

## Consent talk on campus with VARP

By AMALIA SHARAF  
Staff Writer

The Speaking of Sex presentation hosted by the Violence Awareness & Response Program Thursday showed students various situations in which it is necessary to make the right decisions to prevent trauma and severe consequences.

The presentation taught students how to properly communicate on susceptible topics and share their feelings with a partner. Presenters stressed the importance of students remembering that safe sex and clear communication with a partner are crucial for mental health and safety.

The presentation was presented by GTC Dramatic Dialogues, a group that conducts engaging and interactive theatrical performances about sexual assault, diversity or substance abuse.

At the presentation, students witnessed three performances, where they were able to discuss the importance of verbal communication and decision-making in a sober mind.

According to the director of GTC Dramatic Dialogues, Michael Agnew, it is important to involve students in the discussion of sensitive topics in order to teach them how to behave in a critical situation, and, if possible, to prevent it.

"Sexual assault on campuses is really prevalent and a lot of mistaken perceptions around it [may cause troubles]," said Agnew. "I've been doing it for 27 years and this is the one show where students' attitudes have not changed significantly. What was talked about here are the



DOMINIC BOTHE • The Reporter

Speaker Michael Agnew discusses with students the importance of consensual sex and the levels of intent.

hyper-masculinity and victim blaming."

The performance and the

involvement of students in the discussion gave students the opportunity to plunge deeper into

such issues. The actors showed situations in which it was nec-

**CONSENT on page 4**

## Education efforts to increase young voter turnout

By JULIA BARTON  
Editor in Chief

Community members will take to the polls Nov. 8 and vote for Minnesota State representatives and other city officials.

MSU students will vote in the highly competitive First Congressional District race, which features incumbent Brad Finstad, a Republican who won the special election last summer, and John Ettinger, the Democrat challenging him again.

Students can also cast ballots for Mankato City Council seats. The city council ward that includes residence halls and campus-area apartments and townhomes is up for grabs as Don Friend and Kevin Mettler vie for the open seat.

Also on ballots are county board races as well as statewide offices such as governor and attorney general.

Grace Larsen is a junior who transferred from St. Cloud Technical & Community College. She is majoring in political science and says she has spent the past few weeks encouraging students at MSU to register to vote.

"When you're in college you have different needs than others who are voting, so in order for your needs to be represented well, you need to vote," Larsen said. "Understand what needs are important to you, and vote because voting is one of the easiest ways to do so."

Larsen is the senator for the College of Humanities and Social Sciences for Student Government and the legislative affairs coordinator. Lately, this consists of her tabling in the Centennial Student Union, putting out posters with QR codes with voter registration and spreading the word to her peers.

Thanks to her efforts, information for voter registration was posted on the D2L homepage. The advancement of technology within

**VOTE on page 7**

## African American Affairs' new director builds unity

By EMMA JOHNSON  
News Director

African American Affairs recently welcomed BalenciaSariah Crosby as its new director. And she has big plans for the organization.

Crosby attended North Harris Community College in Houston and decided to attend grad school at Minnesota State University, Mankato to become a resource for students.

Crosby took over the position after the departure of Kenneth Reid at the end of last year.

"This opportunity opened up beautifully for me to get that experience beyond the classroom side and be more on the side of student services and student

support," Crosby said. One of her main goals this year is building community and stitching any gaps that may remain. She explained she doesn't want students to feel like they're floating by in college, but to have students feel connected.

"There's community here and there was community before I got here and Covid played an interesting role in redefining and setting those boundaries of the community," Crosby said. "I'd like to shed a light on that community so others can see 'oh, they're doing something cool and I want to be involved with it.'"

In order to build community, Crosby has a multitude of events

**DIRECTOR on page 2**

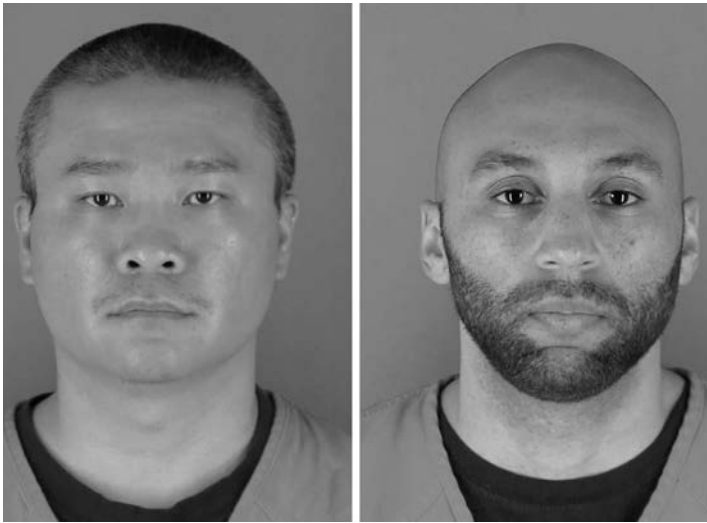


DYLAN ENGEL • The Reporter

The new AAA Director resides in the offices of the Multicultural Center in Centennial Student Union room 269.



## Ex-Minneapolis cops plead guilty in George Floyd's death



Hennepin County Sheriff's Office via Associated Press

Tou Thao, left, and J. Alexander Kueng. The former officers entered the plea Oct. 24, 2022, just as jury was about to begin in his trial. Jury selection for Thao was expected to begin later Monday.

By AMY FORLITI  
Associated Press

A former Minneapolis police officer pleaded guilty Monday to aiding and abetting second-degree manslaughter in the killing of George Floyd just as jury selection was about to begin. Another former officer waived his right to a jury trial, setting up an unusual proceeding in which the judge will issue a verdict after lawyers submit written arguments.

The plea deal for J. Alexander Kueng calls for 3 1/2 years in prison, with prosecutors agreeing to drop a count of aiding and abetting second-degree murder. Kueng is the second officer to plead guilty to the state charge, following Thomas Lane, who pleaded guilty earlier this year.

Their former colleague, Tou Thao, rejected a plea deal earlier this year, telling a judge

it "would be lying" to accept any such deal. On Monday, he agreed to go forward with a modified proceeding called a trial by stipulated evidence, in which he accepts certain evidence against him and waives his rights to a trial by jury and to testify.

The two sides will work out agreed-upon evidence against Thao and will prepare written closing arguments. They will submit those to Judge Peter Cahill by Nov. 17, with Cahill to rule on guilt or innocence within 90 days. The process includes an agreement to drop the aiding murder charge if Thao is convicted on the lesser charge. With such a conviction, Thao would likely get about four years in prison.

All three were convicted in February on federal counts of willfully violating the civil rights of Floyd, who was Black.

### ◀DIRECTOR from page 1

planned for the spring semester including Africa Night, the Pan African Conference and the Ebony Ball. So far, Crosby's favorite event was On&Poppin's inaugural event which fostered community by building pasta and marshmallow structures.

"Some students came with their friends and I said 'OK, let's break up some of these silos. I want to challenge you all to work with others,'" Crosby said. "The event was silly, but it got the room talking and going."

Crosby said she considers her job as a bunch of different roles ranging from mentoring, advising and individual rapport building between her and students. Crosby said she intends to put herself in places where she can show her space to other students.

She encourages students to stop by her office in the Multicultural Center in CSU 269 as one of the ways students can get involved with AAA.

"This office is open and welcoming for students and their needs to come in and share

that space and time with me. I want them to get comfortable visiting with me so when they see me outside of the office, we can talk more," Crosby said.

Another goal of Crosby's is listening to students' suggestions. Crosby explained that it's important to learn their interests to gain students' trust.

"I think if the students can trust me and that I'm here to support them, I might be able to start mentoring," Crosby said. "Some students move through that process quicker than others, but I'm here to help them work on it."

Crosby said she hopes to bring authenticity to MSU and AAA as she goes forward in her new role.

"I want people to know that when I say I'm going to do something, I'm going to deal with it as soon as possible. When it comes down to the betterment of my students in an individual community, I definitely want to champion and push that forward," Crosby said. "You've got to take care of yourself and others."

## Mavs in Action attend Adopt a Highway event to clean up waste



CARLY BAHR • The Reporter

Mavs in Action students volunteer to assess and patrol the highway to remove leftover garbage and waste.

