



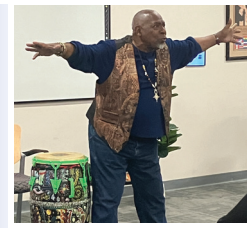
Artemis II returns

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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 7 • April 16, 2026

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## Knights win Nationals



Photo by Anne Hopkins

**NECC's 2026 Men's Basketball Team Nationals Championship announcement on billboard on Interstate 495.**

**BY LIDIA RAMIREZ**  
*Editor-in-Chief*

On April 8, Northern Essex Community College came together in the Sports and Fitness center on Haverhill campus to celebrate and honor the Knights Men's Basketball team and staff national championship victory

State Sen. Pavel Payano was among the speakers.

Darren Stratton the NECC head Men's basketball coach won the Region 21 Coach of the Year Award, the East District Coach of the Year Award, the NABC Coach of the Division.

During the national championship tournament Stratton won the National Championship Gary Cole Coach of the tournament award.

After the national championship tournament, Stratton won NJCAA National Coach of the Year.

The NECC Athletic director, Dan Blair won the NJCAA National Athletic Director of the year award.

Attendees including former NECC Men Knights basketball

*Continued on Page 8*

## What's Happening?

**Outdoor Campus Cinema Nights - Despicable Me**  
Haverhill Campus Quad  
Friday, April 24 @ 7:00 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.

**Academic master plan student forum**  
April 16, 2026, 12:30-1:30 @ The Haverhill Commons, C201  
April 23, 2026, 12:30-1:30 @ The Lawrence Commons, LC133  
April 24, 2026, 12:30-1:30 via Zoom  
For more information go to NECC calendar.

### How to find security around each campus:

**Haverhill Campus**  
100 Elliott St., Spurk 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.

# Editorial

## A penny for our thoughts or pocket hole?

BY LIDIA RAMIREZ  
Editor-in-Chief

Pennies are usually never paid attention to. You may see them on the pavement, roads, floors and anywhere basi-

cally. Even inside the trash and a lot of people don't bother to pick them up.

Though their value doesn't run any shorter than one cent, it means nothing to many persons.

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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  
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Issue #	Publication Date	Ad/Copy Deadline
1	March 5	Feb. 27
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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](mailto: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.*

and inflation, tariffs, and minimum wage increases, pennies are almost irrelevant with how much currency has evolved.

It IS worth nothing to a growing number within the nations.

In fact, among this growing number are the homeless and poor people.

While some consider a penny to be good luck, others may have a collection.

You may find that picking up every penny you see can be time-consuming maybe that's the reason people don't bother picking them up.

Yet we all know there's plenty of people that toss their "pennies" or "change" after buying something.

As the years pass

Prices typically range from one cent less than a whole number. For example, one dollar and ninety nine cents, ten dollars and ninety nine cents, or one hundred ninety nine dollars and ninety nine cents.

On November 12 of 2025, the U.S. Treasury stopped producing new pennies and the banks stopped distributing them shortly after because of inventory shortage.

This leads to questions such as, should pennies remain under legal tender if they are being phased out?

Should prices still end in ninety nine cents or cents that don't add up to five or ten, etc?

On my recent visits to stores, I was not given my full amount of change after my transaction. I was told that the reason is because the bank is no longer giving out pennies.

Could the view of pennies valuing so little mean that people aren't worth receiving their full change back?

This poses a greater question about whether the "losing pennies" from folks pockets are adding up for merchants and claimed by the government.

I deem that soon in time the gov-

ernment will come up with a solution to the current dysfunctional legality of transaction and prices, since what all merchants are going to do is round their prices up.

The government has to answer to people losing money every time they shop because they aren't getting it back.

Sure maybe once or twice may not be a big deal but everytime people go shopping the same will happen.

Considering that not everyone uses digital wallets or cards to pay for their purchases.

One, ten, or a hundred pennies from different shopping visits from one person may not seem a big deal to people but when you add up more than forty five percent of the U.S. population using cash to pay in 2026, that's a great deal of pennies adding up to approximately one million and fifty seven hundred thousand dollars.

That's just one penny from each person, now considering as many times each person goes shopping using cash during this dysfunctional legal moment, that sum is literally multiplied surely in a large, greater number.

Who's benefiting from our money, will they pay us back? I believe the government can be utterly delusional but this is calling scam or scheme.

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

You can reach us at:

978-556-3633

[observer@necc.mass.edu](mailto:observer@necc.mass.edu)



## Opinion

# Get experience without experience

BY KATIE YEATON-HROMADA  
*Coordinator for Career Services*

Summer's coming up fast, and suddenly everyone's talking about internships, part time jobs, and "getting experience." You're ready to apply — but then you hit a roadblock: every job wants experience you don't have yet. That's literally why you're applying.

Here's the good news: you can build experience before you land that first big role. You just have to get a little creative. Here are a few ways to start boosting your resume, sharpening your skills, and getting yourself career ready long before graduation day.

### **What does it mean to have no experience?**

No experience generally means you have not held any jobs similar to the ones you're interested in applying. But, that doesn't mean you lack skills. You've likely developed skills in class, volunteer work, personal projects, or internships.

Entry-level jobs are commonly the first step on the career path. Although the definition of entry-level can vary by industry and company, these positions require no experience or minimal education. Many job descriptions will have a long list of "preferred" qualifications – don't let that scare you. Apply anyways! Your transferrable skills and eagerness to learn may help you land an interview.

### **Research and prepare**

Applying to companies randomly on Indeed or Handshake can feel productive, but it may not be the best use of your time. A better approach is to pause and get clear on what matters to you—like a job's location, pay, or whether the role connects to your major. Once you know your priorities, use job boards to

identify companies that match and create a list of your top ten. From there, search each company's websites to learn more about their mission and current openings. You can still use job boards throughout your search, but you may find yourself spending more time researching companies directly and applying through their individual websites.

Preparing also means having your application materials ready to go. Creating a master copy of your resume and cover letter can help you save time. When you find a job you wish to apply to, fine-tune your documents to clearly show the hiring committee why they should invite you to an interview. You can look at the job description as a reference to ensure your skills and examples demonstrate how you could thrive in this role.

Looking for feedback? Career Services offers individual feedback appointments to strengthen your resume and cover letter. Find us on Navigate.

### **How do you strengthen your skills right now? Here are some ideas!**

#### **Informational interviewing**

One of the easiest ways to learn about a career is by talking to someone who's already doing it. An informational interview is a low pressure conversation where you ask someone about their job, how they got started, and what keeps them excited about their work.

