Larkinville: A breeding ground for business

By Mary E. Goetz, Editor-in-Chief

Over the last 20 years, the Larkin Development Group has been transforming Buffalo’s historic district into Larkinville. Its goal is to “have the complete neighborhood, where it’s living spaces, working space, retail space,” Harry Zemsky, owner of Hydraulic Hearth. Harry Zemsky overlooks his restaurant and bar, along with his next-door neighbor the Swan St. Diner, and the free event programs in Larkin Square. These include free concerts, and Food Truck Tuesdays in the summer months, which he says “put us on the map.” Mr. Zemsky states; their bulk mail orders were transported on the railroads.

Mr. Zemsky also speaks on the architectural significance of the soap manufacturer, who became friends with Darwin Martin, the businessman who brought Frank Lloyd Wright to Buffalo to build his now historic home. After this construction, John Larkin

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Disco’s Not Dead! It’s Right Here at SEM

By Katherine F. Rooney, Editor-in-Chief

On Friday Nov 4, students at Buffalo Seminary and their guests were invited to dance the night away at “Boogie Wonderland,” an entirely student-led dance held in the school gym and Atrium. As one may have guessed, the theme was disco, so many students came donned in their finest sequins and sparkles ready to jive.

The idea of the dance came from the Junior health and leadership class, taught by Ms. Stothart. Faith, ’24, recalls, “Ms. Stothart asked our Junior health classes how we want to be remembered and what sets our class apart from others. Our class has a lot of school spirit and energy, so she suggested we plan something to potentially become a tradition. We decided on a dance, so we created a committee of juniors and seniors.”

The members of the aforementioned committee included Kaya ’24, Melaina ’24, Juanita ’24, Faith ’24, Katherine ’23, AJ ’23, Sunshine ’23, Olivia ’23, and Meara ’23. The committee took the reigns with organizing, planning, budgeting, and decorating for the dance, yet, they were assisted by all of the Juniors as part of their health and leadership class, along with Ms. Stothart who said, “I am that one person who is working with each committee member, the food, the entertainment, the decorations, purchasing, budgeting, permission forms, and connecting all of those people with each other, but also with the appropriate departments.”

A few other staff members also played a crucial role in the dance. According to committee member Olivia ’23, “Mr. Embler was a huge help in putting up the disco ball and other decor and making sure the gym was clean and well prepared for our students and
Science Behind: Fall Leaves

BY FAITH WENDEL
Editor

You step outside and take a deep breath. You can smell it. Fall. You take a look around at nature’s color palette and begin to wonder what causes the shift from green to vibrant, warm-colored leaves. It just so happens that science has an explanation!

Chlorophyll is the green pigment found in the majority of plants. Carotenoids, responsible for yellow, orange, and brown colors in some food and plants, and chlorophyll are present in the chloroplasts of leaf cells all year long, but the green pigment tends to mask the other colors. Autumn’s nights as they increase in length, slow down chlorophyll production until it is all destroyed allowing the carotenoids and anthocyanin, the pigment of cranberries, red apples, etc., to show off their vibrant colors. Different trees produce different colors—oak leaves are red or brown, beech leaves are light tan and red maples are scarlet. Other factors affecting leaf color are temperature and moisture. Sugars are produced on warm days, and cool nights prevent the sugars from leaving. Different levels of soil moisture result in varying leaf colors from year to year. Delayed color change and lowered color intensity come from summer drought and warm fall, respectively. With its unpredictability comes beauty.

Arguably, the best season is fall, or at least, I believe it is. The best part is, of course, the leaves. There’s nothing better than trudging through piles of colorful, crunchy fall leaves. The mystery of their colors is uncovered. Science—there’s an explanation for everything.

“[It] was the best homecoming dance we’ve had.”

Disco from Page 1

their guests. Mr. Valdez put in his helping hand to safely return the disco ball and Ms. Merrell helped us all when working through purchases and paperwork.” A few staff members, Nurse Kim, Alex S., Ms Kimmet, and Grace C. actually attended the dance as well to serve as chaperones.