By CARLY BAHR  
Staff Writer

Mavs in Action had its debut Adopt a Highway event Saturday.

Adopt a Highway is a program through the Department of Transportation that divides sections of highways and designates them to volunteer groups to clean roadside trash.

Previously, Mavs in Action, a student engagement team at Minnesota State University, Mankato worked with the city

of Mankato to coordinate a cleanup of Rasmussen Woods. This project will be replacing that, according to Community Engagement Office general advisor Crystal Watts.

"We just decided to try something different this year. We've loved working with the city of Mankato and the Department of Natural Resources in the past, but we wanted something that we could actually put our name on and plan on consistently every year, and with Adopt a Highway now we

get to do it twice a year," said Watts.

Mavs in Action Vice President Jacob Rangitsch organized the Adopt a Highway project after getting the idea from his fraternity, Sigma Nu, which also maintains a section.

"I thought this would be a good project for Mavs in Action where we'd be able to do this every semester. I reached out to Blue Earth County and just asked them if they had any available sections that we could

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# Companies lure workers with college perks

By DEE-ANN DURBIN and ANNE DINNOCENZIO  
Associated Press

When Daniella Malave started working for Chipotle at 17, the main benefit she was seeking was free food. As it turned out, she also got a free college education.

While working full time for the chain, Malave completed two years of community college with annual stipends of \$5,250 from Chipotle.

After that, she enrolled in the company's free online college program, through which she earned a bachelor's degree in business management from Wilmington University in 2020.

"I didn't have to pay for my education," said Malave, 24, who now works as a recruiting analyst for Chipotle in New Jersey. "Every time I say it out loud, I'm like, 'Is this real?'"

Chipotle is one of more than a dozen companies that have launched free or almost-free college programs for their front-line workers over the last decade.

Since 2021 alone, Walmart, Amazon, Target, Macy's, Citi and Lowe's have made free college available to more than 3 million U.S. workers.

Companies see the programs as a way to recruit and retain workers in a tight labor market



SETH WENIG • Associated Press

While working full time for Chipotle, Daniella Malave, completed two years of community college with annual stipends of \$5,250 from the restaurant chain. After that, she enrolled in the company's free online college program.

or train them for management positions. For hourly employees, the programs remove the financial barriers of obtaining a degree.

Thousands of people are now taking advantage of the benefits. Starbucks, which operates an

online college program through Arizona State University, says 22,000 workers are currently enrolled in its program.

Guild Education, which administers programs for Walmart, Hilton, Disney and others and offers online programs at more

than 140 schools, says it worked with 130,000 students over the last year.

But some critics question whether the programs are papering over deeper problems, like pay so low that workers can't afford college without them or

hours so erratic that it's too hard to go to school in person.

"I do think they are providing these programs to skirt around the issue of just paying people more, giving people more certainty, improving their quality of life," said Stephanie Hall, a senior fellow at The Century Foundation, a nonpartisan think tank.

Hall said a lack of data also makes it difficult to judge the programs' effectiveness.

Chipotle, Walmart, Amazon and Starbucks, for example, don't share graduation rates, in part because they're hard to calculate because students often take a semester off or take more than four years to earn a degree.

Rachel Carlson, CEO for Guild Education, which also doesn't reveal graduation rates, says the more relevant data is whether college classes help employees get promotions or wage increases.

Others question the quality of the online programs and whether students' degrees will be marketable or help them pursue other careers, especially since many companies limit what employees can study.

Discover only fully funds 18 bachelor's degrees at eight universities through Guild, for example.

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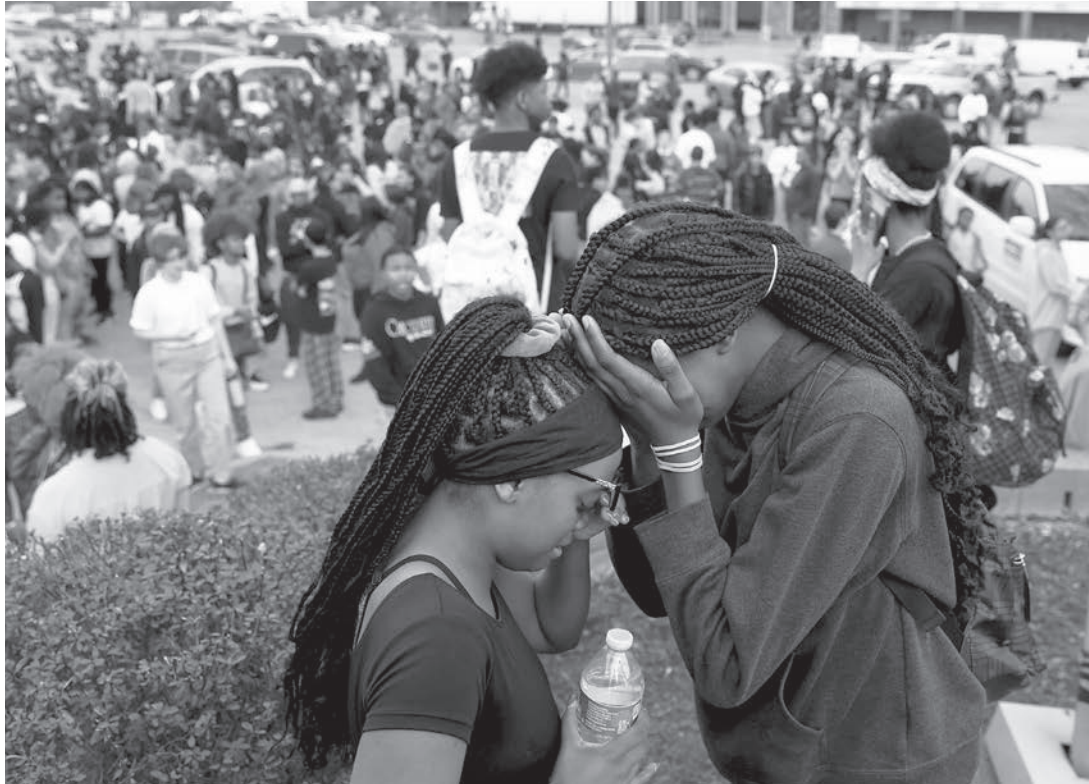
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## 2 killed in shooting at St. Louis high school; gunman found dead



DAVID CARSON • Associated Press

Students stand in a parking lot near the Central Visual & Performing Arts High School after a reported shooting where a student and teacher were killed and six wounded in St. Louis on Monday, Oct. 24, 2022.

By MICHAEL PHILLIS and JIM SALTER  
Associated Press

An armed former student broke into a St. Louis high school Monday morning warning, “You are all going to die!” before fatally shooting a teacher and a teenage girl, and wounding six others before police killed him in an exchange of gunfire.

The attack just after 9 a.m. at Central Visual and Performing Arts High School forced students to barricade doors and huddle in classroom corners, jump from windows and run out of the building to seek safety. One terrorized girl said she was eye-to-eye with the shooter before his gun apparently jammed and she was able to run out.

Speaking at a news conference, Police Chief Michael Sack said fast actions by a security guard, along with police officers who “ran to the gunfire” helped end the shooting before more people were killed or hurt. Police on Monday evening identified the shooter as 19-year-old Orlando Harris, who graduated from the school last year. Police said they did not have a possible motive. They said earlier in the day that it was not clear if anyone had been targeted.

Sack said Harris had no prior criminal history.

Authorities didn’t name the victims, but the St. Louis Post-Dispatch identified the dead teacher as Jean Kuczka. Her daughter said her mother was killed when the gunman burst into her classroom and she moved between him and her students.

“My mom loved kids,” Abbey Kuczka told the newspaper. “She loved her students. I know

her students looked at her like she was their mom.”

St. Louis Schools Superintendent Kelvin Adams said seven security guards were in the school at the time of the attack, each stationed at an entrance of the locked building. One of the guards noticed the gunman trying to get in at a locked door, but couldn’t. The guard notified school officials, who contacted police, Sack said.

“It was that timely response by that security officer, the fact that the door did cause pause for the suspect, that bought us some time,” Sack said.