Most professionals are happy to chat for 20 minutes, especially if you come prepared. Do a little background research first: look them up on LinkedIn, check out their projects, or ask a mutual connection for insight. Then bring a short list of questions you're genuinely curious about.

People love sharing their stories, and you might walk away with advice, clar-

ity, or even a new direction you hadn't considered.

#### **LinkedIn learning**

Did you know you can access thousands of educational videos and professional certificates through LinkedIn Learning for free with your student email? It's especially helpful when you're preparing for a job that requires a specific skill. For example, if you know Excel is essential, you can take an Excel certification course to strengthen your formula skills. Once you complete a course, you can add the certificate to your resume or highlight it in your cover letter to show employers you're serious about developing your expertise.

Learn more: <https://necc.edu/workforce/career-services/linkedin-learning/>

#### **Volunteering**

Volunteering is an easy, hands-on way to explore a career path and get a feel for an industry. Many local non-profits are looking for students who can help out weekly with ongoing projects. Nursing majors, for example, often volunteer at nearby hospitals to see what the day to day environment is really like and confirm that the field feels like the right fit. When you show up consistently, you'll get to know the staff, ask real questions, and see what different roles look like in action. An hour or two a week could help you explore new interests—and maybe even your future career.

#### **Job simulation**

If you have some time, you can try job simulations to test out the work at your own pace. Forage offers free, virtual job simulations designed by real companies to help you explore different career paths and build practical skills. These self-paced courses give you the chance to complete tasks similar to

what interns or entry-level employees might do. It can be helpful to figure out what type of work you want to do, and build confidence in your skills. You can add completed simulations to your resume and LinkedIn profile to showcase your initiative.

Ready to check it out? Visit: <https://www.theforage.com/>

#### **Internships**

Internships are short-term, hands-on experiences that let you apply your classroom learning to the workplace. You can complete them for academic credit or pursue them on your own outside of school. They typically last a semester or a few months.

Many employers are looking for students who are curious, motivated, and eager to grow. Don't count yourself out just because you're not an expert—apply anyways! Employers offering internships understand you are still figuring things out, and it can be a great experience to decide what you what to prioritize in your future career.

Pre-internships: Some companies offer pre-internships designed to help you build skills and stand out as a candidate. These opportunities might be listed as case studies, job simulations, online trainings, or networking events. Ready to explore? You can find many of these opportunities on Handshake—take a look in the jobs and events sections. If you're focused on a particular location or type of business, start by creating a list of companies. From there, check out their websites and social media to learn more about their early career opportunities. Visit our website for more information and career resources! <https://necc.edu/workforce/career-services/>

Email: [careerservices@necc.mass.edu](mailto:careerservices@necc.mass.edu) Handshake URL: [www.necc.joinhandshake.com](http://www.necc.joinhandshake.com)

# Opinion

## The old-fashioned way

By **MIKE RIDEOUT**

*Coordinator for Tutoring Services*

At what point does something become considered “the old-fashioned way?” “The old-fashioned way” for many of us is a time before Covid, before 9/11, before the age of cellphones or even the Internet. This can look different depending on who you ask. I recently asked my nine-year old son to make believe he was on the phone, and he promptly placed his flat palm against the side of his face. What’s even more surprising was when I asked him to hang up, and he lightly pressed his pointy finger against his other palm without making a sound. The days of using your pinky and thumb as an imaginary phone appear to be numbered, and the satisfying “click” of hanging up has gone away, too. Either way, nobody talks on the phone anymore, which is considered “the old-fashioned way” to

many people.

My personal view of “The Old-Fashioned Way” might look similar to what’s been floating around on social media for the last month or so. I’m talking about the reels or short clips of old blurry pictures from the 90’s scrolling by as “Iris” by the Goo Goo Dolls plays in the background. Perhaps you’ve made one of these reels if you’re old enough. Perhaps your parents made one. Movie stars, musicians, and influencers are churning out these retrospective reminiscent videos and racking up the views while simultaneously bringing us all back to a time when things were different. A time when things were simpler. It was a time of mixtapes, bunny ears, dog runs, roll-down windows, card catalogs, encyclopedias, rotary phones, and riding bikes until the streetlights came on.

This was back when emotional in-

telligence was a real thing, and artificial intelligence (A.I.) was a plot line from sci-fi horror movies. Things are so vastly different now, and I consider myself lucky to have not only become a teenager before the Internet was born, but also to have finished college before A.I. had become so engrained in so many aspects of our lives from dating to recipes to research. In just writing this piece, I’ve had Microsoft’s A.I. tool interrupt my process with several wrong suggestions, with the most egregious suggestion telling me I should fix my first reference of the “Internet” to “It’s”. Luckily, I am able to recognize how wrong that suggestion is. But what if I didn’t?

In a world far-too reliant on technology far-too advanced for us to truly understand, it is becoming increasingly difficult for us to know when it works well and when it doesn’t work at all.

In October of 2025, the British Broadcasting Corporation found A.I. chatbots make mistakes. A lot of mistakes. They found A.I. chatbots to be wrong 45% of the time. Now, six months later, it’s probably safe to say there has been some improvement. However, even if A.I. services were 100% accurate, the drawbacks are still there. For one: relying on A.I. prevents us from learning the processes we use it for on our own.

To add to that, when we use A.I. to do our work (or even parts of our work) for us, we lose our own voice. We lose the months and years of experience that make us experts in our field. We lose the credibility found in building a career for ourselves. We block our own learning of the most basic concepts that are foundational in nature. In becoming so dependent on this new tool of the future, we lose the ability to do and learn things the “Old-Fashioned Way”.

## A poem: The Haverhill Commons

By **LINDA VALENZUELA**

*Correspondent*

The Haverhill Commons is in, in fact, not a commonplace at all,  
But a very rare spot indeed;  
For there are no pretty artifacts, unless made of cardboard and paper,  
No diamonds or ore,  
No rare metals that make it a mine,  
But, yes, it is a rarity of character,  
Rarity in its attraction of NECC’s typical guests,  
From the bowels of the halls do they chunder unto the entrance,  
A tentative step replaced by a surer one,

Confidence placed in one’s heart at the sight of Kraft macaroni  
Or a tiny bag of black kettle Tea,  
A homely little place,  
And the music!  
There’s no wonder,  
That it is not unlikely for a new wanderer,  
To go from traipsing to loitering to lounging,  
More than an old couch potato, do they so grow on the spacious chairs,  
The soft background music doing working more on them than any assignment they’ve done,  
The lovely staff stand and await,

To keep the peace or offer a joyous greeting,  
Or look over a rough draft or Herd the scattered students into the newest workshop,  
Oh, the events!  
How could one miss them?  
The posters crowd the walls, the chatter echoes throughout the halls,  
Echoing and ricocheting off of the chambers of the classrooms,  
Students must,  
They must,  
Ask themselves:  
“What is going on?”  
For this room, can go from an eleva-

tor pitch,  
To a love poem open mic,  
To a grand reception hall,  
Full of feasting,  
Free pizza and wild conversation aplenty,  
Just the amount of conversation,  
And pauses of silence in between,  
For poor chaps filling in that last-minute essay or  
The casual printerer asking for an 8 x 11 in.,  
‘What could I say about this room?’  
Well, I think I’ve said plenty.  
I love it,  
God bless it.”