However, at its core it really was a dance by the students and for the students. Besides the massive amount of time that students dedicated to blowing up over 300 balloons, searching for the perfect disco ball, and tracking down a photobooth, they were also the ones who ultimately brought the energy and enthusiasm that truly make a dance successful. One committee member, Meara ’23, observed, “I think the dance went really well and was the best homecoming dance we’ve had with the most amount of students attending.” Committee member Faith ’24 agreed stating, “I think it was a huge success! The main objection was to make something fun, and I believe everyone who attended had a great time.” It really was a boogie wonderland!
“Take camp with you”: A reflection on Pathfinder and rally for future participants

By Elle Noecker
Assistant Editor

RING RING. The time is 7:15am, which means it is time to prepare for the big day ahead. Only, this is not your typical alarm. And you’ve probably been lying awake for the past 30 minutes or so because you thought you felt something run across your head (sure enough a chipmunk was making itself comfortable in your hair). RING RING.

You and your half-asleep roommates sit up on your creaking cot and look around through heavy eyelids. The massive bell at the center of camp makes its final chimes as some of your classmates choose to make the morning plunge into the piercing cold lake while others get ready for breakfast. Three days of this same morning routine sound daunting. Terrifying. Impossible, even. But personally, I did not want to dread it. I did not want to be making myself comfortable in your hair. RING RING.

To take it from the top, let’s go to the morning of the departure. The drive to Algonquin Park is a lengthy one, so you must arrive early at your departure point—everyone’s favorite place during your last few summer days—SEM! Maybe you have a little extra pep in your step because you are extremely excited (as you should be) or maybe you are dragging your feet in dread (which is okay too), but it is impossible to deny that it is nice to see your classmates again. You all pile on the bus and the journey begins. Goodbye Buffalo, you think as you wave to the ever disappearing land that you call home behind you as you cross the Peace Bridge (for some it may not be that dramatic, but as a home body, I did in fact experience this). As the day carries on, the bus grows louder and there is talk of the ever-suspenseful roommate situation (which you will soon realize is a win-win because either you end up with some of your closest friends or you form new bonds and have the best time ever with classmates you might not see too much at school!).

Arriving on the Canadian island comes next and you must separate from your cell phone. You will quickly realize that you would much rather absorb the enchanting world around you rather than an electronic screen anyway. As described by SEM’s Director of Development and chaperone of the trip this past fall, Ms. Leah Kimmet, “one highlight for me was getting off the bus and onto the pontoon cargo boat to head out to Pathfinder Island. Once on the water, I found the scenery to be remarkably beautiful!” As soon as you start to look around, you are instantly captivated by your surroundings. Floating in a seemingly magical way on the brisk, fresh water are endless islands full of secrets and history in which you are soon enthralled to learn about. Once you step foot on Pathfinder Island, your perspective of life, teamwork, nature, and independence will shift in a way in which you never deemed possible.

Of course, the pre-Pathfinding anxiety you may be experiencing is totally valid. Most people have never experienced spending hours upon hours canoeing (nevermind portaging that canoe—whatever the heck that means), or hiking a mountain—but the takeaways from this experience are invaluable. When asked about what challenges they faced on the trip, current members of the junior class did not hesitate to share some obstacles they encountered and conquered. Huizi ’24 recalled the biggest challenge for her to be jumping in the freezing cold lake first thing in the morning. Although this was optional for students, Huizi chose to try it out and was happy to say that she took the plunge. She continued to explain that on the trip, she “underestimated the difficulties of those challenges we would face and the joy we would gain.” Huizi continued, “[It] turns out many activities were quite harder than I previously thought, but they all brought me a lot of fun!”

Challenges on this trip are inevitable, but it’s the cohesiveness of the class and faculty that make it all possible and more than worthwhile. A significant portion of the trip requires physical and mental stamina which was definitely a bump in the road that almost

See Pathfinder on Page 4
“[The] joy flowing under a canopy of stars was priceless.”