He declined to say how the man eventually got inside, armed with what he described as a long gun. Central Visual and Performing Arts shares a building with another magnet school, Collegiate School of Medicine and Bioscience. Central has 383 students, Collegiate 336.

Officers worked to get students out of the three-story building, then “ran to that gunfire, located that shooter and engaged that shooter in an exchange of gunfire,” killing him, Sack said.

Monday’s school shooting was the fortieth this year resulting in injuries or death, according to a tally by Education Week — the most in any year since it began tracking shootings in 2018. The deadly attacks include the killings at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas, in May, when 19 children and two teachers died. Monday’s St. Louis shooting came on the same day a Michigan teenager pleaded guilty to terrorism and first-degree murder in a school shooting that killed four students in December 2021.

Some of the six people hospitalized in Monday’s attack

suffered gunshot wounds, while others were struck by shrapnel, Sack said. He did not provide any information on their conditions.

Taniya Gholston said she was saved when the shooter’s gun jammed as he entered her classroom. “All I heard was two shots and he came in there with a gun,” the 16-year-old told the Post-Dispatch. “I was trying to run and I couldn’t run. Me and him made eye contact but I made it out because his gun got jammed.”

Two teachers recounted near-miss confrontations with the shooter.

Ashley Rench told The Associated Press she was teaching advanced algebra to sophomores when she heard a loud bang. Then the school intercom announced, “Miles Davis is in the building.”

“That’s our code for intruder,” Rench said.

Students took refuge beneath her desk and behind her podium as the shooter tried to enter the locked classroom before giving up and going away.

“I don’t know why he chose not to break my windows or shoot through the lock,” she said.

Raymond Parks was about to teach a dance class for juniors when a man dressed in black approached. At first, Parks thought the man was carrying a broom or a stick. Then he realized it was a gun.

“The kids started screaming and running and scrambling. He walked directly into the two doors and pointed the gun over at me because I was in the front,” Parks said.

For some unknown reason, Parks said, the shooter pointed the gun away from him and let Parks and the dozen or so students leave the room.



DOMINIC BOTHE • The Reporter

Students act out skits that demonstrate various examples of intent from one person to another through multiple scenarios.

### ◀CONSENT from page 1

essary to talk about the safety of committed actions, decision-making and safe sex for partners.

After each performance, students were given the opportunity to ask questions to the characters and express their thoughts about what happened.

“[This event] sounded like something exciting because I feel like speaking of sex

is something that everyone should do and be comfortable with,” said a student who attended the event. “I learned that people have different opinions on what is right or wrong but overall we should always try to do what is best for people. A lot happened today, a lot we have to learn from it. It is not enough to put in words. Personally, I learned to be more comfortable with speaking about sex in different places.”

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# Test scores show historic Covid setbacks for kids across US



KELLEY SMITH • Associated Press

The COVID-19 pandemic spared no state or region as it caused historic learning setbacks for America's children, erasing decades of academic progress and widening racial disparities, according to national test results.

By COLLIN BINKLEY  
Associated Press

The COVID-19 pandemic spared no state or region as it caused historic learning setbacks for America's children, erasing decades of academic progress and widening racial disparities, according to results of a national test that provide the sharpest look yet at the scale of the crisis.

Across the country, math scores saw their largest decreases ever. Reading scores dropped to 1992 levels. Nearly four in 10 eighth graders failed to grasp basic math concepts. Not a single state saw a notable improvement in their average test scores, with some simply treading water at best.

Those are the findings from the National Assessment of Educational Progress — known as the “nation’s report card” — which tested hundreds of thousands of fourth and eighth graders across the country this year. It was the first time the test had been given since 2019, and it’s seen as the first nationally representative study of the pandemic’s impact on learning.

“It is a serious wakeup call for us all,” Peggy Carr, commissioner of the National Center for Education Statistics, a branch of the Education Department, said in an interview. “In NAEP, when we experience a 1- or 2-point decline, we’re talking about it as a significant impact on a student’s achievement. In math, we experienced an 8-point decline — historic for this assessment.”

Researchers usually think of a 10-point gain or drop as equivalent to roughly a year of learning.

It’s no surprise that children are behind. The pandemic upended every facet of life and left

millions learning from home for months or more. The results released Monday reveal the depth of those setbacks, and the size of the challenge facing schools as they help students catch up.

Education Secretary Miguel Cardona said it’s a sign that schools need to redouble their efforts, using billions of dollars that Congress gave schools to help students recover.

“Let me be very clear: these results are not acceptable,” Cardona said.

The NAEP test is typically given every two years. It was taken between January and March by a sample of students in every state, along with 26 of the nation’s largest school districts.

Scores had been stalling even before the pandemic, but the new results show decreases on a scale not seen before.

In both math and reading, students scored lower than those tested in 2019. But while reading scores dipped, math scores plummeted by the largest margins in the history of the NAEP test, which began in 1969.

Math scores were worst among eighth graders, with 38% earning scores deemed “below basic” — a cutoff that measures, for example, whether students can find the third angle of a triangle if they’re given the other two. That’s worse than 2019, when 31% of eighth graders scored below that level.

No part of the country was exempt. Every region saw test scores slide, and every state saw declines in at least one subject.

Several major districts saw test scores fall by more than 10 points. Cleveland saw the largest single drop, falling 16 points in fourth-grade reading,

along with a 15-point decline in fourth-grade math. Baltimore and Tennessee’s Shelby County also saw precipitous declines.

“This is more confirmation that the pandemic hit us really hard,” said Eric Gordon, chief executive for the Cleveland Metropolitan School District. To help students recover, the school system has beefed up summer school and added after-school tutoring.

“I’m not concerned that they can’t or won’t recover,” Gordon said. “I’m concerned that the country won’t stay focused on getting kids caught up.”

The results show a reversal of progress on math scores, which had made big gains since the 1990s. Reading, by contrast, had changed little in recent decades, so even this year’s relatively small decreases put the averages back to where they were in 1992.

Most concerning, however, are the gaps between students.

Confirming what many had feared, racial inequities appear to have widened during the pandemic. In fourth grade, Black and Hispanic students saw bigger decreases than white students, widening gaps that have persisted for decades.

Inequities were also reflected in a growing gap between higher and lower performing students. In math and reading, scores fell most sharply among the lowest performing students, creating a widening chasm between struggling students and the rest of their peers.

Surveys done as part of this year’s test illustrate the divide.

When schools shifted to remote learning, higher performing students were far more likely to have reliable access to quiet spaces, computers and help from their teachers, the survey found.

## ◀CLEANUP from page 2

apply for, which they did, and now we have a highway,” Rangitsch said.

The Mavs in Action’s section is located on Highway 17 between Mankato and Madison Lake.

The group’s plan is to visit the highway section each semester. For Saturday’s volunteers, there is less trash in the fall than in the spring.

According to Rangitsch, this is because the people who live alongside the highway typically clean it themselves as part of their yard work and there is no snow, which in winter covers the existing trash from view. This causes the litter to move through the ditches as it melts in the spring.

Removing existing trash before the snow comes is crucial according to Watts.

“They end up in the ditches, which end up in the waterways around farmlands and then they end up in the natural waterways through those farm lands. So it’s super important to not just focus on the big pieces of plastic, but the little ones as well,” Watts said. “So

your small liquor bottles, your broken bottle caps, your shreds of plastic bags, those types of things are the things we try to look for and pick up.”

Students have varying reasons for attending volunteer events.

Some, like Gency Vataoli, need to for their scholarships. Vataoli is an international student who volunteered at Adopt a Highway and does additional volunteer work. He said his favorite volunteer event was a day of packing bread for people in need.

“It feels good to give back to people and help people. It feels good,” Vataoli said.

Mavs in Action meets at 4 p.m. Thursdays. During these meetings they do a smaller service project like making cards for senior living homes and packaging laundry detergent pods to donate.

They also do larger events outside the CSU like Adopt a Highway and the upcoming holiday carnival Dec. 3.

Rangitsch said the carnival will have 200-300 attendees, mostly kids and parents, with

CLEANUP on page 7▶

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# Editorial

Editorials represent the opinions of The Reporter editorial board. The opinions expressed here are not necessarily those of the college, university or student body.