## News

# Speechapalooza returns to NECC

BY GABBY ACOSTA  
Correspondent

Have you ever felt like your voice is not loud enough or not heard enough?

Well, don't feel bad, you're not alone. Come join us at Speechapalooza 2026 and be part of an unforgettable experience!

### Why join Speechapalooza?

Speechapalooza is a Northern Essex student event that celebrates free speech and embraces student voices.

### When will it be?

This event will be hosted at the Haverhill Spurr Building, Lecture Hall A, on April 23, 2026, from 12:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.

### Enjoy the perks?

Free pizza, free speech, free college. PLUS PRIZES!!!

### Why now?

With the rhythm of life including all

of its affairs, it is difficult to invest time into practices that enforce our creativity and the opportunity to uplift our inner voice.

That voice that is suave and tough, or loud and low. That voice comes in many tones and it comes from within and that is unique and only you have the power to represent. That is why I want to invite you to our 11th Anniversary of celebrating our voices with Speechapalooza.

This is the opportunity to create a memorable moment to later pass on to those after us. It is culture and it is heritage and it is uplifting. Let's embrace our voices and come together as one, to capture this single moment for life.

Please come and join us to experience the power of speech!

For more information please contact [mshafer@necc.mass.edu](mailto:mshafer@necc.mass.edu).



# Anti-trans laws in the United States

BY STORM HERNANDEZ  
Correspondent

Politics is like a pendulum; it goes from one extreme to another, and if you're lucky eventually it will slow down, and you'll end up somewhere in the center. Right now, it is hard to see the center, with all the right-wing rhetoric and a resurgence in anti-trans rhetoric and laws. Kansas is just one such example of the right-wing push against the "woke" left.

In February, Zane Irwin reported through KCUR and NPR, that Kansas's Republican supermajority overruled Gov. Laura Kelly's veto that would have stopped the passage of a bill that bans

transgender people from using the restroom that aligns with their gender identity and invalidates licenses and birth certificates that do not align with their current gender.

While laws like these might not directly affect those living in Massachusetts, Professor Seth Ridinger, a history professor at Northern Essex Community College said, "national issues take up the most room in our local discourse, and therefore, do impact us on a local level."

Professor Steve Russell, also a history professor at NECC, believes that limiting people's licenses is "plain stupid."

Russell went on to explain that it's important for people to be certified

to drive. Licenses provide proof that you know the rules of the road, and if we are limiting the ability of people to obtain this certification due to other issues like immigration or gender identity, it is bad for the state and the federal government. If people can't legally get to work, they can't provide for themselves or their families which then means they end up surviving off charity or the government.

The United States has seen this type of extreme before. Russell believes that the level of our polarization is something seen before during the American Civil War. While thankfully he doesn't think we'll have another civil war, he did offer up some advice on what people can learn from history.

Russell, said, "if you ignore ideas ... that you don't like, you risk being blind-sided."

Ridinger thinks there is hope. The year 1968 was filled with strife, the riots in Chicago, escalating Vietnam War and the assassination of Martin Luther King and Robert F. Kennedy, despite all this it still landed on a high. The United States watched as Apollo 8 orbited the moon. Ridinger said "I believe this event gave the nation hope for the future, hope at how, despite adversity and conflict, we can come together to achieve great things."

No students have responded to requests for interviews from the Global Politics Club or Gender and Sexuality Alliance.



# Arts & Entertainment

## NECC Theater to present 'Angels in America'

By BAILEY ORIO  
Opinion editor

A Pulitzer Prize-winning landmark of American theater is coming to NECC this spring, bringing with it a powerful and deeply human story that remains just as relevant today as when it first premiered.

From April 30 through May 3 NECC theater will present Angels in America

Part One: Millennium Approaches. Set during the height of the 1980s AIDS crisis, the play follows the intersecting lives of six individuals as they navigate love, loss, sexuality, and religious faith under the conservative political climate of the Reagan administration. Through its complex characters and emotional depth, the production examines themes of identity, community, and resilience in the face of uncertainty and fear.

Widely regarded as one of the most important works of modern American theater, Angels in America blends realism with moments of fantasy to tell a story that is both intimate and expansive. Its exploration of personal and political struggles offers audiences a thought-provoking and emotionally impactful experience.

Performances will take place on April 30 at 4 p.m., May 1 and 2 at 7

p.m., and will conclude with a final matinee on May 3 at 2 p.m.

Due to mature themes and adult content, the production is recommended for audiences 18 and older. Reserve your tickets today. NECC Theater is a 14x National Award-Winning Theater program run by Associate Professor, Brianne Beatrice at Northern Essex Community College.

Northern Essex  
Community College

Directed by  
**Brianne Beatrice**  
Assistant Directed by  
**Matthew Lundergan**

General Admission – \$20.00  
Seniors & Students – \$10.00

April 30 – 4:00 PM  
May 1 – 7:00 PM  
May 2 – 7:00 PM  
May 3 – 2:00 PM

**Angels**  
in  
**America**

*A Gay Fantasia  
on National Themes*

PART ONE: MILLENNIUM APPROACHES  
By Tony Kushner

NECC THEATER

WARNING: Adult Content. Show not recommended for young audiences. 18+

For more information, tickets, sign language, allergies, etc.  
please contact Theater Coordinator Brianne Beatrice  
at [Bbeatrice@necc.mass.edu](mailto:Bbeatrice@necc.mass.edu)