Pathfinder from Page 3

Everyone on the trip endured. However, Faith ’24 was proud to say that “with the support of my friends and the counselors, I was able to make it through every day trip. Never once did I regret any part of it.” In the words of Fiona ’24, “Pathfinder taught me to be okay in pretty uncomfortable situations and that I could live without my phone.” Ms. Kimmet perfectly summarized what it means to face the challenges of Pathfinder and the irreplaceable outcomes of them when she reflected, “In my life, I always cherish experiences where I can challenge myself physically and mentally while building strong connections with others at the same time.”

From late night games and adventures in the forest, to stargazing, to tipping over in the canoe and laughing about it so hard you can’t climb back into the boat, Pathfinder brings memories with your classmates that you will cherish and reminisce about each day—and that is not an exaggeration. A popular favorite memory was the grand finale on the last night of the trip known as Muskoka Prom. (Disclaimer: besides the fact that it will be one of the most light-hearted, happy, unified, and pure fun experiences of your life, no further details will be revealed in case you too get the privilege of dancing the final night of Pathfinder away). This trip benefits the benefits and challenges of this trip has stated that they would go again and are so glad they decided to face the unknown.

Departing from camp was a bittersweet day unlike any other. Ms. Kimmet shared a method of final closure that she learned from a different camp in the past. Myself, and I am sure everyone who was present, will hold this moment closely for the rest of their lives. We all put our hands over our heart and said in unison “take camp with you.” For me, this was the most powerful moment of the trip, as I can confidently say it holds true. Lessons learned from Pathfinder are necessary in everyday life, and the memories will make you long to relive it. So the next time you lay awake imagining the horrors of this unknown class camping trip, replace those thoughts with images of a stunning starry sky more beautiful than in your wildest dreams and a magnificent moon as your nightlight, knowing that it will be one of the greatest experiences of high school and maybe even life.

There’s no critical mass of people living down here, [to] have an open and viable retail business, you need to be a destination.”

Larkinville from Page 1

One of these businesses new to the area is Ben Johnson’s boutique chocolate shop. Mr. Johnson owns Blue Table Chocolates and is the parent of Mia, a junior at SEM.

Blue Table Chocolates used to be located in the Five Points neighborhood on the West Side. Eventually, they outgrew the small space, and after problems with air, plumbing, and WiFi, they “decided to find a new home,” in January of this year, Mr. Johnson says.

They opened this Saturday, Nov 12, and are now open Monday through Saturday 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. While it’s “too early yet to see any impact on sales or walk-in traffic,” Mr. Johnson says that “the new space is infinitely more usable so far, and we are able to really have fun with the aesthetic.” The new shop has a surreal waving wooden wall, displaying their chocolates with a sleek, clean look.

When asked if he would recommend Larkinville to other business owners, Mr. Johnson shared his moving experience thus far saying the area “has been very welcoming,” and explained his hopes for the future: “we have big hopes for an increased summer business” due to the free events in Larkin Square.

Larkin Square and its events, as well as Larkin Development Company’s continuous new-builds, serve as magnets for foot-traffic and business in Buffalo in the growing neighborhood. All that’s left: drawing residents to develop a lively retail scene.
Dr. Harts: Inspiring others through music

BY YUSRA ALSADAM
Staff Reporter

“[With] teaching voice and teaching different instruments, the main thing is to bring over the excitement and the passion for the playing or the singing and bring it to whoever it is I’m teaching,” says Dr. Madeline Harts, SEM’s new music teacher. Her strong passion for music makes her perfect for the job.

Dr. Harts has been in many previous teaching environments including Bowling Green State University, University of Miami, SUNY Fredonia, University at Buffalo, and Niagara University. Dr. Harts says she wanted to work at a high school because she enjoys teaching students who want to work together.

Her elementary school teacher and her combination of love for the piano and helping her peers is what inspired her to have a career in teaching music. “I think that it’s really fun and exciting to be able to just bring music to life with my fingers and to make it almost sound like singing in a way,” Dr. Harts said.

When asked what her favorite instrument to play is, Dr. Harts responded that she has a special love for the piano. She took lessons when she was younger, but never thought of it as something that she had to do. Creating and exploring new ways of combining different melodies brought up that excitement that she had for playing.

