

North Andover's Lauren Lynch is congratulated after scoring a run for the team as the Scarlet Knights clubbed Essex Tech 18-6 during March 31's season opener on the brand-new and beautiful home softball field.



CARL RUSSO/Staff photos

North Andover's Julianna Arria sprints toward home plate beating the throw and scoring another run during the March 31 win.

# Home at last

Artificial turf field allows for softball opening day despite rain

By Hector Longo

» Staff Writer

NORTH ANDOVER - For North Andover High girls, the school day was just a little bit sweeter, and it had nothing to do with the pizza, chicken fingers or sloppy joes served in the café.

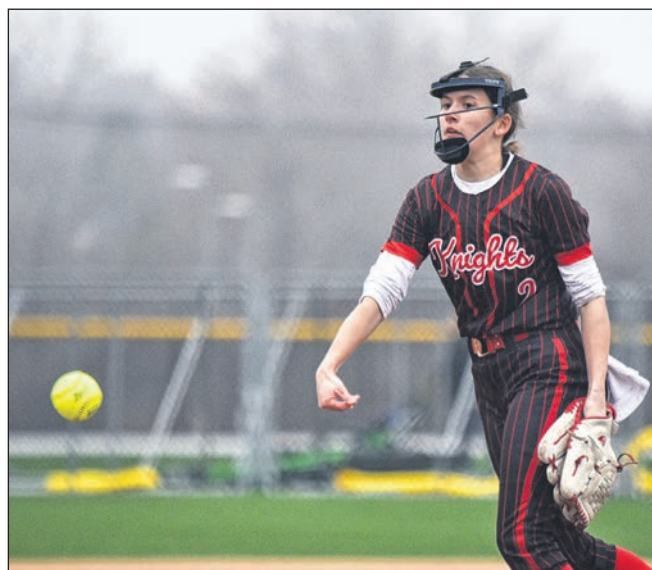
"I wasn't worried all day," Knights senior softball captain Lily Fabiano said prior to the season opener March

31. "Last year, if it was raining all day like this, we wouldn't play. I knew despite the rain today, we would. So it was a great day."

Thanks to the sparkling, new on-campus, artificial turf softball diamond at North Andover High, Opening Day went on, just as planned, even amid dreary, wet weather.

