

## Exploring the Beloved Community on MLK Day



Photo of Zaheer Ali giving a speech  
ELLEN JORDAN '26  
NEWS ASSOCIATE

Courtesy of The Lawrenceville School

55 years after his death, Martin Luther King Jr. remains a symbol of unity, love, and peace for many. Given the meaningful legacy he has left behind, it was only fitting that Lawrenceville students and faculty came together on January 15—Martin Luther King Jr. Day—to celebrate his beliefs, accomplishments, character, and the honorable causes he fought for.

King (1929-1968) is remembered for his extraordinary oratory abilities, emphasis on non-violent forms of protest (which took inspiration from Mahatma Gandhi and, in turn, inspired other political activists such as Nelson Mandela), and being a pivotal leader of the Civil Rights movement in the 1950s and '60s up until his assassination in 1968.

Although Lawrenceville students previously spent the day participating in community service events to honor King and his legacy of helping those who need it most and bringing together people across different cultures and neighborhoods, this year, only an all-school meeting was held—a program titled “The Beloved Community,” which was planned by Director of Community Service Elizabeth Ferguson, Executive Director of the Hutchins Institute for Social Justice Zaheer Ali, and Reverend Violet Lee.

According to Ferguson, the switch from community service participation to an all-school meeting was a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. “The pandemic hit, and the landscape of schools and nonprofits shifted, and many places no longer accommodate large numbers of volunteers as they did in the past,” Ferguson explained.

Lee began the meeting by reading an excerpt from one of King’s most famous speeches, “Where Do We Go From Here?”

The speech is often regarded as one of King’s most radical, and is also King’s personal reflection on the Civil Rights Movement.

Following Lee’s remarks, Aviana Zampardi’24 took the stage with a reading of “A Litany for Survival,” a poem by Audre Lorde, and was followed by another student speaker, Xavier Penn ’25.

“[King was] an icon in the fight for African-Americans in this country,” Penn began, transitioning into one of King’s “lesser-known hopes for humanity”: the idea of a “Beloved Community.”

King first penned the idea of a “Beloved Community” in his 1957 “Birth of a New Nation” speech, where he proclaimed that “the aftermath of nonviolence is the creation of the Beloved Community.”

Following Penn’s brief presentation, Ali elaborated upon King’s vision of a “Beloved Community” and all that it entails.

“It is in this Beloved Community that Dr. King wanted us to imagine a restorative understanding of justice,” Ali said.

Further, Ali urged listeners to “find value in someone that [they] don’t know” and practice performing acts of kindness and selflessness for those around them.

“That’s the work of the Beloved Community: we start small and radiate change,” Ali concluded.

The final performance of the night featured viral pianist Timi “Keys” Esan, who hails from the United Kingdom and is currently a freshman at Harvard. Esan played a variety of pieces, including “Am I Dreaming,” which most Lawrentians sang along to. With his song selections, Esan aimed to “cater to MLK’s ideals,” specifically those focusing on love and peace.

Head of School Stephen Murray H’54 ’55 ’63 ’65 ’16 P’16 ’21 delivered closing remarks, and a reception was held in the Clark Music Center with refreshments and the opportunity to

hear Esan perform more pieces after the program was over.

For Ali, Esan’s performance was his favorite moment of the evening; he was thrilled to have had the opportunity to share Esan’s talent with the Lawrenceville community.

“Given the timing of our program, we knew that it would be important to ensure a performance with a high level of interactivity, information, inspiration, and entertainment. I saw Timi Keys perform at Harvard last fall, and I felt confident that he could bring the kind of energy, tone, and spirit to end our program on a high note,” Ali elaborated.

While Ali was pleased to have “fashioned a program and a reception that worked,” he hopes that future Martin Luther King Day programs will be held earlier in the evening to avoid cutting into study hall time.

The overall message that Ali hopes Lawrentians take with them from the meeting is “the importance of moving toward the goal of the Beloved Community in the spirit of redemption and reconciliation.”

“The wonderful thing about [the idea of the Beloved Community] is that we can each start small with everyday acts of kindness and consideration. This is what Mr. Murray encouraged us to do in his 2023 Convocation address. This is King’s legacy. And it is our responsibility,” Ali finished.

For many Lawrentians, the schoolwide program and Esan’s performance helped students view King through a new lens.

“I really enjoyed the [musical] performance. I thought it was well done, unexpected, and something very different; with a new message about Martin Luther King that didn’t just discuss the things that we might traditionally learn at school,” Mila Cooper ’26 reflected.

## Outside the Bubble Oregon Supreme Court Lets Trump Stay on Ballot

SAMUEL WANG '26  
OPINIONS ASSOCIATE

The Oregon Supreme Court has temporarily allowed former President Donald J. Trump to remain on the state’s 2024 Republican primary ballot amid nationwide legal disputes over his eligibility to run for President under the 14th Amendment of The Constitution, which bans those who have “engaged in insurrection or rebellion.” Lawsuits in over 30 states challenge Trump’s candidacy, citing his involvement in the 2021 U.S. Capitol insurrection. The decisions made in Colorado and Maine, which both found Trump ineligible to run, along with the Supreme Court’s

reevaluation of the Colorado verdict, have sparked a nationwide interest in the fate of the former President. Oregon’s decision is still on hold until further input is received from the Supreme Court, with the potential for new lawsuits against Trump to be filed. While Trump’s lawyer denied him having played any role in orchestrating the Capitol riot, this uncertain and complicated situation reflects a broader uncertainty and legal complexity over Trump’s eligibility for the presidency as “judges... have found themselves in uncharted waters that pose fundamental questions for American democracy,” according to the New York Times.

## Iowa at odds with New Hampshire on abortion

SARAH JANG '27

As presidential caucuses kick off in Iowa this week, G.O.P. candidates face the challenge of balancing the varying conservative viewpoints on abortion across the nation. In Republican-dominated Iowa, conservative Christians take a very strong pro-life stance—leading G.O.P. candidate Nikki Haley to cater to that majority with a campaign that highlights her pro-life views. In contrast, conservatives in swing

state New Hampshire lean towards legalizing abortion. To appeal to all voters, many Republican candidates have changed their stances on abortion depending on which state is hearing their messages, eliciting criticism from Democratic candidates and voters themselves. How G.O.P. candidates address the topic of abortion in their platforms will continue to affect the race for votes within the Republican Party as the election progresses.

## U.S. and Britain launch strikes against Houthi rebel targets in Yemen

SAHANA LÖWY '26

On January 11, the United States and United Kingdom launched military strikes against Houthi rebels in Yemen in response to escalating attacks by the Iran-backed political group. The combative effort, supported by Australia, Bahrain, Canada, and the Netherlands, targeted Houthi-controlled sites with over 60 targets hit. President Joe Biden issued a statement attributing this military move to protecting American allies and freedom overseas. The Houthis, in return, vowed to re-

taliante—the rebel group’s military spokesperson, Yahya Saree, said that airstrikes would not deter further Houthi attacks on shipping in the Red Sea. According to the U.S. Central Command, since November 19, Iranian-backed Houthis have fired 27 anti-ship ballistic missiles from Houthi-controlled areas in Yemen into international shipping lanes in the Gulf of Aden. This rapidly-escalating conflict between the Houthi and various members of the UN stems from Houthi support for Hamas, a foreign terrorist organization.





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### Dogs of the Week Hadee Emily Pan '24



# Christmas? In This Economy?

ANGEL XIN '26

December is that time of year. Whether it be Christmas, Hanukkah, or Kwanzaa, family members travel across states, nations, or even continents to reunite with each other and celebrate their faith and traditions. What better way to express this joy, excitement, and appreciation than through gift giving (or, in capitalistic terms, “socially-expected redistribution of capital”)?

Various studies have shown that these holidays, with Christmas being the most prominent example, significantly stimulate the U.S. economy: not only is December's share of annual retail spending 17 percent higher than the monthly average, but 2023 has broken the record for the highest amount of holiday retail sales ever with a staggering \$957 billion in revenue compared to 2018's 850 billion. Data scientists found that November and December holiday sales in particular average to approximately 20 percent of total annual retail sales. I attribute the increasingly important ties between

Christmas and the economy to three main reasons: inflation, Capitalism, and the gradually more secular connotation of Christmas.