She got excited that her career could revolve around what she loved so she became involved with music in high school.

Dr. Harts emphasizes that students learning music have to be invested and interested in what they’re doing in order to push themselves forward and feel confident. “It’s not right to think that someone is born with the ability to be good at singing or to be good at an instrument. It’s all learned. Anyone can learn how to do it,” she states.

Outside of SEM, Dr. Harts likes to spread music in the community as much as she can. She is the executive director of the Grammy-award winning Buffalo Philharmonic Chorus and likes to play at local gigs and festivals.

She also loves teaching masterclasses at local universities as well.

When she’s not playing music, she loves reading, knitting, and watercolor painting.

Not only does Dr. Harts want to inspire her students to take off in their music careers, she wants everyone at SEM to make music an important factor of their lives whether that be singing, dancing, playing an instrument, or just listening to music. She also hopes that she can incorporate music more in school events and give private or group lessons in the future for those that still wish to learn or didn’t get an opportunity to do so in the past.

Getting to Know Señora Rivera

BY SASHA WECHSLER
Staff Reporter

“You are all very motivated here, that is important. That you want to learn and you are curious and that you are here because you want to be here, not because you have to.” This is what Señora Liza Rivera, a new Spanish teacher at SEM, told me in an interview. She encourages students to learn for themselves, to learn because they want to.

She admires the positive, welcoming environment we have at SEM and how the students are personally driven to succeed.

In addition to loving our school, Señora Rivera has many different accomplishments of her own: a Ph.D. in Romance Studies and a Master’s in Iberic and Latin American Studies from the University of Paris Sorbonne, a Master’s in Didactics and Linguistics in French as a Foreign Language FLE, which stands for Français Langue Étrangère, which means French as a foreign language, from the University de Rennes 2, and a Master’s in Spanish from the University of Reims.

Señora Rivera speaks four different languages: Spanish, French, Italian, and English. She also has many different hobbies and interests, one of which is traveling. She has traveled to over eighteen countries all over the world. She loves to cook and try different styles of food. Though she enjoys all cuisines, her favorites are probably French and Italian. She also loves reading, some of her favorite books are “The Name of the Rose,” by Umberto Eco and “100 Years of Solitude,” by Gabriel García Márquez.

Throughout her time at SEM, Señora Rivera has already become a big part of our Spanish Club. She is looking forward to potentially starting a Movie or Fitness Club. Señora Rivera has wanted to be a language teacher. She says that it was intuitive for her - she always knew that she would love teaching different languages to people. When she moved to Buffalo, she knew she loved SEM and knew she would really enjoy teaching here, which was solidified after she first took a tour of the school.

Part of how Señora Rivera is so successful in learning all of these languages is her drive and self-advocating. When she was a little girl, her dad would take her and her siblings to see films with subtitles in different languages, that is how her spark was ignited. She found it so fascinating how different languages worked and wanted to learn more. So she took action. She contacted embassies in Bogota (the capital of Columbia) and she started her collection of 25 dictionaries. They were a very large part of her success in language. She still has those dictionaries today. She knows that everyone’s path to learning a language is different, but she encourages everyone to try it. “Everyone learns in a different way,” she says. “A way that works for me may not work for someone else.” She encourages every student to find their own way in learning a language.
From Journalism to Education: Introducing Ms. Zhao

By Grace Dolan
Staff Reporter

“I get fulfillment from helping people, this is my personality, some people feel happiness when they achieve goals but I feel extremely happy when I can help others,” Ms. Jie Zhao, the new Mandarin teacher here at SEM said. During our interview, she talked about how passionate she is about teaching and the fulfillment it gives her to see the enthusiasm of students on their journey to learning a new language.

Her passion for teaching has taken her across the globe, from the Liaoning Province in China to Buffalo, NY to work here at SEM. She got her Bachelor’s degree at the Liaoning Technical University and is now completing her Master’s degree at the University at Albany, where she is majoring in curriculum development and instructional technology.

