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Observer

The award-winning student newspaper of Northern Essex Community College • Haverhill and Lawrence, Mass.

Spring 2026 • Volume 90 • Issue Number 5 • March 5, 2026

News Bytes

It's a WinWin pawty!

BY LIDIA RAMIREZ
Editor-in-Chief

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It's a WinWin party at Northern Essex Community College! Winnie the school's best friend had turned two on February 13th, the same day her party was hosted in Lawrence Campus' El Helfni building by Student Life. Excited and thrilled with the same emotions when she walks through the halls and sometime visits classrooms at both campuses, Northern Essex students, staff, and other friends gather to celebrate the school's committed emotional support dog.

Being the school's real mascot, Winnie receives a well-deserved pampering, pets, and treats from her party guests. Upon asking guest Arianna, "Do you think that the school has made a good decision in including Winnie as it's emotional support dog?", Arianna



Photo by Editor-in-Chief Lidia Ramirez

Winnie smiling during her birthday party.

What's Happening?

NECC Library: Women's History Month Read/Watch/Listen, March 11 @ 11 a.m. - 12:15 p.m. Haverhill Commons, C201.

This year's Women's History Month theme is **Leading the Change: Women Shaping a Sustainable Future**. Join NECC Librarians as we celebrate the visionary women who are defining what it means to build a sustainable future—one that supports healthy ecosystems, equitable economies, and strong educational foundations.

How to find security around each campus:

Haverhill Campus
100 Elliott St., Spurr Building,
Room 110C

Lawrence Campus
45 Franklin St. main lobby
Call 978.556.3333 from a cell
phone. Extension 3333 from
any campus phone on either
campus.

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NECC Observer

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Have you taken Journalism I? Are you taking it now?
Would you like to be on the Observer staff? Then submit
your resume to observer@necc.mass.edu

Publication Schedule

Issue #	Publication Date	Ad/Copy Deadline
1	March 5	Feb. 27
2	March 26	March 20
3	April 16	April 10
4	April 30	April 24

We welcome letters and articles from our readers. You can submit via email, and must include your name and phone number for verification. Write "Letter" or "Article to Editor" in the subject line so we notice it right away.

Send your letters to observer@necc.mass.edu

We try to publish all letters we receive, but we reserve the right to edit or reject those we receive.

*The NECC Observer is a member of the Associated Collegiate Press,
College Media Advertisers Inc., the Colombia Scholastic Press
Association, and the New England Press Association.*

Editorial

THE LIBERAL ARTS DIVISION
PRESENTS:

Meet the Student Press



- Meet the students who report, write, design and edit NECC's award-winning student newspaper, the NECC Observer.
- Hear about why journalism is important for civic engagement and democracy and how you can contribute
- Learn about the important role of a free press and the work that student journalists do at NECC and beyond
- Learn about how you can get involved with the Observer
- Share thoughts, story ideas and suggestions with student staff

THURS. MARCH 5

11AM - 12PM

in the Haverhill Commons
(Room C-201)

We welcome requests for ASL sign language interpreting & other ADA access requests. Please contact the host of this event: mshafer@necc.mass.edu or 978-556-3347 for requests, questions or event information.



CELEBRATE STUDENT JOURNALISM!

Opinion

Getting started with your career

Five resources you can access right now

BY KATIE YEATON-HROMADA
Coordinator for Career Services

Building a career can feel like an overwhelming, long-term project, but you don't have to figure everything out at once. College is one of the best times to ask questions, meet people in different fields, and get a feel for what you might want to do. Even small conversations or quick events can teach you something useful. Instead of waiting until your last semester, start exploring now. Ready to take action? Here are five resources to kickstart your search:

Talk with Professors

It's easy to get so focused on assignments that you forget the person teaching them has a whole career behind them. A short conversation – a few minutes before class starts or after it ends –

can give you insight into how they built their path, what the field looks like, and what opportunities you might not have considered. Professors are one of the most accessible career resources you already have, and learning about their experiences can open your eyes to more opportunities.

What Can I Do With This Major?

Whether you already know what you want to study or you're still deciding, your major can open more doors than you might expect. What Can I Do With This Major? features information on common career paths, the skills you'll build, and the types of employers who hire in your field. This resource saves you time by putting everything in one spot — an overview of the field, common job titles, and professional organizations you can join to get involved.

Give it a look and see where your major could take you: <https://necc.edu/academics/what-can-i-do-with-this-major/>

Handshake

You don't always know what you're interested in until you see it, and careers are no different. If you have a general idea of what career you want to do but want to explore your options, Handshake is a great starting point. Every student gets a free account with their MyNECC login. Use it to browse jobs, find internships, attend free events, and access job application resources. Get started: www.necc.joinhandshake.com

LinkedIn

Professional social networking sites, such as LinkedIn, LinkedIn is a helpful way to learn about companies and start building your professional network. Create an account and connect