When the Covid-19 pandemic first hit the global economy, the labor market tightened significantly, leading to massive unemployment and lower wages. Labor unions responded with strikes and bargains, and firms responded with higher wages and an increased market price, effectively lowering the value of a dollar by inflating how many bills were in circulation. Although the Federal Reserve has been continuously trying to resolve this dilemma through increasing interest rates, the problem remains unsolved. In 2022, the mean net worth of American households was already \$1.06 million because of the enormous increase in the cost of living, one clear example of the effects of inflation. It is important to understand that part of why Americans spend more now on holiday gifts is because they spend more now on everything else, too.

Consumerism affects every aspect of our lives, not just Christmas: we commercialize the teenage girl's desire to belong by selling

them identities made of Starbucks, Stanley cups, and Lululemon leggings. We capitalize on their fear of not being loved by reinforcing the idea that the monetary value of gifts accurately reflects how much others value



Melina Kyriakopoulos '27/THE LAWRENCE

you. Our society conveniently defines people and emotions as numbers, and this extends to Christmas, as well as any other holiday that you can think of. When the religious symbols that defined Christmas are replaced by candy canes, eggnog, and tinsel, and Santa's gifts are

seeing friendships as transactional, calculating whose companionship offers us emotional or social benefits and leaving others by the way-side—a constant comparison of “worth” that is both unnecessary and draining. While many would agree that we should show more kindness around campus, we ignore countless daily opportunities to do so, and fail to go beyond common courtesy—beyond what is required.

Asking for an authentic “culture of kindness” is on the idealistic side—for one, kindness involves reaching out beyond one's comfort zone, a troublesome task in its own right and made even more daunting by life at Lawrenceville. At Lawrenceville, time is a priceless commodity, and squeezing the most value out of the limited moments of leisure becomes imperative. This pressure on students disincentivizes the type of kindness Murray asked, in his speech, to see. It is easier and more immediately rewarding to spend time with existing friends instead of trying to break the ice with new people with whom we might not connect very well. Trying to widen a friend group is made especially difficult for members of the Circle and Crescent: the little interactions that often build lasting friendships, such as innocently hanging out on a house's front porch, or joining in on a pickup game outside, are hindered by the Circle and Crescent houses' physical separation. Furthermore, because of our very purpose at this School—to be thoroughly prepared to enter the world—we spend the majority of our day working for ourselves, toward our own grades and goals. Friendships, though necessary for well-being, take time and effort, and at Lawrenceville, we can only prioritize a few of them. Taking these obstacles into account, the campus of kindness that Murray envisioned in “On Being Kind” seems a bit out of our reach.

However, that an utopic School culture is impossible does not mean we should not

strive to be better. We should hold our casual acquaintanceships in higher esteem and should seek to forge more such connections. It is easy to make and maintain these relationships—it only takes greeting classmates by name when you pass them and catching up whenever the opportunity presents itself. Also, our low-stakes relationships are easier to appreciate when we drop the cold label of “acquaintance”—such a hierarchy in our interactions isn't necessary. Instead of leading with calculation, actively recognizing the positives in others—their skills, their unique perspectives, or the way they make you feel—will lead to many more friendships. The consistent way to be interesting to others is to be interested in others. To realize that the classmate sitting alone at Tsai can teach you something, if you sit down with them and ask questions with genuine curiosity, is to be kind. Especially at Lawrenceville, where students hold a broad array of talents, we should seek to meet all the people we can.

So, we return to Murray's call. Do meaningful things: invite someone new to play football in the Circle, talk to a classmate as you wait before class, and greet people by name when you pass them during the day. Kindness is most impactful to people who are the most vulnerable. Seize the chance to connect with someone! The point is not to be nice simply because it's convenient or because you were told to back in September; in fact, the opposite should be true. The purest forms of kindness are the ones that have no motive behind them, actions taken without promise of a reward. Common courtesy is the norm at Lawrenceville, but appreciating others and reaching out when able will make our time at Lawrenceville all the more rewarding.

*This Editorial represents the majority view of The Lawrence, Vol. CXLIII.*

used to measure love instead of express it, the holiday bloats into a Capitalist trope; when a holiday emphasizes competition over unity, all it really celebrates is pure Capitalism.

Now, why is the commercialization of Christmas so much more successful than other religious holidays? While over 30 percent of the global population is Christian, Christmas' influence stretches far beyond this statistic: in fact, among the approximately 160 countries that celebrate Christmas, many observe other religions. In China, a majority-secular country guided by Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism, Christmas fairs are an extremely common phenomenon and popular destination in December; the holiday has evolved from a celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ to a secular celebration and time of relaxation. In fact, the evolution of Christmas may be best described by its music: our first associations are Mariah Carey's *All I Want for Christmas is You* and Justin Bieber's *Mistletoe*, not religious carols.

I have always believed that Christmas is particularly effective in its secularization

because of its timing in the middle of winter, a season known for the longest nights, shortest days, and extremely bitter weather. What better way to preserve one's warmth and joy than to celebrate? Even before the Christian faith, pagans celebrated “the Crystal Feast” and the “Unconquered Sun.” Virtually all religious cultures have traditions which celebrate light in times of darkness. It is a signal that spring is approaching, with light, warmth, and harvests—these are all universally lovable things, which explains why they have been capitalized on so intensely by our consumer culture. In modern America, companies seize on the fact that we prefer living in herds with our fellow family members and friends, showered by their love; and that we are also humans who draft out long term plans, who hope and dream. Ultimately, Christmas' most important aspect—making it invaluable to both the economy and our society—is that it provides us a reason to continue moving towards the light.



Gloria Yu '26 /THE LAWRENCE



# The Border Crisis: Learning from the Past

ALINA DIAZ FERREIRA '25

The United States faces a crisis at its southern border: millions of migrants, both illegal and legal, pour into the nation at sustained record highs, causing concerns about high rates of homelessness along the border and in sanctuary cities; crimes committed by previously convicted felons; and strains on infrastructural and economic resources. Comparing the border policies of the Trump and Biden administrations illuminates that the U.S. government must remember the order of priorities and its responsibilities to the people so our leaders can better address this domestic crisis.

Over his term, former President Donald Trump worked to minimize illegal immigration and collaborated with Latin American countries on the immigration process. 450 miles of wall along the Southern border were built under Trump, along with, according to the Trump Administration's statements, an 87 percent decrease in illegal crossings. The Trump administration enforced pre-existing immigration laws and, notably, terminated the 'Catch and Release' policy which released into the U.S. migrants awaiting their court hearings instead of keeping them detained. Trump replaced these policies with the Migrant Protection Protocol, which protected Mexican immigrants while

hearings were processed. As a result of these changes, encounters at the border declined to 52,000 in September 2019 and further to 36,000 in February 2020, before U.S. COVID restrictions, such as Title 42, decreased them even more.

In contrast, promoting a more "humane" approach to immigration (according to its official website), the Biden administration enforced rapid deportations for those who crossed the border illegally. The Biden administration ceased construction on the wall (though later continuing some segments); stopped the Migrant Protection Protocols program; and ended the removal of non-citizens from the States, among other changes to the U.S.'s border policy. Instead, Biden endeavored to create more "humane" pathways to American citizenship.

Refugees from certain countries are given automatic lawful residence for two years if sponsored through humanitarian parole, and other migrants can make appointments at the border using the U.S. Custom and Border Protection's app, CBP One. In theory, the app can schedule an appointment to meet with a CPB representative. However, the implementation of this app has not been

entirely successful: it has crashed multiple times and offers too few appointments for the number of migrants trying to get through. Many migrants still cross illegally and are either released into America with no near court date or evade detection completely.