The Knights christened

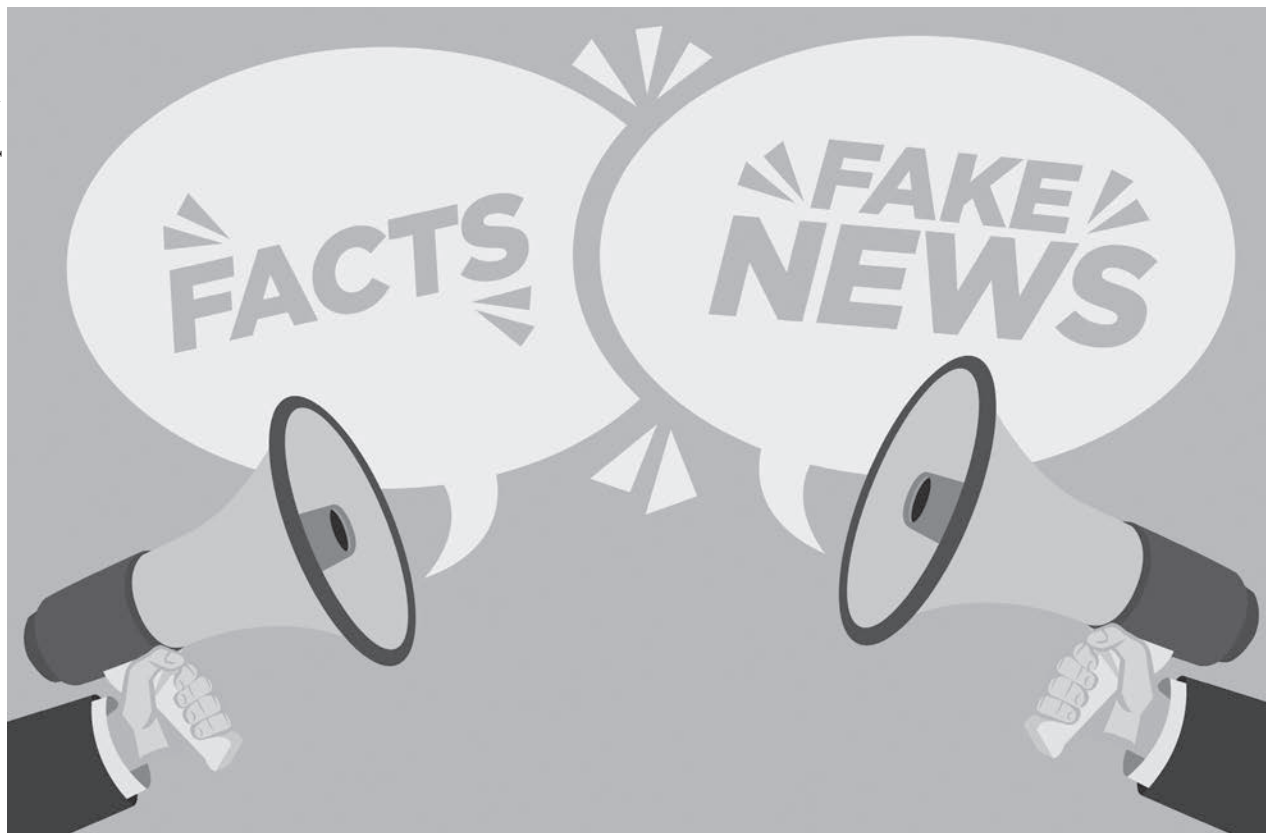
SEE SOFTBALL, PAGE 4



North Andover pitcher, Lilianne Lee tosses a pitch.



North Andover's Ceili Brown lays down the bunt during the March 31 home contest against Essex Tech.



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» **FactCheck.org**, run by Annenberg Public Policy Center, performs much of the same tasks, and also let's you ask questions of the fact checkers. An example question: Did the Supreme Court rule that it is illegal to take the oath of office with anything but the Bible? (The answer is no.)

<https://www.factcheck.org/>

» **Snopes** is the original fact-checking website. Use the site's search bar to get to the bottom of political statements, viral videos and urban myths.

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» **A Google reverse image search** is the best way to find out if that photo you saw making the rounds on Twitter or Facebook is real. This story from PC Magazine walks you through how to do it on your desktop or your phone.

<https://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2492468,00.asp>

» **Still need help?** Contact us at the Eagle-Tribune, and we'll get the answer for you, no matter the topic. Email editor Tracey Rauh at [trauh@eagletribune.com](mailto:trauh@eagletribune.com).



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» **Softball**

Continued from Page 1

their new home turf with a decisive, 18-6, six-inning win over Essex Tech.

“Coach said it before the game: It’s our first game on this new field, so we’re making history,” said fellow captain Lauren Lynch. “We came in with good energy because it does mean something to us. This is my last year to play, and I really want to make it count, so we came out with energy because we were doing something special here.”

This is no slight to the Knights’ former home, up the road a ways at McEvoy Playground. But this brilliant new park that sits adjacent to the new turf baseball diamond on the drive in is pretty sweet.

Never have the softballers felt so loved.

“It’s definitely nice to feel important and thought of. We wouldn’t have been able to play if we were at McEvoy. We are able to work around that,” Lynch said. “Now we have a brand-new field at our school. We can have fans stop by and watch (if the weather ever gets warmer!). It’s just nice to feel thought of.”

The new-look Knights performed like they felt right at home, too.

Junior Riley Davis, playing a new position at first base, flashed the leather like a seasoned vet there.

Her sixth-inning backhand scoop of a one-hop throw from third base was straight fire.

“It’s a new defensive change for me. I like first a lot,” she said. “It’s a lot easier (to play defense and pick throws in the dirt) on the turf, and I love my infield.”

Tuesday’s sky was gray. But everything else about Opening Day in North Andover was bright.



North Andover’s Lauren Lynch tags an Essex Tech runner sliding back to first base.

CARL RUSSO/Staff photo



North Andover’s Riley Davis is all smiles with the team’s win and playing on the new field.



North Andover’s Ceili Brown is safe at second during the March 31 home opener win over Essex Tech.



North Andover pitcher Lillian Lee throws a pitch during the March 31 home win over Essex Tech.



Salem police Officer Joey DeFeudis was named the state's School Resource Officer of the Year. DeFeudis works out of an office at Woodbury Middle School.