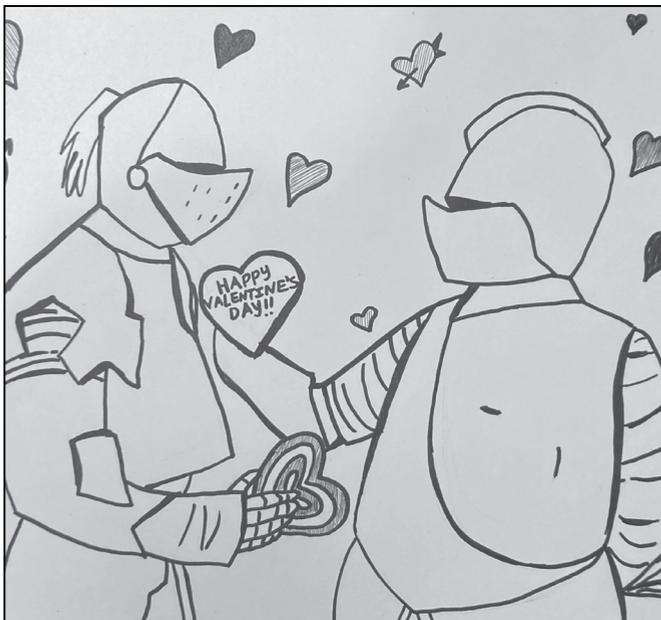
with classmates, professors, and people doing work you find interesting. Follow companies and topics you want to learn more about. Your account will grow with time – you don't need 500+ connections when you're starting! Focus on meaningful ones. Get started with a free account: <https://www.linkedin.com/>

Career Services

That's us! Career Services at NECC offers individual meetings to support students in their career journeys. From exploring career options to preparing a new resume for a career change, we're available to help students take their next step. Want to meet? Schedule through Navigate or email careerservices@necc.mass.edu with questions.

Scan the QR code to visit our Career Services website.

Comics by Narjis Musa



Opinion

ICE operations raise questions

By BAILEY ORIO
NECC News

Innocent American citizens are being taken away detained, and in some cases killed during ICE operations.

These incidences have shaken communities and raised questions about accountability, use of force and civil rights in the United States.

One of the most disturbing stories was the detainment of Liam Ramos who was used as bait or leverage to kidnap his father, a legal asylum seeker Adrian Conejo Arias.

The image of the child's arrest sparked outrage and fear within immi-

grant communities, where families already live with uncertainty.

Then there is Alex Pretti a veteran's affairs ICU nurse who was brutally shot by ICE agents. Agents tried to shift the blame onto Pretti however video footage showed that to be false.

This raised significant questions regarding Pretti's death.

Renée Good a mother of three was fatally shot by ICE agents during an encounter with them.

According to Kristi Noem, agents acted in self defense after Good allegedly tried to run over an ICE agent. However, state and local officials have

disputed elements of that claim, deepening public mistrust and intensifying calls for clarity.

According to the BBC President Donald Trump stated that the federal government would de-escalate operations in Minnesota following Alex Pretti death.

For many residents, however, the damage has already been done. Vigils have turned into marches. Marches have turned into nationwide protests.

Across the country communities are demanding answers .

They are demanding accountability.

They are demanding justice for the

families left behind.

These incidents are no longer isolated headlines. they have become symbols of a broader national debate about immigration enforcement, civil liberties, and the limits of federal power.

Whether one supports stricter immigration laws or broader reform, the loss of a life demands serious reflection.

At the heart of this issue are not just policies, but people — children, parents, nurses, families — whose lives have been permanently altered.

And for many Americans, the question remains: how many more?

Confused, anxious about the state of the world?



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Haverhill Commons – Room C-201

News

NECC Theater earns top honors

Production recently performed at American College Theater Festival

By **MELISSA BOUSE**
NECC News

In January, as much of the region was digging out from the biggest snow-storm in years, a group of Northern Essex Community College's finest thespians and stage crew was loading up their recent production of "The Vagina Monologues."

On Jan. 27, they traveled to Albany, New York, for the Region 1 American College Theater Festival (ACTF), an annual program that brings together hundreds of college theater students, professors, and professionals from New England and New York to showcase their work and share their expertise.

The show was just one of five selected to be staged at the Festival. It features students Mirrorajah Metcalfe, Maggie Evans, Jenny Ngo, and Naima Eve.

All four actors were also nominated to compete in the Irene Ryan Acting Scholarship. Jessica Newey received award nominations for stage management, lighting design, and dramaturgy. The show is directed by NECC Professor Brianne Beatrice.

Their bravery in the face of adverse travel conditions paid off. "The Vagina Monologues" earned the Best Invited Production award.

Evans, with scene partner Eve, won second place for the Irene Ryan Acting Scholarship.

And Beatrice was named the National Alliance Acting Teacher of Excellence.

She will attend the National Alliance

of Acting Teachers' Conference at The Juilliard School in June with winners from the other seven regions.

These honors continue a long history of strong showings from Northern Essex at the Festival.

"Hurricane Diane" was a Region 1 finalist in 2025. The show, its cast, crew, and Beatrice were then selected for a series of national awards from the ACTF. At the ceremony that spring in Washington, D.C., they took home 13 awards total, the most of any college, including many four-year private schools.

Beatrice will be notified in March if the play wins any national Festival honors. In the meantime, they staged a two-night revival of "The Vagina Monologues" at NECC on Feb. 7 and 8.

Northern Essex offers a variety of theater and acting courses.

Additionally, they stage several full productions and readings throughout the year. Anyone interested in learning more about NECC Theater or the audition process should email Professor Beatrice at bbeatrice@necc.mass.edu.

The American College Theater Festival is a national theater program involving 18,000 students from colleges and universities nationwide, which has served as a catalyst for improving the quality of college theater in the United States.