Understandably, after the Biden administration's pledge to curb the border crisis in a humane way, within a month of Biden's installation, both CBP encounters with immigrants and



Sophie Yang '26 /THE LAWRENCE

the number of unaccompanied children seen at the border dramatically increased. Last month, December 2023, 302,000 migrants were taken into custody—the highest monthly total ever recorded. Similarly, in the 2019 fiscal year, 851,508 migrants were apprehended at ports of entry. Although the Biden administration enforced penalties for those attempting to cross illegally, 2.47 million migrants crossed the border unlaw-

fully in 2023, only about 142,000 deportations were made, and interior apprehensions and deportations were sharply reduced. Penalties the administration claims to have implemented and strictly executed are not driving down numbers nor discouraging migrants from crossing illegally.

Despite (or perhaps because of) previously opening their arms to migrants as 'sanctuary cities,' places where migrants would not face charges imposed by the government, New York City and Chicago, among others, now struggle to continue admitting more of them and handle their pre-existing state issues. Over 143,000 migrants have arrived in New York over the past year or so, something Eric Adams cited as a reason for city budget cuts affecting the library system, trash clean-up, and more. Most recently, the border crisis has severely impacted the city's students, forcing James Madison High School students to switch to remote learning indefinitely as the state uses the facilities to house two thousand new migrants. New York has also filed lawsuits against transportation companies that brought migrants up from Texas, trying to regain the millions of dollars it has spent providing shelter and healthcare to both ille-

gal and legal immigrants. Likewise, Chicago faces a similar influx of migrants and has resorted to restricting migrant dropoff locations.

The current federal government must strike a balance between a functional immigration process and a secure border, but must currently direct its attention toward the latter. Firstly, the government would have to invest in technology to monitor crossings and finish walling the sections of the border where most illegal crossings occur. Additionally, continuing agreements with neighboring countries to keep immigrants in safe houses until documentation is processed would further the security of our border. However, the documentation process must also become more streamlined. To reduce the major backlogging of the courts, the government has to both increase the number of immigration judges drastically and reduce the number of incoming illegal migrants. Logically, America's responsibilities are first to its citizens, secondly to its legal immigrants, and lastly to illegal migrants. By prioritizing legal migrants, the immigration proceedings could happen more smoothly, helping all parties involved. Securing the border is essential to the safety of American citizens and migrants alike, the protection of our interior systems, and the maintenance of the rule of law.

## Can Israel's Bombing Campaign End Hamas? Fighting an Ideology Takes More than Fighting a War

LEO MAHE '26  
OPINIONS ASSOCIATE

For over a hundred days after Hamas militants crossed Israel's border on October 7, killing 1,139 people and taking around 250 hostages, Israel has bombed Gaza into a wasteland, which UN humanitarian chief Martin Griffiths recently described as "uninhabitable."

According to Oxfam, an international collective of non-governmental organizations, Israel's bombing campaign has led to a death toll exceeding any other major conflict in recent history, currently leading to around 250 deaths a day with a current death toll of over 24,000, around 70 percent of which are estimated to be civilian casualties. Israel dropped more tonnage of explosives in the last few months in Gaza than the United States dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki combined, displacing 1.9 million people—around 85 percent of Gaza's population—and heavily restricting access to fuel, electricity, and clean water in the region. According to the United Nations, "more than 90 percent of Palestinians in the territory say they have regularly gone without food for a whole day" and more than half are at risk of starvation.

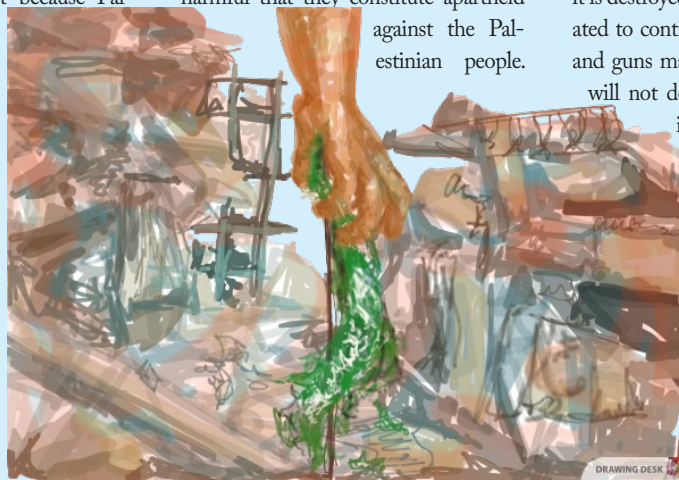
In the eyes of the Israeli government, all of these actions are worth it to achieve its end goal: eliminate Hamas and take back the hostages. They are certainly trying, having killed or captured between eight and nine thousand Hamas militants out of a total of around 30,000 and returning 100 hostages. Online, however, heated ar-

guments question whether Israel has the right to slaughter so many civilians if it can achieve its goals by doing so.

Israel's goal of permanently ending Hamas has become increasingly difficult and grows less achievable with every bomb that goes off, for reasons that go far beyond Hamas itself. After October 7, polling indicated that support for the US-designated terrorist group skyrocketed, more than tripling from 12 to 44 percent in the West Bank and increasing from 38 to 42 percent in Gaza. This wave of support is not because Palestinians support the slaughter of civilians; in fact, according to Fadi Quran, a West Bank activist, many Palestinians refuse to believe stories about civilian murder. He says that most Palestinians instead see Hamas's efforts as a challenge to the military occupation, defending against their occupiers.

The Palestinian Authority (PA), which currently holds control over the West Bank, came to power with the belief that diplomacy could achieve the wishes of the Palestinian people, meaning the terrorist actions of the Palestinian Liberation Organization at the time and Hamas today were unnecessary. Yet diplomatic attempts have not only been unsuccessful but have continued to worsen over time. As Ghaith al-Omari notes in his article in *The Atlantic*, the stalling and eventual failure of the Oslo

Accords, the last significant attempt to give Palestinians an independent state, "undermined the PA's central message" and the success of diplomacy. Today, 60 percent of land in the West Bank remains under full Israeli civil and military control, and Palestinians face constant threats from settler violence as well as severe limitations to where they can go and what they can do. According to Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and independent UN human rights experts, these practices are so severely harmful that they constitute apartheid against the Palestinian people.



Clare Pei '26 /THE LAWRENCE

Coupled with the Palestinian Authority's history of rampant corruption, inefficiency, and unresponsiveness, this failure of the PA proves to Palestinians that diplomacy will not bring them anything, giving them nowhere to turn but to radical and often violent groups like Hamas.

Even though Hamas's actions on October 7 directly led to and partially excused Israel's brutal response in the eyes of the international community, polling

shows that Palestinians do not see Hamas as the enemy: they see Israel, the country actively bombing them, as the enemy.

On October 7, Netanyahu vowed "mighty vengeance" against Hamas for the death of around 1100 people. What vengeance might Gazans seek after Israel has killed over 20,000 people in a country where the median age is 19, and made their homeland "uninhabitable?" Israel's response, and any further actions it takes, will only continue to strengthen the message of Hamas or, if it is destroyed, the next organization created to continue in its memory. Bombs and guns may kill off Hamas, but they will not destroy the ideology behind it. But if bombs cannot kill off Hamas, what can?

Although Israel does not have any easy or immediate solutions to this issue, the only thing that can kill radicalization is stability, something that Israel cannot produce without Palestinian cooperation but can certainly move Palestine towards.

First, and most importantly, Israel should listen to the international communities' calls for a ceasefire, ending the devastation it has inflicted upon Gaza and allowing it to heal.

Second, Israel should end its occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem, giving Palestinians the state they so desperately desire. According to the United Nations, Israel has illegally occupied East Jerusalem, West Bank, and Gaza since 1967, after a six-day war

between Israel and neighboring Arab states. Hamas, the Palestinian Authority, and most of the international community support a deal creating a Palestinian state with these three regions. However, Israel has continuously refused the deal for various reasons, the most significant of which has been their claim to the entirety of Jerusalem. Furthermore, creating this state would require Israel to dismantle its own illegal settlements in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, something it is unlikely to do anytime soon.

