it. Find the nutcracker!

Baking

Baking and cooking are good ways for loved ones to spend time with each other and get home-made sweet treats. Get some recipes out and bake sugar, gingerbread, chocolate chip, snickerdoodle and pepper-

mint meltaway cookies(recipe on the centerspread) over the break!

Ice Skating

Seven percent of the responders find ice-skating fun during winter break. According to timeout.com and Millennium Park Foundation, the Millenium Park ice skating rink in Chicago is one of the best in the city. It has free ice skating lessons available. The rink is open from Nov 15, 2024 to Feb 2, 2025. Admission is free, however, reservations are required. Sometimes they can be closed due to weather conditions so

be sure to call and ask before visiting.

The Maggie Daley ice-skating ribbon is another common choice. It is free of cost on some days unless you are renting a pair of skates. With the skates, it can be anywhere from \$17 to \$23. Check their schedule for the days they have no entry fee and please be sure to make a reservation as all of these rinks can get crowded.

The Glacier Ice Arena in Vernon Hills is a closer and indoor ice skating rink. If you are interested, take a look at their schedule as well!



photo courtesy of yelp.com

Some cupcake flavors available at Molly's Cupcakes. It's located not far from the tree lighting, and sells many flavors such as Creme Brulee, Boston Cream, and Peach Cobbler.

Winter baking ideas: Peppermint meltaway cookies

Darby Schwerman
Staff Reporter

Peppermint meltaway cookies are a classic holiday treat. They're easy to bake and a crowd favorite, making them the perfect dessert to try for any party, or even just to enjoy on a cozy snow day.

Eric and I put these cookies to the test, each following a different recipe, and results were positive across the board. Some of the highlights were the crumbly texture and the frosting.

By far though, the newspaper team's favorite characteristic for both cookies was the crushed peppermint topping. To give mine even more of that distinct peppermint flavor and an extra crunch, I mixed candy cane bits into the dough as well. For those who enjoy peppermint flavors, this is a must for holiday season baking.



"The frosting was very tasty and contrasted nicely with the texture of the cookie!" - Anna Hulls

Ingredients

Cookies

- 1 cup (222g) salted butter, softened
- 1 1/4 cup (137g) powdered sugar
- 1 egg
- 1 tsp peppermint bakery emulsion *can use peppermint extract here instead
- 2 1/2 cups (295g) cake flour
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 1/2 tsp salt

Vanilla Glaze with Peppermint Bits

- 2 tbsp butter
- 1/2 tbsp vegetable shortening *This is optional, but it helps the icing to crust and get hard on the outside).
- 3/4 cup (80g) powdered sugar
- 1/8 cup (30ml) milk more, if needed
- 1/2 tsp clear vanilla extract
- red food coloring
- 1/4 cup (42g) bob's sweet stripes soft peppermints crushed for garnish

For the rest of the recipe, visit cookiesfordays.com for more!

Holiday celebrations in Lake County: Mundelein tree lighting and more

Blake Guenther
Staff Reporter

All over the world towns and cities have their own unique ceremonies for the holiday season. From markets, to tree lightings, parades, and trains, there are many towns you can visit to make a holiday memory in Lake County. Many towns hold events the weekend after Thanksgiving, but there are still celebrations to come in Gurnee, Lake Zurich and Mundelein for a fun holiday time.

This year in Gurnee there are two different days of holiday events; Holiday Lights on December 5th and the Holiday Train on December 7th. The 4th Annual Holiday Lights festivities are on Thursday, December 5th from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at Welton Plaza on Old Grand Avenue. This event is free to the public, but attendees are encouraged to bring non-perishable food items to donate to the Warren Township Food Pantry. The webpage states that this event will include, “fire pits and s’mores to keep you warm, craft stations to keep you busy, and much more! Special guests include everyone’s favorite holiday duo Mr. and Mrs. Claus, Gurnee Mayor Tom Hood and more!”