CHESTER H. HAWRYLCIW THEATER  
THIRD FLOOR OF SPURK BUILDING C

REPURPOSED

MARCH 9TH 2026 - APRIL 20TH 2026

LINDA HUMMEL-SHEA ARTSPACE  
BENTLEY LIBRARY, NECC HAVERHILL CAMPUS

ARTIST'S TALK  
MONDAY APRIL 6, 2:00PM - 4:00PM

EVENING RECEPTION  
THURSDAY APRIL 9, 5:30PM - 7:30PM

ANNE HOPKINS  
ENA KANTARDŽIĆ  
STEPHEN POWERS  
KRISTIN POWERS  
CHRIS TWICHELL  
AMY SAIKIA WILSON

INDIVIDUALS REQUESTING SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETING, ACCESS REQUESTS, QUESTIONS, OR FURTHER  
EVENT INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT THE HOST OF THIS EVENT, KRISTIN POWERS [KPOWERS1@NECC.MASS.EDU](mailto:KPOWERS1@NECC.MASS.EDU)



# Arts & Entertainment

## Tarot Talk Part 3: Beginning the final push, navigating the path to the exit

BY J.T. MELANSON

Arts & Entertainment Editor

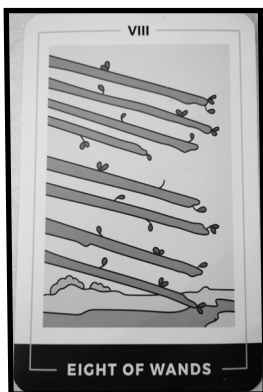
As the April sun begins to warm the walkways of the Lawrence and Haverhill campuses, the atmosphere at Northern Essex Community College is shifting. We've since moved past the initial "Awakening" of January and survived the "Crossroads" of March. Now, as the April/May finals approach, we've officially begun to walk the path towards the "Final Push."

This stage of the semester is usually defined by a frantic search for the finish line. Much like a journey through a fog-laden forest at night, the path forward requires both individual willpower and the support of those around us. For this edition of Tarot Talk? We explore the archetypes of the homestretch and the lessons of companionship found in cultural mythology and also in our reality too.

### The Home Stretch: Archetypes of the Path

#### 1. The Eight of Wands: The speed of the season

The Eight of Wands depicts eight staves flying through the air toward a target. It's the card of "Sudden Action" and rapid movement. In mid-April, everything happens at once: final project deadlines, graduation audits, and the push



Photos by J.T. Melanson

for summer registration. This card is all about momentum, about things moving forward, sometimes at an overwhelming speed. For NECC students, this card reminds you that now is not the time to stop. If anything? It reminds us now is the time to go full steam ahead, focusing your efforts on the target.

#### 2. The Moon (XVIII): Navigating the unknown

The Moon represents that time of night where shadows stretch and the path has become unclear. It serves as the archetype of "Illusion" and "Subconscious Fear." For NECC students, this is the mid-April anxiety kicking it into full gear—the "What if?" that keeps you awake, if you may. What if the final is harder than I thought? What if I didn't prepare enough? The Moon reminds us that while the path ahead is foggy, it still exists and we still walk upon it. To move forward? You must trust the Universe and your intuition. Keep moving, even though you can't see the finish line yet.



#### 3. The Six of Swords: Transitioning to calmer waters

In this archetype, a figure is being ferried across a body of water towards a distant shore to places unknown. It represents a necessary transition—leaving a place of turbulence to find a place of peace for yourself. As finals begin their

approach, we're all in that boat. We're beginning the wind down from the stress of the semester and moving toward the "calmer waters" of the summer break. It reminds us that while the journey is difficult, the destination is within sight. This serves as a reminder that no matter what, the storm eventually passes and the journey towards the next chapter of your life continues onward.



#### The Companion's Journey: Mio and Mayu's Path

For this edition of Tarot Talk? I want to continue our look into the Fatal Frame II: Crimson Butterfly mythos, this time? We're moving passed the "Sacrifice" part and focusing on the journey of the twins, Mio and Mayu Amakura, the two playable protagonists of the game. Their tragic story is defined by a singular goal: to find the exit and escape the darkness of Minakami Village together. Do they succeed? That depends on the decisions you make throughout the game.

For the modern student, this mirrors the reality of academic life. No one truly succeeds in a vacuum, that's for sure. Like Mio guiding Mayu through the shadows of the "Lost Village," students often rely on their peers, study groups, and mentors to navigate the toughest parts of the semester. However, their journey also carries a warning about "The Sacrifice." Sometimes we carry

the burdens of our expectations (or the expectations of others) so heavily that it slows our progress towards finding the exit.

To survive your "Final Chapter," we must be like Mio—focusing on the "Crimson Butterfly" of our goals—but we must also be aware of our own limits too. The "Exit" is only reached when we balance our drive with the support of our community.

#### Institutional resources for the final journey ahead

To ensure you reach your "Exit" safely, NECC has many "guiding lights" during the final weeks of the term:

The Writing Center: Before submitting your final research papers, ensure your work is polished and professional.

Contact: 978-556-3411 | tutoring-center@necc.mass.edu

Student Life & Engagement: If the "Final Push" is creating isolation, reconnect with the campus community to find your "Mio and Mayu" support system.

Contact: 978-556-3731 | studentlife@necc.mass.edu

Academic Advising: For those graduating or transferring, ensure your "Exit" is properly mapped out by checking your final requirements.

Contact: 978-556-3700 | advising@necc.mass.edu

As we approach the final weeks, remember that the goal is not just to finish, but to finish together. Keep your momentum, watch for the light of The Sun, don't be afraid to lean on your resources and remember that the Crimson Butterfly will always guide you.



# News

## Nationals tournament continued from Page 1

players from years 1999 to 2026. Stratton, who was a student at Northern Essex from years 1991 to 1993, began coaching at NECC during the years 1999 to 2015 and 2020 to present.

According to his former players and current players of 2026, he has been a great inspiration and motivation to them.

Their journey in the athletic division has had a major impact in their growth and success both in academic and sports.

Here are some things former players had to share with the audience,

“This institution, this basketball program has opened so many doors and most importantly made me the man I am today. So, thank you from the bottom of my heart,” Ryan Middlemiss said.

Words of gratitude were directed to the team.

“You didn’t just win a championship, you added to a legacy,” Nathan Proulx said to the NECC audience and Men’s basketball team.

In the event, fans were gifted cheer gear and catering service was set out for everyone.

Other basketball coaches, faculty and athletic staff were given awards.

Academic coaches were given flowers by the basketball champions.

Inside the Sports and Fitness center in Haverhill, is displayed the 2026 National Champion Men’s Basketball Division III trophy.



Photos by Editor-in-Chief Lidia Ramirez

A photo of a basketball game in the late 90s found in The Observer newsroom.