More than 600 academic institutions participate in state, regional, and national American College Theater Festivals.



Photo Courtesy of NECC News

Cast, crew, and supporters of "The Vagina Monologues."

Arts & Entertainment

AI in the film industry raises concerns

By **BRIANNA BURGOS**

Correspondent

As artificial intelligence becomes more common in Hollywood, some NECC students are raising concerns about synthetic performers like Tilly Norwood and their impact on opportunities for human actors.

Tilly Norwood is an AI-generated actress created by Eline Van der Velden, a Dutch comedian, writer, actress, producer and CEO of Particle 6, an award-winning AI-first production studio. The actress was announced Sept. 27, 2025, and sparked industry buzz along with backlash after reports that multiple talent agents wanted to sign the AI actress.

In 2023, a strike led by the Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists raised concerns about studios using artificial intelligence without informed consent or fair compensation.

NECC student Allora Ramos said the union's response to Tilly Norwood and other synthetic performers was an effort to protect the acting industry.

"I think they realize people won't want to watch a film where the actor is AI," she said. "The regulations against AI will last quite a while due to so many people not agreeing with AI and the strike from three years ago affecting revenue in Hollywood."

“

Actors are able to add small things to a scene, like a squint to an eye or the way they say something. I believe that an AI actor wouldn't be able to make those decisions that actors choose to make for their characters.

- Student Allora Ramos

”

Aside from the regulations, students also focused on the impact AI performers could have on those starting out in the acting industry.

Another student Dariellys Medina Duran said replacing actors with artificial intelligence would take away the hard work that was put into their careers.

"People have to find good agents, build a portfolio and go through relentless auditioning," she said. "An AI actress is offensive to the people that put in the hard work to bring joy and entertainment for others."

Some students also questioned whether artificial intelligence has been introduced as a cost reduction strategy than a creative tool.

"I definitely see AI overall as a tool for companies to save money," Medina Duran said. "They want to make something that will give them tons of money without having to put any work into it."

While some students expressed concerns over synthetic performers, others acknowledged the potential creative possibilities.

NECC student Eva Carias said AI in films could be interesting depending on

how it is used.

"I would think as long as people have a good story and they're able to make AI tell it properly," she said. "I would probably look at the movies and enjoy them."

However, students said human emotions are what makes films memorable and meaningful.

"Actors are able to add small things to a scene, like a squint to an eye or the way they say something," Ramos said. "I believe that an AI actor wouldn't be able to make those decisions that actors choose to make for their characters."

This paper is your voice, too!
We want to see what you have to say.

... ooo ...

You can reach us at:

978-556-3633
observer@necc.mass.edu

Arts & Entertainment

Drag in our community

By **STORM HERNANDEZ**
Correspondent

Drag has become a controversial topic.

With lawmakers seeking to criminalize certain aspects of drag, what do those that interact with drag really think about the art form?

Boston based Drag performer Just JP says, “drag is my superhero costume. In drag I am presenting in a way where I feel invincible and powerful.”

People that oppose the art form like Arizona Republicans told NPR in a joint statement, “If men want to dress as women, and if adults want to participate in watching these hyper-sexualized performances, they have the freedom to do so. It crosses the line when kids are subjected to these drag shows.”

Just JP challenges that idea, saying, “drag is not inherently sexual, and the people who think drag is inherently sexual are usually misogynists who believe drag is only “the illusion of womanhood” and assume women are sexual objects.”

Shaun Hood former editor of the Arts and Entertainment section of the Observer and current Northern Essex student says it more politely, “Some shows are for all ages, and some shows are for adults.”

Just like any other performer drag artists tailor their performances to their audiences.

Just JP described drag performers as “fashionable clowns,” and as a beard-

ed flamboyant Queen this definition fits them well. Merriam-Webster defines drag as “entertainment in which performers caricature or challenge gender and often wear elaborate or outrageous costumes.” Despite these benign definitions, drag has been demonized by politicians and people alike. Maybe some people don’t like the reflection they are forced to confront when attending a drag performance?

Shaun Hood has attended drag shows in both Haverhill and Salem, Massachusetts and finds it a cheap and fun way to see live entertainment.

Hood described drag simply as “queer entertainment.” He specifically likes getting to see live singers perform without paying concert level prices.

While it can be said that drag is unconventional that doesn’t necessarily make it the boogey man that some people seem to make it out to be. Just JP talked about the impact that they want to have on their community. Obviously, they want to entertain and distract, like most performers, but what they believe to be most important was to “harbor a community where no one is hungry, no one is unsafe, no one is unhoused.”

While no one can be perfect, it’s important not to let perfect get in the way of good. Interviews have been requested of the Global Politics Club and the Gender and Sexuality Alliance at Northern Essex Community College, but no one has volunteered.



Photo by Eric Magnussen

Boston drag performer Just JP

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Arts & Entertainment

NECC visits the Museum of Fine Arts

By **LIDIA RAMIREZ**
Editor-in-Chief

Northern Essex Community visits the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, MA. On February 20, students, staff, and extra participants joined together for an exciting and educational visit to one of the most famous museums.

Coordinated by the Associate Director of Lawrence Campus and Community Relations, Giselle Peguero Grullon and funded by the White Fund, the trip was led by former Lawrence High School Art teacher David Meehan.