Third, Israel must allow Palestine to return to its former self, ending its physical blockade of economic activity in Gaza and allowing trade to flow in and out of the city. Gaza needs to rebuild, reconstructing the 50 percent of its infrastructure that Israel destroyed as well as building a new airport and seaport, both of which Israel destroyed more than twenty years ago during or shortly after they were constructed.

Outside of committing to a ceasefire, none of these steps will be easy nor likely to occur, as Israel openly states that it opposes the existence of a Palestinian state. The last prime minister who tried to create such a state was assassinated by a far-right law student with views that, according to Doron Weber of Haaretz, are not all that different from modern Israeli politicians like Benjamin Netanyahu and Ben-Gvir. Israel has not meaningfully attempted to create a Palestinian state since. But without change, Hamas will only continue to grow in popularity, and violence may soon supersede diplomacy as Palestine's strategy to resist Israel.



## Red and White Night

ARYANA IYER '27  
SPORTS ASSOCIATE

This past Friday, January 12, Lawrenceville students came together in the Loucks Field House to celebrate the Boys' and Girls' Varsity Basketball teams during the annual Red and White Night Pep Rally, organized by Athletic Representative Rayce Welborne '24, Dean of Athletics Tripp Welborne H '58 P '21 '24, and Director of Athletics Nicole Stock. Members of the two Varsity teams and spectators in the crowd were invited onto the courts to participate in different contests and games, cheering each other on.

The event started off with an introduction of the two basketball teams, members of which were split up into co-ed red and white teams. Although the white team emerged victorious, exciting plays were made all around by both the athletes as well as spectators.

In the three-point contest—the event kicking off the pep rally—Yijia Song '26 of the white team and Aryana Iyer '27 of the red team both tied with seven points, with Noble Whitfield '24 bringing home a win for the white team. V Formers Hayla Dora, Caleb Frederick, and Kingsley Hughes then participated in a skills contest, where they took turns shooting

baskets.

Spectators from the Circle and Crescent Houses also had the opportunity to win House points and represent their respective sports teams. III Formers Leeza Klochkov and Hansen Peck won points for the Griswold and Stanley Houses respectively from winning the knock-out contest, while Sneha Kumar '24 showcased her athletic prowess in the dunk contest. Corey Woodson's '26 windmill dunk over Raphael Dunn '24 marked a thrilling close to the pep rally.

Song, who is a forward and shooting guard for the Girls' Varsity Basketball team, said, "I get the impression that the team has more supporters than I had anticipated, which gives me more confidence when we play." Dora described the atmosphere of the event as "electric." Reflecting on his team's experience after Red and White Night, Whitfield said, "Even though we are going through a rough stretch, the energy provided from the rally helped us play with more passion and regain some confidence, and I think it did the same for the basketball program as a whole." He noted that the pep rally served as a strong reminder of the support and passion of the Lawrenceville community when it comes to sports.



Red and White Night

Cindy Shum '24 / THE LAWRENCE

## A White, White Winter: The Annual Snowball Dance

ANGEL XIN '26

This past Saturday, the Social Council organized the annual white-out themed Snowball Dance in the Kirby Arts Center (KAC) Lobby.

Social Council members Alex Salgado-Lozhkin '26 and Kellen Fisher '26 arrived at the event an hour early to set up decorations. "I typically also use this time to organize the music list," Salgado-Lozhkin said, "because my main job is to DJ for the dance." Salgado-Lozhkin has been the DJ for all the school dances following last year's Snowball Dance, and aims to "continue to improve his music" to energize the students. He noted that though few students followed the White-Out dance theme, he saw many "having an enjoyable time, which is all that matters." Fisher's goal was to work alongside Salgado-Lozhkin's DJ-ing by "reading the general vibe of the room" to see what music the students wanted next.

While the event was not much of a success in terms of numbers—as few students were present—the attendees described it as "colorful, energetic, and fun." Aiden Li '26, who stayed for the entirety of the dance, attributed the limited turnout to the location



Snow Ball Dance

Phoebe Rayner '27 / THE LAW-

and timing of the event. "The KAC reminds people too much of [School Meeting]," he noted, "and it doesn't feel right for a dance." Li also noted that "the timing was off," since the dance was scheduled on a long weekend where a large portion of the student body was off campus.

Salgado-Lozhkin echoed Li's sentiments: "The Snowball Dance last year, which took place at a similar time of year, had a similar turnout." Salgado-Lozhkin explained, "With athletics, heavy school work, and a long weekend together, [coming to the dance] is a lot."

Anastasia Fabien '26 gave a different reason for the smaller turnout. "It's a larger problem relating to the togetherness of our community," Fabien said. She felt that "dances are no longer how they used to be" because "students are too focused on individual academic pursuits." In Fabien's view, placing a greater emphasis on upcoming dances and schoolwide activities is necessary to rekindle community spirit when it comes to such social events. Specifically, she recommended "more eye-catching [School Meeting] announcements and school-wide posters."

## En Bonne Compagnie: Lawrenceville's French Table

CHARLES POTTER '25  
NEWS ASSOCIATE

Passing by the private room of the Irwin Mezzanine or the Hyatt Room of Abbott Dining Room during a Friday lunch period, you may have overheard French words and phrases from students and faculty engaged in conversation. These conversations take place as part of La Table Française, the French Table, which is organized by Lawrenceville's French Club.

Claire Robbins '24 became a leader of the club during her IV Form year. "The goal of the club is to bring together students of all French levels interested in learning more about the language and French culture," Robbins said. The club primarily comes together every other Friday during lunch for the French Table. Robbins described the atmosphere of the French Table as a "casual space where [students and faculty] dine together and converse in French." Reflecting upon her experience from her past few years in the club, she noted that the French Club gave her the chance to "enrich [her] French skills and have many interesting conversations." "I still have a lot to learn in terms of the French language, but getting to practice with peers has been a genuinely fun experience for me," Robbins elaborated.

Connor Dougherty '24, another club leader, described the central objective of the club as "promot[ing] a love for the French language, culture, and community on campus," with his personal goal for the year being to "increase the excitement and enthusiasm for the French language and to spread this within the student community." Dougherty was driven to become a French Club leader due to his "love for the language and culture," which he developed from "studying the language in school and global communities more broadly." Learning French and deepening his understanding of French culture has allowed Dougherty to "broaden [his] perspective of many geographically and culturally diverse places, such as Switzerland, Morocco, and Canada." The unique experiences and cultural insight he has gained from his travels are things he aims to share with the Lawrenceville community. "I think the club is impactful on campus by bringing light to those who come from French backgrounds, those who appreciate the language, or even those who are just trying to improve their skills from class," Dougherty said.

Alyssa Roberts '24, an avid French Table attendee, called

the meetings "an open space for students and faculty to convene and practice their French speaking." She said she enjoys the "unstructured time to learn and practice French outside of the classroom" that the club provides, and also appreciates "how accessible and frequent the meetings have been." The French Table has no set topics for their meetings, allowing for free-flowing and organic dialogue between attendees, which Roberts enjoys as they can "converse about [their] days and anything that comes to mind." This aspect of the club has also allowed Roberts "to meet so many new people and get to know the French-speaking community on campus." "French Club is one of my favorite clubs on campus, and I can not wait for the next French Table meeting," Roberts said.

Later on this year, Lawrentians can look forward to many more French Table meetings, a showing of a French movie, and a crêpe making event. French Club events and La Table Française provide a unique space for students to apply their French knowledge outside of the classroom, allowing Lawrentians to enjoy the art of the language, learn more about French culture, and further develop their verbal skills.



French table holding a discussion

Emily Pan '24 / THE LAWRENCE



## A Golden Night

ROBERT GIUFFRA '26

The Golden Globes Awards Ceremony took place this past week, on January 7. Unfortunately, due to Lawrenceville's nightly study hall, I was unable to watch the show live, but I later saw a recording of the show, and here are my thoughts.