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## When costumes aren't okay

Halloween is coming up, and many people are looking forward to the culmination of the spooky season, and all the fun events it consists of.

In the days leading up to that fright-filled night, many partake in the tradition of going to the nearest Spirit Halloween store, rifling through the racks of overly-priced costumes and dressing up as their favorite movie or television show character.

For the most part, it's exciting to see everyone's costumes, and the creative liberties they take with them. For example, the myriad of costume interpretations on Eddie Munson from *Stranger Things* or a couple's outfit pretending to be Barbie and Ken from the upcoming live-action movie.

However, we as a collective, believe there are some costumes that should never be put on in the first place. Mainly, costumes depicting, and in most cases appropriating, a certain culture.

If you come from a background that isn't yours, pretending to belong to and identify with another culture is never okay.

At their roots, Halloween costumes are a glorified game of dress-up. You put on the outfit and the wig and become a different person for the day, before ultimately taking off the costume at the end of the night.

For many, such as Native American or Indigenous peoples, their culture isn't a costume they can take off at the end of the night.

An average Joe can go to a Halloween party wearing a cheap, inauthentic headdress, pretend for a night that they're from a culture that doesn't belong to them and receive endless costume praise from their peers.

But when an Indigenous person wears the same headdress or even exists publicly in the same space, proudly presenting their cultural identity that the average Joe was pretending to present as, they have the potential to be the target of massive waves of hate and racist microaggressions.

Seeing someone doing this and not saying anything about it is equally as insensitive as dressing up yourself. We as students shouldn't let our fellow peers culturally appropriate others' identities, and turn them into the punchline.

At its core, Halloween is an innocent and fun holiday, and we should remember to keep it that way when it comes to picking out costumes. If you ever have to wonder if your costume is offensive, pick the safe option and opt not to wear it.

# Perspectives

## Made in China: Adoption and options



By JULIA BARTON  
Editor in Chief

As someone who was adopted, my thoughts about *Roe v. Wade* being overturned in June made me reflect on my own story and how I personally wouldn't be here if it wasn't for my birth mother who put me up for adoption.

I thank God every day that I am here in the United States. Having the opportunity to attend college, receive an education and live in a mostly "free" country is a luxury that most of us take for granted.

When the U.S. Supreme Court overturned this ruling made over 50 years ago which guaranteed a women's right to abortion nationwide, I got to thinking: What if China made abortion illegal? What would the repercussions be and how would that

affect the millions of families overseas? When I was born in 2001, China still strictly enforced the one-child policy. This policy was to ensure the population of the country wouldn't get too large, since China is one of the countries with the largest populations in the world.

Culturally, families in China wanted to keep the male child in hopes to carry on the family name and join the workforce for the family. On the other side, the female babies were less desirable and put into orphanages like myself, or aborted.

In 2016, China became more lenient and authorities ended this policy. Currently, families in China are allowed up to three children per household.

As someone who was raised in the United States since she was nine months old, I feel like I have a unique outlook on the whole debate

and the "war on women's bodies."

Women in strict circumstances like China, still had the ability to choose what they wanted to do with their bodies for decades.

I think it is quite strange that one of the biggest social issues in politics is surrounded by what women can or can't do with their bodies, yet who knows if we'll even have a world to live in to fight about this issue.

Regardless of where you stand, I think that here in the United States we pride ourselves on democracy and the freedoms we have that many in other countries do not.

Even faced with a policy that limits the number of children you can have, women in China chose adoption while having other options available. Taking away that right isn't going to take away that option, only criminalize it.

# Pulse

"What is your biggest fear?"

Compiled by Lilly Anderson



EMMA SCHWANDT,  
SENIOR

"Heights/paper cuts."



JACOB WEBER,  
FIFTH YEAR

"Not being a good math teacher."



JACOB BORCHERT,  
SENIOR

"Failure."



ABBY O'BRIEN,  
SOPHOMORE

"Drowning."



OLIVIA LUEBBEN,  
FRESHMAN

"Spiders."



JACOB ANGLIN,  
JUNIOR

"Clowns."



# Alex Jones seeks new trial after \$1B Sandy Hook verdict



TYLER SIZEMORE • Associated Press

Conspiracy theorist Alex Jones takes the witness stand to testify at the Sandy Hook defamation damages trial at Connecticut Superior Court in Waterbury, Conn. to throw out a nearly \$1 billion verdict against him.

By DAVE COLLINS  
Associated Press

Conspiracy theorist Alex Jones has asked a Connecticut judge to throw out a nearly \$1 billion verdict against him and order a new trial in a lawsuit by Sandy Hook families, who say they were subjected to harassment and threats from Jones' lies about the 2012 Newtown school shooting.

Jones filed the requests Friday, saying Judge Barbara Bellis' pretrial rulings resulted in an unfair trial and "a substantial miscarriage of justice."

"Additionally, the amount of the compensatory damages award exceeds any rational relationship to the evidence offered at trial," Jones' lawyers, Norm Pattis and Kevin Smith, wrote in the motion.

Christopher Mattei, a lawyer for the 15 plaintiffs in the lawsuit against Jones, declined to comment on the filing Saturday, but said he and other attorneys for the Sandy Hook families will be filing a brief opposing Jones' request. Twenty first graders and six educators at Sandy Hook Elementary School died in the attack on

Dec. 14, 2012.

An FBI agent who responded to the shooting and relatives of eight children and adults killed in the massacre sued Jones for defamation and infliction of emotional distress over his pushing the bogus narrative that the shooting was a hoax staged by "crisis actors" to impose more gun control.

Six jurors in Waterbury, Connecticut, ordered Jones and his company, Free Speech Systems, on Oct. 12 to pay \$965 million in compensatory damages to the plaintiffs and said punitive damages also should be awarded. Bellis has scheduled hearings for early next month to determine the amount of the punitive damages. During the trial, victims' relatives said in often-emotional testimony that they were threatened and harassed for years by people who believed the lies told on Jones' show. Strangers showed up at the families' homes to record them and confronted them in public. People hurled abusive comments on social media. Relatives said they received death and rape threats.

The verdicts came after another jury in Texas in August

ordered Jones and his company to pay nearly \$50 million in damages to the parents of another slain Sandy Hook child. A third trial over the hoax claims, involving two more Sandy Hook parents, is expected to be held near the end of the year in Texas. Jones, who has acknowledged in recent years that the shooting did occur, has blasted the lawsuits and trials on his Austin, Texas-based Infowars show, calling them unfair and a violation of his free speech rights.

But he lost his right to present those defenses when the judges in Connecticut and Texas found him liable for damages by default without trials, for what they called Jones' repeated failures to turn over some evidence including financial documents and website analytics to the Sandy Hook lawyers. With liability already established, the trials in both states focused only on how much Jones should pay in damages.

Pattis, Jones' lawyer, wrote in the motions filed Friday that there was a lack of evidence directly connecting Jones with the people who harassed the Sandy Hook families.

◀VOTE from page 1

the past decade has made it easier than ever to spread information widely and increase voter turnout.

"I think social media has an impact on voter registration because it has gotten so much easier in the past few years," Larsen said.

Many candidates use social media platforms to run their campaign ads to discuss what issues they stand for.

"Just because you see an ad doesn't mean it's necessarily true," Larsen said. "Vote Smart

is a website where you can search candidates and can see if they voted yes or no on certain issues and you can see if their views align with your values."

The MSU library has resources about voter information that students can find online and read about voters' rights, media coverage of candidates and fact check on the Library Class & Subject Guides page under the political science tab.

"In the smaller elections, there's a lot more influence your voice has. The candidates

are a lot more accessible. That is why it is important to find someone who aligns with your goals no matter what they are," Larsen said. "Local politicians are the ones who are going to influence you the most so that's why it's the most important."

Although the window to preregister has passed, those who wish to vote can participate in same-day registration. Preska is the polling place for students living in the dorms. Off-campus students will have to refer to their Mankato precinct polling place.

# Coke sponsorship leaves bad taste with green groups



GENE J. PUSKAR • Associated Press

Coca-Cola's giant sponsorship of the flagship U.N. climate conference, known as COP27, sparked an online backlash and highlighted broader concerns about corporate lobbying and influence.

