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BY ANNA FRITZE

Season’s greetings! With the end of this horrible year finally in sight, I, like many others, hope for a more positive and progressive year in 2021. However, I have to remind myself that just because the year is changing a number, that does not mean that everything magically is going to get better. Though we are all tired of doing our best to stay safe and do the right thing in order to make progress that seems impossible, I encourage you all to keep pushing.

Lean on loved ones for support (metaphorically, of course), find what helps you stay positive, and treat the people around you with as much kindness as you can muster.

Good luck to my fellow students with your finals, and thank you to all of our professors for dealing with this weird transition with us. Whatever you celebrate, have a wonderful, safe, and relaxing holiday.

Concordia Saves the Music Amidst Pandemic

BY REBECCA BEASLEY

This year has looked very different from years past due to the pandemic. Although Concordia was able to have students return to campus in September, students are required to wear masks, stay six feet apart, and meet only in small groups. In the background, many more things are happening to keep students safe.

For Concordia’s music and theatre department, extra measures have been put in place. Early into the pandemic, it was found that singing is more capable of transmitting the virus than simply talking. According to the CDC, singing increases the chances of the airborne spread of COVID-19, due to the “concentration of suspended respiratory droplets in the air space” and “Inadequate ventilation… that allowed a build-up of suspended small respiratory droplets and particles.” To save the choirs and other music groups, Concordia had to act. Any student involved in the Jubilate Choir or Christus Chorus is familiar with the Concordia Covenant. At the beginning of the semester, every one of those students signed an agreement, or a covenant, promising to follow social distancing rules and to do their part to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

By reducing these risks, Concordia will be able to stay open and still have choir and music groups.

Other than the Concordia Covenant, the choirs at Concordia also have special singing masks that were commissioned from a local business, Thanh’s Tailor. The masks allow for better diction while still keeping the choir members safe. An additional step the choirs take is singing outside when weather permits. They break up into smaller groups to practice and move rooms every 30 minutes. These extra measures can be exhausting but have allowed Concordia to save the music, and the music department.

Concordia has been unable to hold live and in-person concerts and performances but has improvised with video recordings and live streams. Theatre performances such as last spring’s Silent Sky and this fall’s Tintypes were shown virtually via live stream. The Hauntitorium tradition was filmed and streamed. The Fine and Performing Arts Christmas Concert for this year, Go Tell it on the Mountain, was professionally recorded ahead of time and put together for viewers. On the other hand, the string ensemble was able to hold an in-person concert with limited attendance and socially distanced seating in mid-November.

Overall, 2020 has been a long and difficult year, especially for the performing arts. Concordia has navigated this new situation with caution, attempting to keep music and the arts alive and students healthy.

Concordia has navigated this new situation with caution, attempting to keep music and the arts alive and students healthy. Students can only hope that the next fall semester does not have to look the same thanks to these efforts.
CSP 2020–2021 Tuition Announced

BY ETHAN LANGEMO

On October 13th, the Concordia University, St. Paul Board of Regents announced that it approved the tuition for the 2020-2021 academic school year at $23,900. This new price raises the previous tuition by a slight 2.09%, or $500. The housing and board for the school year was also approved, increasing it by 3.03% to $9,900. The overall price will be $33,800 for traditional undergraduates living on campus. All students will still be paying a few thousand dollars less than they would have had to before the historic 2013 tuition reset. An article from the StarTribune revealed that even though students are paying less and taking on less debt, the school has managed to increase its revenue by a whopping 66%. This means that more money is able to go towards financial aid, campus management, and resources for education.

Concordia’s competitive low price combined with several opportunities for financial support continue to make it the most affordable private college in Minnesota. All the while, it still maintains the same quality of education a student would get at any overpriced school. CSP Provost and COO Dr. Eric LaMott has stated that the cost of attendance is one of the most important factors that students look for when searching for colleges. This especially applies to students just graduating high school who are hoping to avoid the incredible amounts of student loans like their peers who decide to go to other popular private MN colleges, such as Concordia Moorhead, St. Thomas, or St. Olaf. These are a couple of the great qualities that have helped spur the surges in enrollment these past few years, though enrollment has been increasing since even before the tuition reset.

The announcement of the coming year’s tuition is a testament to the dedication of the institution to its students. Concordia, St. Paul continues to prove that an affordable education really can be as good as an education from other schools which forces the illusion that high quality programs require a high price tag. Some schools are making changes to their tuition due to the pandemic. The University of Minnesota has decided not to raise its tuition, and institutions part of the Minnesota State University system are also considering freezing tuition. Other schools that have gone online due to the pandemic are considering cutting tuition. Some may decide to cut costs to attract students who left when online classes took place of in-person learning. CSP is a leader when it comes to making the price work for students, and hopefully other schools will attain the guts to follow suit.

Amazon Pharmacy: Prescription Drugs Online

BY DAVINA BELLINGER

Amazon is one of the biggest online shopping companies making billions of dollars each year. One new online shopping option accessible to Amazon prime members is Amazon Pharmacy. The company will receive discounts from 50,000 different physical pharmacies around the country, some of which include Costco, CVS, Walgreens, and Walmart.

Prescription drugs sales through Amazon Pharmacy will reach $360 billion this year, according to the Centers of Medicare & Medicaid services. With the pandemic still on the rise, Amazon Pharmacy hopes to take advantage of the interest in shopping at home for its Prime members.

For now, Amazon Pharmacy is making itself accessible to all customers, except for the following states: Hawaii, Illinois, Louisiana, and Minnesota. The company said that it will keep customer sensitive medical information secure. Amazon will also not sell any Schedule II controlled medications such as opioids.

Amazon is building off PillPacks mail-order prescription-drug business to help customers with multiple daily medications for those with chronic conditions. The various other drugs that they also provide for their customers are refrigerated insulin. The company has also added the feature so that its customers can have their doctors send the prescriptions to Amazon Pharmacy.

Economists have looked into the reasons as to why Amazon may become an attraction to customers when they are filling up prescriptions. One of the reasons could be how the online retail may seem more pleasant and competitive with normal retail drug priceings.

Amazon is booming with its new pharmacy, which mostly affects small drug businesses throughout the country. The main companies that are also trending with the pharmacy industry are CVS and Walgreens because of their connections with mailing industries like FedEx and UPS. In addition, they also partner with some of the biggest health insurers in the country like Aetna.

November 15 SpaceX Launch

BY OWEN LIEBERT

At 7:27 pm EST, on Sunday, November 15, 2020, the Crew 1 Dragon spacecraft lifted off from NASA’s Kennedy Space Center in Florida. After a highly successful launch, the crew underwent an eight and a half hour flight to reach their destination on the International Space Station. On board were four astronauts: Commander Michael Hopkins, Pilot Victor Glover, who will be the first black man to take part in an extended mission aboard the ISS, Mission Specialist Shannon Walker, and Veteran Astronaut, Soichi Noguchi, who is a part of JAXA, the Japanese National Aerospace Agency. The crew will be joining NASA astronaut Kate Rubins and Russian astronauts Sergey Ryazhikov and Sergey Kud-Sverchkov, who are already on board the space station. They arrived aboard a Russian Soyuz spacecraft last month. The crew is set to spend the next six months aboard the station before returning in the same craft they arrived on.

This launch marks a new era for NASA. SpaceX launched NASA astronauts from America on May 30th of this year. But before that mission, they had not launched astronauts to the International Space Station from American soil for nearly ten years. Before now, NASA had been depending on Russian spacecraft to provide transportation to the space station. This launch is also significant because it was the first time a privately engineered spacecraft launched human beings into orbit, as well as SpaceX’s firstcrewed mission. Ultimately, the May 30th launch was considered a test mission. The November 15th mission was the first fully operational mission launched by NASA in nearly a decade.

The launch was initially set to take place on the 14th; however, weather conditions were obstructing the flight path. The next day, the weather still threatened to postpone the launch. Despite the risk, the launch was carried out smoothly. Ironically, an almost identical turn of events occurred earlier this year when the May 27th test mission was delayed.

Most notably absent from the launch was SpaceX founder Elon Musk. He had potentially tested positive for COVID-19, (meaning that he took 4 tests but 2 were negative and 2 were positive). The Crew Dragon spacecraft was named Resilience to represent the difficulties that have been faced this year. Just before the launch, Commander Mike Hopkins gave a message of unity to everyone, “By working together on these difficult times, you’ve inspired the nation, and the world… Crew 1 for all”.

3 THE SWORD NEWSPAPER
The Fight for Women’s Rights in Poland
BY ERIKA SOUKUP

WOMEN IN POLAND HAVE been taking a stand and fighting for their rights since October 22, when Poland’s constitutional court issued a ruling that tightened abortion laws that were already one of the most restrictive in Europe. The protests have been organized by the group Women’s Strike. The group is not just involved in abortion rights, but has also outlined areas extending far beyond abortion rights where it says urgent change is needed: stronger and wider women’s and LGBTQ+ rights in general; the separation of church and state; more support for healthcare, small businesses and education; full judicial independence, per The Guardian. The current issue the group is fighting for is women rights and the ability to have control over their bodies, specifically in regards to abortion. The nation, which already had some of the strictest abortion laws in Europe, will now only allow the procedure in cases of rape, incest or when the mother’s life is in danger. According to CNN, around 98% of abortions in Poland have been conducted as a result of fetal defects, meaning the ruling bans virtually all other procedures taking place in the country. It could force women to carry a child even if they know the baby will not survive childbirth.

The protestors believe it’s not an attack on just human rights, but specifically women’s rights. “There is an effective ban on abortion in Poland now,” Agnieszka Kubal, a sociology and human rights scholar at University College London, told CNN in an interview. “This has to be read in the context of the wider right-wing discourse on abortion in Poland, that women cannot be trusted with the right to choose.”

On Friday, October 30, at the capital of Poland, Warsaw, people gathered for one of the largest demonstrations seen in Poland for decades with more than 100,000 protesters in attendance. Unfortunately, the Polish government is acting aggressively towards the peaceful protesters. According to AP News, Polish police came under criticism on Thursday for using tear gas and force on mostly female and younger protesters during the latest in a string of women-led protests.

On Tuesday, immense pressure from the protests have stopped officials from publishing the rule, which would make it into a law.

Give or Receive Meals Safely during the Holidays: Nutritional Assistance Located on or Near Campus

RECEIVING ACCESS TO BASIC food needs will be a challenge for many Minnesotans this winter. According to Gov. Walz, “One in eight Minnesotans is struggling to put food on the table as we face a pandemic and its impact on our economy.” COVID-19 will continue to affect Minnesotans during the holidays, but there are ways to help. Listed below are places helping provide food to people in need all within two miles of Concordia. In addition, there is information for those needing access to services, and those looking to donate or volunteer.

COMET’S CUPBOARD, partnered with Second Harvest Heartland, is a food shelf available to Concordia students, faculty, staff, and alumni. It is also available to community members by appointment. Comet’s Cupboard hopes to “reduce stigma associated with receiving nutrition assistance by creating a welcome environment.” The food shelf is located in Meyer Hall 115 for students. To donate, drop off non-perishable items or dollar donations in the Center for Student Engagement office. To schedule an appointment or for more information, go to csp.edu/student-services/cometscupidboard/

Meyer Hall 115 Food Shelf Hours: 9am-3pm Monday-Friday

Center for Student Engagement Office: 1282 Concordia Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55104 – Make checks payable to Concordia University Food Shelf.