I think the Golden Globes reflect of the current culture in Hollywood; the winners, while all great well-known actors, were extremely predictable. On the film side, *Oppenheimer*, Christopher Nolan's newest masterpiece about the life of J. Robert Oppenheimer, swept, with both Cillian Murphy and Robert Downey Jr. winning for their performances. The win was biggest for Downey, whom Christopher Nolan cast with the challenge of playing a more calculated villain, as opposed to the boisterous protagonist he usually plays. Nolan also won for Best Director, which is, again, no surprise.

Now, on the TV side, my personal favorite show, *Succession*, had an even more impressive performance than *Oppenheimer*. *Succession* is the story of fictional media mogul Logan Roy (loosely based on Rupert Murdoch) and his attempts to find a worthy successor for his empire. But Logan's toxic personality and abuse of his children have caused a slew of problems and flaws in each of his progeny, and the show explores these flaws through their relationships with other characters. Both Kieran Culkin and Sarah Snook won for their leading roles in the show, and Mathew Macfadyen won Best Supporting Actor. *Succession* also won the award for best drama. This has been a great year for film and television overall, and looking forward to the Oscars and Emmys, it seems there is a clear path painted for *Oppenheimer* and *Succession* to sweep. There is, however, a possible exception, as I could see Bob Odenkirk winning Best Actor at the Emmys for his role as the titular character in *Better Call Saul*.

Finally, I would not be doing my job if I did not mention the hard-to-watch stand-up routine by Jo Koy. Though I actually found the NFL-Taylor Swift joke funny, in conjunction with his other demeaning jokes, especially his critique of *Barbie*, describing it as a movie about "a plastic doll with big boobies," it is easy to see the inherent sexism of Koy's "jokes." Koy has nowhere near the skill Ricky Gervais as host brought to the award show in the past.

I like to judge a hosts performance by Harrison Ford's reaction to the jokes. A blank reaction means the host did a pretty good job, as Ford is a pretty mellow guy. If the host makes Ford laugh as Gervais has famously in the past, the host has done an exceptional job. Unfortunately, this time, the host made Harrison Ford actively scowl. Anyway, that is all I have on the Golden Globes. On to the Emmys and Oscars—award shows people actually care about. Stay strong through the snow, Lawrenceville.

## All The Light We Cannot See: A Review

SONIA IVANCIC '25  
ARTS ASSOCIATE

A blind girl, a radio-obsessed boy, a walled-off city, an austere Nazi political school, and a mysterious gemstone are all masterfully woven together in Anthony Doerr's critically-acclaimed WWII novel *All the Light We Cannot See*. Published in 2015, this novel was an instant success and winner of the 2015 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction. This past November, Netflix came out with a highly anticipated four-part television adaptation by the same name. Many Lawrenceville students, already familiar with the story as a required IIForm summer reading book, enjoyed the new series over Winter Break.

The story centers around Marie-Laure LeBlanc, a girl who grows up in Paris and has been blind since childhood. She lives with her father, Daniel, the key master of the natural history museum. Daniel also protects the infamous cursed gemstone called the Sea of Flames. Concurrently, in an orphanage in Germany, Werner Pfennig lives with his sister, filling his days constructing radios from spare mechanical parts. When war hits and the Nazis invade Paris, Marie-Laure and Daniel flee to the coastal town of Saint-Malo, where Marie's shadowy uncle, Etienne, resides. Werner's gift for constructing radios is noticed by local Nazi officials who send him to the elite Nazi political school Schulpforta, where he struggles under hostile treatment and bullying. The two plotlines begin to converge as Werner works in the Nazi ranks to locate illegal radio transmissions that head towards Saint-Malo, where

Marie-Laure and Etienne broadcast encoded resistance messages. At the same time, a Nazi closely monitors Daniel to try and steal the Sea of Flames, which Daniel takes with him after fleeing Paris. The story culminates when all these storylines converge, with the characters' shared connection to the radio crumbling their divisions.

In the miniseries, this story is not presented linearly but flashes back and forth between two timelines. Although I was initially skeptical of this approach, it did not hinder the narrative of the story, providing well-placed breaks that I began to look forward to when one section became lengthy. The highlighted moments were done thoughtfully and allowed for strong character development.

Another positive aspect of the jumps in time was that scenes could also naturally skip between Werner's and Marie's viewpoints. I especially liked how the filmmakers placed scenes together when the two characters engaged in similar activities but in separate places, highlighting their connection early on, which allowed the merging storyline to feel natural and even anticipated. The only flaw I found with the pacing was that the first two episodes seemed slower, while

the final two were action-packed and fast-paced to cover large parts of the plot.

With just four episodes, the series was certainly condensed in comparison to the novel. Overall, I did not feel a sense that a large portion of the plot or character development was lost, as is common in television adaptations. The book covers many disconnected but fascinating subplots: the Sea of Flames, the father-daughter relationship, the allied advance, and Werner's sister, among others, and Doerr's prowess lies in effortlessly tying these all together. I think the filmmakers, including director Shawn

Levy (who also directed *Stranger Things*), faced a large challenge in turning this book into a miniseries, but the showrunners were extremely adept in their choice of which moments to present on screen as each subplot felt adequately developed. The only aspects lacking may have been an insufficient backstory on the significance of Jules Verne's novel *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*, which is featured heavily in the book, and the sense of mystery. Though not a true mystery, Doerr's novel leaves readers with many questions: what is the Sea of Flames, and why does one man want it? Where does Daniel hide it? What kinds of messages are Marie

and Etienne broadcasting? What is Etienne's secret? With such limited time, many of these questions are sadly brushed over or quickly answered in the series.

The largest change of all is the ending. Doerr's ending to the book—the entwining of the two plotlines—is quite somber after the build-up of each character slowly moving closer to one another. In contrast, the miniseries has a long-anticipated romance scene. Though perhaps a little unrealistic, I truly enjoyed the feeling of a sweet resolution and "happy ending," it conveyed a sense of hope, more or less lost in the book, after an intense show.

Aria Mia Loberti stars as Marie-Laure. Like the main character, the actor herself has been blind since childhood. This casting allows the portrayal of Marie to be realistic, fighting the stereotype that is often seen in blind characters on screen: walking with hands outstretched or constantly unfocused eyes. To ensure this accurate representation, the producers had to open up auditions to the general population, as there were very few blind actors. Loberti had, in fact, never acted before, having recently graduated from The University of Rhode Island and gotten a master's degree, making her already impactful performance even more stunning. Book lovers will always agree that television adaptations never make it up to par with cherished books. Yet, *All the Light We Cannot See*, a favorite for many Lawrenceville students, has justly been portrayed on screen and certainly leaves a lasting impact. If you have not already seen it, I highly recommend this miniseries!



Gloria Yu '26/THE LAWRENCE

## The Return of Seaweed Brain & Wise Girl

REBECCA STREETER '27

Perhaps one of the most awaited book adaptations of our generation, the *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* TV show reached a record-breaking 1.3 million views globally after the release of its first two episodes on December 20. The show follows a 12-year-old boy named Percy Jackson who is uprooted from his life as a kid in New York and thrown into the world of ancient Greek gods and monsters. Even as everything he knows is turned upside down, even more shocking news appears as his godly parentage is revealed, and he is sent on a quest to find Zeus', the king of the gods, stolen lightning bolt. Following a... less successful movie adaptation (let's just refer to them as inspired rather than adapted), Rick Riordan, author of the beloved five-book series, took a much more involved role in the production of this show. It follows the same plot as the first book of the series, and thankfully, the general consensus of fans, new and old, seems to be that so far the show is everything they had hoped for. Praise has been given for a multitude of things, particularly its mostly faithful portrayal of events (with the exception of a few well-received changes) excellent casting choices, and well-written humor.

The casting of this show was inarguably controversial, with some people claiming that the cast's physical differences in contrast to

their characters in the books would ruin the show. Most fans, however, have agreed that does not matter given that the young actors fit their roles so perfectly. The books, written in first person from the protagonist's point of view, provide a window into the sometimes naive and often amusing inner monologue of a middle school boy. His sarcasm and general disillusionment with the gods are essential to his character, and 14-year-old Walker Scobell has done an excellent job of bringing Percy to life. He is not alone, with audiences praising Scobell's fellow cast members, such as Leah Jeffries, who plays Annabeth Chase, Aryan Simhadri as Grover Underwood, Dior Goodjohn as Clarisse La Rue, and Charlie Bushnell as Luke Castellan.