Before becoming a teacher, she was a journalist in the Liaoning Province. She explained that there are a lot of similarities between being a news reporter and a teacher, like the ability to listen and communicate with people, which ultimately led her to become a teacher. Her first experience in the classroom was when she started teaching online classes. This was the spark that lit her love of teaching.

When teaching, she focuses on introducing culture, holidays, and the history behind the Mandarin language. In Ms. Zhao’s class, Fridays are culture days. She weaves history lessons into the curriculum along with other topics like learning how to write with the Mandarin characters. “I introduce a well known historical setting like the Great Wall. So who built that?,” she explained.

She focuses on giving a “background” of the language that may not be as widely known or taught, along with the other important parts like the unique way of writing with characters.

Outside of the classroom, Ms. Zhao enjoys an array of activities from camping with her family to reading. She loves cooking different types of food from numerous countries like Korea, Mexico, or even the United States. From making pizza and burgers to her personal favorite, dumplings. She says cooking is her “loving language” and is her way of enjoying people’s company and how much she cares for them. She loves cooking different types of food from numerous countries like Korea, Mexico, or even the United States. From making pizza and burgers to her personal favorite, dumplings.

She enjoys seeing the motivation, enthusiasm, passion, and creativity in SEM students. “Compared to general highschoolers, SEM students really stand out,” she said. While at SEM she hopes to reach out to more students, and inspire them to learn more about Asian culture and help them open their minds to different cultures and ways of life. She believes that one big importance is how, “[learning] can help you connect with other people and help you understand how other languages work.”

She would like to inspire students to follow their passions no matter where it takes them. “I feel like I have a second chance to choose another career, you only live once,” Ms. Zhao said. “Open your mind, you open your heart.”

Where’s the Coffee? Understanding the effect of Starbucks’ union efforts

By Fiona Murphy
Assistant Editor

Disclaimer: This is a student narrative about the alleged personal experiences of students and Starbucks employees. This story does not hold any legal validity or representation for the Starbucks Union, Starbucks company, or any persons involved.

Strawberry Acai Refresher, Chai Tea Latte, Iced Caramel Macchiato upside down, Caramel Frappuccino, Iced Green Tea Latte. Whether it’s the thing that gets you out of bed in the morning, a quick stop after school, or a trip to get drinks during advisory, if you go to SEM, you have almost certainly been to the Starbucks on Elmwood Ave.

Maybe you noticed the workers protesting, saw the lawn signs for a union, or you’ve just walked by, unsure of what it means. The store closing, the sign in the window apologizing for any inconveniences, and even the day that they gave out gift cards, this Starbucks has changed since the union efforts began.

Maybe you noticed the workers protesting, saw the lawn signs for a union, or you’ve just walked by, unsure of what it means. The store closing, the sign in the window apologizing for any inconveniences, and even the day that they gave out gift cards, this Starbucks has changed since the union efforts began.

I began my research by asking the people in the SEM community who were affected. How much did the Starbucks shutdowns actually affect students? Although I got
varying responses, the general consensus was: not too much. Regular Starbucks customers chose to support other coffee shops nearby such as Caffe Aroma, Spot Coffee, or another Starbucks in the area.

Prior to researching this, I had very little knowledge of what a Starbucks union would mean for the workers and the customers. I was not alone in this. Of those who I asked, very few people actually knew what the union efforts were for. And regarding their support for it, it was a tentative yes; Supporting the workers, but not really understanding what the support was for. Smiling, waving, or signaling that you stood with the workers as you walked past them holding their signs outside the store, demanding that their voices be heard.

Getting a barista to talk to me was extremely difficult. I went two separate times, and both times the workers were very reluctant to speak on the union. Their resistance to speak with me was largely due to the number of people who come in daily and ask them about the union. I ultimately was able to get a short interview with one of the baristas.

In speaking with them, I got an entirely new perspective on this issue. They talked about the working conditions, which have become much worse since the union began - understaffing, which causes the current baristas to be overworked - and a lack of management so they cannot voice their concerns to anyone, these problems make the work environment less than pleasant to be in. The unfortunate part is that none of the benefits of the union have taken effect as the contract isn’t finalized.