HALLIE Q. BROWN COMMUNITY CENTER is an African American, nonprofit social service agency open to all since 1929. Their mission is to “improve the quality of life in [the] community by providing access to critical human services, fostering, and promoting personal growth, and developing community leadership.” Their food shelf includes culturally specific foods donated by partner stores. Due to COVID-19, the food shelf has transitioned to curbside pickup and delivery only. Appointments via phone or the online request form are required to access the food shelf.

Hallie Q. Brown Community Center has created the Milk and Egg club to support kids affected by the recently increased “milk gap.” Hybrid or fully online school models prevent kids from receiving free lunch tuition. They can’t get the calcium, vitamin D and potassium that school milk offers, and protein rich foods are often not donated to food shelves. Through the Milk and Egg club, a donation of only $20 can provide a month’s worth of milk and eggs for kids. To fill out a food shelf request form, support the Milk and Egg club, or for more information, go to hallieqbrown.org

Hallie Q. Brown Community Center Hours: 8:30am-6pm Monday-Friday
270 N Kent St, St Paul, MN 55102

KEYSTONE COMMUNITY SERVICES helps those in need including “isolated seniors, youth and families needing connection, and those needing food support.” To access food shelf services, no appointment is needed. Upon arrival, there are several social distancing measures in place. Food is served on a first come, first serve basis. To donate food or personal care items, drop off donations at the Merriam Park Community Center. For a list of donation needs, or more information, go to keystoneservices.org

Midway Food Shelf Hours: 10am-12:30pm and 2pm-4:30pm Monday-Friday
1916 University Ave W, St Paul, MN 55104

OPEN HANDS MIDWAY offers hot meals, fresh produce, and bakery items for free. Open Hands Midway is partnered with Second Harvest Heartland and dedicated to “providing means for those who are economically challenged and help obtain nutritious meals and groceries.” They have a free meal service (take-out only) and a food shelf. Also provided: a ‘pay as you can’ lunch every Friday serviced by Shobi’s Table in the parking lot at Bethlehem Lutheran Church the-Midway.

Open Hands Midway is looking for meal prep volunteers on Mondays and Wednesdays from 10am-3pm. Volunteers are expected to follow COVID-19 guidelines even when not serving food in person. Food shelf donations are also welcome. For a list of donation needs, or more information, go to openhandsmidway.org

Open Hands Midway Free Meals (take-out): 12pm-2pm Monday and Wednesday (No meals December 28 & 30)

Open Hands Midway Food Shelf Hours: 12pm-2pm every other Tuesday

Shobi’s Table Food Truck Hours: 11:30am-1:30pm Fridays
436 Roy St N, St Paul, MN 55104
The Disintegration of Ethiopia: How Regional Conflicts in Opposition to Ethiopia are Once Again on the Rise

BY RAJEERA GELETA

Ethiopia is once again disintegrating. After Abiy Ahmed took over in 2018 as the new Prime Minister of Ethiopia, replacing the former Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF), conflicts around the country have once again sprung up. Ahmed was a Nobel Peace Prize laureate in 2019 for his effort to bring peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea. However, since he took office, a civil war and several armed conflicts sprouted in nearly every region of Ethiopia. We will look at the two biggest armed conflicts that are in opposition to the Ethiopian government.

Ethiopia is a country in East Africa composed of 10 ethnic-based regions as seen in the map below. This division in administration is called ethnic/multinational federalism and was created in the ’90s when the TPLF, a political party and former rebel group based in Tigray, took power in Ethiopia. One of the goals of this system was to give indigenous nationalities to Ethiopia a certain level of autonomy instead of complete secession which was the popular choice for several groups, especially among the Oromos who reside in Oromia, the biggest region in terms of land and population according to the latest Ethiopian census.

The biggest conflict that could lead to the disintegration of Ethiopia is the civil war that began on November 4th in the Tigray region. According to a report that the Ethiopian government made out to the international community, TPLF attacked the Northern Command of the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF). In response, the federal government has started a war to oust the political party. The TPLF, on the other hand, has claimed that Eritrean forces have joined the conflict backing ENDF. In response, TPLF has sent rocket attacks to Eritrea’s capital city Amara according to US intelligence and several media outlets. With that response, this civil war could potentially turn into a regional war. Both sides of this war claim they are winning so far, and Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed has stated in a press release that the international community should not get involved unless Ethiopia asks for assistance. If this war continues under these terms, it may be a long and costly war for both sides.

In the Oromia region, a completely different struggle has taken place since June against the government. Hachalu Hundessaa, a prominent Oromo activist and singer, was interviewed on the Oromia Media Network (OMN) in June 2020, where he publicly criticized the Ethiopian government and the romanticization of Ethiopian history at the expense of the Oromo people. According to Aljazeera, after the interview people called for his death on social media, and he was assassinated a week after the interview took place. After his assassination, the Oromia region exploded in protests. The Ethiopian government security forces have arrested and killed several Oromo activists, journalists, politicians, and innocent Oromo civilians. News stations and political offices that have been openly critical or in opposition to the government have also been shut down in Ethiopia. Because of these actions taken against the Oromo people, armed conflicts have grown in several parts of the Oromia region between the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) and the government.

Since Ethiopia was created by conquering other nations into the empire, many ethnic groups feel as if they are being marginalized by the government. As new regimes continue to marginalize these groups of people, it is expected that new armed conflicts will emerge and old ones solidify. As these groups grow, we may see Abiy Ahmed’s regime being the last chapter in the nation’s history.

Concordia 451

BY ALEXANDRIA GOSEN

Former Associate Justice of the supreme court Potter Stewart once said, “Censorship reflects a society’s lack of confidence in itself.” Censorship is a sort of secret topic. As students, we hear about it and we read about it, but we do not realize what little power we have over it. Sure, we can protest, but ultimately if a person with power slams their proverbial gavel and order a gag order on anyone, it will pass. This is actually a major issue here at Concordia, but I think it’s one that is seldom discussed. But, we are all affected: professors are censored, the arts are censored, and student opinions could be censored.

Many students don’t completely realize this, but most of our professors are under their own personal gag order. Many (all of whom will go unnamed) have expressed concerns about losing their jobs if they say the wrong thing, particularly in regards to their own personal politics. If they express a view that a student doesn’t agree with and that student snitches, any professor could get in trouble. Because of this, we as students are missing out on the ability to learn to think for ourselves. We don’t get to disagree with our professors and have these important conversations. We are taught the basic beliefs of Concordia, and thus we ultimately are carbon copies. It’s no different than the mentality of high school.

Furthermore, it is no secret that the theatre program is one of the most censored areas on campus. This is because many shows tackle quite intense topics. The Concordia theatre department does its best to put on meaningful, family friendly shows, but even then there are people who are outraged by costumes, plot points, and innuendos made with in a show (which, really, is all of Shakespeare). However, has it ever occurred to those who encourage this theatrical gag order that this limits those attempting to pursue a theatrical career? It’s hindering our training as performers. We don’t learn how to play intense roles because we aren’t given the opportunity. Why aren’t we given the opportunity? Because there is a social expectation for any and all shows put on the stage to be fun, happy, and good for the whole family. It’s unrealistic to life. Aristotle once said, “the aim of art is not to represent the outward appearance of things, but their inward significance.”

In continuation, there is a lot of tension between conservatives and liberals on campus. Maybe you don’t notice it, but plenty do. And, while I do not agree with many conservative views, I recognize that they have a right to express their opinion. We’re in a really interesting place when our First Amendment rights are all being exercised: the right to assemble and protest what we disagree with; the right to express our opinions, however unsavory they may be to others; and the right to freedom of the press. However, nobody recognizes how easily some of these things could be subtly dismissed by the people in charge at Concordia. If anyone who sponsors the paper doesn’t like what they read, articles could get pulled and topics could be censored.

Censorship can be defined in one word: toxic. If we forever fear uncomfortable conversations, how will they ever become comfortable? If we forever give more power to silence than solutions, how can we expect anything to be done in anyone’s favor? Ray Bradbury said, “There is more than one way to burn a book. And the world is full of people running about with little matches.” The question is, are we going to spark conversation, or are we simply going to burn?
A COVID-Friendly Holiday Tour

BY ALEXANDRIA GOSEN

DECK THE HALLS with boughs of holly! It's Christmas time ya filthy animals! Normally, now would be a great time to go to a mall, visit Santa and his elves, and have a jolly good time in commercialized wonderlands—but that all sounds incredibly contagious. So, here is a convenient list to plan a COVID safe Christmas trip for you and your friends.

1. Get outside
Walk in a winter wonderland! Go find a lovely little hiking trail and check out the authentic Minnesnowta scenery. You and your friends can take some enchanting photos, have epic snowball battles, and even build a snow fort! Embrace the youthful side of winter! Another option for some youthful Christmas activities is to go sledding! There are plenty of locations where you can have a grand ol’ time outside, away from people. Another outdoor idea is ice skating. You could do this with your friends, but personally, I think this is a cuter date idea than anything.

2. Get Online
Of course, it’s possible that the only way you can safely be with your loved ones is via the internet, and that is okay! There are still plenty of online options! You could host a Holiday game night! Do movie trivia or something along those lines. And, Jack Box TV is a year round activity. You could also start a virtual book club! Read a cute Christmas book or something aggressively anti-Christmas if that’s more your thing. You could meet with your club online; be connected but apart.


3. Get Creative
Christmas is also a great time to get creative! Make gifts, care packages, decorations, you name it! It’s also a good time to bake some gingerbread cookies and houses, decorate cakes and cookies, and share your recipes with your friends and family! The ideas are limitless; so are you! Be sure to have fun.

4. Actual places to visit
There are also several tourist stops to visit, though be sure to check their new regulations before planning your trip!

**BENTLEYVILLE TOUR OF LIGHTS** (Nov. 23- Dec 28). You and your friends can tour the lights of Bentleyville! Now a drive through attraction, it’s $10.00 per car.

**THE EUROPEAN CHRISTMAS MARKET** Located at the Union Depot this charming market is reminiscent of traditional pop up markets located this time of year throughout Europe.

**HISTORIC HOME TOURS**: Mayowood Mansion, Hubbard House, Glensheen, Charles A. Lindbergh House and Museum, and a few more locations offer a glimpse back in time to see what the holidays were like 100 years ago.

These times are crazy, but it’s still the most wonderful time of the year! So, don’t get the holiday blues. There are still plenty of opportunities to have a jolly time, stay safe, and make magical memories.

Why War is Widespread in Africa

BY RAJEERA GELETA

As of 2019, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), there have been at least 15 armed conflicts on the continent of Africa alone. The main reasons for these conflicts are corruption and dictatorships. I believe one of the most effective solutions could be redrawing Africa’s borders along ethnic lines and we will look at two countries to see why current African borders aren’t effective, those countries being Nigeria and Somalia.

Africa has a border problem because the creation of modern-day African borders wasn’t made by Africans, but rather by European countries so they would reduce the possibility of fighting over Africa’s abundant resources. When drawing up these borders, preexisting African nations in the continent were not taken into account. After Europe “left” Africa, the borders remained virtually the same. Nigeria, for example, was never a nation before imperialism, and the Somali people were artificially divided up by Europeans among four countries: Somalia, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Djibouti.