The casting is not the only excellent adaptation from the books, and the show's (mostly) faithful following of the book's events has satisfied many fans. If a viewer had a checklist to mark each time a well-loved scene was brought to life successfully, almost all the boxes would wind up checked. That's not to say, however, that there have been no changes. For example, in the book, after his disastrous school trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Percy remains at Yancy Academy for the rest of the school year. In the new show, however, Percy is expelled immediately after and returns home. This type of

change has the clear purpose of shortening plot points so as to fit the whole tale within the eight-episode series. While understandable, some people have complained that the cut decreased their watching enjoyment. Additionally, more changes have been added in the form of dialogue. Some dialogue seems to have occurred to Riordan after publishing the series. These humorous small events, such as Grover's consensus song and Mr. D, also known as Dionysus, convincing Percy that he is his godly parent, add to the story that many people already love. And until Episode Five, "A God Buys Us Cheeseburgers," these small changes were the only differences from the beloved books. I'm not going to spoil it, but there were some major changes to the "Tunnel of Love" scene. While I was initially upset about the differences, they have grown on me. Despite changes, some necessary, others welcome new additions, the series has definitely satisfied my and other fan's hopes content-wise.

However, I can admit that as someone who has read and remembers the books fairly well, my enjoyment has likely been higher than that of someone who has not read the books. The world of Greek myths made modern can be confusing to anyone who has not read at least a few of the over 15 books set in Riordan's world. This confusion is countered somewhat by the fact that the main character is suffering from a similar lack of information. Things will fly over the heads of viewers who have not read the original books (such as Percy's love of blue candy), but the show itself is clear-cut enough that it is still able to be enjoyable.

Any Lawrenceville student would likely find the show fun to watch, and those who are fans of the book series will not be disappointed. The only real issue I have found is that the episodes come out in the middle of Tuesday study halls, so I have to wait until 10:00 PM to watch them!



Emily Pan '24/THE LAWRENCE



# The Transition into the College Counseling Journey

JENNY ZHAO '25  
FEATURES ASSOCIATE

As college application season comes close to an end for the V Formers, the process has just begun for the Class of 2025. The starting bell for the IV Formers' college counseling journey officially rang this past Monday, January 15. With a brief introductory session, students were acquainted with the College Counseling Office (CCO) and their mission to "offer the opportunity for students to draw upon and apply the academic skills and personal development that result from their overall Lawrenceville experience."

The College Counseling Office consists of a team of counselors led by Co-Directors Holly Burks Becker P '06 '09 '12 and Jeffrey Durso-Finley P '13 '14 '19 '22 who are in their 39th and 23rd years at Lawrenceville, respectively. Beyond the leadership duo, counselors Beth Foulk, Courtney Roach, George Long, Melanie Litzinger, Tim Cross, Testing Supervisor Robyn Campbell, and Office Manager Sharon Carabelli contribute to the College Counseling Office's many years of experience. To say that the Lawrenceville College Counseling Office has an extensive resume would be an understatement: the School's counselors hail from

established institutions around the country such as Amherst College, Brown University, and Dartmouth College to name a few. Speaking about the College Counseling Office at large, Durso-Finley highlights that "the Lawrenceville CCO has more than 100 years of combined experience...and an amazing team of collaborative educators who know both the college admission process and Lawrenceville as an institution incredibly well." For Lawrentians looking to supplement their college search journey with external help, he emphasizes that the School's team is more than enough to deem out-of-school assistance "completely unnecessary," as the team "finds [themselves] having to repair poor essay feedback fairly often."

As Durso-Finley puts it, "colleges and universities are complex organisms with distinct differences, even if they have structural similarities." He hopes that IV Formers can focus on "trying to understand themselves," to recognize "their own educational direction and strengths," followed by the "fun part:" putting together "the two big-picture ideas to build an approach to college applications." Becker echoes Durso-Finley's thoughts, emphasizing that "the tasks of applying to college are entirely manageable as well as



College Counseling Office Halloween group

Courtesy of *The Lawrenceville School*

revealing, interesting, and fun."

For underformers concerned about their prospective college or university paths, Durso-Finley advises them to be "engaged in maximizing their Lawrenceville experience." As "little formal college counseling...is appropriate for a II or III Former," Durso-Finley explains that the IV Form will be "ready to dive into the college process given their essential preparation to the foundational components of a vibrant education in the first few years." Even so, support and scheduling are given to underformers and their families at

Family Weekends throughout the year, as well as during Scheduling Day during Spring Term.

The College Counseling Office is aware of each Lawrentian's busy sequence so the "curriculum and sequential process is designed to be achievable, stress-free, educational...and quite fun," according to Durso-Finley. The CCO's "curriculum and to-do list" are "completely manageable," but they do require students to be their "best-organized selves" and "attend to the process." Reflecting upon her many years of experience, Becker concludes that "the happiest seniors are

those that return in the fall with a few thoughtful essay drafts, a complete draft of the main common application, a resume, and a balanced college list," emphasizing the summer before the students' V Form year to be extremely important. Luckily, the team of counselors has designed a process that is broken into "reasonable and recursive units." In the upcoming months, IV Formers can certainly anticipate a period of "building relationships" and "self-discovery" as they start to navigate the intricacies of the challenging yet rewarding college application journey.

# Empowering Students: Eduardo Hernández's Approach to Advising

SAMUEL WANG '26  
OPINIONS ASSOCIATE

At Lawrenceville, the role of an advisor is not solely about academic guidance, but is rather about forming an close relationship with their advisees that often mirrors familial bonds. Advisors, with their unique styles and approaches, become more than just faculty members or teachers—they have a "side quest" to act as mentors, confidants, and, sometimes, lifesavers. One of the most beloved advisors at Lawrenceville has been instrumental in fostering special connections, known not just for their guidance but also for enriching the student experience in unique ways.

Eduardo Hernández is a familiar face around Lawrenceville, especially in the Cleve House. Known for juggling the roles of advisor and Head of House with impressive ease, what sets Hernández apart is not only his cool style, but also his genuine

commitment to understanding what's going on in student lives, both in and out of the classroom.

"Being a Head of House means that I see them all day around and I will have first hand information on what has happened to them," Hernández explains. This unique position allows him to observe students' daily lives and gain a well-rounded understanding of their personalities while paving the way for students to succeed. He is not just aware of their academic struggles—he's tuned into their challenges, game victories, and the subtle shifts in their day-to-day lives. "I can tell something is wrong from the look on my advisees' faces"—a testament to his discerning eyes that can capture all the details of a student's life.

Hernández's approach to advising is not about flashy events or doing something special to make him stand out. He focuses on genuinely listening and providing thoughtful, practical guidance. "When advisees come to check in, I already know what

has happened to them," he says. His awareness means he's often a step ahead and ready to offer advice or provide support to better the student. Hernández emphasizes that "besides being a dorm head, as an advisor, I can give care, trust, and support to [his advisees] and always be there when I am needed." With his commitment and dedication, he mirrors the same values that the other Lawrenceville advisors strive to maintain.

Hernández doesn't only see his advisees as students under his charge because he views each one as an individual with a unique story and specific needs. In his world, being an advisor is more than a title—it's about creating a space where students feel seen, heard, and valued. His ability to see the full picture, understand the nuances of student life, and provide support at any time makes him not just a respected figure in Cleve House but a trusted and indispensable part of the Lawrenceville Community.