TIM JEAN/Staff photo

Salem police officer Joey DeFeudis is an avid marathoner.

N.H. SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER OF THE YEAR

# A mentor and a marathoner

Salem school's 'Officer Joey' says he gets a whole lot in return for his efforts

By Jill Harmacinski

» jharmacinski@eagletribune.com

SALEM, N.H. — By day, officer Joey DeFeudis is in uniform meeting with students and co-teaching classes at Woodbury Middle School.

Off duty, he's training at the Salem Athletic Club or putting the miles in on the town's streets and roads.

To the kids, he is "Officer Joey." To his peers and co-workers, he is empathetic, dedicated, trusted and award-winning.

DeFeudis, 50, was recently honored as the state's School Resource Officer of the Year. Days later, he left for Tokyo to take part in his latest marathon as a charity runner for the Blood Cancer United,

formerly the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society.

"While many officers deserve this distinction, officer Joey DeFeudis is truly exceptional. Our school and community are undeniably better because of his presence," Woodbury School Principal Matthew Barry wrote in his nomination letter to the New Hampshire Juvenile Police Officers Association.

Barry said DeFeudis "exemplifies the modern (school resource officer), moving far beyond the traditional uniform to serve as a vital educator, mentor, and advocate for our youth."

"Officer Joey is a cornerstone of our school culture. He frequently co-teaches health and wellness units,

“Students do not see him as a symbol of law enforcement, but as a trusted adult.”

Woodbury School Principal Matthew Barry

transforming the classroom atmosphere with his presence," Barry wrote. "Students do not see him as a symbol of law enforcement, but as a trusted adult.

"His impact is best seen in small moments of empathy; for instance, he just recently turned a student's 'rough start' into a successful day simply by taking the time to listen and connect, allowing her to return to class with a renewed mindset."

Medford native DeFeudis has been a police officer for the past 21 years, first starting his career in Allenstown, New Hampshire, and then coming to Salem in 2008.

He spent 15 years in the patrol division before

becoming a school resource officer. DeFeudis said at first he was a bit reluctant about the new assignment, but soon learned his role in the school was both necessary and influential.

"It's community relations on the juvenile level," said DeFeudis whose days start at 6:45 a.m. with dozens of students coming by his office to chat and talk about what's going on at both school and throughout the community.

DeFeudis said he attends all three lunches daily to talk with the students. He is also a presence at extracurricular events, including traveling to Pennsylvania when Salem boys baseball competed in the Little League World Series.

"It's a privilege to be part of their lives. ... and I do get a lot in return," DeFeudis said.

He has also spent the past decade running marathons to raise cancer research money in memory of his mother, Deborah DeFeudis who died of leukemia in 2015 at the age of 63.

DeFeudis ran his first marathon in 2016 raising \$26,000. He has collected more than \$100,000 more since then, also competing in Ironman World Triathlon Championship in Hawaii in 2019 and half Ironman competitions.

He remains committed to raising money for cancer research particularly as his father, Jack DeFeudis, was diagnosed with Stage 3 pancreatic cancer.

Running in the Tokyo Marathon is part of his plan to compete in the World Marathon Majors, again raising money for Blood Cancer United. DeFeudis is planning to run

marathons in London, Chicago and New York City later this year. He is waiting to hear if he can get a bib to run the marathon in Sydney, Australia.

DeFeudis said he runs on the treadmill at the Salem Athletic Club, but also tries to get outdoors as often as possible. He's known to take long runs around Salem, but also travels to Boston and Cambridge for a change of scenery.

Barry, in his nominating letter for School Resource Officer of the Year, said DeFeudis' "grit" inspires and encourages them all "to pursue their own wellness goals."

"His dedication to our community is unmatched. Whether he is cheering on the sidelines of local athletic events or traveling to Pennsylvania to support our students in the Little League World Series, Joey is always there," Barry wrote.

Donations for DeFeudis' efforts can be made at pages.ils.org.

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# Adopt-A-Grandparent program brings generations together

By Sabiel Sanchez

» Methuen High School Reporter

METHUEN – As a high school student, how often do you sit down and talk to a senior citizen? For many, the answer is “not often.”

More than 20 years ago, however, Methuen High English teacher Jeffrey Bellistri set out to bring the generations together and dismantle stigmas coming from either side. Alongside his students, he created Adopt-A-Grandparent, a club designed to build genuine bonds between students and the local senior community.