As mentioned before, Nigeria was artificially made, and was named after the Niger river (a name suggested by the first governor of the colony, Frederick Lugard’s, wife). Nigeria’s three main ethnic groups are the Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo. Throughout Nigeria’s history, there were and are many liberation efforts, and some of the most popular ones are the Biafran War and the Oodua Independence Movement. The Biafran war was fought for the independence of Biafra, a region in southern Nigeria composed mostly of Igbos. The reason why Biafra wanted to secede was because the Igbo people were marginalized from the political process, and because they didn’t have control of the oil reserves that resided in their land. The Biafrans lost the war, but the legacy of Biafra lives on through the separatist organization the “Indigenous People of Biafra,” which aims to liberate Biafra from the rest of Nigeria.

Unlike Nigeria, which is a combination of different groups of people, Somali indigenous lands have been split up between different countries by Europe. The Ogaden region was given to Ethiopia, the part of the northern region was incorporated into Djibouti, the western region was given to Kenya, and the remaining land makes up modern day Somalia and Somaliland. The idea of a unified Somalia, called Greater Somalia, became popular amongst the Somalis after colonialism. Two well-known unification wars that were fought between Somalis and non-Somali governments were the Ogaden War and the Shifta War. In the Ogaden War (1977-1978), Somalia declared war against Ethiopia in hopes of unifying the Ogaden region under Somalia. The Somali government was supported by the Ogaden Somali and their liberation fronts which caused them to be very successful, but only at first. With the help of nearly every Soviet-aligned country, however, Ethiopia pushed the Somali forces back to Somalia. Similarly, Kenya, during the Shifta War (1963-1967), a war for the unification of the Northern Frontier District of Kenya with Somalia, was once again a territory heavily composed of Somalis and filled with local liberation fronts, but unification once again failed. Even though these unification efforts failed, people still long for unification.

In both of these cases, the borders created by imperialism don’t work in modern-day Africa. There are no current plans to fix this border problem, and the most realistic option would be setting referendums for nations that want independence and setting in transitional governments in those nations that would make sure they are peacefully integrated into the international community, but it is laughable to imagine a world where African leaders willingly give up their power, and that is why this cycle of violence will most likely continue.
Best Last-Minute Gifts

BY REBECCA BEASLEY

Holidays never fail to bring a little bit of stress, which makes it easy to forget to get gifts for a friend or two. Look no further for a list of budget-friendly, last-minute gifts for whoever it is you missed!

First, I’ll dive into gift ideas for those girls on your list. Maybe it was your mom, a sister, or a friend, here’s a couple ideas for her. For most women, a trip to Target will be your savior. They have $10-$20 blankets, beanies and hats under $15, and my personal favorite, $5 mugs. You can’t go wrong with a “self-care mug” filled with a hot chocolate packet or tea bag, maybe Lindor chocolates or fuzzy socks, and other little goodies. Chapstick, face masks, scrunchies, or nail polish is another option. Also at Target are cheaper candles and scarves, ranging from $5 to $20. If you’re looking for more of a one-item gift, I’d recommend a book or jewelry. Etsy is a good place to find quality items from small businesses, but making time to shop local will only be beneficial.

Next, for any guys you still need to get gifts for. Shopping for guys can be difficult. Step one is to think of his interests. There are a lot less “generic” type gifts for guys than there are for girls. First ask yourself if socks or slippers are his thing. Those can be found just anywhere for a decent price. If the man you’re shopping for has a beard, I highly recommend putting together a “beard care kit” made up of beard balm, conditioner, and maybe lotion. These things tend to be in the same area as shaving cream and other bathroom items. Just like with girls, you can’t go wrong with a mug or tumbler gift. Depending on his favorite drink, put together a water bottle or mug gift. Fill it with edible tidbits and the like. Maybe stop by the campus bookstore and find a sweatshirt on sale. Consider board games or card games such as Cards Against Humanity, One Night Ultimate Werewolf, or Uno.

Other gift ideas you can get anywhere include tech accessories like headphones, phone cases, or portable chargers. These can be as expensive or inexpensive as you like, depending on the brand. Don’t forget about nerdy gifts such as a Lord of the Rings recipe book or brain teaser puzzles. Reusable masks have made it onto shopping lists, too. Remember, try to support small businesses in your area! COVID has created especially hard times for these businesses, and the holiday season is the perfect time to support them. Try to avoid ordering everything off Amazon or other dot coms. Even for last-minute

Are We Heading Towards Another Shutdown?

BY ETHAN LANGEMO

Here’s no doubt that the shutdown our country went through had a massive impact on several aspects of our lives. Small businesses were forced to close permanently, unemployment reached levels comparable to parts of the Great Depression, basic necessities were taken en masse by greedy, paranoid hoarders, and people were denied the ability to see friends, family, and neighbors due to being confined to the space of their homes. The Trump Administration’s orders for a national lockdown and restricted travel to and from China was a first step to help save the economy and lives. Eventually, the economy has begun to bounce back as people are gradually able to go back to work and make money to support themselves and their families. However, the question of whether we are heading back into lockdown and what that would entail is unclear.

Several European countries, including Germany, England, France, Belgium, and Greece, went into a second lockdown in early November. Israel imposed a second lockdown far earlier, starting on September 23rd. Leaders from countries such as Brazil and Russia have stated that there is no intention to put the country into lockdown. Whether the U.S. will or will not go into a second lockdown is unclear. While it was able to prevent millions of deaths, it also had unfavorable effects. Joe Biden, the next President-elect of the United States, has made claims that even he does not want to see the country go into another lockdown. Ms. Celine Grounder, one of Biden’s top advisors, stated that the goal will hopefully be to implement a more “targeted” plan, which will probably mean different states will need to follow different levels of restrictions.

With the possibility of a vaccine being approved and made available as early as December 10th, there may not be a need for a lockdown whatsoever. But a vaccine being available so soon is only a possibility, and if things continue to spiral out before then, some sort of lockdown (not necessarily another full-scale national lockdown) might be in order. The effectiveness of the vaccine may also be a deciding factor on whether or not and how much lockdown gets put in place. If it is hit-or-miss, it will probably be safer to continue taking precautions and staying in quarantine if individuals test positive. If it has a high success rate, however, none of that may be necessary.

Ultimately, I think the possibility of another lockdown rests on when the vaccine comes out and its effectiveness against COVID-19. There is a lot of uncertainty as multiple companies race to get their treatment out, and right now it appears the big pharma giant Pfizer is in the lead as they await FDA approval for their vaccine. If it doesn’t come soon enough, however, we might see another lockdown, but I don’t think it will be as extreme as the big one we experienced starting back in mid-March.

Christmas Traditions

BY BRITTANY MCCARTY

What are some of your favorite traditions during the holiday season? For some of you, it might be a family tradition, and for others, there may be no traditions at all – or perhaps you celebrate another holiday or observe a religious custom, such as Hannukah or Ramadan. Either way, ‘tis the season to celebrate: our traditions, our family and friends, and above all, our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the center of Concordia University as well as the world.

Across the United States, most of us are familiar with the story of the birth of Jesus as the Savior, and this is depicted in the many nativity sets that may be put on display at churches and in homes. Another familiarity that we see is the cross, which of course is the universal symbol of faith. But unbeknownst to some is the Advent wreath and candles, which signifies the three weeks preceding Christmas and Christ’s birth.

Other things that Christians identify with during this time of year: What would Christmas be without a tree? Whether your tree is like that of Clark Griswold’s in National Lampoon’s Christmas Vacation or like the measly tree that Charlie Brown had, and whether real or artificial, there is something to be said about the Christmas tree. It is where we gather around; it is where we tuck away gifts on Christmas Eve; it is where we adorn with sentimental ornaments and tinsel. I think I remember even stringing popcorn together one year, something that few people do anymore. Regardless of how you decide to decorate your tree, or whether you have a tree at all, may it shine brightly and be used to bring your family and friends a little closer together.

Other traditions that I remember growing up were things like going to the Macy’s Holidazzle Parade, to see Santa, as well as writing Santa a letter. Baking cookies and driving around the neighborhood to see all of the Christmas lights on people’s houses were favorites also, and my personal favorite, watching all of the various Christmas movies. It’s a Wonderful Life, The Santa Clause, A Christmas Story, and Elf, among others, were tradition in our house. Vaguely do I remember creating gingerbread houses – who doesn’t like all of the candy and frosting?

Perhaps a more sacred tradition would be singing Christmas carols, which unfortunately has dwindled over the years. Yes, we still sing traditional hymns in church, and of course here at CSP, but that is about as far as it goes. Many of us will be looking forward to the Christmas concert that we are having virtually this year, and God willing next year it will be in-person, on campus once again as tradition would have it.

All in all, it is my hope that this has stirred some memories within you for this holiday season, no matter if we are being socially distant or not. Have an enjoyable and safe Christmas, and remember the number one reason why we celebrate – because of Jesus Christ, our Savior.
Stress relievers for finals

BY REBECCA BEASLY

As the semester comes to an end, the sun sets earlier, and finals loom over students, stress is no unfamiliar thing. It never hurts to have a couple strategies to help manage inevitable stress. Time management skills go along with many of these, so consider making a daily schedule to help you stay organized and stress-free.

First on the list is this: make time for friends/family. Even if you are just spending time in silence as you study, having company is a mood-booster. Of course, with a possible second lockdown, wearing masks or hanging out via zoom is a good idea.

Secondly, sleep! Our bodies are busy while we sleep as they heal and repair. While it may feel like you should sacrifice a little sleep for some studying or recreation time, it is more beneficial to just sleep. Twenty minute naps and eight hour slumbers are ideal. Use caffeine to get you through the day, but do not use it as a sleep substitute. Take care of yourself!

Along those lines, taking care of yourself is a good way to avoid stress. Exercise helps you sleep better, and it releases endorphins (one of the “happy hormones,” the E in DOSE). If exercise is not your thing, consider simple breathing techniques or stretching. Yoga or meditation can be another substitute.

A fourth stress reliever is to “unplug.” Try to avoid scrolling endlessly on social media. While it feels good to distract yourself, it is not a good stress reliever. Try connecting with a friend, calling a parent, going for a walk, or even watching an episode of a show. If all you’re looking for is a distraction, try making a list of things you’ll treat yourself to after finals. What holiday traditions do you look forward to? List out everything you’re excited to do after finals.

Listening to music is good to help focus while studying, and it can also provide a good break from studying. Whatever music it is that you love—try it! I listen to music from video games while I study and take a break with all the feel-good songs from my childhood.

When was the last time you had something to eat? Do you have water, or some sort of hydrating drink? (No, coffee does not count. Neither does that energy drink you have.) Take a break from studying and eat. A proper meal is ideal, but take snack breaks if that is all you can do. My favorite snacks are dark chocolate. Remember, taking occasional breaks will help you study better!

Another stress reliever is to think positively. Cheesy, right? Even if it is sarcastic, a positively-worded thought is better than you telling yourself how many ways this can go wrong. It’s good and healthy to have goals, but don’t let the feeling of impending doom drag you down.

Finals cause a lot of stress, but being prepared and taking care of yourself will help reduce stress and even help you succeed. Remember to connect with loved ones, get sleep, go for a walk, eat, and stay hydrated. Just around the corner is winter break!

The Newest Pointless Innovation in Social Media: Fleets

BY RYAN SKILLE

On Tuesday, November 17th, 2020, the popular social media app Twitter rolled out a new feature by the name of “Fleets.” This new feature allows Twitter users to post a picture, Tweet, or text to a temporary story that will be deleted after 24 hours, in contrast to a regular Tweet which will stay on a user’s profile forever unless they decide to delete it. According to Twitter’s blog post on the day of the release, they came up with the term “Fleets” because the impermanent nature of them means they are “fleeting” thoughts. Twitter also specified that they had been receiving a lot of information regarding users feeling uncomfortable about Tweeting because it seemed “so public, so permanent, and like there’s so much pressure to rack up Retweets and Likes.” Twitter also stated that as of yet, there will most likely not be any indicator if another individual screenshots your Fleet, meaning that anything you Fleet can still be saved by someone else and permanently Tweeted out later to make fun of you. If only Twitter had realized that there has already been a feature that has existed since the app was created and that allows users to feel more comfortable about the permanency of Tweets: uninstalling the app.