On December 7th, the Canadian Pacific Kansas City Holiday Train will be stopping in Gurnee. According to the CPKC website, “the 2024 CPKC Holiday Train will tour Canada and the U.S. Nov. 21 through Dec. 20, raising money, food and awareness to support food banks across our network.” The Village of Gurnee webpage

states that the “The Canadian Pacific Kansas City (CPKC) Holiday Train is nearly 1,000 feet long with 14 rail cars, each decorated with hundreds of thousands of technology-leading LED lights and holiday designs.” The Holiday Train event is scheduled from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. with the train estimated to arrive at 5:00 p.m. and a holiday concert performed on the train at 5:15 p.m. The Village of Gurnee website states, “the Holiday Train is anticipated to arrive on the east side of the railroad tracks near Depot Road.” In addition to viewing the train and enjoying the concert, attendees can enjoy “Free pictures with Santa Claus, Patch 22 Petting Zoo, DJ Frank Wright playing holiday Music, and a complimentary snack tent.” The Holiday Concert will consist of performances from The Lone Bellow and Tiera. If attending this free event, it is suggested that you park at one of these locations: Viking Park 4374 Old Grand Ave, Viking Middle School 4460 Old Grand Ave, or Warren Township High School - 500 N. O’Plaine Rd.”

Visit Lake Zurich on Saturday, December 7th between 3:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. for “Miracle on Main Street.” The free event will be held in downtown Lake Zurich at Rotary Park, 7 E. Main Street. Attendees are offered the opportunity to make a craft, take a sleigh ride or visit with reindeer. There will be adult beverage and food vendors. The website highlights “Hot cocoa provided by the Lake Zurich Area Chamber of Commerce and hot cider provided by the Lions Club.” The Village of Lake Zurich’s website describes the event by

stating “a beautiful 24-foot tree that will be on display for the holiday season, an opportunity to meet Santa and his reindeer along with entertainment by Lake Zurich High School’s Bare Voices & Blue Notes Show Choir, Peace Lutheran Bell Choir, a DJ and the Academy of Performing Arts.” To see the performances, visit the entertainment stage located at the intersection of Old Rand Road and Main Street. If any of this sounds exciting to you, consider paying a visit to Lake Zurich on December 7th.

If you would prefer to stay closer to MHS, Mundelein will be holding its first “Winter Tree Lighting Festival” on Saturday, December 7th from 2:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at the Courtland Commons on Courtland and Seymour Streets. This new event, per the Village of Mundelein’s website, “is a combination of the Village’s Holiday Tree Lighting Ceremony which has been held on the first Friday of December for over 20 years, and Winterfest started by MCC in December 2022, on the day after the Tree Lighting.” The website states that, “The Winter Tree Lighting Festival opens with Santa’s Cottage at 2 pm.” Beginning at 3:00 p.m., there will be musical entertainment from the Mundelein High School, Carmel High School, Mechanics Grove and Fremont Middle School Choirs plus numerous local musicians. Other activities include a kids holiday train, live ice sculpting, visit from Disney Princesses, story-time, letters to Santa, a Kris Kringle Market. There will be food vendors, plus complimentary hot chocolate and treats provided by the Mundelein Park and Rec-

reation District. The tree lighting will be at 6:15 p.m. followed by a fireworks display. As you can see this year’s event has a variety of pieces of entertainment that suit whatever your family is looking for. With the new event being bigger and better than ever it is highly suggested that you take a visit to Courtland Commons Park on December 7th to experience the magic of the new and improved Winter Tree Lighting Festival. More information on this event can be found at mundeleincommunityconnection.org/community-events/winterfest.

Whether it’s heading to Lake Zurich to take it’s vast performers, going to Gurnee to view the holiday train, or staying right here in Mundelein to experience the new Winter Tree Lighting Festival, there is no doubt that in Lake County you’ll be able to enjoy any of the holiday festivities you please.



Last year’s Mundelein Tree lighting festival. The 2024 tree lighting took place on December 7th.

A winter wonderland in Chicago: activities in the city

Ashton Salski
Staff Reporter

Looking for things to do over winter break? Well, Chicago has it all. Chicago has endless activities over the holidays right downtown. The 111th annual lighting of Chicago’s Christmas tree took place Nov 22 but doesn’t leave until Jan. 8, leaving plenty of time to go see the 53-foot Colorado Blue Spruce tree at Millennium Park.