Today on Wednesdays at 2:30 p.m., students gather at the Methuen Senior Activity Center where they spend quality time with their older counterparts in a high-energy and welcoming atmosphere.

The club, which operates under the motto “the eyes of the past meet the eyes of the future,” is open to new members who would like to join.

“I still advise AAG because it’s the thing of which I’m most proud in Methuen,” Bellistri said. “I go home every Wednesday with such a good feeling about students at Methuen High and their capability of truly making a difference in the community.”

Upon arrival at the senior center, students are likely to be greeted by Barbara and Linda, two women known for their jokes and playful bickering.

Inside there are many more familiar faces: Dotty, David, Mike, Connie and Yo, to name a few. These seniors aren’t just looking for someone to chat with; rather, they are genuinely excited to learn about students’ lives.

Some of the seniors share unique stories. They also participate with students in competitive board games, trivia and a fan favorite, Spoons. There’s even an annual fashion show.

Each year’s highlight is the Intergenerational Prom, which is so much more than just a dance. Some of the senior citizens are getting a first chance to enjoy such an event, having been financially constrained or tied down with family obligations when it was prom time during their high school years.

Its years of success pay testament to the impact of Adopt-A-Grandparent. The program serves as a powerful reminder that there is not an age limit on groups of people who can laugh, have fun and be connected to one another.

*Sabiel Sanchez is a Methuen High School student. This piece originated in Blue & White, the school’s newspaper.*



Students and senior citizens pose for a photo during an Adopt-A-Grandparent visit to the Senior Activity Center.



Seniors and students enjoy a variety of activities through the Adopt-A-Grandparent program. Here a group of participants assembles for a photo.