Regardless of how many people actually asked for the new update, the responses have been largely critical.

“Fleets is a very fun and necessary addition to Twitter. All social media platforms are not seemingly blending together,” referencing the fact that practically every single social media app similarly developed a story-like feature after Snapchat introduced the idea back in 2013. Many Twitter users are also comparing the name of the feature to the top-selling brand of enema: Fleet. For those of you that don’t know, an enema acts like a laxative that is used to treat constipation and clean the lower bowel.

If Twitter’s new Fleets feature worked properly, that would be one thing. However, due to a bug discovered very quickly after Fleets were announced, users were able to use an app that’s designed to interact with Twitter’s backend systems via its developer programming interface not only to view and download Fleets without notifying the individual who posted them, but also archive the URLs so that the Fleets were accessible long after the 24-hour viewing period had expired. When questioned about the bug, a Twitter spokesperson told TechCrunch, “We’re aware of a bug accessible through a technical workaround where some Fleets media URLs may be accessible after 24 hours. We are working on a fix that should be rolled out shortly.” However, at the time of writing this article, no fix has been released yet.

In a world in which social media rules every aspect of our daily lives, something like a story feature on a single app seems small and trivial. However, there are many Twitter users that have hundreds, thousands, and even millions of followers, and what they say or post could have a large influence on their audience. Always remember to be respectful, kind, and open-minded in any conversations you engage in.

New Year, New Me?

BY KALYNA XIONG

This year, I will save more money.” “I will be healthier.” “I will learn something new.” Do any of these sound familiar? Everytime the year ends, many of us come up with goals for the upcoming new year to break out of our old, bad habits. Self-improvement is a great thing. We should always find ways to better ourselves. However, do we even need to have these goals for the new year?

We create many goals for ourselves to achieve when a new year comes around; we see January as a fresh slate. There are those who dream big and have ambitious goals, whereas others have goals that are more toned-down and easy to achieve. Don’t get me wrong, both kinds of goals are great. Are all of them attainable? Maybe, again, it would depend on what they are and how the upcoming year goes. Having small, easy goals definitely help check off someone’s list of resolutions. By the time December rolls around, one could say they’ve improved some sort of aspect in their life. Tougher goals are a bit difficult to reach and they need extra effort to be achieved. As a result, the end goal may not happen when winter starts to come around.

Like many others, I’m a participant in New Year’s resolutions. It is something I have done growing up. Each year, I have a list of goals to reach. After writing out my list, I have a burst of energy as I am ready to complete them. I am also one of those people who start strong, but then my motivation slowly dies out within the next couple of months. When I fail to reach my goal, what do I tell myself? “There’s always next year.”

Do I mean those words? Of course I do. When a new year comes around again, I keep the same goals I have failed to achieve and then add in more goals. However, the majority of my goals are always put to a pause halfway through and then I wait it out again for another year. The cycle is never-ending. I’m positive I’m not the only person who does this. The majority of the other people who create a New Year’s goal are on the same boat; there is only a sliver of people who can actually do it, and I applaud them for it.

New Year’s goals are definitely fun to make, and it is amusing to see how much we improve our lives over the years. Many of them can be achieved, but not all of them. Reaching our goals really depends on how realistic they are and how motivated we can be to complete them.
Concordia and COVID Update
BY ERIKA SOUKUP

As Christmas break approaches, tensions continue to rise. The conversation flooding the halls are questions of who's going home, who's staying on campus, whether the people traveling will be getting tested before or after, and more. Especially as Thanksgiving draws near with the three weeks between Thanksgiving and Christmas. People are much more aware of their actions and circumstances. Are the measures being taken by Concordia enough?

Concordia recently has been increasing rules and regulations, specifically in residence halls. The rules from the beginning of the semester have been that one needs to wear a mask at all times inside a space and there can be no off-campus visitors in dorms. Recently, however, the rules have been heightened in preparation for students returning from Thanksgiving Break. Now there can be no visitors between rooms in the same dorm, higher restrictions for sports, volleyball intramurals ending early, more limited rearranged seating in the Dining Hall, and testing available for students. But are these measures enough when it comes to increasing the safety on campus in preparation for people leaving?

With that thought it seems as though Concordia is on the right path when it comes to COVID, but the opinions don't end there. "Concordia says they're doing well, but I hear different numbers from different people every day. Do I believe the people who are probably downplaying the severity or the people with a higher number who might be telling the truth? I want them to be transparent, if it's bad, tell us it's bad." Because of this, it's tough to know the truth. As for us as students, it is important we continue to go above and beyond following the rules in order to prevent increased cases and even a shutdown here at Concordia.

Is Christmas Really the Best Time of the Year?
BY RYAN SKILLE

For those of us that aren't Christmas nuts, who don't start celebrating in October, Christmas time can make it very easy to get caught up in the hustle and bustle. Anyone who doesn't want to be looked down on by the entirety of society must partake in the mindless shopping, wrapping, decorating, cooking, and celebrating that happens at this time every single year. On top of that, a healthy dose of seasonal depression often hits soon after the holidays are over. With the amount of money that goes into the season's greetings every year, many people despise the holiday season and see it as simply a way for big corporations to get even richer off of everyone's festive panic. We fall into the trap of believing that the hustle and bustle of Christmas is taking away from the true reason for the season. Here are a few reasons why the commercialization of Christmas is actually a good thing.

Distracting relatives
Sure, spending time with your distant family members may become tiresome and draining, but thanks to capitalism, you can get out of conversations much more easily. All it takes is a little trip to the liquor store. We at The Sword do not endorse underage drinking, but a small bottle of a little something something can be an easy way to slip out of your relatives' radars. Present it as a Christmas gift and watch the magic happen. With everyone happily blubbering, you have plenty of time to sneak off to your room to play video games or watch Netflix.

Toxic positivity widely accepted
If you are the kind of person that shoves down all of your negative feelings of self-doubt and instead opts to only allow yourself to think about the good and happy things in life, then this season is perfect for you! Worried about your problems? Too bad! It's Christmas, and you HAVE to get into the Christmas spirit. Research shows that the smallest amount of distracting relatives can be an easy way to slip out of your relatives' radars. Present it as a Christmas gift and watch the magic happen. With everyone happily blubbering, you have plenty of time to sneak off to your room to play video games or watch Netflix.

Good music
The tradition of playing Christmas music has existed for a very long time, and it continues to persist to this day. What better excuse to continue to pump out the same five songs with different titles over and over again? If you're an aspiring musician hoping to get big, then creating a Christmas album is the way to do it. If it worked for Mariah Carey, why can't it work for you?

To sum up, regardless of how downtrodden you feel by all of the activities and celebrations this season, remember that capitalism is a good thing, and you should be grateful for it. Without commercializing Christmas, we wouldn't have all of these wonderful opportunities to get cheated out of our money. Regardless of what you celebrate this season, please stay safe and remember to stay happy!
Creative Gift Guide for Christmas during COVID-19

BY MACKENZIE GRUBBS

With the holiday season in full swing, many are left to wonder what traditions they will be able to continue this year despite the disruption caused by COVID-19, one of these traditions being holiday shopping. Here are some tips for gift giving in a safe and thoughtful way this year:

Utilize your new quarantine skills.
If you took up a hobby like baking during lockdown, now might be the best time to showcase your new skills for friends and family. Bake some Christmas cookies for the family sweet tooth or make a friend’s favorite desert and do a drive by drop-off. Maybe baking isn’t your thing, but you tried out a new skill like knitting. A cozy pair of socks or a warm sweater handknit with love and care is a gift both thoughtful and practical. Whether you tried painting, woodworking, or sewing, homemade gifts are always a win. What better way to show someone that you care about them than by dedicating your time?

Support small businesses.
Small businesses are the ones most affected by the pandemic, so consider spending your hard-earned money at a local shop or online small business. Many local brick and mortar establishments have adjusted to accommodate social distancing guidelines with things like curbside pickup and delivery options. A good option for supporting local establishments that don’t offer tangible goods, like restaurants and movie theaters, is to purchase gift certificates for when they can safely reopen. You can also find handmade goods, vintage items, and personalized gifts on websites like Etsy, where many of the shops are independently run.

Shop online.
Finding gifts online is a great way to ensure a contactless shopping experience and can sometimes be the best place to find that certain item you’ve been searching for. Most retailers have online discount codes and offer the same in-person sales. Places like Amazon offer 2-day shipping with a Prime membership for the last minute shoppers. (Students get a discount on Amazon Prime memberships, too!) Be sure to check if your local shop has what you’re looking for and consider ordering from their website first.

Good luck with your Christmas shopping this year!

Should Winter Sports Return?

BY RENE ELIAS

One year ago, whispers of a mysterious virus in China started to creep into news sources. Here in the USA, I think everyone underestimated the power of this virus. Fast forward to today, and COVID has spread around the world. Some fall sports started back up in August, but now, many sports events are being canceled due to players having the virus or not following the proper safety protocol. This is not just impacting college teams, but also the NFL. Canceling games seems to be the only solution to the problem. But is having to cancel games after games necessary is teams keep having breakouts of the virus? How can we have sports but still keep the players safe? That all comes down to having players being tested frequently. But is more testing necessarily better, or does that just bring us more problems?

Now, like most of the country, we are doing our duty by socially distancing ourselves from the people we are used to seeing all the time to help prevent the spread of the virus. As a member of Concordia athletics, I also had the feeling of uncertainty like many of the athletes. Will winter sports return? Would sports be the same when they resume, and what changes can we expect when they do return? Would athletes ever be able to play in the year 2020? We have all waited for the unknown answer over the summer for news of when the pandemic would end. Instead, we still do not know what the future holds for sports. With all of the procedures put in place around the school, I do believe that Concordia is ready for winter sports to return. As fans, we finally have seen a light at the end of the tunnel with basketball schedules being released and waiting for more sports to come back as well, but the real question is, are other schools ready?" Some of the athletes on CSP teams have concerns if other schools will be able to keep up with testing, at what point does the season get canceled if there's more than one school pulling away from competition? Although there is no real answer, just in these past few months we have watched Division-1 teams being able to play sports around the country. The Ivy League is one of the first conferences that have canceled sports. I am confident in our school officials and leaders that we can have a safe season and get the joy from seeing our school teams play again.

The Bear Brigade is a club that I recommend students to join and for everyone to follow on Instagram @cspbearbrigade. Its purpose is to invite students to represent the official student section of CSP sporting events. With that being said, none of us have the answers to which route is the best to take in this situation. Since we are in unprecedented times and we are still adjusting to our new normal, I believe that the Concordia community can rally together to start to make a positive change. All we can do is hope for the best and do our part with Comet’s Commitment to support the athletes and hope that sports will go on. I think sports will get us through this time, and we can finally get a slice of normalcy that we have all been craving.
A Changing Dance Department

BY ERIKA SOUKUP

Jan Puffer, Dance Professor and director of Spring Into Dance, retired earlier in the year, throwing dance classes and Spring Into Dance into confusion. Especially with COVID, dance class enrollment has dropped considerably.