By KELVIN CHAN  
Associated Press

This year's United Nations climate summit is brought to you by Coke.

Soft drink giant Coca-Cola Co.'s sponsorship of the flagship U.N. climate conference, known as COP27, sparked an online backlash and highlighted broader concerns about corporate lobbying and influence.

The COP27 negotiations aimed at limiting global temperature increases are set to kick off next month in the

Red Sea resort town of Sharm el-Sheikh. The Egyptian organizers cited Coca-Cola's efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and key focus on climate when they announced the sponsorship deal in September, which triggered immediate outrage on social media.

Activists slammed the company for its outsized role contributing to plastic pollution and pointed to the deal as an example of corporate "green-wash" — exaggerating climate credentials to mask polluting behaviors.

◀CLEANUP from page 5  
different RSOs hosting games and event tables.

Rangitsch said, "We aren't technically an RSO, we're

kinda like a subsection of the community engagement office. We're really just a group of students that are here to volunteer."

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# SPORTS

## No. 1 Mavericks send Cougars over the falls

By CHARLIE GROEBNER  
Staff Writer

On a warm afternoon in late October, the ladies of the Minnesota State University Mankato Mavericks soccer team continue a phenomenal season in their quest for a potential title run. Last Saturday they added another victory to the resume as they were victorious 3-0 against the University Sioux Falls Cougars

During the opening minutes, both sides started rather slow with both teams unable to generate any momentum. It would not be until the six-minute mark that the Mavericks will strike first, thanks to senior forward Brynn Desens putting the ball in the back of the net. She then proceeded to add another goal late in the first half before both teams made their way to the locker room. Even if they would only be her two goals of the contest, The Appleton Wisconsin native played with emotion during the contest.

"I think today I just came out with a little extra edge. Coming out with something to prove. Did have a bit of a slow start, that for me was all about trying



DYLAN ENGEL • The Reporter

Senior Brynn Desens scored twice in Friday's soccer matchup against Sioux Falls. The Mavericks won 3-0 to extend the winning streak to three.

to get the team fired up and put something in the back of the net," said Desens. As both teams exited the locker room momen-

tum seemed to be shifting back and forth in the remaining minutes. The Maverick's aggressive offense that plotted two goals

in the first half would be stonewalled on every turn by the Cougar's Defense, leaving them exhausted and allowing the

Cougars to try and capitalize on several scoring chances.

It would not be until the final few minutes when sophomore forward Maille Mathis would seal the win for the Mavericks late in the quarter.

This allowed the Mavericks to just wind the clock down and add another win on the season and keep their undefeated streak at home.

Even with their struggles late in the game, the group's message was clear to try and do anything to lite a fuse and get on the board.

"Just continuing to be the aggressor and not backing down. Even though at times we may not live up to the level, we just need to push ourselves and try to grow as a team and just stay hungry and want more," said Desens.

Currently sitting with a record of 11-1-4 and being the No. 1 ranked team in the Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference, they are one of the top teams to watch out for as they gear up for the postseason.

With only one game left, all eyes are on them as they look to bring home MSU's first title for women's soccer.

## Mavericks top Vikings to keep playoff aspirations alive

By HAYDEN LEE  
Staff Writer

The Mavericks looked impressive Saturday, besting the Vikings and continuing to dominate on the ground. This win gives the Mavericks their tenth win over the Vikings in the last eleven years, righting the ship and putting the Mavericks in a much better position to compete for a playoff spot.

The Mavericks took an early lead on the game's opening drive, with junior running back Shen Butler-Lawson capping off a 7 play, 72 yard drive with a 13 yard touchdown run for the Mavericks.

Proceeding the Mavericks' efficient opening drive would be three short drives resulting in two punts for the Vikings and one for the Mavericks.

On the Mavericks third drive of the game, their offense put together a Kansas City Chiefs-esque drive. This possession contained two plays for 45 yards and only took 13 seconds off the clock. A beautiful 44 yard completion from sophomore quarterback Hayden Ekern to freshman receiver Grant Guyett set the Mavericks up on the Vikings'

one yard line, where Butler-Lawson scored on the very next play. 14-0, Mavericks.

After another three and out from the Vikings, the Mavericks took back over from their own 12 yard line with 4 minutes left to play in the first quarter. This 14 play drive took the game into the second quarter and was capped off by yet another one yard touchdown run from Butler-Lawson, putting the Mavericks up 21-0.

The teams then exchanged punts before the Vikings finally got on the board via a 34 yard touchdown pass from junior quarterback Casey Bauman to sophomore receiver Jack Fisher. This made the score 21-7 Mavericks, and it stayed that way heading into halftime.

The third quarter started slow but was eventually taken over by the Mavericks, where, with 4:54 left in the quarter, quarterback Ekern would score his only touchdown of the day on a 10 yard scamper, putting the Mavericks up 28-7.

On the following drive, the Mavericks' defense came up huge. Junior defensive tackle Grant Nagel pressured the Vi-



DYLAN ENGEL • The Reporter

The Mavericks defeated Augustana 35-14 Saturday, moving into a four-way tie of 6-2 with Winona State, Bemidji State, Wayne State and Augustana. The photo above is from the last home game win.

kings' Bauman into throwing an interception to defensive back Somon Anderson for the first touchdown of his collegiate career. This essentially closed the door on any potential Vikings comeback, with the Mavericks taking their largest lead of the game, 35-7.

The fourth quarter was mostly punts and turnovers on downs, and Bauman was replaced by sophomore Thomas Scholten with 3:43 remaining in the game. The Mavericks' defense forced an interception on Scholten's first play, with Anderson taking it away yet

again. To close out the game, the Vikings put together a quick 10 play, 61 yard drive, making the final score 35-14.

With this win over the formerly 21st-ranked Augustana, the Mavericks have their statement win and are putting

FOOTBALL on page 11 ►



## Senior Spotlight: Mari Dougherty



Courtesy of MSU Athletics

Mari Dougherty is one of the seniors on the Minnesota State University, Mankato swim and dive team.

By HAYDEN LEE  
Staff Writer

Mari Dougherty has been an integral part of the Mavericks' Swimming and Diving team for all four years of her collegiate career. Whether it be her cheerleading, hard work and dedication, or just her pure love for her sport, Dougherty has been a great athlete and leader in her time at Minnesota State University, Mankato. The senior is currently majoring in aviation management and holds an internship with Endeavor Air.

The Farmington, Minn. native's journey began at Foss Swim School in Lakeville, MN where she began swimming competitively in just first grade. Dougherty also participated in other sports such as cross country, track, and soccer, as well as taking on dance before her love for swimming inevitably took over.

Dougherty's time at MSU began in 2019, where she finished ninth in the 100 freestyle at the UW-Stevens Point Invite with a time of 56.84 as well as eighth in the 50 freestyle against South Dakota with a time of 25.75.

Regarding the energy and experiences she has had at meets, Dougherty says it's a crowd like no other.

"The energy on deck is awesome, everyone is cheering for each other, it's an audience and an experience that's just different from a lot of other sports," said Dougherty. "Everyone who is swimming in college chose to swim, so there is also a lot more energy and excitement and excitement that goes into the race."

Dougherty has been an exceptional athlete for MSU, placing top ten multiple times

in the 100 and 200 freestyles during in-season and conference meets. She also set two personal records at the NSIC Championship with a time of 1:55.70 in the 200 freestyle, as well as 11:12.01 in the 1,000 freestyle. Her two selections to the NSIC All-Academic Team also highlight her hard work and dedication in the classroom. But it's been the connections and friendships that have really made her time at MSU special.

"I think the best part has been meeting some of my best friends that I will have forever, there is no friendship like a teammate friendship," Dougherty added. "You see each other on your best days and on your worst days, so that support system is like a family to us."

As for her personal and team goals for the rest of the year, Dougherty is optimistic and hopes to go out with a bang.

"I'd say I am hoping to break my personal record in the 200 freestyle, that's been an event that I've been stuck on the same time for a while," Dougherty admitted. "Our team goal this year has been just to win conference this year, this year would be a three-peat for us."