Hernández's advising



Photo of Hernández

Courtesy of *The Lawrenceville School*

experience is only a glimpse of what it takes to be an advisor. Countless other advisors on campus uphold an equal amount of support, care, and love and offer help in their own way. It is essential to

understand that students must respect everyone, especially their advisors for their effort in helping us to do more than we can. Just like the Lawrenceville Mission, an advisors' job is also to "inspire the best in



# From Dawn to Dusk: Day in the Life of Head of School Murray

**JENNY ZHAO '25**  
FEATURES ASSOCIATE

Everyone at Lawrenceville knows him—Steve Murray H '54' 55'63'65'16'P'16'22. No one else can imagine taking on the role of Head of School quite like he does.

Describing his role as “half being the mayor of a small town,” and “half like running a mid-sized company with 400 employees,” Murray sees being Head of School as a position that pushes him to both “be available... and take care of business.” As he puts it, the latter half of his job description also means “being true to the educational mission... at the heart of the School.”

Murray’s typical day starts earlier than most Lawrentians, even on a Monday when classes begin at 8:00 AM. From answering emails to frequenting Big Red Community Swim, his mornings are focused on “keeping in touch with people.” Following these morning tasks, the bulk of his day is “involved in meetings” to “stay informed about what is going on around campus.” Often with the Head of Houses or Senior Staff

Team, Murray prioritizes “making sure [he is] available to them.”

Another part of his day is taking care of longer term projects, such as the current Tsai Field House construction. From fundraising to design, many plans need his support and approval, as Murray, a figurehead for the school, ultimately needs to “take responsibility for decisions.” To Murray, he thinks it is crucial to be “visible.” Reverting back to Lawrenceville athletics, whether Murray is “giving pointers to the Varsity Water Polo team” or “trying not to get a penalty on the sidelines of a volleyball game,” Murray feels “incredibly lucky...that it is part of [his] job to be [there] and be connected to students.”

While most of Murray’s day is spent in meetings, he concludes that no two days are alike. As he puts it, his genuine belief in Lawrenceville’s offering of “opportunity to really talented, interesting young people who have great heart and soul” fuels his passion for his job.

If there was a competition for the longest to-do-list on



**Murray in his office**

Nicole Halucka '26 / THE LAWRENCE

campus, Murray would surely rank highly. With so much to do in so little time, he accredits his assistant, Maria Mangione, for “keeping [him] organized...and [his] schedule set.” Murray also finds motivation from external resources, such as serving on a number Trustee Boards, which he finds “good professional development for [him],” as well as “a good way

of representing Lawrenceville a little more publicly.”

To a Lawrentian, it may appear that the Head of School’s perspective on campus issues differs greatly from theirs as a student, and find it difficult to “know quite what it’s like to be in [his] shoes.” Murray doesn’t seem to think so. From sharing “day-to-day rhythms of the school,” he sees everyone

as “part of the community,” and thus “views things through a similar lens.” Even so, as an important figure on campus, he hopes that “people trust that [he is] doing [his] best” to lead Lawrenceville. From Murray’s presence on athletic grounds to advising community pursuits, it is clear that he “[loves] the community...[and] the student body...and[feels]luckytobehere.”

# A Behind-the-Scenes Look into Smeeting

**MIRA PONNAMBALAM '26**  
FEATURES ASSOCIATE

Every Thursday, Lawrentians file into the Kirby Arts Center for School Meeting, or more informally, “Smeeting,” but very few understand all the time and effort that makes each Smeeting possible. To Student Council President Bryce Langdon '24, Smeeting “is a super special time because it’s the only time we’re together as an entire community.”

Smeeting is the product of the combined efforts of the Dean of Students office, faculty, the Student Council (or “StuCo”), tech crew, and any special performers or speakers. In preparation for Smeeting, Langdon will first check the list of students who have signed up to perform. During StuCo meetings on Monday nights, planning Smeeting is the first item on the agenda. “We run through a schedule. Once I have all the information, I set up an order in terms of what makes the most sense. Then I’ll reach out to the tech crew, who have been fantastic all year, and they help set up any necessary technology,” stated Langdon.

Still, planning Smeeting does not come without its challenges. Keeping Smeeting original takes a lot of new ideas

and people. Langdon added that “incorporating feedback from members of StuCo, House presidents, social representatives, people who have reached out in open StuCo meetings, faculty members, and multiple previous school presidents have helped” make Smeeting fresh and exciting. Only once the plan is outlined and approved by the Student Council and the Dean of Students office does the Tech Crew start to work.

Every Wednesday at 6:30 PM, a dry run of Smeeting occurs in the KAC. “Bryce reaches out with the plan for Smeeting and the list of what we’re going to do and any tech needs. Typically the goal is to have anybody who is going to speak at Smeeting or be [at Smeeting] be there Wednesday night,” said Annabella Saltarelli '25, a member of the tech crew. The dry run is used to troubleshoot videos, sound, set up, and more. “The tech crew makes things so much easier on all of us,” mentioned Langdon. During Smeeting, tech crew is also in charge of adjusting microphone volumes according to each speaker’s voice. Saltarelli noted that “Usually the biggest part of tech is, whenever there’s a performance, we have to bring the main rag out, change the stage lights, and change the music.” In addition to the work done



**Thursday Smeeting dry run**

Anna Bao '27 / THE LAWRENCE

by tech crew, performers must prepare for their chance on stage.

Michelle Zhang '25, who performed in December, noted that “I went to the Wednesday meeting, but I also went to many weeks of rehearsals until I got the dance ready to go. In my dance, I chose a song that went very much against my style while still complementing my style of dance. I really liked the challenge. I spent maybe two or three months trying to come up with it.”

All the effort that goes into Smeeting pays off. Saltarelli particularly enjoys watching the performances. “It’s really nice to see the talents of Lawrentians

because we don’t have an opportunity where everybody gets to see that,” she added. Langdon and Student Council’s attempts to make Smeeting entertaining are also all worth it. “When people are getting a good laugh or coming out of Smeeting saying ‘that was a good one,’” Langdon believes he has made Smeeting successful. Langdon adds, “if we can get everyone on stage at one point during their Lawrenceville career, then I think that’s a great thing.” Zhang agrees, saying, “performing felt like a testament to my commitment, and I got to show that to the school. I was excited and also kind of

scared, but I’m glad I did it.”

For future School Meetings, Langdon plans to get faculty more involved in game shows and performances. “I will not reveal their name yet, but there’s a faculty group practicing to perform in the next couple weeks, and The Disciples just got their band back together, so we’re hoping they’ll perform too,” he stated. There are many exciting developments to look forward to in future School Meetings! Remember, Smeeting, with the entertainment and sense of community it brings to Lawrenceville, is all thanks to the hard behind-the-scenes work of dozens of people!



## CONGRATULATIONS TO ELLIE DIMATOS '25 FOR BEING A PART OF THE U.S. TEAM THAT WON GOLD AT THE U-18 HOCKEY WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS IN SWITZERLAND

### WHY THE BUFFALO BILLS WILL WIN THE SUPER BOWL

**BRYAN BOANO '25**  
143RD SPORTS EDITOR

November 26, 2023. Jalen Hurts runs 12 yards into the endzone in Lincoln Financial Field. The Eagles win an overtime thriller by a score of 37-34. The Buffalo Bills have six wins and six losses on the season and sit as the 11th seed in the American Football Conference (AFC) playoff standings. Panic has set in in Upstate New York. A team that had Super Bowl aspirations before the season sat at 6-6, having lost five of its last eight games. If there were any chance for the Bills to win the playoffs, they would likely have to win all five of their remaining games. That would entail beating the reigning Super Bowl champion Kansas City Chiefs in their home stadium, taking down the Dallas Cowboys led by MVP frontrunner Dak Prescott, and facing their eternal rivals, the then 8-3 Miami Dolphins, in the last week of the season in

Florida. With experts putting Buffalo's chances of making the playoffs are hovering around a lowly 14 percent, Fox Sports Analyst Nick Wright went on national television and defiantly claimed "There's a zero percent chance [The Buffalo Bills] make the playoffs". The Buffalo Bill's season was effectively over.

November 26 was the last time the Bills lost a football game.