Professor Puffer taught most of the dance classes. Instead of having the normal classes with a final showcase at the end of the semester to show their work, most of the spring semester dance classes are being turned into independent studies with the final showcase being combined with Spring Into Dance. Dr. Monica Murray, head of the Music, Theatre, and Dance Department states the idea is simply because “enrollment numbers are dramatically lower for the spring, probably due to COVID. By moving them to independent studies, the instructional time is more flexible. There will be some sort of spring showcase; formatting and delivery will depend on COVID, but whether or not the technique class dancers are present depends on the students taking the classes and is ultimately up to the instructors.” Murray is confident of the combination since it will provide choreographers a chance to work with a wider variety of students and skill-levels.

Spring Into Dance is one of the most well-known shows Concordia consistently puts on, started by Professor Puffer. Because of COVID, the current idea is to perform outside with a space reserved inside just in case of inclement weather, which will allow for a socially-distanced live audience. Murray believes “the show will be shorter, which would most likely have happened anyway, possibly to allow two shows a day to keep the audience smaller and make it more flexible for bad weather.”

I was able to speak with two different students, both who are involved in the dance department or Spring Into Dance in some way. A dance student, who is involved in both classes and Spring Into Dance, said, “Combining classes with Spring Into Dance is a great opportunity because you can take that one step even further, so if you were just in classes now you can experience Spring Into Dance. It also gives dancers an opportunity to experience more of a performance. Having it outside provides more opportunities to experiment more. I also think that’d be really cool.”

Another student, Xinia Anderson, who is involved primarily with Spring Into Dance, had some other thoughts. When asked about the classes being combined with Spring Into Dance for the final, she responded, “I don’t like that. It’s irritating. Spring Into Dance has nothing to do with the spring course dance classes, they’re completely separate. One is audition based, and there’s a certain skill set you need when you audition that you don’t need when registering for classes. It’s not fair for students in the class who might be at a lower skill level.” Anderson also expressed frustration because at the meeting held for students involved in the dance department, she was not able to attend. “There should be another meeting where they ask students what they want because we’re the ones being affected the most. It’s our stories and our time; we have to work with or not work with whatever they want to do. Being the ones most involved in it, we understand what works with it and what doesn’t.”

The end goal is for the department to continue to exist, but as we can see, there are many thoughts and opinions on how to do that.

Men’s Basketball Ready to Start Up Soon

BY RENE ELIAS

As the 2021 season approaches, there is nothing but excitement for sports to come back at Concordia. The men’s basketball team is among the teams that are ready to start their season back up very soon. Listening to Coach Fletch on the latest episode of “CSP Bears Podcast,” Coach Fletch stated, “The efforts of bubble and not hanging around other people as well as not going out should be rewarded with the athletes.” As we are still in the abyss of the unknown, and there are still more questions than answers, one thing that should be brought to light is the hard work of the players as practices continue. We are starting to see a light at the end of the tunnel. We are starting to get excited for game days again, and most importantly, we are starting to get excited about the hard work of the players and coaches becoming apparent on the court.

“Our athletic director has done a great job to make sure our season continues,” states Coach Fletch, and as a fan, it is exciting to see a schedule finally released. While speaking to the graduate assistant, Sam Nicholson, he told me that “the one part that I see the most is how the team improves day by day.” He continues by saying that he is excited to see the team in action this upcoming year.

A big shift into this upcoming year is only playing eight games and having to play the same team twice in the same weekend. It is safe to say that our student-athletes have never had an experience like this. “I’m confident in our guys and confident in our system,” says Coach Fletch. Although COVID protocols and policies have changed our society week-by-week, the season is still on everyone’s minds. You can see the dedication on every player’s face when walking into the Gangelhoff Center. A player from the men’s basketball team on campus states, “The culture has shifted. We are in a winning mindset.” You can see the Golden Bears men’s basketball team back in action this upcoming January 2nd versus Minnesota Crookston online followed by Wayne State on January 8th.
Women’s Basketball Season Starting Up Despite COVID-19

BY ISABELLA D’BURKE

WITH THE UNFORTUNATE cancellation of fall sports, it is imaginable that the women’s basketball team had doubts about their upcoming season. However, they continued to work hard throughout the uncertainty, and it will soon pay off as the NSIC recently released a schedule for the 2020–2021 basketball season.

The women’s team will be coming into the season experienced and cohesive as they only lost one senior last year, Cassidy Byrd. In addition to gaining two new freshmen, the strong returning classes will provide a strong backbone for the team underneath all of the hard work the women have been putting in this fall. Returning to the team will be seniors Riley Wheatcraft and Danielle Schuab, who both made the 2019-20 basketball All-Conference teams. The two combined scored an average of 26.1 points per game. Continuing, the duo’s three-point shooting resulted in ranks of sixth and seventh in the conference last year. Overall, last season the team finished with a 13-14 record and a conference record of 12-10. They entered the NSIC Tournament as the fourth seed in the NSIC South and were eliminated by Northern State in overtime.

New on the women’s team are Lindsey Becher and Sarah Kuma. Becher comes from Mounds View High School in Shoreview, Minnesota. She lettered five times in basketball, was named All-Conference her sophomore and junior year, All-Conference Honorable Mention 8th grade and freshman year, Most Valuable Player junior year, and Defensive Player of the Year sophomore year. Kuma played for Lakeville North High School in Lakeville, Minnesota. She lettered five times in basketball, was named All-Conference her junior year, played in four state tournaments, and holds her high school’s all-time school record for her 3 point shooting percentage.

Next year, the team will be losing four seniors, Danielle Schuab, Sidney Wentland, Riley Wheatcraft, and Ayla Lemke. While they will be losing four crucial players, the women’s team already signed three new players on November 11th (National Signing Day). The team will be gaining Megan Gamble from Clear Lake, Minnesota, Caela Tighe from Big Lake, Minnesota, and Faith Alberts from Parkers Prairie, Minnesota.

The women will start up their season with a game away against University of Minnesota Crookston on January 2nd and 3rd. Then, they continue on the road at Wayne State the next weekend. The first home game for the Lady Bears will be on the 15th and 16th against Sioux Falls.

CSP Swim Team Practicing for Inaugural Season

BY DAVINA BELLINGER

WITH THE END OF fall semester approaching, CSP’s first women’s swim team is completing their season. Practices this season started up in October, and they were held at the new pool located at Henry Sibley High School. Due to COVID, the NSIC has changed the swim team’s schedule and shifted their competitive schedule from a fall season to not being able to compete until January 1st.

The CSP swim team was eager to start up their first season, but due to the pandemic, this inaugural season looked a bit different than they were expecting. In the water, they had to spread out in the pool. The swim team has a total of three members which makes it easy to have a lot of space and have their own lanes in between other swimmers. When the team is out of the water, they wear their masks.

Matt Bos is the head coach of the women’s swim and dive team. He is hopeful for the whole team to continue staying positive for the rest of the season. Bos said, “Obviously this is a challenging year for everybody in so many ways. Our goal is to just stay as positive as we can and take it one day at a time. I think, if anything, people will learn to be flexible which hopefully will help to create growth mindsets down the road.”

Liv Laube is a first year student and one of three team members. She hopes that the team will expand and continue to add new members. She said, “I hope that this year we create the culture we want for our team. I want our team to work hard at everything we do, so we should start that now, even though we don’t know what will happen because of COVID-19.” Bos also said, “We have great kids with positive attitudes who are willing to step outside of their comfort zone. It’s a joy to work with these women on a daily basis.”

Laube stated that what she really enjoys about being a part of the swim team is having the opportunity to practice with her other teammates. She said, “I really enjoy being a part of a team, so it has been nice meeting the other women and practicing with them.”

Matt Bos said that one of the achievements they have accomplished so far is staying healthy and staying focused on school & training. Bos said, “We are trying to keep things simple. Focusing on school work and getting in whatever good training we can get is all of our focus. Obviously we want people to stay healthy.”
Rene Elias: Concordia's Photographer!

BY ANNA FRITZE

If you have seen any awesome Concordia sports pictures posted anywhere recently, it's likely that Rene Elias took them. Rene has liked photography since he was a kid. He says, "Growing up, I just always liked taking photos. I remember going to a wedding with a camera my parents had just gotten my when I was eight years old. I ended up following the couple around and taking their pictures throughout the night." Since then, Rene's passion for photography has progressed, but he didn't consider making photography his career choice at first.

Rene went to St. Paul College for two years before coming to Concordia. There, he studied pre-law at first. He took photography courses, but they were not his main focus. When a photography professor took Rene under his wing, Rene started to change his mind about his future; his professor encouraged students to take pictures of what they wanted to. "I started taking pictures of things I liked, like sneakers and sports, in the classic black and white," Rene said about his class. He also commented on learning the inner workings of a camera: "My professor made us take a camera apart and put it back together again. That helped me understand why we take pictures a certain way and what goes on inside the camera."

Here at Concordia, Rene is planning on graduating December 2021 with a major in marketing and a photography minor. He started an internship last spring with the athletics department, though it was not for photography at first. He started out running the scoreboards, taking stats, and running social media accounts, but after mentioning that he could take photos as well, his superior Josh Deer gave him a chance. Since then, his internship has turned into a double-internship in a way, as he helps with athletics and takes photos. Josh says about Rene, "Rene's work speaks for itself. He has a great eye for photography and the instincts to anticipate a great shot in the spur of the moment. What people don't see is how Rene has dedicated himself to his craft behind the scenes with the ability to organize, sort and edit his work. Perhaps just as important of a skill is his ability to cultivate positive, trusting relationships with players and coaches, allowing him to embed himself which leads to the type of access the best photographers in the business dream on!"

On taking sports photos at Concordia, Rene said, "My job is to make the students look good." He lives with two basketball players and one football player, which he says helps him know what the athletes want their photos to look like. He never wants any of the athletes to feel overlooked; he tries to take photos that make the athletes happy, and in turn, Rene is happy, too. Basketball is his favorite sport to photograph because, "there's always action happening." The main thing he loves about the photography courses on-campus is that he and his classmates critique past classes' photos, but they also constructively criticize each other as well.

Rene's plans for the future are to work his way up to taking photos for professional sports teams. He knows there will be bumps in the road and that he will have to work hard, especially with COVID happening now. His dream team to work for is the Dallas Cowboys, and help them "keep their value as a franchise." Overall, when asked what he loves about photography, Rene said, "I like the freedom of taking pictures however I want. There's not one set way to do it. I also love editing; there are so many programs to learn from, and once you think you know what you're doing, there's an entire new program to learn."

At the end of our talk, Rene said, "The main point I want to get across is that I really like my job, but my main goal is to make the athletes and the school look good. I want to make sure Concordia is represented well. I do my job because I love sports, and I want to make the students happy."

You can find Rene's pictures on Instagram @hypebeast_rene, and on Concordia's Flickr page. Check him out!

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CSP Recruits New Athletes on Signing Day

BY ISABELLA D’BURKE

Even though COVID is still present, CSP is recruiting new athletes weekly, with many of those athletes signing on National Signing Day (November 11th). Following November 11th, CSP announced that it will be gaining three athletes on the women's basketball team, five athletes on the softball team, six athletes on the baseball team, six athletes on the soccer team, and five athletes on the cross country/track and field teams.