If you’re not tired of the Christmas lights, go head over to Lincoln Park Zoo where they host lights all over the zoo to walk around during the night time. Right outside the city, the Chicago Botanic Garden allows visitors to view the scenic paths around the garden featuring lights of all different decorations. Lastly, Illumination: Tree Lights at the Morton Arboretum gives an immersive experience of a one-mile path that offers spectacular views with a fire pit section where families can hang out afterward.

If you’re looking for a holiday market, the



The 2019 tree lighting festival. This year’s tree lighting took place on Nov. 22, and the tree will stay lit until Jan. 8.

Christkindlmarket takes the gold medal. The German-themed Christmas market takes place from the middle of November to the late days of December. The Christkindlmarket happens as 50 West Wash-

ington Street in Chicago. If you want to branch out go to the Randolph Street Holiday market where over a hundred vendors sell anything you could think of. An admission of ten dollars is required but it is well

worth the visit and it takes place at West Randolph Street. The Navy Pier also provides the Holiday Artisan Market where the “Light Up the Lake” event takes place.

On the north side of Chicago, Wrigley Field arranges a Winterland at Gallagher Way from Dec. 6 to Dec. 22. Wrigley Field has a tree lighting ceremony and different events each day to fill up your winter with excitement. Around Wrigley Field, there are many Christmas-themed restaurants and food markets. These places have decorations all over the place and Christmas-themed-labeled items to add to the fun.

Lastly, it’s time to travel to Millennium Park for some ice skating fun. This Chicago tradition allows you to skate around “The Bean” and into Maggie Daley Park which offers enjoyment for your family and friends. All around, Chicago hosts ice skating rinks leaving no excuse to not give it a try.

If you want to look more into the things you can do in Chicago, choosechicago.com gives plenty of ideas for what opportunities there are.

Boys bowling pins their spot at number one for all time highest score

Dan Stricklin
Staff Reporter

The Boys Bowling team started two weeks ago and has already gotten the ball rolling. In their second tournament of the year, they broke their all-time highest score for a single match with 1,241 pins.

Senior Trevor Wiersema led the way with 268 pins. In a close second was Junior Denver Russell with 267; in third was Senior Winston Petri with 249 pins; in fourth was Senior Shawn Mastandrea with 233 pins; and in fifth was sophomore Matteo Mele with 224. While they started off hot with a big game, the team didn't progress as much as they hoped to afterward, but nevertheless, they placed overall in 5th at the tournament.

A lot of the boys including Russell have high hopes for the remainder of the season. Russell stated he doesn't think they will lose another match this year.

Russell hopes to make it to state this year. Two years ago teammates Winston Petri and Trevor Carman both made it to state. Russell is striving to make it there because

he said "It would be a really fun memory to have from high school."

Petri has the same plans as Russell to make it to state, but Petri has his eyes on the top ten this year.

Petri said, "Two years ago [state] wasn't good, but I know I [can] do better."

When Petri went to state two years ago he didn't make the top 75, but things can change in two years. Petri verbally committed to Wichita State his sophomore year to continue bowling. Petri has the same belief Russell does, thinking they won't lose another match this year if they do their mandatory pre-game routine.

Carman added, "I think we will win Conference aging this year."

Carman went to state as a freshman and hopes to be back this year. He mentioned that "going to state as a freshman was a really fun experience." He wants to help the team as much as he can because he wants his teammates to have a fun experience as well.

Carmen also mentioned that his goal is for him and the team are to finish 1st in a tournament this year. Last year during a

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Tot. + hdcp
/	X	X 9	/	X	X 8	/	X	X 9/8		224 224
0	49	69	89	117	137	157	186	206	224	224
X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X 9	/ 9/X		268 268
0	60	90	120	150	180	209	229	248	268	268
X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X 9	-	267 267
0	60	90	120	150	180	210	239	258	267	267
X	X	X 8	/	X	X 9	/ 9	/	X X 8 1		233 233
0	58	78	98	127	147	166	186	214	233	233
X	9	/	X	X	X	X	X	X 9/X		249 249
0	40	60	90	120	150	180	209	229	249	249

photo courtesy of @gomhs_athletics on IG

The scores of the second tournament of the MHS Boys Bowling season. The team is hoping to not lose any matches throughout the remaining season.

tournament he was able to finish first in individual pins, but he wants to celebrate one with his whole team.