“Through the White Fund Enlightenment Series, NECC proudly brought our students, staff, and members of the Lawrence community to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston to experience something truly special paintings from the White Fund collection currently on display at the MFA.

This visit was more than a museum tour. It was a moment of connection and pride. Seeing works that belong to our community displayed in one of the world’s leading art institutions.

Bringing Lawrence residents into that space reinforces the mission of the White Fund: expanding access, deepening cultural engagement, and ensuring that world-class art is not distant, but shared.

When our community sees its legacy represented on such a stage, it affirms that these spaces belong to all of us.

When asked, “Do you think that students are more engaged into their curricular activities and academic works by visiting the Museum of Fine Arts?”

Meehan responds, “You can see how it relates to what you’re studying in school. It’s not the same as the pictures you see when reading in the textbooks, it’s better because you can see it in person.”



Photo by Editor-in-Chief Lidia Ramirez



Photo by Editor-in-Chief Lidia Ramirez



Photo by Giselle Peguero



Photo by Editor-in-Chief Lidia Ramirez

NECC staff, students, and other participants as a group at the Museum of Fine Arts.



Photo by Maria Aybar

Tour guide David Meehan giving an informative talk on the bus on the way to the museum.



Photo by Giselle Peguero

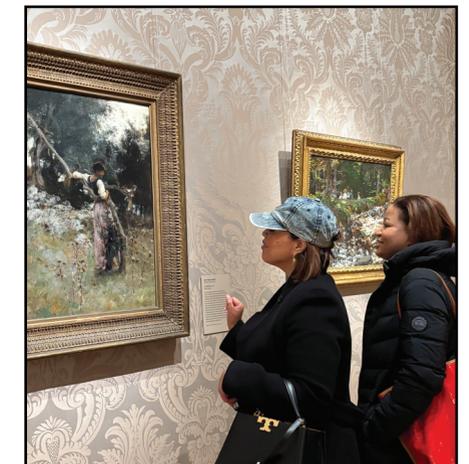


Photo by Giselle Peguero

Participants observe paintings

Arts & Entertainment

Tarot Talk Part 1: Spring Awakening—New Seeds, New Tools, and Following Your North Star

BY J.T. MELANSON

Arts & Entertainment Editor

As the frost still clings to the windows of Bentley Library, the quiet of the winter break has officially been replaced by the fresh hum and noises of a brand new semester. At Northern Essex Community College (NECC), the start of the spring term signals a unique transition—shifting from “low-gear” rest of holiday break back into “high-gear” academic action, complete with a fresh syllabus staring at you from across the screen.

Hello everyone, this newest installment of Tarot Talk focuses on the “Leap of Faith”, a requirement of starting fresh. It also focuses on the tools you’ll need to succeed, and the long-term vision that will keep you motivated once the days of March set in. The three cards present serve as your Spring Orientation, offering symbolic guidance on how to plant the seeds for a successful year ahead.

A Note on the Methodology:

The relevancy of tarot lies in their symbolism, which provides a framework for navigating the specific challenges of student life as we know it. As we head full throttle into 2026, I selected the trio of cards shown here for their direct relevance to the “Start-of-Semester” experience: embracing the unknown, utilizing campus resources, and maintaining hope when the chips are down.

Tarot Breakdown: The Journey Begins Anew

1. The Fool (0) — The Card of New Beginnings, Innocence, and Spontaneity

The Lesson for NECC: The Fool is the “Zero” from which all other num-

bers flow—the ultimate symbol of a fresh start.

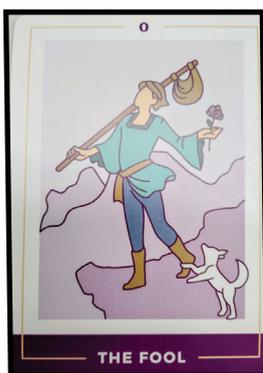
The Leap: Just as The Fool stands at the edge of a cliff ready to walk into the great unknown, many NECC students are either walking into new majors or challenging “101” courses in continuation of the previous semester’s objectives.

The Advice: The Fool reminds the NECC student that it’s okay to be an absolute novice. Whether you’re navigating the parking lots of Haverhill campus, mapping out the Lawrence campus for the first time, or opening a textbook on a subject that intimidates you, this serves as encouragement to embrace “The Fool’s” bravery. Remember that every expert on campus started at the number “Zero”.

2. The Magician (I) — The Card of Resourcefulness, Action, and Manifestation

The Lesson for NECC: If The Fool is the approach for a new semester? Then the Magician is the execution. He stands with all the tools he needs—the cup, sword, wand, and pentacle—laid out before him. The world is quite literally his oyster.

Using Your Tools: This card prompts



Photos by J.T. Melanson

you to ask: What resources am I actually using? Am I using them correctly? NECC provides the “tools” for your table. This includes the Academic Coaching Center, Center for Accessibility Resources and Services, and several Tutoring Centers you can access.

The Digital Edge: This institutionalized support aligns with The Magician’s call to master your environment. Students should utilize tools such as the EAB Navigate system to “build academic plans” and “stay on track” from day one. You already have the potential to succeed; you just have to pick the right tools to do so.

3. The Star (XVII) — The Card of Hope, Inspiration, and Renewal

The Lesson for NECC: The Star often follows a period of chaos, representing a “Nexus Polaris” that guides you toward your ultimate goals.