When discussing the new recruits in the article, "Soccer releases fall signing class," by Joey Scanlan, head soccer coach Steve Bellis said, "Our focus for this class was very specific. To stay competitive, we knew we needed to strengthen defensively and add some wide players to the mix. I think we have accomplished this goal and much more. Each player will bring many positives both on and off the field to our program." With that goal in mind, Bellis and the team will be welcoming six new women: Brittany Bordson from Lino Lakes, Minnesota, Kendyl Hagenbeck from Mukwonago, Wisconsin, Lily Yang from Maplewood, Minnesota, Sydney Manthana from Rockford, Minnesota, McKayla Stockness from Mahtomedi, Minnesota, and Scarlett Rock from River Falls, Wisconsin.

The women's basketball team will also be gaining valuable players. The team will be gaining three new women: Megan Gamble from Clear Lake, Minnesota, Caela Tighe from Big Lake, Minnesota, and Faith Alberts from Parkers Prairie, Minnesota.

In a recent article from CSP, head softball coach Bob Bartel expresses his excitement for the five new athletes. These athletes include Avery Johnson from Hudson, Wisconsin, Morgan Medlo from Moundsview, Minnesota, Sydney Pelzer from Little Canada, Minnesota, Danielle Sharum from Marietta, Georgia, and Rachel Novak from Oakdale, Minnesota. Baseball will be gaining six new athletes, Kal Brohmer from Elko, Minnesota, Korey Dahlberg from Farmington, Minnesota, Jack Greenlun from Sartell, Minnesota, Reece Piontek from Denmark, Wisconsin, Gavin Rusch from Green Bay, Wisconsin, and David Salz from Maple Grove, Minnesota.

The women's cross country/track and field teams had five signees on the 11th. Running on both the cross country and track teams will be Tess Houghlum from Mora, Minnesota and Kelsey Thelen from Farmington, Minnesota. Sprinting for the track team will be Jordyn Glinski from Lakeville, Minnesota and Gianna Bedford from Eagan, Minnesota. The final women who signed on the 11th is pole vaulter Abby York from North St. Paul.

This is just a sneak preview of all the new athletes CSP will be gaining in 2021. Not only will there be more signees throughout the year, this article doesn't include the men's cross country/track and field, football, golf, swimming, men's basketball, and esports athletes. CSP will recruit numerous student athletes as the year progresses.
Esports Wrap Up

BY RICHARD MAHLE

As the semester begins to come to an end, the eSports team is wrapping up the season as well. The eSports program has been putting on events with other sports programs, and the hope is to continue that collaboration throughout the years.

The Overwatch team is wrapping up this semester by setting up skirmishes with other teams from many different schools. On top of that, they are also watching the games they have played to identify what to work on for this off-season. The team is also working less on their mechanical skills and more on their teamwork.

The Super Smash Brothers Ultimate team is working vigorously on their mechanical skills to become well-oiled fighting machines. One event they participated in was a head-to-head tournament with the Concordia University Saint Paul baseball team. It was all in good fun, which is wonderful because of how tight Concordia students are with each other.

The League of Legends team has been working hard all year so far, so hearing that they are pushing themselves to the limit even in the off-season is not surprising. The potential is growing for this team, and they will be interesting to watch in the upcoming season.

The Hearthstone team has killed it this semester so far with their fantastic achievements in their competition, so nobody should be surprised to hear that they are taking their time studying the current meta for the game. While nobody is certain if it will be the same meta next semester, what we can count on is, in the words of Coach Hermes, “your Golden Bears will do fantastic.”

Finally, the rocket league team is enjoying their off season by focusing on working together on the “field” to tighten up their teamwork. They have shown themselves to be strong players before, so there is a lot of promise in the next semester.

One thing to note about all the teams is that they are all focusing on ranking up and proving that they are capable players in their respective games. They are also all trying to have events with other sports programs at Concordia. There is a lot of hope for this program next semester, and while they have shown a lot of promise this semester, it is the hope to have wins across the board in each team next semester. The teams stream each game on Twitch.tv/cupbears, so be sure to stay up to date and follow the Bears when they start their seasons back up.

How ‘Bout Them Cowboys!?

BY RENE ELIAS

On November 22nd, the Minnesota Vikings played the Dallas Cowboys. The game was highlighted as “Americans game of the week,” and had an unusual start time at 3:20 PM. The game started with Dallas scoring. Vikings fans felt a gut punch after this, but there was a silver lining in this play. The Cowboys missed the field goal. After this game, Dalvin Cook totaled enough yards to rush for 1,000 yards this season so far. His stat line showed Cook rushing for 103 yards and scoring 1 touchdown in this game. A wide receiver for the Dallas Cowboys, Ceedee Lamb, had an amazing touchdown catch. By half-time, the score was 16-7 with the Cowboys leading over the Vikings. With the Vikings being on a three-game winning streak going into this game, quarterback, Kirk Cousins, looked more comfortable than other weeks. Cousins threw for a fabulous 314 yards and had 3 touchdown passes. The Minnesota Vikings defense played average against the Cowboys.

In the 4th quarter, the Vikings defense allowed running back, Tony Pollard, to explode from the backfield to get a 42-yard touchdown run, which in turn let Dallas have their lead back with a score of 23-21. Since that game, the Cowboys lost on Thanksgiving Day to the Washington football team, and the Vikings conquered the Panthers. According to NFL on Fox, due to a low winning division, “The Cowboys still have a chance to make it to the Super Bowl.”

The Cowboys have won the Superbowl five times more than the Vikings, and although Aaron Rodgers and Russell Wilson are having MVP caliber seasons, there is not much more time left in the tank for either team. Meanwhile, the Cowboys have a lot of talent with upside potential. This win against the Minnesota Vikings just goes to prove once again how good the Cowboys can be at full strength. As long as they can make it to the playoffs, anything is possible. A record doesn’t matter when each game counts. There is no series, and as long as the Cowboys win the NFC East, which is still very likely, they will host a playoff game with a home field advantage, which plays a big part in the outcome of a game. The potential is there, but only time will tell what is in store for the Dallas Cowboys.

NBA Season Starts Back up Late December with Changes

BY HARRY LIEN

The national basketball association (NBA) is set to start its 75th regular season on Tuesday, December 22. The regular season will consist of a 72-game schedule, which is a change from the traditional 82-games. Additionally, a new postseason format in the form of a Play-In Tournament will determine what teams will fill the bottom seventh and eighth playoff seeds in each conference.

The 2020-21 regular season schedule will be segmented into two parts. That said, the first half of the season will be released around the start of training camp, which should approach in the coming weeks as preseason play begins December 11. The second half of the season will be released during the “latter part of the first half portion of the schedule,” according to the NBA’s official website. Any games that are potentially postponed during the first half are expected to be added to the second half schedule.

Like typical regular seasons, the All-Star break will be the divide between the first half and the second half of the regular season. However, due to the late start this year, the All-Star break is pushed back a few weeks and is scheduled to take place March 5th through the 10th.

Back on November 17, the NBA Board of Governors unanimously approved to implement a postseason Play-In Tournament for the upcoming 2020-21 season. The proposal is on a one-time basis for this season. The tournament will take place May 18 through the 21, shortly after the regular season and before the first round of the playoffs start. Teams with the seventh-highest through the tenth-highest winning percentage in each conference will be included in the new format. Teams that are the seventh-highest and eighth-highest in winning percentage will have two chances to win one game, earning them a playoff spot, while the ninth-highest and tenth-highest in winning percentages will have to win two consecutive games to earn a spot in the playoffs.

Following the Play-In Tournament, the NBA Playoffs will start up May 22 and extend all the way into July 22.
Music Review: Noah Cyrus
BY ALEXANDRIA GOSEN

The 2021 GRAMMY nominees have been announced, and Noah Cyrus has been nominated for best new artist. Noah is usually best known for either her voice acting in Ponyo as the title character, and of course, for being Miley Cyrus’s little sister. Noah is successfully stepping into her own spotlight with numerous singles and her new album, “The End of Everything.”

This album is a quick listen, as it has eight songs that come to about 24 minutes total. It is perfect if you’re in the mood for an existential cry. Noah’s impressive alto range adds an intense emotion over her already incredibly emotional lyrics, and to top it all off, she sounds very similar to Miley, so there’s a lingering feeling of nostalgia over that. While several of her numbers are love songs, most reflect her existence and place in the world. Songs like “young and sad” is a direct cry to her depression, and it opens with a voicemail from her dad, Billy Ray Cyrus, telling young Cyrus that she is not alone.

Some of her songs are a little more metaphysical. “I got so high that I saw Jesus” is ultimately a reflection of the times calling out the poor state of the Earth and its economy. The album closes with a riveting send-off, “The End of Everything,” which is a somber reflection on how everything is going to someday die, so you better start appreciating what you have. It is a beautiful way to end the album, given it, as a whole, appears to be an ode to acceptances: accepting depression, accepting the state of the world, and accepting that she can only do so much.

If you are the kind person who is into music inducing a good cry, I would highly recommend Noah Cyrus’s “The End of Everything.” She gives a whole new tone to the Cyrus musical legacy, and it seems as though her music is here to stay.

Food Review: Zait & Za’atar
BY RICHARD MAHLE

Zait and Za’atar is one of my favorite restaurants out there. They have a beautiful menu for Middle Eastern cuisine. With their baba ganoush and falafel appetizers that provide the perfect start to a meal and main courses of either a sandwich or plate, their options are amazing.

The sandwich options are chicken shawarma, beef shawarma, musakhan chicken, souq veggies, or falafel. I have been lucky enough to try each sandwich except for the souq veggies over my time living in the area, and I can confidently say that you will not be let down by any of these. My personal favorites are the musakhan chicken and the beef shawarma combo meals. For roughly nine dollars you can get a sandwich, fries, and a drink. Something to note would be that these two sandwiches are the priciest ones on the menu, so if you choose a different sandwich, you can expect to pay less. The beef shawarma is grilled spiced beef, pickles, and tahini sauce wrapped in pita bread with potentially a side of house made fries. The musakhan chicken is chicken marinated in olive oil and sumac, grilled with caramelized onions, and wrapped in pita bread. If you love the taste of onions, you will adore this sandwich.

One of the other main entrees are the plates. They offer chicken shawarma, $9.49, beef shawarma, $9.99, musakhan chicken, $9.99, falafal, $8.49, souq veggies, $8.99, and kushari, $7.99. While I have not been able to try each of these plates, I enjoy the beef shawarma immensely. The dish had turmeric rice topped with grilled beef shawarma and tahini sauce, served with a simple salad with an olive oil and lemon dressing that is made in house. When delightful yellow rice is topped with juicy beef and flavorful tahini sauce, I know my stomach will be satisfied.

The last entrée is more of a fancy side that is in a larger portion. The restaurant offers a series of fry dishes with different toppings. They have shawarma fries, musakhan fries, falafal fries, and souq veggies fries. While I have not personally had this dish, my girlfriend enjoyed the shawarma fries, which are fries topped with beef and chicken shawarma, tahini sauce, garlic mayo and their house-made hot sauce, which is set on the side. I was lucky enough to steal some of these fries, and I believe that the really spicy hot sauce is fantastic. The meat is always cooked amazingly perfectly, which just makes any dish you eat with it something to enjoy.

Senior Swan Song: Jared Greenberg Presents "Speed-the-Plow"
BY HARRY LIEN

Concordia, St. Paul senior Jared Greenberg is presenting "Speed-the-Plow," a 1988 play written by David Mamet. Set in 1980s Hollywood, the play lends a satirical dissection of the American movie business. Bigshot Hollywood producer Bobby Gould, played by Nathan Kleppe, receives a screenplay from a longtime friend Charlie Fox, played by Kyle Baker. While in cahoots with one another, the two wage a bet on whether or not Gould is able to sleep with his temporary secretary Karen, played by Lindsey Bahr. Determined to win the bet, Gould assigns Karen to read over a script he has and meet up later at his place to discuss it. Karen, unaware of the bet and his ulterior motive, has her own agenda as well.