Photos courtesy of Laura B. Kozlowski





# Arts & Entertainment

## Storyteller Al Bostick visits NECC

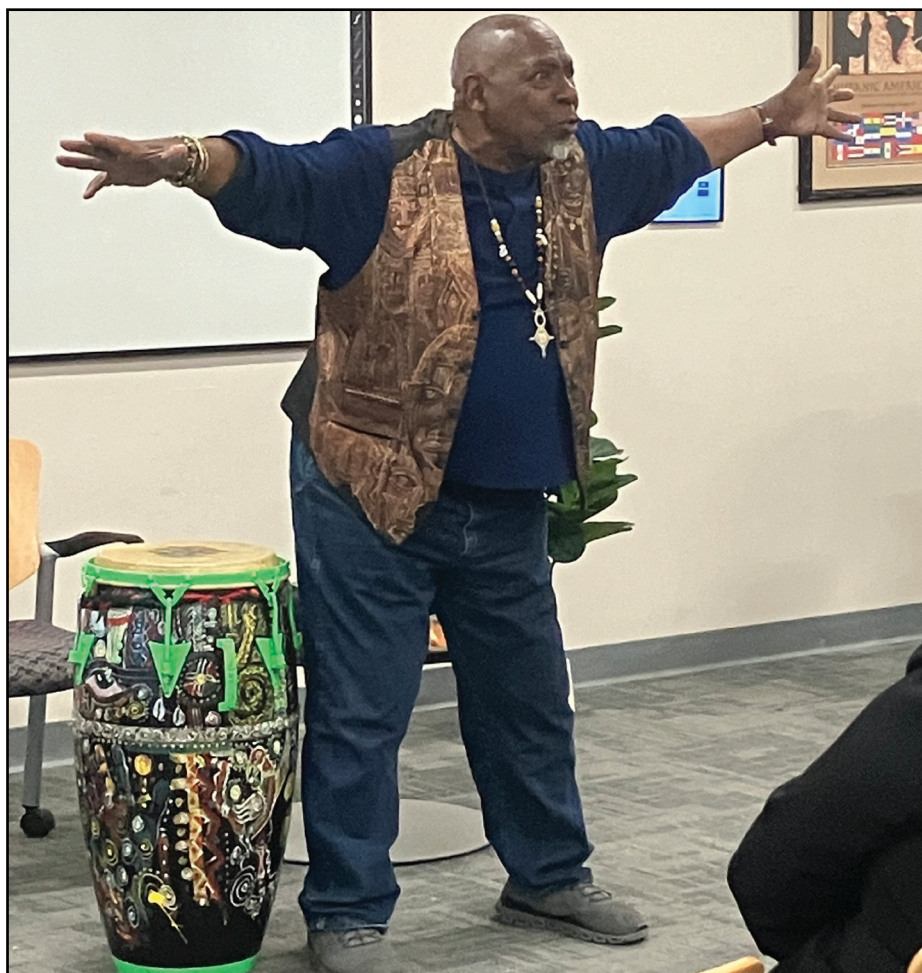


Photo s by Editor-in-Chief Lidia Ramirez

Storyteller Al Bostick entertains a crowd in the Dimitry building on the Lawrence campus on April 7.



Photo s by Editor-in-Chief Lidia Ramirez

A translator was on hand at Al Bostik's performance in Lawrence.



Photo s by Editor-in-Chief Lidia Ramirez

NECC President Lane Glenn smiles as he listens to Al Bostick's performance.

Northern Essex Community College

SPRING 2026

NECC MUSIC

PW I, II, III, IV

FINAL PERFORMANCE EXAM

Public Welcome!

MAY 12

1:30PM - 3:30PM

DUETS, TRIOS, QUARTETS, AND QUINTETS PERFORMANCES

TC-103, HAVERHILL CAMPUS

PERFORMANCE WORKSHOP WILL HELP STUDENTS DEVELOP MUSICAL SKILLS NEEDED FOR PERFORMING AS A SOLOIST AND AS A MEMBER OF A MUSICAL ENSEMBLE THROUGH LEARNING AND PARTICIPATING IN CLASS CRITIQUES AND THROUGH DEVELOPING PRINCIPLES FOR LESSONS, ENSEMBLE PERFORMANCE, AND CONCERT ATTENDANCE.

#NECCMUSICTHRIVES

We welcome requests for ASL sign language interpreting & other ADA access requests. Please contact the host of this event: Prof. Alisa Bucchiere phone: (978) 556-3779 email: abucchiere@necc.mass.edu for requests, questions for event information.



# Features

## Artemis II returns to Earth

By **TRISTAN TAYLOR**  
*Features Editor*

The Artemis II mission has concluded after ten days in space. Launching on April 1, the astronauts on board (Reid Wiseman, Victor Glover, Christina Koch, and Jeremy Hansen) conducted a lunar flyby, marking the first crewed flight outside of low Earth orbit since Apollo 17 in 1972.

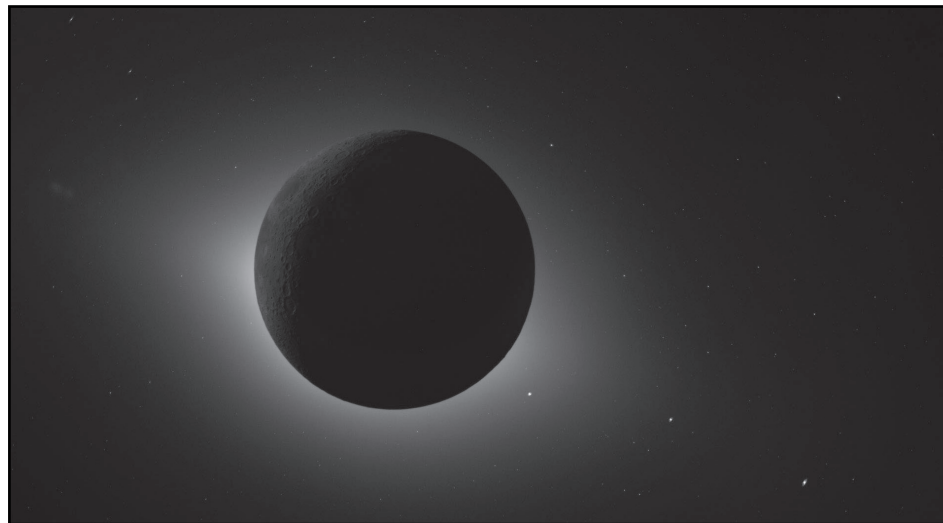
Early concerns had shrouded the outcome of the mission in doubt. After the failed Boeing Crewed Flight Test in 2024 left two astronauts stranded aboard the International Space Station, many feared a similar outcome. After the uncrewed Artemis I mission returned with a highly damaged heat shield, fears spread regarding an outcome similar to the Columbia disaster in 2003.