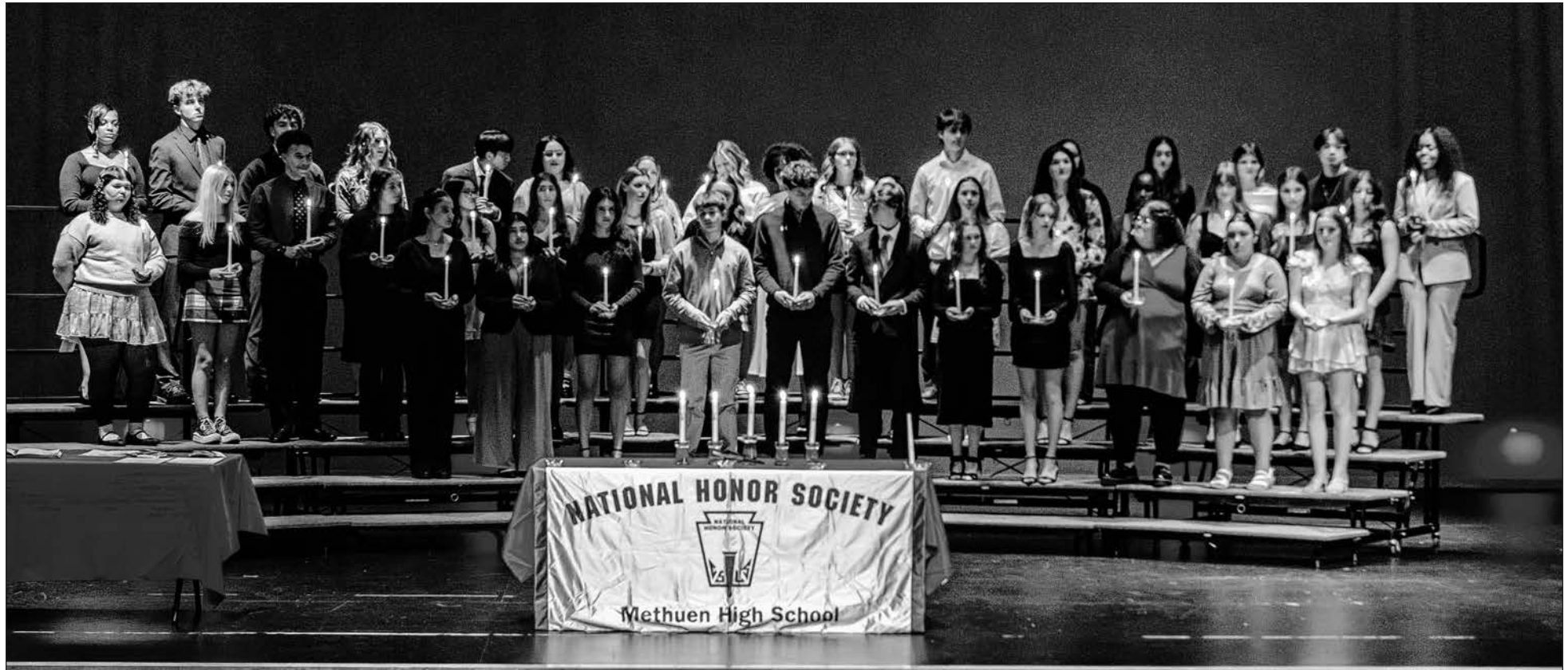


PHOTO BY BLUE &amp; WHITE STAFF

National Honor Society students hold ceremonious candles during their induction.

## Induction ceremony recognizes existing, new honor society members

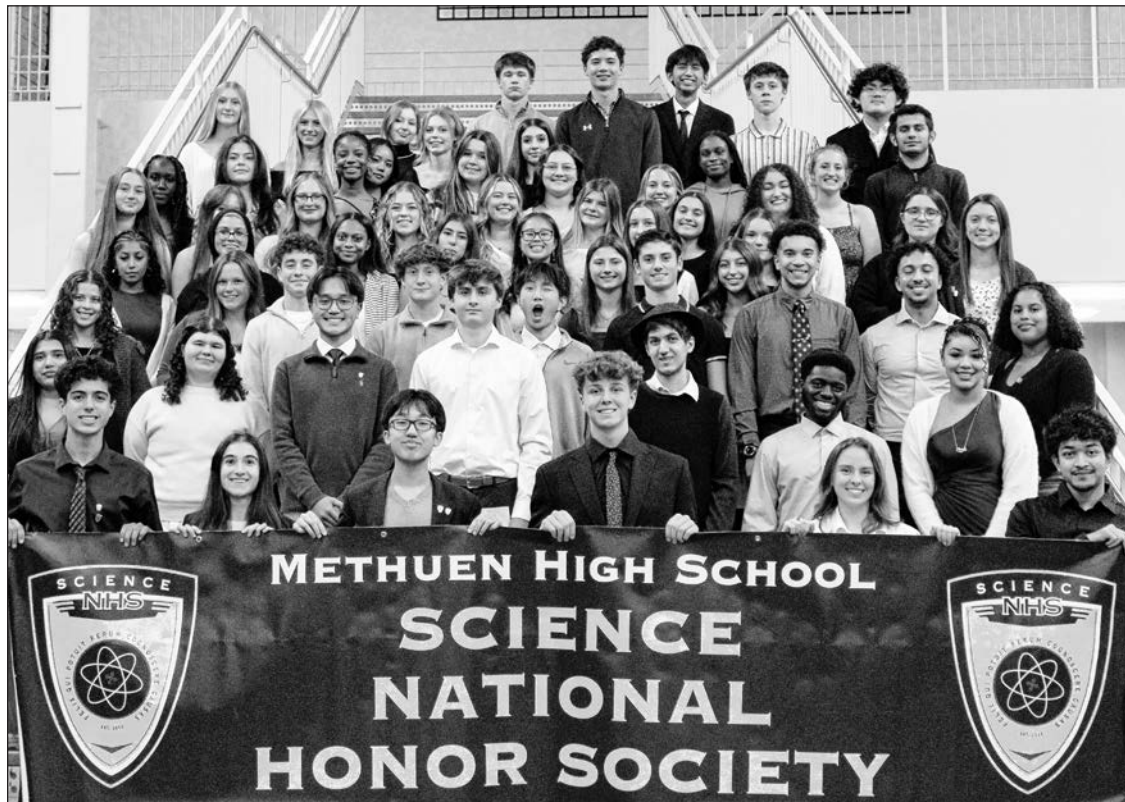


PHOTO BY BLUE &amp; WHITE STAFF

Science Honor Society members pose for a photo at the induction ceremony.

By **Kylie Lam**

» Methuen High School

METHUEN — The Science National Honor Society and National Honor Society held their induction ceremonies, with students gathering at Nicholas Auditorium for an evening of recognition.

“I would say both of the ceremonies went very well,” said National Honor Society President Gabe Nyakro, who also belongs to the science society.