By all means Wright (no pun intended) should have been right in his diagnosis of the Bill's season. Teams that are .500 usually don't go on five game-winning streaks to end their season. But this Buffalo team is clearly different. They went into GEHA field at Arrowhead Stadium and defeated the Chiefs. They dominated the Cowboys 31-10 in Buffalo, and pulled off a gutsy win to snatch the AFC East Title away from Miami at the last possible chance. With their backs against the wall, the Buffalo Bills have responded resoundingly. They are a team of destiny, and they will be the 2024 Super Bowl Champions.

Of course, it all starts with their superstar quarterback.

Yes, he leads the league in total turnovers since 2020. Yes, he seems due for one bone-headed play every game. Yes, he threw 18 interceptions this season. None of that matters. Josh Allen is in the upper echelon of quarterbacks with only Patrick Mahomes to keep him company. His 91.8 offensive grade made him Pro Football Focus's (PFF) highest-graded quarterback for the 2023 season, ahead of Most Valuable Player (MVP) favorite Lamar Jackson. Allen led the National Football League (NFL) in total touchdowns with 46, and his 15 rushing touchdowns set an all-time record for the most by a quarterback in a single season. In the most pivotal moments late in the game, Allen is better than anyone. This season he has led four game winning drives in the fourth quarter, and four more drives where he gave the team the lead late in the fourth, before the defense ultimately allowed a score. He has the highest Estimated Points Added (EPA) in the last five minutes of close games, and the highest EPA when accounting for drops from his wide receivers. No matter which way you spin it, Allen is an S-tier quarterback. With Allen

at his best, and head coach Sean McDermott orchestrating a top-10 defense, the Bills are ready to exorcise their playoff demons.

Buffalo's 31-17 win over the Pittsburgh Steelers in the Wildcard Round of the playoffs punched their ticket for the Divisional Round, where a familiar foe awaits: Mahomes and the Kansas City Chiefs. The Chiefs have played the Bills in two of the last three postseasons, with Kansas City winning both times. The most memorable postseason meeting between the two teams occurred in the 2021-22 season. In what is regarded by many as one of the greatest playoff games of all time, the Chiefs overcame a four-touchdown performance from Allen to win 42-36 in overtime. But this Chiefs team is not the same one that took the field on January 23, 2022. Star wide receiver Tyreek Hill is no longer on the roster, Travis Kelce is beginning to show his age, and Mahomes is in the midst of the worst statistical year of his career. If there was ever a time for the Bills to get their first playoff win over Kansas City, it is now.

If the Bills beat the Chiefs on Sunday, they will likely have to travel to Maryland to face off

against the Baltimore Ravens, led by soon-to-be MVP Lamar Jackson. The Ravens, by almost every metric, have been the best team in the league this season. A battle against them on their home turf is a game that no one should be able to win.

But winning games no one expected them to is exactly what Buffalo has been doing since November. Buffalo has proven they can perform when the pressure is highest. When Buffalo makes it to the AFC Championship game, they will be in the middle entering game with a seven game win streak once they make it there, with every one of those games being a must-win scenario. When this Bills team is at their best, they can beat anyone, and this team is hitting their stride at the right time. Led by one of the most talented quarterbacks to ever play in the NFL, the Bills won't lose another game for the rest of this season.

February 11, 2024 is the day the biggest football game of the year will be played. The day all of America will be watching. The day the Buffalo Bills will be crowned Super Bowl Champions.

### WHO TO LOOK OUT FOR AT THE 2024 AUSTRALIAN OPEN

**KADEN LU '26**

On January 13 2024, the first main draw round of the 2024 Australian Open Grand Slam tournament commenced. In this Grand Slam, players vie for the champion spot through playing five set matches in a seven round bracket.

Throughout this tournament, most fans will only pay attention to the big names, such as Novak Djokovic, Carlos Alcaraz, or Stefanos Tsitsipas—players who have already built their fame. Undoubtedly, these players will

perform remarkably and are certainly worthy of the attention they garner, but there are many lesser known players that people should be on the lookout for.

In recent years, it has become a common sight to see players find their way to fame through winning one of the Grand Slams. Players like Ben Shelton and Carlos Alcaraz, who were merely top 100 players, have jumped into top 32 seeds in grand slams like the Australian Open by just winning one tournament. Alcaraz especially is an example of this phenomenon, as he jumped from rank 32 to first after winning the 2022 US Open. These tournaments, like grand slams and ATP (Association of Tennis Professionals) 1000 and 500 tournaments, open doors of opportunities for these lesser known players, and it might

happen again in this year's Australian Open.

Max Purcell, an Australian player, is one of several underrated players who have made it through to the second round of Australian Open. After previously defining himself as a doubles player, he is now making his way into becoming a singles player after leaving his previous doubles partner, Matthew Ebden. After the split, he moved from number 220 on ATP rankings at the beginning of the 2023 to rank 45 by the end of the year. Additionally, he has been present at all the major tournaments in 2023, demonstrating his promising skills that others see as well. At age 25, Purcell still has a lot of time to build a stronger foundation, perfect his performance, and become a much stronger player.

At 19 years old, Alex Michelsen

also has a lot of potential to not only compete well in this Australian Open, but also to climb the ranks in the future. Despite having only played professionally since the start of 2023, Michelsen is already ranked 91 on the ATP leaderboard. Someone this young achieving such a rank is unprecedented, which demonstrates Michelsen's potential to reach a much higher rank as the years go on.







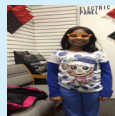
Although many thought his time at the top was over, Grigor Dimitrov, a 32-year-old Bulgarian, is making his comeback into the competitive realm of tennis. Recently, he won his first ATP title in the Brisbane International tournament, where he beat out Holger Rune for the champion spot. That victory marked the beginning of his journey back to ranking in the top 10. A deep

run in this year's Australian Open seems very possible for Grigor as he has already won his first match against Márton Fucsovics, beating the Hungarian in four sets.

Unfortunately, many unseeded players who showed promise going into the tournament have already lost in the first round, like Roman Safiullin and James McCabe. Moreover, several well-known, highly ranked players have lost, like Domic Thiem, who was once ranked in the top three, but was beaten by 30th ranked Felix Auger Aliassime in the first round.

These players, both older and younger, have displayed their potential to the world. Even if they lose early in the Australian Open, they have promising years ahead of them.

## Winter Dance Series Picks

Name Title	Dorothy Lee '26 Captain of LKrew	Isaac Moon '27 Captain of KDC	Isabella Spencer '26 Captain of FRObeats	Aoife Kilfeather '24 Captain of LDT	Roshan Shah '25 The only Buckeyes fan on campus	Sonia Singhal '24 wrangler of anyone who wants to join the nachasquad	Ally Calderon '24 Captain of Suave	Maansi Sharan '24 Captain of TDF
Photo:								
How high can you kick?	2.3 inches	I am actually not able to kick that high	pretty darn high	180 degrees of course	Shoulder Height	sorry my feet are permanently stuck to the ground :(	Over my head, but most people can since I'm only 5'1.	180 :)
What performance are you most excited for?	tech crew's cotton eye joe	I'm excited to see how KDC's dance turns out. I could see their dedication during practices, and I know it's going to be very fun. Another group I'm excited for is TDF, and I know they won't dissappoint!	ALL OF THEM (but of course BAD is always one to look forward to)	LDT AT THE DANCE SERIES THIS SATURDAY!!!	Frobeats	any choreo involves love from d dubs	FroBeats' step dance!!!!	TDF!!!!
If you could make your costume for this performance anything you want what would it be?	10 layers of winter coats	It would be more street style, drawing inspirations from Enhyphen's dance practices.	i <3 our costumes	probably something from the UDA college dance nationals currently happening	Unicorn Onesies - especially for the boys	pjs	Shakira and JLo's Super Bowl half time show costumes.	Something from dance moms!
anything else thats funny?	... a prophecy from yesterday abt me on board picks	Not really- But a fun fact is that others hold hands when they fall asleep so they don't drift away!	our captain meetings	you should follow lvilledanceteam on instagram tbh	48-32 ("#1 defense in the league")	Hudson crying over Chinese food at our captain's meeting	N/A	N/A