The barista I talked with told me that they had support from managers when the union first began, but they only attempted some “union bust activities” that actually worsened conditions. The barista, who was originally in favor of having a union, told me that they are not as on board with the union anymore. In their own words, “if everything that the union contract had going on went through, it’d be great, but with all the stalls and everything, it’s just made it a negative environment to work in.” They are fed up with the time it’s taking for them to get the rights they’ve been protesting about for well over a year.

When I asked them if they had anything else that they wanted me to include or that they thought I should know, they hesitated, at first. But as I was leaving, they stopped me and told me to know my rights. They said that it’s important to self-advocate before group advocating; that you shouldn’t “just go with the flow just because that’s what you think you should do. Be assertive. If you think you should be treated a certain way, let them know.” I thought it was a powerful statement from them, someone who just minutes before didn’t even want to talk to me. Although they, in their own words, “just work there.” I thought that it was fascinating to get a perspective that I couldn’t have gotten anywhere else.

I am so thankful to the barista who was willing to speak with me. They didn’t have to, and without that interview, I never would have gotten the perspective that I was looking for and that helped me to write this article from a place of knowledge instead of one of ignorance. I want to leave you with the idea that everyone has a story to tell. The people who make your drinks at Starbucks are more than just someone who pours milk into your coffee or fulfills your mobile orders. They have more to say about the establishments that they work for. They may not be representatives for the company, but they do have opinions about their workplace. It’s important to know what you are supporting when you say you’re behind a cause. Very few things like this can be boiled down to a simple solution, this has been a conflict in the business for a long time and it is making the workers’ conditions worse than before; this reality is the opposite of what their union contract intended. While something like a union is positive from the outside, it is a lot more complex than it seems.
Takeaways from the Play: The SEM Theatre Community

BY MAISY FLANNERY
Staff Reporter

Every fall and spring, Buffalo Seminary Theatre puts on a production for everyone to come and see. This fall, they put on the play The Illustrated Bradbury by Ray Bradbury, but what the audience didn’t see was the weeks of work and dedication the cast and crew had to put on this show, the behind the scenes of an average show at SEM, and how the theatre department at SEM affects the cast and crew.

Nadia ’25, was that the stage manager for this production, and says that her main takeaway is she has, “Certainly grown more confident, developed leadership skills these past three plays, and made friendships I could not have had without theater.” The community is the main aspect of SEM Theatre that stands out, with the amazing ability to put on a performance where students have the opportunity to take initiative and lead, of course under the guidance of the director and theater teacher Ms Susan Drozd, who encourages this independence within each show. Bela ’23, the dramaturg and playbill creator, adds, “It has definitely made me appreciate the performing arts more. It has made me more inclined to go and see shows and to want to participate in shows when I’m in college.”

This is definitely a shared takeaway with the majority of the theater community at SEM, with numerous opportunities to watch local shows providing an experience and knowledge of theater outside of the school.

Nadia adds, “SEM Theatre has really affected my outlook on performing arts because I got to see how much really goes into making live art so amazing, and I have learned to appreciate it even more.” The appreciation for theater extends past the cast and crew, but to anyone who comes to see each show. The growth each student leaves with is something that they will carry with them long after each show, Bela says, “I have learned to be a much more go-with-the-flow kind of person, and have been able to challenge my artistic abilities a lot. It’s made me more comfortable in creating art and showing it to other people.” One thing about the SEM Theatre community is that everyone is always ready for any challenge that comes their way, leaving each show with an overwhelming gain of confidence and problem-solving abilities.

In my experience, SEM Theatre has taught me to ask for help when I need it. Being the assistant stage manager for The Illustrated Bradbury has shown me how and when to take initiative, allowing me to solve problems thoroughly and efficiently, whether it’s during a performance or at rehearsal. It has made me appreciate every step of putting on a show, despite how trivial some tasks may seem.

The SEM Theatre community has certainly taught me, as well as my peers, the significance of performing arts, and the beneficial traits that come with it. •

Hornet Jacket Day 2022

BY ANDREA ALAVE

The cast and crew of The Illustrated Bradbury.

SEM Theatre