Greenberg has made a few changes from the original "Speed-the-Plow" script. Namely, he has cut the first half of Act I and all of Act III. The original play has three acts in total. Another change was the removal of most explicit language and curse words. However, in a few cases he left it in to maintain emphasis in the dialogue. Greenberg chose this play because he is a fan of Mamet, the play’s writer, and finds him talented at what he does.

Greenberg is looking forward to showing off his production and is appreciative of the actors, as he says, “They help breathe life to the script and make it feel alive. I can’t wait for people to see the culmination of all our hard work putting this together.”

"Speed-the-Plow" will be available in three showings via a video live stream December 11, December 12, and December 13. In order to receive the link to the performance, simply email cspstage@gmail.com.

Dark and Deliciously Wicked: Mark Rosenwinkel Presents "A Sentimental Tale"
BY HARRY LIEN

A MIDS THE PANDEMIC, Concordia St. Paul’s theatre department remains determined to put on a show. Mark Rosenwinkel’s upcoming production, "A Sentimental Tale," warps us back in time to the days of radio dramas presenting a vintage noir story. According to Rosenwinkel, radio dramas were noted for dark and menacing stories about ordinary people committing terrible acts. He also uses the term "noir," which is French for “black,” to describe the melodramatic subject matter and black and white photography, emblematic of this genre. That said, the production will be a video live stream in the form of a radio show on camera with sound effects and music to accompany it. Additionally, the script is being read by fully-engaged actors donning 1940’s period costumes. These combined elements will look to make the production immersive and reminiscent of the era depicted.

To preface the story, “A Sentimental Tale” concerns the conflicts of social class and character between a gossip reporter and her daughter in law. In order to get a sense of the narrative structure, Rosenwinkel credits listening to and watching a number of radio and television dramas from the 1940’s and 1950’s. Staples of the noir genre, such as plot twists and moral questions, are also aspects he uses. However, Rosenwinkel distanced the production from the noir’s traditional use of the “helpless female” which he sees as a sexist trope. That said, in his play, the primary struggle is with the female characters, because, being a noir story, they are as wicked as everyone else.

Overall, Rosenwinkel is excited with how the script turned out, as it was a great read for him and the cast. Rosenwinkel continued on saying, “It’s a dark, deliciously wicked story of twisted ambition, and it takes advantages of the limitations that theatre is working under during the pandemic, turning them into opportunities for something new and different.”

Performances are free and will be live streamed at 7:00PM on December 11, 7:00 on December 12, and will wrap up on December 13 at 2:00PM. In order to receive the link to the performance, simply email cspstage@gmail.com.
ARTS & VARIETY

Recipe Review: Apple Cinnamon Pancakes

BY ERIKA SOUKUP

With December and cozy-Christmas weather approaching, a perfect morning recipe is needed: pancakes! We don’t need to debate the specifics of pancakes vs. waffles vs. french toast, but this is a great (and sugary) way to start the day.

INGREDIENTS
1 1/3 cups all-purpose flour
1 1/2 tsp. baking powder
1 1/2 tsp. cinnamon, divided
1 tbsp. granulated sugar
1/2 tsp. kosher salt
4 tbsp. butter, divided, plus more for cooking
1 large egg, separated
1 tsp. pure vanilla extract
1 1/4 cups milk
4 large apples, peeled, cored, and finely chopped (about 5 to 6 cups)
1/2 cups brown sugar

INSTRUCTIONS - BAKING

Step 1:
• Mix flour, baking powder, 1 teaspoon cinnamon, sugar, and salt in a medium bowl.
• Melt 2 tablespoons of the butter.
• In a large bowl, whisk to combine egg yolk, vanilla, milk, and melted butter.
• Gently fold dry ingredients into wet ingredients until just combined, then fold in 1 1/2 cups of chopped apple.

Step 2:
• In another medium bowl, using a hand mixer, beat egg white until stiff peaks form.
• Fold egg white into batter gently with a rubber spatula until just combined.

Step 3:
• Make apple topping: in a small saucepan over medium heat, melt remaining 2 tablespoons butter.
• Add remaining apples, brown sugar, remaining 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon, and a 1/4 cup water.
• Cook, stirring occasionally, until apples have softened and mixture is jammy, 10 to 15 minutes.

Step 4:
• In a large skillet over medium heat, melt 1 tablespoon butter.
• Pour about 1/4 cup pancake batter into pan.
• When little bubbles appear, about 1 to 2 minutes, flip and continue cooking until both sides are lightly golden. Repeat with remaining batter, adding more butter to pan as needed.
• Serve pancakes topped with apple mixture.

Whatever you do, make sure to eat them with the sauce. The pancakes themselves were pretty good, but the addition of the apple mixture on top was what really pushed it over the edge.

A Tribute to Alex Trebek

BY KACIE DUNCAN

I can vividly picture myself sitting in the living room of my childhood home, my father at the table with paperwork in front of him, and the smell of meatloaf coming from the kitchen where my mother busily cooked. When the clock struck six o’clock, my older brother would turn the television on and without a word, my five siblings and I would settle in our usual spots amongst the couch. On the television we would hear the familiar theme song of Jeopardy! come on, and within moments we would be greeted by its host. This was how every week night of my childhood life went. It was one of the few steady traditions we had in our lives.

Alex will forever be a part of countless family memories across the country, including my own.

As many of you may know, Alex Trebek recently passed away after battling cancer for the last eighteen months. Alex was eighty years old when he passed. For thirty-six of those eighty years, we had the honor of having Alex as the host of Jeopardy!, a show that was a part of many family’s evening traditions.

I’ve often been considered to have the slightest bit of an old soul, as I enjoy things that people my age don’t normally enjoy. One of those things has always been Jeopardy!. I remember sitting on that living room couch, doing my best to answer any of the questions that boggled my young mind. As I got older, I knew more answers, and it became even more enjoyable to try and beat my parents and older siblings. Who could get the most answers right—a competition that was never ending in any household that watched Jeopardy! together.

2020 has, needless to say, been a rough year. It never makes it easier when we lose someone who was so much a part of our childhood. Alex Trebek’s death has been a reminder to me to hold onto every moment, past and present. It is a reminder that everyone has an impact on the lives around them, one way or another. I doubt that young freshman Alex in college thought he would ever impact so many people’s lives, and yet he did. You never know where life is going to take you, or the impact you will make on someone’s life.

Alex leaves behind his wife Jean and his two children, Emily and Matthew. Our hearts and thoughts go out to his close friends and family in this heartbreaking time. Alex will forever be a part of countless family memories across the country, including my own.
American Horror Story: 1984 Review
A Disappointing Edition to the Idiosyncratic Series
BY MARYKATE FENSTERMAKER

American Horror Story is an anthology horror TV series. The show, currently 9 seasons long, contains a separate plot line in each sequence, but has recurring actors such as Sarah Paulson, Evan Peters, and Lily Rabe. AHS season 9, titled 1984, aired on FX Networks about three months ago. The story follows five characters who become summer camp counselors at Camp Redwood, the spot of an infamous massacre in 1970, just fourteen years earlier. 1984 breaks away from the typical AHS patterns by following an 80's slasher movie theme, but the season has little in common with the rest of the series. There is a substantial amount of time leaps, flashbacks, and foreshadowing which challenge the event sequencing. 1984 feels very inconsistent and fails to impress viewers with the big twist, something American Horror Story is known for. Overall, 1984 lacks in depth.

First off, AHS veterans; Sarah Paulson, Jessica Lange, Evan Peters, and Frances Conroy are all missing from 1984. Although they play different roles throughout the series, the recurring actors are a big part of what viewers enjoy about the show. The absence of these icons, especially following the amazing character crossovers in season 8, just threw 1984 out of sync. Speaking of season 8: Apocalypse, the writers did an incredible job pursuing previously loose ends of the earlier seasons while introducing new elements. Originally, it followed the apocalypse, caused by the Anti-Christ in season 1: Murder House and ended up resurging the witches from World Art Gallery Opening.

Among the gory deaths and cliché friend groups, like 80's slashers, 1984 focuses on good vs evil and redemption. The characters in 1984 were summed up to their either good or bad backstory, which was later used to justify their life or death. After the first few episodes, a well-liked character, Ray, admits to accidentally killing someone after a hazing went wrong. In a short amount of time, his character totally switches gears and leaves multiple people behind to save himself. Within seconds of escaping, he gets his head sliced off by Mr. Jingles, and I will admit, I felt he deserved it. We also have Trevor, a sleazy camp staffer who saves multiple people and lives happily ever after as a ghost. Even though the characters have a unique backstory, these were never pursued beyond flashbacks. We do not learn enough about the characters to know why their personalities drift so far away from expectations, other than inconsistency within the season. Emma Roberts, an AHS recurring star who plays Brooke Thomson in 1984, is set up to be the “final girl” from the very beginning. We know little about her, and we become neutral on whether she should survive or not. There is not much of a story to Brooke other than her cliché ending monologue, which was a disappointing finish.

Despite the lack of character depth, 1984 was a fun season that indulged on pop-culture references. Although a big twist is never revealed, a few fan theories suggest an even crazier plot involving time travel, surveillance, or video game simulation (which would explain why characters stray so far away from their usual temperament). The year 1984 has a smaller impact on the story than suggested by the title. The setting, Camp Redwood, has more of an influence on the events. However, some people suggest George Orwell’s 1984 may have something to do with the story. Overall, AHS’s 1984 was not as good as we were expecting. Creator, Ryan Murphy, has already given out clues to what season 10 will bring to the AHS universe. Hopefully, it will be a step up, otherwise the authentic anthology series could come to a bitter end.

World Art Gallery Opening
BY ERIKA SOUKUP

A new gallery show is now open at Concordia from November 19 until December 16. The show is from the Concordia Collections and is based on World Art. The pieces in the gallery have a large range, including Chinese paintings, Japanese Prints, art from New Guinea and West Africa, and Western Art. The show itself has a wonderfully diverse focus and on every wall there are new things to observe and learn.

Keith Williams, professor in the Art and Design Department was the one who set up the gallery for this show and chose which pieces to highlight. He says, “What I chose to highlight is world art so it’s in conjunction with the world art course I’m teaching. It’s meant to be an educational collection as opposed to a collection that accrues financial support.” Beside every art piece there is information concerning the piece such as the author, date, and materials, and for every section there are a couple paragraphs that speak about the culture and art style as a whole. “It shouldn’t be a completely foreign experience. I’ve given viewers a bit of a read in the layout to assist in understanding,” Williams says.

While looking through the collection, you can see the thought and beauty behind each piece. Chiwara masks from the Bamana are wildly popular in the United States because they’re such spectacular and abstract sculptures. There’s a large hanging banner from a Korean Christian artist, all of it using typography created by the text of the New Testament in the Bible.. Another piece present is a very famous Ukiyo-e image: The Hollow of the Deep Sea Wave off Kanagawa. The department has both the original and a reproduction hanging side by side so the audience can see the direct differences.

Not only should this exhibit be an educational experience for students, but it should also speak to the larger issues at present. Williams says, “Concordia’s the most diverse student body in the region and state. We don’t look like a traditional white liberal arts school. So that diversity and the fact that our own student body brings their own cultural background, to have a collection that only focuses on the western masters seems very inappropriate.”