The mission also was scheduled to be part of the Lunar Gateway program, which was a plan to build a replacement for the International Space Station, which is approaching its end-of-life date, scheduled for 2030, followed by a controlled de-orbit into Point Nemo, the area farthest from land, in 2031. However, the Lunar Gateway program was canceled in early 2026.

After being delayed numerous times between early 2019 and March of this year, Artemis II successfully launched on April 1, 2026. Early on in the mission, essential life support systems aboard the spacecraft, such as the toilet and the water dispenser, were damaged in a concerning incident. On April 6, the crew passed by the dark side of the moon, capturing a photo of a solar eclipse. During this time, the crew lost contact for around 40 minutes, which



Photos courtesy of NASA  
**The crew of Artemis II. From left to right: Jeremy Hansen, Christina Koch, Victor Glover, and Reid Wiseman.**



Photos courtesy of NASA  
**The solar eclipse photographed by Artemis II on April 6.**

was planned. The crew also created numerous videos during their time in space, which led to Saturday Night Live parodying them on their April 11 show.

On April 10, Artemis II re-entered the Earth's atmosphere, resulting in a splashdown off the coast of California after nine days. The mission, which

was deemed successful, had already been anticipated because of a number of firsts. Victor Glover became the first person of color to fly by the moon. Likewise, Christina Koch became the first woman to achieve the feat, while Reid Wiseman set the record as the oldest person to do so, and Jeremy Hansen became the first Canadian to complete

a lunar flyby. This crew inspired many on social media.

One NECC student, Kylee DeAngelo, said it was “inspiring”, further stating “I think there are benefits to this. They flew by the dark side of the moon, which hasn’t been done in over 50 years. They’re discovering new things, and you can only go up from there.”

Further echoing DeAngelo’s claims was another NECC student, Aidan Lohan, who stated it was not only “very interesting”, but that “it opened the door for the future of space exploration.”

However, some felt that this historic mission should have happened sooner. NECC student Danny St-Pierre was among those who felt this way, although he did express positive thoughts on the matter, stating “I think it was long overdue.

This could very well be the catalyst for further space exploration and research. I can’t wait to see where it leads us”, jokingly adding “However, I was told by my family to not leave the planet.”

Artemis II will be followed up by Artemis III, with that mission expected to take place in mid-2027, followed up by Artemis IV, which is expected to be the first crewed landing on the moon since Apollo 17 in 1972. Artemis IV is currently set to take place in early 2028.

Until then, humanity will have to wait for what will be, to quote the late Neil Armstrong, “one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind.”

We at the Observer would like to congratulate the crew of Artemis II on a successful mission and subsequent return to Earth.



# Features

## Graduation anxiety

By PHEONIX GERMAN  
Features Editor

I wanted to write this story because I feel like its not talked about as often as I feel like it should. Because it's a real thing and it should be known.

So, I'm graduating this semester, and something that I have been thinking about is my current classes and also transferring to University of Massa-

chusetts Lowell. The reason why I say this is because I am currently taking my last three classes, and I'm not going to lie, Its tough. I'll be thinking about the many possibilities of going to UMass Lowell but also thinking that I might fail one of my classes, which is what I have mostly been thinking about.

I have been feeling really excit-

ed to transfer to UMass Lowell and being able to dorm there, But I also have been feeling very nervous for my classes and for living in a dorm as well. The thing is, this is real, it's happening, and I just have to focus on my work and just do my best to pass these last three classes.

One thing that I have been noticing is that I am constantly stressing about my future, whether that's my career and what I want to do, and even just if it's a couple of weeks from now. It is impacting what majors I chose and whether I like the major or not. It really stresses me out lately.

Another thing is that I have been overthinking a lot, which makes me study a lot and makes me think more negatively when I don't do well on an assignment.

This really impacts me emotionally and it doesn't help with my self-esteem.

I have also been noticing a lack of focus when it comes to when I am thinking about graduation and the classes I am taking and how one bad grade can cause me to not graduate. Its something I have been working on but it's hard to not think about that when you are on your final classes.

All that stress happens daily, it's not a one-time thing. Because of this I have been feeling a lot of mental overloads, mostly on weekends, but it happens a lot.

One thing that has been helping me is actually studying for classes, I know its crazy to say that but its true. It helps with the mental overloads because I am only focusing on my classes, it also helps because I can tell myself that I have at least studied. This

helps with my confidence knowing that I am trying my hardest to pass these .classes.

Another thing that helps me is going on my TikTok. Here's the thing though, its not just a regular account where I can just watch anything.

Its specifically a study account where I can only watch studying videos and make some of my own to help me stay focused as well.

I recommend doing this as well if you are also struggling to stay focused. It is a really good thing to have, and honestly, it has been saving me from burning out and losing motivation for a while now.

Like I said in the beginning, its real, the constant pressure and anxiety is real. Here's one thing I want to leave off with, the most we can do is try our best in our classes. We just need to work hard and pass these classes to graduate.

I just really wanted to talk about this because I didn't even know that this was even a thing until I started feeling it myself. It's a lot of mental pressure that can really impact your motivation or it can cause you to burn out from focusing on studying for your classes too much. We all need to take breaks at some point; we just need to also make sure that we work hard while taking care of ourselves as well.

With these weeks being the last few weeks of the semester left, the stress has been increasing for me. Studying for classes is a great way for me to know that I am doing good and I can pass these classes. I have been so far. For everyone who is reading this and is graduating, I just have one thing to say.

LOCK IN!

# KNIGHTS!

## YOUR FEEDBACK COUNTS!

*Complete your course and professor evaluations now.*



Scan the code to visit [necc.bluera.com/necc](https://necc.bluera.com/necc) to give your feedback  
(Please use your Student email to login)

# Arts and Entertainment

## A24 redefines film for millennials and Gen Z

By **BRIANNA BURGOS**  
Web Editor

When viewers are looking for a movie and come across an auteur-driven film, the minimalist A24 logo often appears on the screen. For Millennials and Gen Zers alike, that logo is the

recognizable brand for new and old generations of cinephiles.

A24 is an independent award-winning global entertainment company, known for defying traditional Hollywood rules with its elevated horror, arthouse aesthetics and genrebending

films. The studio has won 21 Oscars, 18 Golden Globes and 18 Emmys for films like “Moonlight,” “Everything Everywhere All at Once,” “The Whale,” “Lady Bird.”