Maintaining Vision: As the “New Year, New Me” energy has faded by this time of the year? The Star serves its purpose as a reminder of why you’re here. Whether you’re working toward a degree, a transfer, or a new career? The Star reminds you never to give up hope. Once you’ve found your groove, everything flows much easier.

Academic Resilience: NECC’s Career Services can help you keep this “Star” of yours in sight, allowing you to explore major/career options and ensure your current hard work leads to a

tangible future. The Star serves as a beacon, reminding you that this semester is a launching pad for your long-term goals and dreams.

Conclusion: Plant Your Seeds Wisely

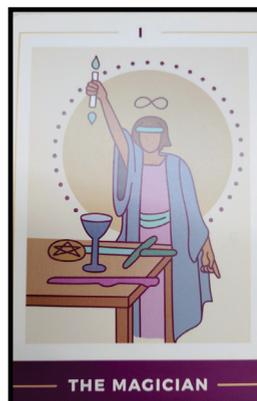
These cards confirm that while the “Fool’s Journey” of the spring semester is just beginning, you are not walking it empty-handed or alone. Use this time to find your rhythm, utilize the Magician’s tools, and keep your eyes on the Star. After all, as the French Emperor, Napoleon Bonaparte (1769 – 1821) once said, “Impossible is a word only to be found in the dictionary of fools”. In other words, nothing is impossible. Also, Kayin Amoh, a character from the game Battle Arena Toshinden Remix, once said, “Every time a path is blocked, another one opens”.

• **Counseling and Psychological Services:** Available to all students, these services offer confidential, short-term counseling for stress management, anxiety, and personal issues. To make an appointment, call 978-556-3730 or email counseling@necc.mass.edu.

• **Academic Advising/SOAR Program:**

This program provides personalized coaching to manage academic load, major exploration, goal setting, and plans for transferring or career entry. Contact them at academic-coaching@necc.mass.edu to schedule a meeting.

• **Success Workshops:** Regular workshops and coaching sessions dedicated to time management, overcoming procrastination, and building crucial life skills. Check the page for the latest schedule.



Features

Reintroduction of language classes sparks discussion

By **TRISTAN TAYLOR**

Features Editor

The reintroduction of Spanish courses at Northern Essex Community College is sparking a discussion.

These courses, taught by Arnaldo Robles-Reyes, will hopefully provide a positive linguistic learning opportunity.

Students, however, have expressed a desire to add more language courses over the coming years.

At one point, the college also offered courses teaching French, German, and Italian, but those have not been offered in some time.

Now, some students believe it's the right time to reintroduce those courses to the schedule and add more.

Talan Stratton, a student at NECC, stated "if there's higher enrollment, the college could offer more language courses."

Stratton's comments have been echoed by many other students.

Another student, Elli Vasilenko, believes offering more courses would be beneficial, stating that "learning another language can lead to the acceptance of diversity and expansion of the mind."

Vasilenko's beliefs have been proven by researchers at Northwestern University, who conducted a study and found that individuals who speak more

“ Learning another language can lead to the acceptance of diversity and expansion of the mind.

- Student Elli Vasilenko

than one language are usually better at multitasking. Furthermore, researchers at the University of Arizona found that multilingual individuals tend to feel a stronger sense of empathy. Both traits are highly beneficial in the modern world.

Danny St-Pierre, another NECC student, has advocated for the reintroduction of French courses.

St-Pierre, who speaks Quebecois French, Lao, and Thai in addition to English, stated "I believe French should be taught, especially because of the large amount of French-Canadian people who have lived in the area for decades."

St-Pierre also believes that Asian language courses should be offered at NECC, "especially considering there's a large number of people of Asian descent in Northern Massachusetts."

Middlesex Community College already offers courses in Asian languages such as Arabic, Hebrew, Hindi, Japanese, Khmer, Korean, Mandarin Chi-

nese, and Russian, and in the eyes of many at NECC, including Stratton and Vasilenko, it would make sense to offer those courses here.

Part of the interest in expanding language programs at NECC comes from the rise in Asian pop culture, more specifically Korean and Japanese music and television.

Since the early 1990s, anime, a genre of animation originating in Japan, has rapidly gained a fandom in the United States, and with some shows lacking a satisfactory English dub or accurate English subtitles, several anime fans have instead chosen to learn Japanese.

Meanwhile, K-pop, a Korean music genre, has experienced the same growth in the United States, and without the

option of subtitles and a lack of English versions of popular songs, many fans have been forced to learn at least a little Korean.

Because of the rapid growth of these two languages, the United States has seen a surge in the interest of learning a second language, with Korean language courses specifically surging in enrollment by 95% over a ten-year period from 2006 to 2016.

Kevin Adu, another NECC student, believes that the college should offer courses in Indigenous languages native to North America and Africa.

He has also stated that the college should offer courses in languages spoken in countries that foreign exchange students come from. Adu himself is bilingual, as in addition to English, he also speaks Twi, a language native to Ghana and parts of Togo and Cote D'Ivoire.

For now, students at NECC may only be offered foreign language courses in Spanish, but there is interest in a broader language program.

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observer@necc.mass.edu



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Features

Why is Pokemon not as popular now?

By PHEONIX GERMAN

Features Editor

Why is Pokémon not as popular anymore?