The boys are 4-0 in conference right now

and plan on making it 5-0 this Tuesday against Libertyville. The four teams they have beaten already have been Warren, Stevenson, Waukegan, and Lake Zurich.

New MHS Swim staff sets new goals of the program

Ashton Salski
Staff Reporter

Mundelein has three new boys swim coaches entering the program this year. New varsity swim coach Jacob Gonzalez is ecstatic to face the challenge of being a first year varsity head coach. Gonzalez is honored to get this chance. In the past, he coached the Lake Forest club team working with all different age groups

"The mentality of coaching is really important," Gonzalez said. "My approach to coaching for this new team is seeing what they're capable of. Making sure that the swimmers are able to reach their personal goals and all together be able to reach their team goals. Also to make sure that the team is excited and pumped up to swim this season and come to each practice and meet with positive energy."

Gonzalez tries to focus on technique, sprints and pace work in practices while trying to hit all the fundamentals as well. Gonzalez chose Mundelein as he wanted to support the program that he swam for himself and see the team experience success. He has always wanted the opportunity to coach the swim team and since playing for Mundelein this was an easy choice for him.

Gonzalez has goals in mind to help this program experience max success. "My plan is to grow the swim team by showing what this group of boys are capable of. Providing a great deal of team building activities and showing that the boys have a strong bond not just in the pool but out

of the pool as well. This year is going to be a hoot and a holler! I am very pumped up for the boys this year to work hard and do outstanding things," Gonzalez said.

New JV coach Caileigh McCafferty is also excited to coach a high school team and hopes to give them the most success possible. McCafferty has been swimming since age 7 and even went to state with her own team in high school. Later, she was a part of the girls national team. McCafferty hopes to work on making the everyone all-around swimmers throughout the season with the best coaching possible.

Technique is a big part of McCafferty's belief as she believes repetition is important for constant improvement. "My biggest hope to improve this team is not only in their athletic ability but in their confidence. I will work on this with each individual athlete focusing."

She added, "For this year, I expect individuals to be the best version of themselves they can be. This means putting forward their best effort in and out of the pool to be successful student athletes. As a team, I will hold them to the expectation of respect and accountability for themselves and their teammates. Although some swims may be of individual performance, this is a team sport and team effort," said McCafferty.

Senior and Varsity swim team player Xavier Hilgart said that the coaches are "all adapting well to the new environment and doing the right things to help us succeed."

MHS wrestling's path to greatness

Xavier Hilgart
Staff Reporter

Boxing. Football. Ice hockey. Basketball. All are considered some of the most challenging and demanding sports in the world that require elite endurance, strength, technique and skill, they truly push the body to its limits. Rounding out the top five is a sport that does not always get its time in the spotlight, but ranks just as hard or harder than some of the most challenging sports in the world. Wrestling, which became an official IHSA sport in 1937, has grown to become a prominent winter sport in Illinois.

Mundelein wrestling definitely qualifies as a prominent winter sport, and it far exceeds that label. With a strong and deep roster with very solid top end talent, they are looking to make this season one to remember.

Headlined by senior and returning varsity captain Kevin Hernandez, the team has high expectations they look to meet. With the IHSA state tournament being the shining light at the end of the tunnel they hope to travel down.

Wrestling is unique in that it is a team competition that is scored by the results of individual matchups. Each weight class has its own individual matchups, and with so many different weight classes, it results in every person's matchup being important for the team's overall success. That means for Kevin, who is working to individually qualify for state but to also lead the team to conference and regional

championships, it is more important than ever for everyone to work together to get as good as they could be.

"The best way to get good in the sport of wrestling is to have consistency, discipline, and patience," Kevin said.

These core values ring true day in and day out during the grueling wrestling practices. Another unique challenge of wrestling is that they have to work to maintain their weight in order to compete in the right weight class.

Senior Max Villaraza said, "Sometimes we have to cut and that can be hard not eating and having energy for practice/meets". A four year wrestler, Max is working towards a sectional appearance, which would require a top 3-4 placement at regionals.

The path to state will not be an easy one either. For individuals like Kevin, who hope to not just qualify but place at state, February will be a grind. With regionals, sectionals and state coming in back to back weekends, it will be a test of their grit and determination along with their individual skill in order to achieve their goals.