The studio’s popularity has also boosted its overall box office performance. Its newest record-breaking hit “Marty Supreme” recently earned \$179 million globally, becoming the company’s highest-grossing release and surpassing the \$148 million worldwide box office of “Everything Everywhere All at Once.”

As A24 continues to expand, its release schedule has increased. The company released 16 films in both 2023 and 2024, followed by 17 in 2025, helping to expand its visibility and reach a wider audience. One movie may be interesting to students at Northern Essex Community College, as it was partly filmed at the Dr. Ibrahim El-Hefni Health and Technology Center on the Lawrence campus. “Sorry, Baby,” a semi-autobiographical film, was written by, directed by and starred comedian Eva Victor. For students and faculty, the film’s connection to the campus adds a point of pride, especially as the film went on to win the Waldo Salt Screenwriting Award at the 2025 Sundance Film Festival. Following its premiere, A24 acquired worldwide rights to the film for \$8 million and the film has continued its momentum this year by winning two Independent Spirit Awards. This local connection has helped transform A24 from an independent underdog of Hollywood into one of the most recognizable film brands among students at NECC.

NECC student Aidan Clark said A24 films feel more intentional compared to Hollywood blockbusters.

“A24 films feel more human and

have a clear direction,” they said.

Clark adds that if the studio continues to focus on homegrown projects, it can continue to become known for its niche quality.

Storm Hernandez, another NECC student, said A24 stands out because it trusts its audience to uncover the deeper meaning behind its films. “A lot of the movies I’ve watched from A24 have a lot of deeper meanings,” they said. “By adding layers, it makes rewatching movies like that extra fun because there’s always something new to see.” Hernandez added that many blockbusters feel repetitive. While A24 films require more attention to understand their atmosphere, they offer a memorable viewing experience. Another student at NECC, Allora Ramos, said platforms like TikTok and Letterboxd have helped introduce more people to the company, especially for younger audiences looking for movies that have substance and strong aesthetics.

“With TikTok and Letterboxd, people get exposed to more of a variety of movies and that’s why A24 became so popular,” she said. “Successful movies like ‘Midsommar,’ ‘Lady Bird,’ ‘Aftersun,’ ‘Waves,’ feel like actual coming-of-age movies and are much more real and relatable.” Ramos added that the studio has thrived by meeting the demands of Millennials and Gen Z audiences. The studio’s rise as a cult-like brand reflects a growing demand for more personal and experimental storytelling. A24 continues to redefine what success in the film industry looks like, setting a new standard for students at Northern Essex Community College and other generations of viewers by prioritizing creativity over industry norms.

# KNIGHTS!

## 2026

### Awards Convocation!

May 12, 2026 at 6:00 PM in the D Building (the Gym).

Awards Convocation is a distinguished academic ceremony organized by the Office of Academic Affairs.

It serves as a mini-commencement celebration that recognizes and honors students who have demonstrated exceptional achievement throughout their academic journey.

This event celebrates two categories of excellence

- *Academic Achievement*-Students graduating with a Grade Point Average (GPA) of 3.5 or higher are recognized .
- *Co-Curricular Excellence*-Students who have excelled in co-curricular activities, showcasing leadership, creativity, and service beyond the classroom.



## Sports

# Baseball team off to a strong start

By **ETHAN LOWELL**

*Correspondent*

The Northern Essex Community College baseball team is off to a strong start this spring, putting together consistent performances early in the season.

Through 19 games, the Knights hold a 13-6 record and remain undefeated in conference play at 7-0. The team is also on a 10 game winning streak. Northern

Essex has played well in all settings, going 4-0 at home and 5-0 on the road, while posting a 4-6 record in neutral site games.

Offensively, the Knights have been productive. The team has scored 143 runs and holds a .314 batting average. They also have a .424 on base percentage and a .476 slugging percentage, along with nine home runs.

Allen McNally, who tried out for the team in 2023, said he is not surprised

by the team's success. "When I tried out, you could tell the program was serious," McNally said. "They worked hard and expected a lot, so it makes sense they're doing well now."

Student Bryce Doucette said the team is worth watching in person.

"I've been to a couple games," Doucette said. "They're actually really fun to go to. More people should check them out."

Alex Dalton said he did not ex-

pect the team to be playing this well. "I didn't really know much about the team before," Dalton said.

"I was kind of surprised by how good they've been and how much they've been winning."

With conference play underway, Northern Essex will look to keep its momentum going. If the team continues to perform at this level, it could be in a strong position as the season moves forward.

## Celebrating 1,000 points



Photo by Academic Coach Ingrid Polanco

**Knights' Women's and Men's Basketball players Rhaelyn Gutierrez and Alejandro Delgado both achieved 1,000 points this season.**

NECC Music Presents SPRING  
2026

# 2026 SPRING Choir Concert

\$5 Admission

**Sunday, May 3rd  
2:00 PM**

Choral Director  
**Prof. Alisa Bucchiere**  
NECC Haverhill Campus  
Hartleb Technology Center  
100 Elliott St. Haverhill, MA

We welcome requests for ASL sign language interpreting & other ADA access requests.  
Please contact the host of this event: Prof. Alisa Bucchiere phone: (978) 556-3779  
email: abucchiere@necc.mass.edu for requests, questions for event information.

Northern Essex Community College **#NECCMusicThrives**



# Sports

## Track and field breaks multiple records

By JOHN MULCAHY  
Sports Editor

Track and field has made waves early into the season.

Sophomore Maci Abbatessa recently broke the schools record for the hammer throw event. At the Jim Sheehan Invitational at Fitchburg State University Saturday April 4, she launched her hammer 34.35 meters or 112 feet eight inches. This broke the previous record set in 2010 by Katelyn Wallace.

“I’ve been working at this for a while and I told coach Tarbox I’m coming for this record, and I’m coming for disk too,” said Abbatessa on breaking the record. “I’m putting a lot of work into it; three-hour practices, four-hour practices. Because I knew that if you work hard enough for it you can get to it,” she said.

At the Knights most recent event on Saturday at the Ed Daniels Classic at Southern New Hampshire University, Abbatessa placed 10th in the shotput event with a finale distance of 10.78 meters or 35.37 feet.

“There is so much chemistry on the track team,” said Abbatessa speaking of the Knight’s bond. “The team and the environment are fabulous, everyone gets along well, the coaches are great,” she added.

Janelis Uviedo set a new school record as well in the women’s 400



Photo courtesy of NECC track and field’s facebook

**NECC at the jim Sheehan Memorial at Fitchburg State University, two Knight’s runners are seen left**

meter hurdles with a time of one minute and 21.64 seconds simultaneously qualifying for the National Junior College Athletics Association Championships in May.