Everyone knows Pokémon, some of them are cute, and some look really cool. But why is it not so popular anymore like when it used to be?

Don't get me wrong, it is still popular, but I feel like its not as popular as when it used to be back in like 2016. Now its more popular with adults and some kids.

As an adult myself, I have a pretty big collection of cards. But a lot of people may have a lot more cards than me. Like people who open Pokemon cards for a living, like YouTube or TikTok.

A lot of people also grade their cards and or sell them. For me, I just collect the cards just to collect them. I don't want to grade or sell them. I don't even want to do master sets. I just collect them.

But there is a negative side to this community. Sometimes its hard to find Pokemon cards in stores that are new or recent. There are some people who buy them in large bulks of new Pokemon and sell them for a more expensive prices once they release. This makes it a lot harder for kids and casual collectors like me to get the Pokemon sets that have just released. These people are called scalpers, They are not just part of the Pokemon card community, but for mostly every trading card game. They can pretty much be spotted everywhere that sells cards. Sometimes you will see them in smaller card shops as well. This is the reason why some card collectors don't go looking for new packs that much anymore. If you want to look deeper on this, You can search up the word Pokemon Scalpers on TikTok. Then you will see how seri-



Photo by Pheonix German

ous this is to kids who are just trying to get some cards for their collection, and for casual collectors who just want to collect the cards.

I wanted to share this because I want people to know about this so they can be aware of it. Whether you're a card collector or not, It is great to try to minimize these people from doing this. Because it is making people leave the Pokemon card collecting community, even if they still love Pokemon. I only know this because I am one of those people who stopped collecting for a while and finally got back into it because I bought some cards at a card shop. And luckily now, my card collection is bigger than ever because one of my aunts boyfriend gave me some that they didn't want anymore, which grew my collection to a whole new level that I didn't even know I could reach when I was little. The picture on this article

os my whole collection.

There is also an app that I use so that way I still get the satisfaction of opening card packs. The app is called Pokemon TCG Pocket. It's a really good way to get the satisfaction of opening card packs but without the hassle of going to stores and finding the newest cards.

That's why I feel like Pokemon isn't that popular when it comes to kids playing and collecting them, and for new collectors who are just trying to pull some cards to add to their collection. Because people like scalpers like to buy them in large amounts and sell them for a more expensive price. There are people who do sell cards like small businesses that are not scalpers. They get their cards from official wholesale distributors instead of places like Walmart or target like we do. So those aren't who I'm talking about in this sit-

uation, card shops are great especially if you are trying to master set or if you just want to buy some cards.

There are many other terms that I can talk about but there's a lot that I just can't talk about in an article. But maybe my next one will be about another term that not everyone knows about, but should know about in regards to the Pokemon card sellers that are out there. It is also a good thing to search up the different types of sellers in this community and in every card community so that way people are aware about it and people can help us stop this from happening as much as it is now.

And who knows, maybe if we do prevent this from happening, trading card games will be more popular then they used to be. Even with the phone app that Pokemon has to collect cards virtually.

Sports

Olympics: More than just the medals

By **BRENAH RYAN**

Correspondent

Four years later, the Winter Olympics are back - the games held in Milano and Cortina, Italy, began on February 6th and all sporting events will be completed and closed out on the 22nd, 2026. From alpine skiing to speed skating, there are 116 medal events over the course of these two weeks, varying across eight different sports and 16 disciplines, and around 2,800 athletes will be competing.

Team USA has brought in 235 athletes - the most in winter Olympic history - and are competing in all events. "Having so many athletes gives team USA a lot of depth, and it gives them really good chances to win some medals," said student-athlete Izzy Tanguay.

After the two weeks of events, there have been many triumphs and upsets across the board. Team USA's Alysa Liu won gold in women's single skating at just 20 years old after coming out of her retirement from 2022. Team USA took gold in two events for women's alpine skiing and bronze in the combined team event. USA's women's hockey team won gold against Canada, after taking silver in 2022; and the men are set to play the gold medal match against Canada - a rematch of the Four Nations tournament final last February.

"It's inspiring how many athletes push themselves through severe pains and injuries," said Tanguay. Unfortunately, four-time Olympian Lindsey Vonn was seriously injured after she crashed at her first event in alpine skiing 11 seconds in. On the course, she was medfrighted and rushed to the hospital where she underwent multiple surgeries to repair her broken leg.

Team USA's Ilia Malinin placed

eighth in the men's figure skating single event. After his performance, he opened up during a candid interview expressing he was unaware of the true stress and intensity the Olympic games bring. From olympics.com, Malinin told interviewers, "(the olympics or medals) doesn't change who you are as a person or even as an athlete." He went into the event wanting to make history with his quad axel jump, but he skated off with grounding experiences being only 21 years of age.

In the sport curling, team USA's women were beaten by Switzerland in the semi-final, earning silver. Curling has exploded in a form of popularity at this year's Olympics, where many are confused and admit they do not fully understand the event. "The only thing I know about this year's Olympics is the sport curling, and I don't know why it is even a sport," said student Milina Quizhpi-Lema.