Whether it is conference and regionals or the state final meet, the team will be working to be the best they can be. At the top end of the team with Kevin, seniors Abasai Hernandez, Gael Diaz, Neftali Cernas, along with Junior Ethan Banda form a strong core of wrestlers looking to lead the team to one of their best in recent memory.

Swimming to state: A girl's swim success story

Hannah Roberts
News/Features Editor

Every year hundreds of Mundelein students sign up for fall sports. Many of these athletes put in months of hard work in order to make it to state. It doesn't happen for everyone, but four girls from the swim team managed to swim their way to state in November.

Junior Gracyn Gigiano, Sophomore Lauren Tableman, Senior Karina Schwalbach, and Junior Amelia Willis all made it to the 2024 state championship for swimming. The event took place at FMC Natatorium in Westmont on November 15th.

State is a major accomplishment that very few athletes achieve and getting there takes hard work. For the girls swim team that work started the third week of August.

Senior Karina Schwalbach described the practices saying, "Our practices last two hours every day in the afternoon, and twice a week on Monday and Friday we practice for an hour and 15 minutes before school."

These practices include stretching as a team before splitting off into different lanes to work on various parts of aerobic and anaerobic activities. Each girl focuses on their specific events as well.

This hard work paid off both individually and as a team. Willis qualified individually

in the 100 free and 100 back events.

Willis said, "My goal for the end of every year is to qualify for state...this year I was cautiously optimistic about my individual events."

On top of Willis' qualifications, the team had two relays qualify for state as well, the 200 medley relay and the 400 freestyle relay.

Tableman said, "Last year, our relays were close to the state cut...I had a feeling that if everyone put in the hard work, we would be able to get the times needed to qualify for state."

That feeling proved correct and for the first time in ten years the team had two relay's qualify for state.

Schwalbach described her experience at state saying, "The stands were quite filled and the noise levels were off the charts. The energy behind the blocks was electric and it was very fun to be there with my teammates."

Similarly, Tableman said, "The actual feeling of finally achieving state was surreal...it was exciting to experience this with my teammates and we were all giddy."

Finally Willis stated, "The state experience is unreal. Since my freshman year it was me and a senior and sophomore year I was alone, this year was by far the best experience...I couldn't ask for a better, closer team."



photo courtesy of @mundeleinhihschool on IG

Pictured above (left to right) are Gracyn Gigiano, Lauren Tableman, Karina Schwalbach, and Amelia Willis, after receiving their state qualifier tags after competing at sectionals.

Girls basketball off to a strong 4-1 start

Dan Stricklin
Staff Reporter

The girls basketball team hosted their 33rd annual Thanksgiving tournament. And it was definitely Thanksgiving week as the girls basketball team was giving the other teams a tough match-up.

The girls won their first game 50-14 against Grant by 36 points, making them 1-0. They then won a close game against Regina Dominican 43-39 to move to 2-0. Next, was another big win against Graylake North 52-19, winning by 33 points this time. In game four, Junior Casey Vyverman had a crazy 30 points in the win over St. Viator 58-45. In game five, the girls fell to Highland Park losing 33-28 and coming in second place at the tournament.

Head coach Sarah Teipel is in her third year of head coaching here at Mundelein and is excited to make new memories and compete at a high level this year. Teipel has a lot of good memories from a lot of her summer trips that she has gone on.

Teipel loves building relationships with her players and seeing them grow both on and off the court.

Senior Adrianna Lesniak mentioned "Beating St. Viator was a memorable mo-

ment because we competed hard and we played as a team," she said.

She added, "The season will go well if we give 110% effort every day."

Playing as a team is a big thing in sports and that's why Lesniak thinks that if they play as a team and have confidence they will have a good season and be able to compete in playoffs.

Some goals Lesniak has are to continue to shoot and take more charges. Lesniak stated, "I will do whatever I can to help the team compete on both sides of the ball."

Vyverman said, "The season will go well because we are getting better everyday."

Her biggest goal this season is to be one of the top teams in the conference this year. Last year, the girls weren't able to make it to the top three in the conference, but they plan to change that this year.