Senior members who had previously been inducted, along with newcomers, were acknowledged at the Nov. 12 event. The spotlight was on science society students first.

“(We were) recognized in a new way this year. As we walked on stage, we stated what we aspired to be when we grew up,” Nyakro explained. “Listening to the vast array of fields people wanted to explore was so satisfying, knowing we were supported by everyone we knew.”

After these students were inducted, the ceremony moved on to the National Honor Society.

“Like SNHS, everything went smoothly,” Nyakro said. “Our

advisor, Ms. Daly, started us off with an introduction to the essence of the National Honor Society. He continued with explaining the importance of each NHS officer.”

Individually the officers gave speeches leading up to the moment when new members recited the NHS pledge and officially were welcomed into the fold.

On the stage, members held candles for this portion of the evening until the time came to blow them out, sending smoke into the air in celebration and as a testament to their commitment to scholarship, leadership, service, and character.

“The Induction Ceremony was a really meaningful experience for me,” said Libby Nichols, a newly inducted member of the NHS.

“The ceremony was certainly an exceptional one and made note of all the outstanding inductees and members,” she added. “It felt like a really special and memorable way to be welcomed.

A longer version of this piece originally was published in The Blue & White, which is the Methuen High School newspaper.



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# Austin Prep students bring Passion Projects to life

By Andrew Skeirik

» Austin Prep in Melrose

**READING** – At Austin Prep, students in AP Language and Composition are using schoolwork to pursue something more personal: Their own passions.

From learning to play the ukulele to conducting environmental research with Gunstock Mountain, students are spending months building skills, exploring interests, and creating projects that reflect who they are and what matters to them.

The multi-semester-long Passion Project concluded in March with a museum-style presentation, where classmates and faculty explored the wide range of student work.

My project featured an environmental study with New Hampshire's Gunstock Mountain, exploring how different environmental and operational factors affect the quality and safety of ski trails throughout the winter season.

The project monitored multiple variables with the end goal of analyzing common factors that may contribute to an unknown problem. Understanding how trails changed over time demonstrated the ski industry's commitment to efficiency and safety.

Stella Masciarelli had something very different in mind.

“My passion project is learning how to play the ukulele, and it stemmed from middle school when I played the saxophone and realized that I enjoyed playing instruments,” Masciarelli, a junior from Reading, said.

“I’ve always wanted to learn another instrument because I think it is a good skill to have,” she added. “This Passion Project assignment helped me to turn a fun idea into a reality. The Passion Project has been so much fun, as it is combining something I’m interested in with schoolwork.”



**Andrew Skeirik presents his environmental research passion project on ski trail quality and safety at the Austin Prep museum-style AP Language and Composition showcase.**

Junior James Aprahamian of Salem, New Hampshire, is learning how to draw a self-portrait.

“My project is not one singular thing being improved upon over a long period of time. It is mostly about building a skill to complete a project at the end to demonstrate the development of this skill,” Aprahamian said. “As I begin working on the final product, the project has turned out about as expected, and I have high hopes for the final result.”

The wide range of topics is

a big part of what makes the Passion Project so meaningful, said AP Language and Composition teacher Stephanie Choate.

“In the past, students have learned how to play instruments and speak other languages,” Choate said. “They have learned construction and created tables, bird houses, guitars, skis, and more. Students have also written books, poems, code and photographic reflections.”

As part of a summer reading assignment, students in

the AP Language and Composition class read “The Element” by Ken Robinson. The novel offers students a path toward self-discovery and discusses the intersection of natural talent and personal passions.

Rather than taking a traditional test after finishing the book, students were encouraged to use their time to discover their own passion. The six-month process allowed students to reflect on their strengths, weaknesses, and untapped potential as they developed a project centered

on personal exploration.

While many school projects are based on class content and ask all students to complete the same task, the Austin Prep Passion Project challenges each student in a new and personal way. It asks students not just what they learned, but what they care about.

Students choose their own topics, allowing them to dive into a subject that genuinely matters to them. The overall goal of the project is to show that real-world success is not just about

remembering information, but about developing problem-solving skills and the ability to explore something meaningful.

In the final months of the academic year, when focus often shifts to AP exams, final projects, and commencement, the Passion Project gives Austin Prep students a rare opportunity to explore new interests and bring fresh energy to their work.

*Andrew Skeirik is a member of the Class of 2027 and resides in Melrose.*



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