After school, Dougherty plans to continue to work for Endeavor Air, where she is currently a fatigue analyst. In ten years, she hopes to be working for a major airline, either in the United States, or even internationally if the opportunity presents itself.

The next home meet is January 21, which is senior night for Dougherty and the rest of the Mavericks, at the MSU pool located in the Highland Center.

◀**FOOTBALL** from page 10  
things together at the perfect time.

They face another challenging opponent in the Sioux Falls Cougars 1 p.m.

Saturday at Bob Young Field. The Mavericks are trending in the right direction, and hope to ride this momentum all the way to a Division 2 national championship.

# No. 2 takes a tough loss up north

By KARSON BUELOW  
Staff Writer

Senior forward Kyler Kupka was the hero Friday, as his lone third period goal propelled St. Cloud State to its 3-2 win over the Minnesota State University, Mankato men's hockey team. On Saturday, fifth-year forward Grant Cruikshank proved to be the difference-maker as he put up two goals and powered the Huskies to a 4-3 win, earning the series sweep over the Mavericks.

The Mavericks had a quick start Friday night as they controlled the pace of play and earned a powerplay just over three minutes into the game. The Huskies were able to kill off the penalty, but still spent a lot of time in their own defensive zone for the majority of the early first period.

With about seven minutes remaining in the period, the Huskies found a good burst of energy thanks to their fourth line, who peppered Maverick goaltender Keenan Rancier with shots, but to no avail. Their work paid off over a minute later, as senior forward Zach Okabe wheeled around the left circle and fired a shot past Rancier to give the Huskies the all-important first goal of the game.

Some back and forth action by both teams took the game to the end of the first period with the Mavericks down by a goal. Minnesota State would be gifted its second powerplay of the game early in the second period.

It wouldn't take long for the Mavericks to convert on the powerplay, as senior forward Sam Morton redirected a shot-pass by junior defenseman Akihiro Hirose to tie the game up at 1-1. Nearly seven minutes later, junior defenseman Tony Malinowski would register his first point of the season as he wired a slapshot past the St. Cloud goalie for the 2-1 lead.

Once again, the Mavericks seemed to dictate the pace of play for the next several minutes, and kept the Huskies in their own defensive zone for the majority of the period. But to counter, the Huskies found a short burst of energy late in the second and Cruikshank finished off a great passing-play from Okabe to tie the game up at 2-2 heading into the third period.

With a powerplay to start the third period for the Huskies, their momentum easily



NAME • Outlet

Minnesota State's Men's Hockey team traveled to St. Cloud for a two-game series against the Huskies. Minnesota State dropped both games.

carried over from late in the second. With a loose scramble in front of the Maverick net, Kupka was able to find the puck and bury it into the back of the net for the 3-2 lead for St. Cloud.

The Mavericks controlled for the majority of the third period, and kept firing shots at the St. Cloud goaltender, but to no avail. The Huskies came up solid during the third period and handed the Mavericks their second loss of the young season.

With a quick turnaround, the Mavericks juggled up lines and started freshman goaltender Alex Tracy on Saturday night, looking for a different outcome than the prior night. Saturday's game got off to a rocky start for both teams, as there were five penalties handed out within the first eight minutes of action.

With about 12 minutes remaining in the first and the Mavericks on the powerplay, St. Cloud grad-student Micah Miller found a quick burst of speed and flipped a pass across to Cruikshank who tapped it into the back of the net for the shorthanded goal.

But the Mavericks would answer back quickly. With a scramble in front of the Husky net nearly two minutes later, junior forward David Silve buried the loose puck past St. Cloud goaltender Dominic Basse to tie the game up at 1-1.

Strong play by both teams kept the game deadlocked at ones heading into the second period. As the story of the weekend would say, the Mavericks started out strong during the second period, but a quick burst by the Huskies would negate those efforts.

As Miller wheeled into the Mavericks' defensive zone, he

sent a harmless shot from the tops of the circles that hit Tracy's glove and trickled into the back of the net for the 2-1 lead. And the Huskies' offense kept humming as senior defenseman Ondrej Trebal sent a shot from the point that got deflected past Tracy by senior forward Chase Brand, giving St. Cloud a 3-1 lead nearly two minutes later.

Minnesota State head coach Mike Hastings took his timeout following the Huskies' third goal to calm his team down and try to regroup. This proved to be effective as junior forward Josh Groll found the back of the net for the Mavericks only four minutes later, cutting the Huskies' lead to just 3-2.

The game remained at 3-2 heading into the final frame. With just under seven minutes into the third period, Morton was able to deke his way past a Husky defenseman and fire a short-side snipe past Basse which tied the game up at 3-3.

St. Cloud started to pick up momentum late in the third period and spent a lot of time in their offensive zone. That work would pay off with just over three minutes to go, as Cruikshank fired a shot past Tracy that gave the Huskies a 4-3 lead.

With very little time remaining, the Mavericks tried to piece together a comeback, but fell short by a final score of 4-3. With the Mavericks' loss, they turned to 3-3 on the season.

The Mavericks will be back in action this weekend as they host Bowling Green on Friday and Saturday to start the thick of their conference play this season. Puck drop is scheduled for 7:07 p.m. Friday and 6:07 p.m. Saturday.

## Mavericks in a funk after falling to Winona State

By CHARLIE GROEBNER  
Staff Writer

The taste of defeat still lingers in the mouths of The Minnesota State University Mankato Mavericks as the volleyball team embarks on their final

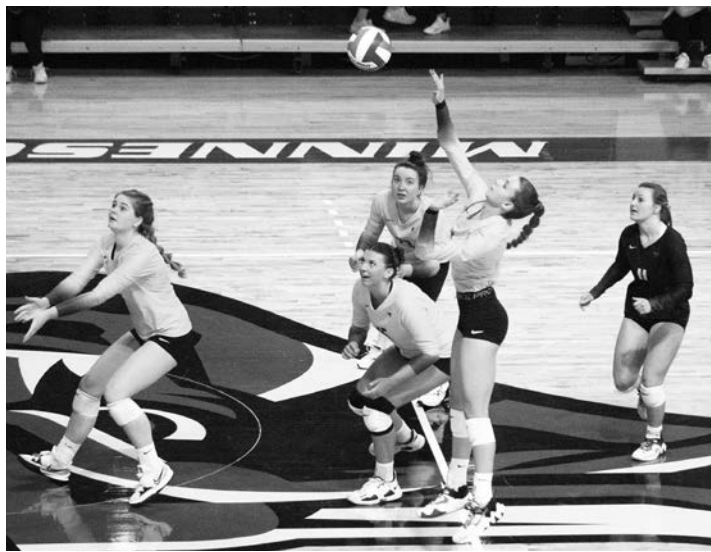
road trip of the regular season. With the season about to reach its end, many people wonder if the team can build momentum before it's too late.

Thursday the Mavericks fell short, losing 3-1 to the Winona State Warriors at the Taylor

Center falling to a record of 6-16.

It also comes with the misfortune of being on a three-game losing streak and the second longest after going on a nine-game losing streak earlier  
**VOLLEYBALL** on page 12 ▶





DYLAN ENGEL • The Reporter

The Minnesota State Volleyball team lost 3-1 against Winona State on Thursday. The team has three games remaining, two of which are at home.

◀**VOLLEYBALL** from page 11  
this year.

One thing that did seem to be already hurting the Mavericks early was that junior middle blocker Sophie Tietz was not in action for the game. Instead, the team's best player had to watch from the sidelines and try to motivate her team in the game. As a result, sophomore Emma Loveall got the nod and started the game in her place. The native of Spirit Lake, Iowa certainly played a huge role in giving the Mavericks thirteen kills and a block in the entire game. However, even for all her heroics on short notice, it wasn't enough.

"It was a fine night; you can never really be super happy about personal stats after a tough loss. But I just played my hardest and it, unfortunately, was not enough to get the job done tonight," said Loveall.

It was a tough night as the Mavericks struggled through most of the first set, falling behind early. They led a come-

back in the second set to claim it and tie the series as both teams would go back to the locker rooms for the half. Afterward, all the momentum swung in favor of Winona State as they took sets three and four ending the night.