The team has grown the last few years under the guidance of head coach Melanie Tarbox who’s now in her third season coaching track and field. Under leadership the Knights saw 13 athletes qualify for the NJCAA Championships last season.

“My first year we had athletes in 5 events now we have 13 events covered. Not only our numbers are higher we’re able to compete in more,” said Tarbox on the growth of the track and field team.

“It’s a group of people that probably wouldn’t be friends, but the sport has given them all a reason to come together. The push each other to be their best selves,” she added, speaking of how the team has come to-



Photo courtesy of NECC track and field’s facebook

**Maci Abbatessa who broke the schools record for the hammer throw event at the Jim Sheehan Invitational at Fitchburg State university**

gether early on into the season.

On the men’s side Milton Garcia, Teriq Goodman, Adriel Rosa Sanchez, and Aivyn Privitera qualified for the NJCAA National Championships in the men’s four by 100-meter relay when they placed eighth with a time of 45.43 seconds at the Ed Daniels Classic at Southern New Hampshire University.

The Knight’s next meet is Saturday at the Sean Collier Invitational at Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

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978-556-3633

# Sports

## Bruins third-period surge secures win over Dallas

By **BRENNAH RYAN**

*Correspondent*

March 31 marked the Boston Bruins' 28th home win of the 2025-2026 season, defeating the Dallas Stars 6-3 at TD Garden.

Ending the month of March with a record of 10-3-3, the Bruins head into April on a four game win streak and maintaining the first wild card spot in the Eastern conference.

The B's put up two goals in the first period and limited their opponents to five shots.

In the second period, the Stars fought back to tie the game with two even strength goals.

Entering the third period tied, the black and gold were hungry for the win against the third-best team in the league. 13 seconds into the third period, Bruin's forward Elias Lindholm scored a power play goal to uplift the team. They went on to score three more goals in the third, securing the win.

Tuesday night's game was also focused on celebrating Women In Sports Night, highlighting all female athletes, coaching staff, broadcasters, and fans. Some players from the PWHL's Boston Fleet were in attendance, with star defender Megan Keller showing off her gold medal earned at this year's winter olympics. When shown on the jumbotron, the athletes were met with cheers and applause bouncing off of the TD Garden walls.

With "Back in Black" by ACDC played over the loudspeakers, and yellow and white laser beams floating around the arena, the Bruins took the ice, with fans banging on the class and cheering. "The fans definitely didn't come to play today," said a Bruins fan who wished to remain anonymous. Even with a handful of green jerseys in



Photo by Brennah Ryan

### Bruins action on the ice against the Dallas Stars at the TD Garden on March 31.

the crowd, and those same fans chanting "STARS" during the national anthem, the black and gold were ready to secure the two points.

The Bruins' starting lineup was Nikita Zadorov and Andrew Peeke at defense, Morgan Geekie, Elias Lindholm and newest addition to the roster at the trade deadline - Lukas Reichel at forward, with Joonas Korpisalo in net. Dallas Stars' starting line up was Nils Lundkvist and Thomas Harley at defense, Colin Blackwell, Adam Erne and Justin Hyrekwian at forward, with Jake Oettinger in net.

Marat Khustnutdinov got the Bruins going early, scoring a wrist shot at 9:58 in the first period, capitalizing off of a rebounded shot.

At 18:51, Viktor Arvidsson doubled the score on a wrist shot, sneaking in behind goaltender Oettinger for the tap-in just as the Bruins' man advantage ended. This marked Arvidsson's 22nd goal of the season, and it was a special

one. In the stands, his eldest daughter was celebrating her fifth birthday.

"I thought the whole game had really good energy," said Bruins' fan Andrea Martin. "Getting to see all the excitement from the crowd was awesome."

At the start of the second period, it was evident the Dallas Stars flipped a switch. At 4:49, Stars' captain Jamie Benn scored a wrist shot on the team's ninth shot of the game, cutting the lead in half, 2-1.

A little over 12 minutes later, the Stars tied the game. At 16:53, forward Matt Duchene beat Korpisalo, sending the puck up over his right shoulder for his 15th goal of the season. With just under two minutes remaining in the second period, Benn lifted the puck up and over the glass with an immediate delay-of-game penalty called. The Bruins went on the man advantage ending in the second, and carried 18 seconds of the man-advantage into the third.

With five seconds left in the power

play and 13 seconds into the third period, E. Lindholm's wrist shot gave the Bruins the lead once more. He was fed a leading pass from David Pastrnak and shot the puck above Oettinger's right shoulder. At 5:51, Bruins' defenseman Henri Jokiharju took a slapshot from the center of the attacking zone and scored his first ever goal as a Bruin in his 39th appearance for the team.

"It was a welcomed surprise seeing Jokiharju score, it was exciting to see someone's accomplishments firsthand," said anonymous.

With less than five minutes to go, the Dallas Stars attempted to pull their goalie for an extra attacker, but it immediately backfired. Arvidsson quickly saw the empty net and fired from his defensive zone, picking up his second goal of the night. With a score of 5-2 Bruins, the Stars capitalized on a power play. Wyatt Johnston tightened the game at 19:02 with his 41st goal of the season, but it was too late for the Stars.

With Oettinger out of the net, the puck was dealt to Arvidsson's stick once more. At 19:47, he shot home his 24th goal of the season, and completed his fifth career hat trick.

Hats came flying down to the ice and the crowd was louder than ever. "Nine goals and a hat trick - I'll take that over any fights," said Martin. "And Drake Maye was there."

That's right.

As the cameramen were perusing the crowd, a young man was shown sporting an "I heart Drake Maye" shirt. The camera remained on him for a suspicious amount of time, until it panned to Patriots quarterback Drake Maye and his wife Ann Michael Maye also at the game in support of the black and gold. The crowd went wild - fans were jumping out of their seats.



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CONNECTION • COMMUNITY • CONVERSATION  
FREE PIZZA • FREE SPEECH • FREE COLLEGE**

**SPEECH**



**LECTURE HALL A**  
**THURSDAY APRIL 23RD 12:30 TO 2:30**

**WE WELCOME REQUESTS FOR ASL SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETING & OTHER ADA ACCESS REQUESTS. PLEASE CONTACT THE HOST OF THIS EVENT: MARY JO SHAFER**

**PHONE:  
(978) - 556 - 3347**

**EMAIL: [mshaf@necc.mass.edu](mailto:mshaf@necc.mass.edu) FOR REQUESTS, QUESTIONS, AND INFORMATION**