With the winter games bringing 93 countries together to compete, the question arises: Does it unite people

across the globe, or does it divide all biased in nationalism? The Olympics are a great outlet for countries to gain recognition and prove their space in the games. It can highlight countries and athletes that may be overlooked, or it can create intense division between rivaling countries. "The Olympics are especially important today as the world has felt very divided in recent years," said student Ashlyn Sullivan. When athletes compete in their events, there are always cheers and applause for all - no matter the size of a country, or number of athletes representing the country - they all own their space to display skills and talent, while also using their platform for good. The Olympics gives a space for all to voice what they represent because in today's world, it is more than just sports.

With the games being held across Italy, there are time-zone differences. Italy has a six-hour difference from Eastern Standard Time (EST), which makes live viewing a challenge for many Americans. As an alternative, many

find themselves watching primetime showings at 8:00pm EST, or through social media. Student Isla Donnelly said, "I see a lot of clips on TikTok, it quickly grabs my attention and attracts more viewers for the Olympics." Across the globe, there has been an extreme upsurge in daily viewers of the winter games. According to NBC, the streaming service is averaging around 23 million viewers for the 2026 games. Compared to four years ago, this is an increase of viewers by about 86%.

As of February 20th, the games are continuing in Italy. Team USA is currently holding 29 medals; but the true meaning of the Olympics is more than decoration. The stories of hard work, resilience, bravery and representation are what shines through. "Sports are played all over the world, and the Olympics helps to unify people through the games," said Sullivan. At the end of the day, a spot on the podium matters less than the sportsmanship and unity the Olympic games create - whether it be summer or winter.

“

It's inspiring how many athletes push themselves through severe pains and injuries.

- Student athlete Izzy Tanguay

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Sports

NECC students coach in flag football world championship

By **ETHAN LOWELL**
Correspondent

After years of playing together, the Rattlesnakes competed in the Flag Football World Championship in Orlando, Florida, in Florida.

The tournament will featured teams from across the country and around the world, and games will be streamed on ESPN+.

The Rattlesnakes won league championships in 2024 and 2025 before losing in the championship game this year. The team has been playing together since 2021, and this is the first time the group has qualified for the ESPN World

Championship together.

The roster is made up of high school players between the ages of 14 and 17. Players on the team are from Amesbury, Salisbury, and Lawrence.

Quarterback Dempsey Spring said the team is looking forward to the opportunity.

“It’s a big deal for us,” Spring said. “We’ve been playing together for a long time, so it’s cool that we get to play teams from different places.”

Wide receiver Robbie Merrill, who has played in the tournament before, said he knows what the team needs to do.

“It’s definitely tougher than regular

games,” Merrill said. “You just have to stay focused and do your job.”

Assistant coach Andrew Baker, a student at Northern Essex Community College, said the team’s experience together has helped them grow.

“They’ve been playing with each other for years,” Baker said. “They understand how each other play, and that helps a lot.”

The Rattlesnakes began with seeding games Feb. 19 against teams from Florida, New Jersey, Montreal and Panama. The knockout round of the tournament begins Feb. 21.

Several skill position players are expected to make an impact.

Spring leads the offense at quarterback.

Wide receivers Robbie Merrill, Nate Oliva, Hayden Lowell and Zach Stanganelli provide key targets. Oliva was named the 2025 league MVP. Manuel Mesis plays multiple roles at running back, quarterback and wide receiver. Shawn Asselin contributes at both running back and wide receiver.

The team will look to compete against top opponents as it takes part in the tournament for the first time as a group.

Editor’s Note: NECC student Ethan Lowell is also one of the coaches of this team.

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Sports

Men's basketball wins Region 21 East District

By JOHN MULCAHY
Correspondent

The NECC Knights men's basketball team are region 21 east district champions for the fourth year in a row. Information from a press release by Athletic Director Dan Blair details the Knights game on Sunday Mar. first as they defeated Quincy college at the Sport and Fitness Center in a thrilling 68-66 victory. Capped off with a last-minute layup from Alex Johnson to clinch the victory. The team's strong brotherhood along with their immense skill has led them to this point.

The Knights season was impressive from beginning to end. According to the Knights homepage they finished the season with a final record of 30 wins and 3 losses. This was good for a winning percentage of .909. This high winning percentage was thanks to an immaculate offence. They shot 42.9 percent from the field with a 3-point shooting percentage of 30.5. The Knights won an outstanding 16 games straight; they have not lost since Dec. 13. Their most dominant win of the year came on Nov. 29 when the Knights took down Suffolk Community College by a final score of 110-55 in the NECC Turkey Classic. Their immaculate campaign this year led them to the top seed position in region 21 along with being ranked second nationally, according to the Knights website.

The team credits their great success

to the family like bond they share.

"We bond a lot more off the court, we're always together building up chemistry," says sophomore Christian Sanders "We came together as a team and started playing for each other." The team's brotherhood started off slowly, but over time they became a true unit, sticking together through all their trials.

"At the beginning of the season we didn't but now we know each other deeply," says sophomore Yunosuke Matsuda, "We're always together."

The strong team dynamic in the locker room has been fostered and defined by their outstanding head coach Darron Stratton.

"His coaching is amazing." Says Christian, "He helps us a lot of the court, and makes sure our minds are right." According to the NECC knight's website Darren has been coaching this team for over 20 seasons. His dedication to the team shows in their play and how they respect each other.

"They're holding each other accountable and that's showing on the court," says coach Darren, "They're very unselfish. Happy when another succeeds."