Art, especially world art, is and should be held with great importance to our world. Williams finished by saying, “The reason art is so important is so we can make an attempt to understand other cultures rather than to judge them from our cultural standards. Hopefully we get to a point of appreciation of differences instead of seeing differences as excuses to separate people.”
Product Review: The Kindle Paperwhite and how it can be a game changer for University Students

BY RAJEERA GELETA

During my first quarter at Concordia, I experienced the struggles of carrying a heavy backpack around that’s filled with my textbooks, notebooks, and laptop everywhere I go. To come up with a solution, I resorted to ebooks on a Kindle Paperwhite. There are many benefits to having the Kindle Paperwhite compared to traditional textbooks, but as expected there are also drawbacks.

Right out of the box, the Kindle Paperwhite was the easiest electronic product I have ever set up. To login to the Paperwhite, all I needed was an Amazon account. Compared to the regular lower-end Kindle, there are some advantages to getting a Paperwhite. Since it has more pixels per inch (ppi), pdf files and comic books are easier to read on the Paperwhite compared to the regular Kindle (Paperwhite is 300ppi vs the Kindle 167ppi). Also, the Paperwhite has greater storage with 8 or 16gb while the Kindle only has 4gb. If you are planning to use the Kindle for academic purposes, I suggest buying the Paperwhite.

The first advantage I realized about the Paperwhite, compared to tablets like the iPad, is that the Paperwhite has a strong battery. I have only charged it once since I bought it a week ago. Also, eye strain is not as much of a problem on the Kindle Paperwhite compared to other tablets because the technology used to create the Paperwhite makes the screen appear as if the pages are from actual books. E-paper, the technology used in the Paperwhite, reflects natural light the same way books do, unlike screens. Because of this, the Kindle Paperwhite virtually has no glare in the sun compared to traditional tablets.

The Paperwhite also has benefits over traditional books. For example, you can carry about 1,000 books for every gigabyte of space you have on your 0.4 pounds Kindle Paperwhite. Also, the Paperwhite is easier to carry around not just because of its weight but also because of its size, which is the main reason I bought it. It has enhanced my learning experience because it gave me the opportunity as a PSEO student to bring all my books, not just textbooks, but even pdf files everywhere I go. If I want to listen to audiobooks, I have the option too with Bluetooth.

However, there are some drawbacks you may need to consider when purchasing the Kindle Paperwhite. For example, not all textbooks are formatted for ebooks, so reading some books feels like a maze. For in-class reading, if the teacher refers to specific pages, you are not going to find the page because of the way the same books are formatted. Reading pdf files at times may require squinting depending on how small the texts are. Since pdf files are meant for pages on printer paper and not for small screens, at times words may be too small for ebook readers. That is rarely a problem, but if it becomes one, it could easily be adjusted in the display setting.

Overall, I think with continued use of the Paperwhite, many of the problems I listed about the Paperwhite seem to disappear. For example, I easily figured out how to read poorly formatted textbooks on the Paperwhite by adjusting the settings on the device. Also, the benefit of carrying all your books with you far outweighs the cons. Compared to tablets like the iPad, the Paperwhite is also very affordable at about $144 dollars. So, if you are struggling with space in your backpack, the switch to ebooks may be what you need.

“I AM” Poem Lawrence Finch

BY DAVINA BELLINGER

Each year, the CSP Coalition for Acceptance, Respect, and Quality (CARE) committee invites the CSP seminar classes to speak. Linda Lee, who helps organize the CARE committee, said, “The learning outcome and goal for those sessions are for students to recognize the value and importance of diversity on campus, and within the larger community, practice diversity awareness, and inclusive attitudes and behaviors.”

Writing is essentially making music and writing is a form of poetry.

This year, the CARE committee had each student write an “I AM” poem in relation to the convocation earlier last month. Lee said, “The I AM poem was a way for students to see the commonality and differences they have with their classmates.”

A student who stood out was Lawrence Finch. The CARE committee is collaborating with the Concordia Sisterhood of Empowerment (CSE) to record a video of Lawrence reading aloud his poem, which will be posted on CSP Student Life’s Instagram.

Lawrence Finch is a freshman at CSP and a business & music major. He says, “Writing is essentially making music and writing is a form of poetry.” He was provided a template that was easy to fulfill the assignment. What Finch wanted to show his audience through his “I AM” poem was what represents him in a sense that does “not fabricate or embellish” him for who he is.

He also goes more in depth by explaining the main inspiration that helped him create his poem. Finch said, “The main inspiration was love and spreading the truth about our generation. Our generation is lost and it is hard to find out who we are as individuals, not by recognition of achievements, jobs and education but who you are. Once you figure out that individualist sense of identity, then you can get that inspiration to become a ‘we,’ and my first step was through this poem.”

Finch said that he will continue to work on his music and make sure that he is doing all he can to be the best version of himself, which is being a true artist. He wants to be like the singers Prince, Marvin Gaye and Donny Hathaway. In addition, Finch has given himself the stage name Paris Rose because of his favorite city in France and favorite flower.

“I AM”

BY LAWRENCE FINCH

I am from a land of dreams
And from a mindset of champions
I am from God’s view
And sweet as syrup on waffles
I am from honeysuckle and lavender
And Channing’s locket, which supplies my love like fluid to a catheter
I am from Tradition and thrive through Ancestry
From the bellows of the ghettos and cherry blossoms with mellow
I am from Larry and Susanna
And from the snow and nutmeg scented air and 4oclock rush hour
I am from wherever I want to believe, and whatever I earn to be
I am from Baltimore, the Charm City
From the 9.9. to the 2000s
And from destiny.
I am from those moments...
December Word Search

O F
T R
W N A F
S A C R
G H W S E A
H P T V H H
U B T N W O N S
T G Z N C R Q W
L H C V F E O T N Y
I K L D E O M O V K
T F A M I L Y O A K D S
C H Z P E Z F I D N I V
J H F T S O I T S T A R E I
C S N O I T A R O C E D O S
A E E F K J C H O C O L A T E M
I S W H S L M I C K F T P N V R
B E L S S A A M N B Q A H F E X X G
R H I V K M Q C S M I S T L E T O E
P M K G A A T J I Q N P D T I D S E A P
Y S L H A T S Z D U X O S K X N R T M I
G C T M T F I I S E E X N W Y R E S A I D L
C P V J M O T G H L N E V E H O A G M S L Z E O
E S H T A E R W C C R Y C R Q J V N R P T M I D
Z B X W G I O J F T X U G I G K S A N T A U M D L P
O F J E
L M L V
P J A E
H E Y Y

CHRISTMAS  PRESENT  SANTA  STAR  SNOW  ORNAMENT
ELF  SNOWMAN  SKATING  FROSTY  EVERGREEN  FAMILY
FOOD  BLIZZARD  COOKIES  KRAMPUS  MISTLETOE  RUDOLPH
WREATH  TINSEL  SCARF  LIGHTS  CHOCOLATE  CIDER
GINGERBREAD  FESTIVE  DECORATIONS
Book Review: Everything I Never Told You

BY REBECCA BEASLEY

EVERYONE HAS THAT ONE FRIEND that knows them better than they know themselves. How well do your family members know you? How well do you know them? Even further, why do we keep secrets from those we love the most? Everything I Never Told You by Celeste Ng shows how family impacts a person's entire life. It shows how love turns dysfunctional. No matter how well we may think we know someone, vulnerability is rare and hard to come by.

Celeste Ng is an American writer who graduated from Harvard University. Her first novel, Everything I Never Told You, is a New York Times bestseller along with her second novel, Little Fires Everywhere. Both have earned several awards, proving Ng's extraordinary writing capabilities.

“Lydia is dead. But they don’t know this yet…” the novel begins. It takes place in the 1970s, surrounding an interracial family in Ohio. The novel has more subjects than just race, however. Lydia’s mother, Marilyn, struggles with her decision to become a homemaker. Her regret leaks into her mothering as she pressures Lydia to be what Marilyn never was. The father, James, pushes his son to be someone he is not. Somehow, the two parents forget about and neglect their third child. From family dynamics and racial issues to gender norms and grief, Everything I Never Told You covers it all. One big mysterious event simultaneously tears the family apart and brings them back together and makes them stronger than before. One reason I enjoy this so much is because it shows that no matter how far you stray or how bad things get, a happy ending is always possible. There is always good to be found in the worst of times. This family is already struggling thanks to the parents’ pressure and other tensions. As the mystery of Lydia’s death is unraveled, the secrets the children kept from their parents and the secrets the parents kept from each other come to light. Their relationships hit rock bottom. Yet, they heal.

My favorite part of the novel is how the reader can relate to each character. I am nothing like this Chinese-American boy living in Ohio in the 1970s, yet I see myself in that character. Being able to relate to these characters helps people empathize with those who are different from them. We, as humans, have a lot in common with each other. On the outside, we may not all have the same interests, or the same hobbies, or the same childhood. Everything I Never Told You shows us the little things we all have in common. Maybe it is sibling rivalry, an insecurity and imposter syndrome, or maybe it is something as big as culture.

Everything I Never Told You is more than the murder-mystery I expected it to be. It is more than secrets. It shows the dark side of love. I would recommend this book to people looking for a quick read (it is a little less than 300 pages) that is both mentally stimulating and emotionally moving. Even if you do not think you could ever relate to the characters, I challenge you to read the novel anyways, as you might be surprised. After reading, ask yourself how well you know your loved ones and how well they know you. What secrets are you keeping?

Senior Spotlight: Noah Klemp

BY REBECCA BEASLEY

NOAH KLEMP, an English literature major as well as a music performance and applied guitar major, is no stranger to Concordia’s Music and Theater Department. Throughout his time at CSP, Noah has been involved in Jubilate Choir, Christus Chorus, concert band, 908 Worship, string ensemble, and theatre. In addition to singing, he plays a variety of instruments, including the drums, piano, bass guitar, upright bass, mandolin, banjo, just about any brass instrument, and even the accordion! Noah grew up in Omaha, Nebraska with his parents, who both attended CSP. His parents inspired both his love of music and his love of literature, which led him to attend CSP. After graduating from CSP, Noah plans to write and record music, which he already has experience with. Noah can be found performing in various restaurants and bars, as well as house shows in the cities, following current CDC and MDH guidelines. He uses his Instagram @noahklemp as a platform for gigs and his music career. Noah plans on teaching English and music part-time or as a substitute in local schools before pursuing graduate studies in English and music.

The people. Noah says, are his favorite part of CSP. It was because of his peers that he enjoyed various band tours and a choir tour to New York City. Outside of his studies, Noah enjoys reading nonfiction literature, especially the works of Greek philosophers. He is also a proud political junkie who wants everyone to know that he did, in fact, predict Georgia’s red-to-blue flip in the 2020 election, down to the hour. Additionally, Noah prefers cats and is a travel enthusiast. He has already been to Central Europe and Hong Kong, and he plans on going to Jamaica in the future. Although the pandemic may put a hold on his travels in the near future, it has changed his perspective on graduating. Noah says the pandemic made him realize that graduation in December is nothing to be nervous about, and is only as big of a deal as you choose to make it.

Noah’s advice for underclassmen is this: care more about everything than that which is required of you.

Noah’s advice for underclassmen is this: care more about everything than that which is required of you. He says that it is easy to earn a degree without learning anything. It is easy to do the bare minimum in your classes and graduate, but just because it is easy does not mean it is a good route. Deciding to care more is a healthy mentality that makes you successful everywhere you choose to apply it, including “work, relationships, friendships, personal development, and especially education,” Noah says.