She also mentioned that another goal she has is "to make good memories with my teammates and have fun." Vyverman's favorite memory was last year's Thanksgiving tournament when their team won. She has plans of playing a lot of games in the playoffs this year.

When the girls play as a team, they are successful, and that was shown during this year's Thanksgiving tournament.



photo courtesy of Kelly Lesniak

The Girls Basketball team before a game against Grant.

You are what you eat: a look into Mundelein's lunch

Hannah Roberts
News/Features Editor

Cheeseburgers, pizza, and chicken sandwiches. These are the staples of the lunch line at MHS.

Of course, Mundelein offers other options as well such as prepackaged salads and sandwiches, pasta, and paninis but most of that stuff is hidden away in the corner of the lunchroom. The most accessible food in the lunch line is also the most unhealthy.

Mundelein gets food from a company called Quest Food which provides lunches to all levels of education from kindergarten to college.

The 'Our Food Philosophy' page of the Quest Food website says, "We are passionate about food and we believe in wholesome, nutritious ingredients."

I however, don't see that philosophy reflected in the food served to students at MHS. Pizza and hamburgers are traditionally seen as the opposite of nutritious by American culture.

According to the Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2020-2025, people ages 14-18 should be eating multiple cups of fruits and vegetables each day along with 6-10 ounces of grains, 5-7 ounces of protein, and 3 cups of dairy.

The Guidelines also state that we should, "Eat little to no added sugar...sugar sweetened beverages add calories but have no nutritional value."

Despite this fact, MHS sells countless sugary foods and drinks such as chips, cookies, and soda. While I am not entirely against these sugary foods and what I see as unhealthy food, I simply think we should have more options to choose from.

This push for more options might not be too difficult either. Quest Foods offers far more than what is served at Mundelein with 11 different branded food concepts. (These are listed on the branded food concepts page of their website).

Mundelein currently serves the Grill option which, for a positive, has 100% lean beef, but there's many more, and in my opinion, better options. For example, the Bread and Bowl concept is something we partially have here at MHS. It includes fresh, made-to-order paninis and soups. We have the paninis, but not the soups.

The issue presented is that these paninis, the only fresh, made to order meal Mundelein offers, is in the deli which is tucked away into the back right corner of the lunch room. It's not as easily accessible or convenient as the rest of the food.

Another great option is the Dash brand which, "provides a variety of hot and cold grab & go items, such as yogurt parfaits, protein boxes, sandwiches and wraps." This option could be great for a student that may need to eat a quick lunch in order to retake a test or utilize the literacy center but still wants a healthy, balanced meal.

One final option I think could be great is the

Hemispheres brand. Mundelein prides itself on its diverse student population. The Hemispheres brand, "provide authentic international offerings that showcase and educate consumers about flavors from around the world." With this option lunch could be transformed from a simple meal to a learning experience.

The lunch Mundelein currently offers isn't too bad, there are some healthy options but what is offered isn't diverse. Moving the made to order food from the back of the lunch room to the actual lunch line and utilizing Quest Foods other food concepts are just a few ways that Mundelein can bring lunch to the next level.

MUSTANG MEAL MENU				
MON:	TUES:	WEDS:	THURS:	FRI:
HAMBURGER OR CHEESEBURGER	SPICY CHICKEN SANDWICH	HAMBURGER OR CHEESEBURGER	SPICY CHICKEN SANDWICH	HAMBURGER OR CHEESEBURGER
PASTA WITH MEATBALLS COMES WITH SAUCE, VEGGIES, & BREADSTICK	PASTA WITH CHICKEN COMES WITH SAUCE, VEGGIES, & BREADSTICK	PASTA WITH MEATBALLS COMES WITH SAUCE, VEGGIES, & BREADSTICK	PASTA WITH CHICKEN COMES WITH SAUCE, VEGGIES, & BREADSTICK	PASTA WITH MEATBALLS COMES WITH SAUCE, VEGGIES, & BREADSTICK
PIZZA CHEESE OR PEPPERONI	PIZZA CHEESE OR PEPPERONI	PIZZA CHEESE OR PEPPERONI	PIZZA CHEESE OR PEPPERONI	PIZZA CHEESE OR PEPPERONI
ENTREE OPTIONS AVAILABLE DAILY				
WHILE SUPPLIES LAST:				
SALADS GARDEN, CAESAR, CHICKEN CAESAR		WRAPS TURKEY, CHICKEN CAESAR		
SANDWICHES HAM & CHEESE, SALAMI & CHEESE, TURKEY & CHEESE		YOGURT PARFAITS		
ALL MEALS INCLUDE: BOTTLED WATER OR MILK & WHOLE PIECE OF FRUIT <i>photo courtesy of d120.org</i>				