As Winona State continues an impressive three-game win streak as they move to 12-9, they are still in the hunt for a shot at the postseason. As for the Mavericks, concerns are starting to creep in for the team as they prepare for a four-game road trip that starts against Upper Iowa. However, despite being in a funk, the team still looks to try and finish this season on a positive note and not get distracted about the future.

"Tomorrow is a new day, and we just need to get our mindset right and be ready to take on our next opponent. It's another big game, and it will be big to knock off another opponent and try to get a win," said Loveall.

## Rebound against Tommies, earn six points in WCHA standings for MSU Hockey

By KOLE BUELOW  
Staff Writer

The wait is finally over for the Minnesota State University Mankato women's hockey team, claiming their first win and a series sweep against the University of St. Thomas this past weekend.

"I'm happy for our team. They've been working hard and were in some tough battles here to start the season with those first six games," stated Mavericks' head coach John Harrington. It was a tough first six games for Minnesota State, who played teams with a combined record of 16-0-0 to begin its 2022-23 season.

Minnesota State is 2-6-0 overall and has earned seven points in Western Collegiate Hockey Association (WCHA) action. The team has lost key players and experienced heartbreaking defeats but has never lost hope, and that showed against the Tommies where the Mavericks came out with two wins.

One of the big storylines this weekend derived from freshman defenseman Kianna Roeske, who earned WCHA defenseman of the week honors for her efforts in the Mavericks' series this past weekend. Roeske earned her first collegiate and Maverick goal Friday while also collecting another point Saturday. Coach Harrington commented on Roeske's impact this past weekend first saying, "Anna Wilgren out is a huge loss for us, and Lindsay Howard hasn't been able to play at all yet either. So, we've had some young players have to step in there, Kianna being



LILLY ANDERSON • The Reporter

The Minnesota State Women's Hockey team swept a two-game series against St. Thomas over the weekend. Thursday's game ended 3-1, and Friday's ended 2-0.

one of them along with Lily Ramirez."

Harrington then went on to say, "They both played like experienced players, they're aggressive players and they try to make a play. And this last weekend, just like we've seen in previous weekends, Kianna got herself involved in the game and she played with an 'I can do things with the puck' attitude."

"What they've done, I don't think has been a surprise to us. We knew they were good players. They're getting a lot of minutes right now and they're taking advantage of that opportunity."

Despite not getting on the scoreboard first, the Mavericks rebounded in game one with three unanswered goals to secure their first win of the season in 3-1 fashion over the Tommies. Junior forward Jamie Nelson described the win

saying, "Nothing is better than getting the first one under your belt. Now we know what it takes to win."

Minnesota State translated the pace of play and their control over St. Thomas into game two where they shut out the Tommies 2-0. Junior goaltender Lauren Barboro tallied 15 saves in the contest, helping earn her first win and shutout of the season.

The Mavericks travel to Bemidji for its upcoming slate, facing off against conference foe: the Bemidji State Beavers. With seven WCHA points under their belt, the Mavericks will look to extend their lead from the Minnesota Duluth Bulldogs for fourth in the WCHA standings. Meanwhile, the Beavers are still looking for their first conference points this season and are hoping to do so after two losses against Wisconsin this past weekend.

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# VARIETY

## Haunted CSU Takeover to spook students

By LAUREN VISKA  
Staff Writer

Halloween is just around the corner, and the campus is starting to decorate for it.

Tomorrow, Oct. 26, the second floor of the Centennial Student Union (CSU) will be decorated for a Halloween takeover.

The Student Events Team (SET) will be hosting this event.

Namita Basnet, the Outreach Coordinator for the Maverick Involvement Team and different Recognised Organisations, spoke about what students can expect from this spooky event.

“The second floor of the CSU will be covered in darkness. We want it to be dark because Halloween is like a real ghost story in the real form,” said Basnet. “I hope students will be dressed up and have fun.”

This event has gone on for the last 12 years, and Basnet is very excited for students to see what is different about it this year after restrictions due to COVID-19 made planning the event difficult.

“COVID made this event tough in the past, and there were not a lot of students. We really wanted to do our best with whatever we could at the time,” said Basnet.



LILLY ANDERSON • The Reporter

The Centennial Student Union Haunted Takeover is back this year, taking place on the second floor. The skeleton hanging in the CSU advertising the event has died from excitement.

“This year, we’ve got eight different organizations helping out. It’s not just about the event, but about the collaborations.”

Some international students, including Basnet, are far from

their families and cannot visit them during this holiday.

Some have never really experienced Halloween.

“For some international students who do not have access to

their family being around or not able to visit them. So for them, we have planned and just as a school to introduce this thing to them,” said Basnet.

“We are one of the multi-

cultural diverse universities in the U.S., so we are planning on doing this event to try and encourage people to come to this wonderful event.”

This event is open to everyone in the community, not just students.

They wanted everyone in the Mankato community to be involved after the COVID-19 virus.

“It’s not only open to students this time; we are opening it to the public to get more people to come,” said Basnet. “We wanted to encourage people to come and be involved after the whole COVID pandemic.”

Students are encouraged to dress up in their costumes and to take a break from midterms.

“I love that people enjoy this holiday and they don’t just dress up. People, you know, dress up and go out and scare people,” said Basnet.

“It will also be a break from their midterms, solely because people really are going through a rough season with them.”

This event will take place from 8 until 10 p.m.

People can walk around the CSU second floor looking at all the spooky decorations.

They will be in all the rooms on that floor, including the ballrooms and conference rooms.

## Television musician Chris Koza performs at recital hall



Photos by DYLAN ENGEL • The Reporter

Internationally recognized songwriter, Chris Koza, performs at Elias J. Halling Recital Hall in the Performing Arts Center on October 18, 2022. At left, Koza plays one of his signature songs ‘Blackberry Moon,’ referencing back to the time he spent in Oregon during the winter season. Koza has released a dozen albums in the past few years, and has had music in a variety of television shows, networks and commercials.



# Leslie Jordan, actor, dies at 67



By LYNN ELBER and  
MARK KENNEDY  
Associated Press

Leslie Jordan, the actor whose wry Southern drawl and versatility made him a comedy and drama standout on TV series including “Will & Grace” and “American Horror Story,” has died.

The Emmy-winner, whose videos turned him into a social media star during the pandemic, was 67.

“The world is definitely a much darker place today without the love and light of Leslie Jordan. Not only was he a mega talent and joy to work with, but he provided an emotional sanctuary to the nation at one of its most difficult times,” a representative for Jordan said in a statement Monday.

The native of Chattanooga, Tennessee, who won an on outstanding guest actor Emmy in 2005 for his part as Beverly Leslie in “Will & Grace,” had a recurring role on the Mayim Bialik comedy “Call me Kat” and starred on the sitcom “The Cool Kids.”

Jordan’s other eclectic credits include “Hearts Afire,” “Boston Legal,” “Fantasy Island” and “The United States vs. Billie Holiday.” He played various roles on the “American Horror Story” franchise series.

Jordan died Monday in a single car crash in Hollywood, according to reports by celebrity website TMZ and the Los Angeles Times, citing unidentified law enforcement sources.

Stars of “Will & Grace” mourned his death.

“My heart is broken,” Sean Hayes tweeted. “Everyone who ever met him, loved him. There will never be anyone like him. A unique talent with an enormous, caring heart. You will be missed, my dear friend.”

“Crushed to learn about the loss of @thelesliejordan, the funniest & flirtiest southern

gent I’ve ever known,” tweeted Eric McCormack. “The joy and laughter he brought to every one of his #WillandGrace episodes was palpable.”

Jordan earned an unexpected new following in 2021 when the longtime Los Angeles resident area spent time during the pandemic lockdown near family in his hometown. He broke the sameness by posting daily videos of himself on Instagram.

Many of Jordan’s videos included him asking “How ya’ll doin?” and some included stories about Hollywood or his childhood growing up with identical twin sisters and their “mama,” as he called her. Other times he did silly bits like complete an indoor obstacle course.

“Someone called from California and said, ‘Oh, honey, you’ve gone viral.’ And I said, ‘No, no, I don’t have COVID. I’m just in Tennessee,’” said Jordan. Celebrities including Michelle Pfeiffer, Jessica Alba and Anderson Cooper, along with brands such as Reebok and Lululemon, would post comments.