A key factor in the success of the Knights this season has been the play of top offensive performer Alejandro Delgado. According to the NECC Knights homepage the sophomore Delgado is averaging 18.1 points per game over his 32 played this year. His most

impressive performance of the season came on Jan. 23 when he put up 32 points against MassBay Community College in only 27 minutes played. "The kid's gonna be there." Said coach Stratton about Delgado, "A player that lights up a box score but is extremely unselfish." Delgado's strong leadership and team first mentality has bolstered this roster to an impressive performance this season. "He is the heartbeat for this basketball team." Says coach Stratton.

The Knights success and chemistry this year came to fruition when they clinched the region 21 east district championship. They'll look to continue this stellar play into the rest of the playoffs as they seek the national championship. According to Dan Blair's press release the national tournament schedule will be released on the NJCAA network on Wednesday Mar. fourth 6 p.m. The tournament is scheduled for Mar. 11th-14th at Herkimer college in New York.



Photo by John Mulcahy

Teriq Goodman goes for a basket during a game against Mass Bay Community College on Feb. 26. The team is on their way to the national championships.



Christian Sanders goes for a basket during a game against Mass Bay Community College on Feb. 26.

Photo by John Mulcahy

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Sports

Women's basketball wraps up

BY JOHN MULCAHY
Sports Editor

The season is over for the NECC women's basketball team. Coming to a close on Friday Feb. 27 against Holyoke Community College. According to NECC Knights homepage they finished the season with a finale record of 14 wins and 12 losses making their win percentage .538.

In a season full of ups and downs the Knights were able to put up solid offensive numbers throughout the year. According to the Knights website they averaged 32.1 percent success in shooting from the field, with a three-point success rate of 22.7 percent. These shooting qualities were bolstered by their 41.8 rebounds and 13.3 assist average per game.

Their biggest win of the season came on Saturday Dec. 13 when they decimated Massachusetts club by a finale score of 99-33.

The Knights playoff run started with a win in their Feb. 26 game against Quinsigamond Community College. NECC took this game by a finale score of 74-34. The victory was highlighted by a 23-point performance from sophomore Rhaelyn Gutierrez who also scored a milestone 1000th career point in the matchup. Gutierrez was backed up by two 10 point performances from Serena Rechdan and Rebecca Heathman, as well as 16 points from Shaneley Henriquez.

Despite a win streak of 5 games leading up to their finale match of the season NECC fell to Holyoke Community College by a final score of 63-49. The Knights will look to build off this competitive season and create a winning team for next year.

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News

Winnie, continued from Page 1

It's a WinWin party at Northern Essex Community College! Winnie the school's best friend had turned two on February 13th, the same day her party was hosted in Lawrence Campus' El Helfni building by Student Life. Excited and thrilled with the same emotions when she walks through the halls and sometime visits classrooms at both campuses, Northern Essex students, staff, and other friends gather to celebrate the school's committed emotional support dog.

Being the school's real mascot, Winnie receives a well-deserved pampering, pets, and treats from her party guests. Upon asking guest Arianna, "Do you think that the school has made a good decision in including Winnie as it's emotional support dog?", Arianna replied "One hundred percent, I want to see more of Winnie."

NECC students aren't the only ones Winnie is a support to, other programs who visit and work at food stops at NECC like the Opportunity Works groups and the Project Search kids that share a special bond with Winnie.

Carlysha Carcarrasquillo, coordinator for Project Search program shares a few words about Winnie. "The dog impacts them during their work, Winnie really makes them happy. Sometimes they arrive to work having a bad day and as soon as they see Winnie, it lifts their spirit. So, Winnie is like our emotional support dog that has been very very helpful because it's a therapy for

them. We like taking her out, she's like our very own pet. She's special to NECC and Project Search as the interns look forward to spending time with her."

NECC police Lieutenant Keith Walker who houses and takes care of Winnie answers to the question, "Is Winnie also an emotional support for you as well, during work and at home?"

Walker replies, "Yeah, we're with each other twenty-four hours a day. A lot of people don't see every aspect of what I see with her when I bring her home. She's different than she is here. She's playful, she loves to run. She loves to go to the beach and the trail. Meanwhile at NECC she's on a leash for the case of if anyone's allergic or scared of dogs," Northern Essex is proud of having such a bonding companion that brings the NECC community closer and puts a smile on everyone's face.



Photo by Editor-in-Chief Lidia Ramirez



Photo by Editor-in-Chief Lidia Ramirez



Photo by Editor-in-Chief Lidia Ramirez



Photo by Editor-in-Chief Lidia Ramirez

Winnie posing for a treat.



Photo by Editor-in-Chief Lidia Ramirez
Winnie enjoying a bone present.



Photo by Editor-in-Chief Lidia Ramirez

Project search program, students



Photo by Editor-in-Chief Lidia Ramirez
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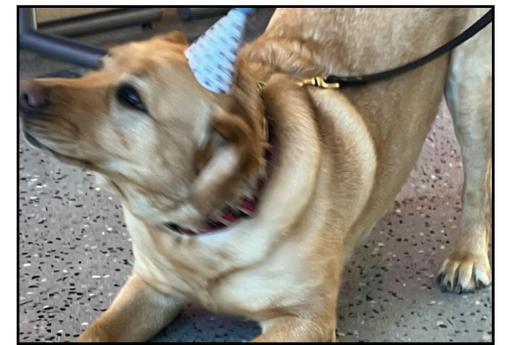


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