The school cafeteria menu. The same options are presented everyday and there is lots of variety in the meals. While there are some other items that aren't listed on the menu, they are not advertised.

Opinion: Don't blame Harris for the Democrats' loss

Eric Beauchamp
Online Editor

There is a sentiment I've heard echoed consistently since November 5th I want to address: that Kamala Harris is at fault for losing the 2024 election. It comes from all sides—Trump voters, Harris voters, and those in the middle. Personally, I believe this claim is a half-truth. Let me explain.

Firstly, I want to dispel a myth: that Kamala lost simply because she is a woman. I believe that there were voters who absolutely made their decision based on this, but claiming it was the only factor detracts from the wider issues of the campaign. And even though I believe there were many who voted based on this thought process, it does not mean that the Democrats would have seen a clearer path to victory with a male candidate on the ballot. At the same time, this does not mean that Harris was the right candidate for the job.

A major fault of her campaign came in its support of the Biden administration. To a degree, this was inevitable due to her position as Biden's VP. As with many incumbent administrations around the world reeling from the pandemic, the Biden ad-

ministration is unpopular. Every election is a fight between "stay the same" or "change", and it seems the Democrats could not recognize that regardless of beliefs, the American people were clearly demanding change long before the election.

In an interview with ABC, Harris answered "there is not a thing that comes to mind" when asked if she would've done anything differently than Biden. Harris doomed herself by refusing to alienate from Biden's policies—it's no question that an unpopular administration is bound to create an unpopular candidate.

Her campaign's other major problem was weak and misguided attempts to attract voters. In specific, her attempts to attract swing and non-voters were counterintuitive. In the same interview with ABC, Harris stated she would consider putting a Republican in her cabinet, and she held campaign events with former Republican congresswoman Liz Cheney. These attempts at bipartisanship did not attract any swing voters, and only further alienated possible ones.

Additionally, much of the campaign focused on the danger that Trump poses to democracy. Time and time again, we've learned that it's not enough for the Demo-

crats to hope that Republicans like Trump will make themselves unelectable. This was not the case in 2016, and it was not the case this election.

But despite all of the grievances I hold for the Harris campaign's ineffective strategies, I believe it's useless to put so much blame on them for losing the election. Many of the factors that contributed to Harris's loss are part of a wider problem in the Democratic Party.

Here is the truth: the American people care most about their material conditions, jobs, and wages, and can see through the half-baked legislation, elitism, and corporate ties within the party that is supposed to be "for the people". This fact is one that the Democratic Party seems to struggle with.

If you don't believe me, here are the facts. Today, America is the wealthiest country in history, yet the St. Louis Federal Reserve estimates that the top 10% of households hold almost 70% of total income. Wealth inequality in the U.S. mirrors that of the Gilded Age, Americans pay the highest prices for healthcare in any developed nation, and houses are significantly less affordable than they were

decades ago. We are heralded as the country of opportunity, but data from Forbes estimates that one-third of Americans live paycheck to paycheck.

These are the American people's problems that the Democratic Party refuses to acknowledge. Not only have the Democrats failed to take on the powerful corporations that permeate rising inequality, they have worked in tandem with them to preserve their powerful status. On top of this, the Democrats spew lies that try to convince the people that they have no involvement in corruption. I believe this is one of the biggest factors that caused many to lose trust in the Democrats this election.

The Democrat's current policies like raising taxes on the rich and lowering costs of healthcare can absolutely be effective, but they are not enough, and work only to bandage the growing issues in our country.

I'll state my claim clearly: until the Democratic Party recognizes and addresses the needs of the struggling working class—higher wages, free healthcare, education, affordable housing, and more—the future of the party is not a bright one.