Soon he became fixated with the number of views and followers he had, because there wasn’t much else going on.

By the time of his death, he amassed 5.8 million followers on Instagram and another 2.3 million on TikTok.

“For a while there, it was like obsessive. And I thought, ‘This is ridiculous. Stop, stop, stop.’ You know, it almost became, ‘If it doesn’t happen on Instagram, it didn’t happen.’ And I thought, ‘You’re 65, first of all. You’re not some teenage girl.’”

The spotlight led to new opportunities. Earlier this month he released a gospel album called “Company’s Comin’” featuring Dolly Parton, Chris Stapleton, Brandi Carlile, Eddie Vedder and Tanya Tucker. He wrote a new book, “How Y’all Doing?: Misadventures and Mischief from a Life Well Lived.”

It was Jordan’s second book,

following his 2008 memoir, “My Trip Down the Pink Carpet,” a personal take on Hollywood, fame, addiction, gay culture and learning to love oneself.

“That sort of dealt with all the angst and growing up gay in the Baptist Church and la, la, la, la, la. And this one, I just wanted to tell stories,” he told The Associated Press in 2021. Among the anecdotes: working with Lady Gaga on “American Horror Story”; how meeting Carrie Fisher led to Debbie Reynolds calling his mother and the Shetland pony he got as a child named Midnight.

He turned many of his memories and observations of life into stage productions, including off-Broadway runs of his musicalized memoir “Hysterical Blindness” and a 2010 version of his “My Trip Down the Pink Carpet,” a show that alternated between stand-up comedy and spirited one-man show.

Those celebrities in mourning included Jackée Harry, Marlee Matlin and Kristen Johnston, who called Jordan “magical.”

Lynda Carter wrote he “put a smile on the faces of so many, especially with his pandemic videos. What a feat to keep us all laughing and connected in such difficult times.”

In a 2014 interview with Philadelphia magazine, Jordan was asked how he related to his role in the 2013 film “Southern Baptist Sissies,” which explores growing up gay while being raised in a conservative Baptist church.

“I really wanted to be a really good Christian, like some of the boys in the movie. I was baptized 14 times,” Jordan said.

“Every time the preacher would say, ‘Come forward, sinners!’ I’d say ‘Oooh, I was out in the woods with that boy, I better go forward.’ My mother thought I was being dramatic. She’d say, ‘Leslie, you’re already saved,’ and I’d say, ‘Well, I don’t think it took.’”

# Ye dropped by talent agency, documentary scrapped



ASHLEY LANDIS • Associated Press

Kanye West watches the first half of an NBA basketball game between the Washington Wizards and the Los Angeles Lakers in Los Angeles, on March 11, 2022.

By LEANNE ITALIE  
Associated Press

A completed documentary about the rapper formerly known as Kanye West has been shelved amid his recent slew of antisemitic remarks.

MRC studio executives Modi Wiczky, Asif Satchu and Scott Tenley announced in a memo Monday: “We cannot support any content that amplifies his platform.”

Ye was recently restricted from posting on Twitter and Instagram over antisemitic posts that the social networks said violated their policies.

He has also suggested slavery was a choice and called the COVID-19 vaccine the “mark of the beast.”

Earlier this month, Ye was

criticized for wearing a “White Lives Matter” T-shirt to the showing of his latest collection at Paris Fashion Week.

Wiczky and Satchu are co-founders and co-CEOs of MRC Entertainment. Tenley is the chief business officer.

Shelving the documentary comes just days after the French fashion house Balenciaga cut ties with Ye, according to Women’s Wear Daily.

In their lengthy memo, Wiczky, Satchu and Tenley reach deep into the history of antisemitism.

“Kanye is a producer and sampler of music. Last week he sampled and remixed a classic tune that has charted for over 3000 years — the lie that Jews are evil and conspire to control the world for their own gain.

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# 'It's about time': Celebrations of Diwali illuminate NYC

By MALLIKA SEN  
Associated Press

The week dawned gloomily in New York, but the drab mist was little match for the holiday at hand: Diwali, the festival of lights that symbolizes the triumph over darkness.

Celebrated across South Asia in some fashion by Hindus, Jains, Sikhs and Buddhists, the multi-day festival has secured a sturdy foothold far from the subcontinent in places with significant diaspora populations — like New York.

“One thing I would say — the whole country celebrates, right? So it's lit up,” fashion designer Prabal Gurung said of celebrations in Nepal, where Diwali is better known as Tihar. He sees signs of Diwali's increased popularity in New York. But, he said, the whole city “is not celebrating yet — so I'm just giving them a year or two.”

Gurung was one of the hosts of Diwali New York, a glitzy soiree held Saturday at The Pierre, fittingly a Taj Hotel. The party, now in its third year, highlights Diwali by bringing together high-powered South Asians with other New York luminaries — people who “the world saw as leaders and role models,” said host Anita Chatterjee, CEO of A-Game Public Relations.

Five miles east of the five-star hotel, those already familiar with the holiday were embarking on preparations for their personal celebrations.

Earlier Saturday, the first of the five-day celebration, the streets of Jackson Heights were replete with reminders of the festivities.

The many sweets shops of the



MALLIKA SEN • Associated Press

Pratik Shetty, son of the proprietor of Flowers by Bhanu, stands by their Diwali stall, which offers flowers, stickers and other Diwali items in the Jackson Heights section in the Queens borough of New York on Oct. 22, 2022.

Queens neighborhood, known for its South Asian community, were packed to the gills with little room for movement.

In the stands outside Apna Bazaar, a grocery store, a sea of small clay pots and wicks for Diwali lamps lay alongside fresh bunches of cilantro and above bags of onions. Handwritten blue signs advertised Diwali specials for everything from 40-pound bags of rice to ghee, tea and pitted dates.

Every year, Sapna Pal comes to Butala Emporium to do her Diwali shopping. Carrying a basket brimming with tea lights and other decorations, the Delhi

native said her Diwali celebrations in the United States are usually intimate family affairs because most people prefer to pray in their own homes.

When asked if she misses Diwali in India, Pal — who has lived in Queens for almost 25 years — responded: “Yes! Every day, every year, every year.” But she nonetheless still enjoys Diwali here, looking forward to the sweets — gulab jamun, ras-malai and different types of barfi are among her favorites — and the puja ceremonies.

Outside a Patel Brothers grocery store branch, Bhanu Shetty has run a pop-up Diwali stall

for two decades. Her son Pratik says the temporary Flowers by Bhanu stall typically draws around 3,000 customers over three days. She is more circumspect: “People come.”

“We've always been known for flowers, but just for these three days we showcase all the temple offerings,” Pratik Shetty said, motioning to 3D stickers, garlands, stencils for the colored powder designs known as rangoli, pictures and, naturally, flowers.

Most of the flowers are locally sourced, but the Diwali specialty is the \$5 lotus imported from India.

Ratan Sharma, a manager at India Sari Palace, says sweet shops and grocery stores are the biggest beneficiaries of the Diwali shopping. But his clothing store does well, too: “Once a year we give a benefit to the customers,” she said, “and they take advantage of it.”

Sharma said the silk saris — typically on the more expensive end — are the most popular item during the annual Diwali sale.

Jackson Heights is a multi-ethnic, multi-religious neighborhood, and some stores still featured signs offering Eid sales. Suneera Madhani, the Pakistani American founder of Stax, attended the Diwali party at The Pierre as a gesture of South Asian solidarity.

She says she would love to heighten Eid's profile in New York in a similar manner.

The Diwali gala was certainly high-profile: Host Radhika Jones, the top editor at Vanity Fair, mingled with Ronan Farrow and Kelly Ripa, all clad in South Asian fashions.

Chatterjee said her firm helped connect some non-South Asian attendees to designers, including fellow hosts Falguni and Shane Peacock.

The party was at times raucous, with several bear hugs that lifted grown men clear off the ground. Gurung, clad in a glittering Abu Jani-Sandeep Khosla ensemble, tore up the dance floor to the 2014 hit “Baby Doll.”

He was subsequently handed blotting paper by a pink salwar kameez-clad Ripa, whose husband, actor Mark Consuelos, pat the table to the beat.

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