

CONCERT ON THE COMMON

Lawrence students mark school year's end with outdoor performance

LAWRENCE — The Lawrence Public Schools first-ever outdoor concert was a big success late last month with 120 students from 12 school music programs giving 21 performances.

Family members and the public attended the concert on the Campagnone Common, which include choirs and bands, solos and duets, recorders and accordions performing everything from classical to hard rock.

School officials said it's hard to overestimate how much work the students and staff put into making this event come together. But they were grateful the rain for the rain to hold off.

They also thanked city workers for their support with making the Common ready and available.



Violinists proudly display their instruments.



A school choir performs.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF LAWRENCE SCHOOL DISTRICT



The Campagnone Common was the venue for an outdoor concert featuring 120 students from Lawrence Public Schools.

EDITORIAL

Why the free press must remain free

Four billion people read Associated Press journalism daily.

A billion access Reuters content each day.

Bloomberg Media has 60 million video viewers monthly.

Yet the Trump administration is drastically curtailing these three major wire services' access to White House press conferences.

For generations, a spot in the press pool at White House media events was reserved for wire services. The Trump administration recently announced it was adding a second spot for a print journalist to pool, but the long-time reserved position will no longer be guaranteed a seat at each press conference.

The wire services can still apply to fill one of the designated seats.

The result is that newspapers, broadcasters and other media outlets across the world that depend on wire services for national and international news will no longer have secured access to coverage of White House press events. The AP alone serves more than 15,000 media outlets around the country including The Eagle-Tribune.

The Trump administration is choking off the ability of an independent press to ask questions and report on White House press conferences while simultaneously shutting down the flow of reporting from the White House to communities across the country served by news organizations that use the wire services.

For decades, the White House Correspondents' Association has been in charge of setting the rules for the press pool, an important task given that many of the press conferences are conducted in small spaces that can't accommodate more than a few dozen journalists.

But the Trump administration in February wrested control over the press pool from the



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correspondents' association, announcing that it would allot fewer spaces to legacy news organizations in favor of new media, including social media influencers. The decision, without a doubt, was driven by Trump's desire to reduce access for organizations that critically report news about him.

That same month, the administration revoked AP access to White House pressers after Trump issued an executive order to change the name of the Gulf of Mexico to the Gulf of America and the AP declined to adhere to the change in its reporting and in its stylebook, because AP is an international wire service and throughout the world the gulf is still called Gulf of Mexico.

The AP sued, and U.S. District Judge Trevor McFadden ruled that the White House could not deny AP access on the basis of its decision to continue using "Gulf of Mexico." McFadden ordered the Trump administration to restore the AP's White House press pool access.

Clearly, the administration's recent decision to remove the

press pool seat for AP, Reuters and Bloomberg is a ploy to continue curtailing AP access, and by extension, that of thousands of news outlets relying on these services.

Previous presidents have recognized the importance of White House coverage by independent media to ensure transparency and the free flow of information. The Trump administration's battle with the AP and restriction of wire service access are unmistakable signs that it does not. The U.S. Constitution prohibits infringing on a free press with the understanding that a free, independent and unfettered press is crucial for democracy.

Instead, the president wants to control not only terminology used by media outlets, but also their ability to provide news to millions of Americans through community newspapers and other local media across the country.

Without a free press, we are all less free.

This piece originated with The Herald Bulletin in Anderson, Indiana, a sister CNHI newspaper to The Eagle-Tribune.



**REAL NEWS
IN SCHOOLS**

How the program works

Your school can have access to local, trusted journalism from The Eagle-Tribune on a daily basis. We report on news throughout the Merrimack Valley and Southern New Hampshire, covering all things local – from schools, to sports, to government, people profiles, business, entertainment and more. You get the facts – the real news – from experienced reporters, photographers and editors you can count on at no cost to your school.

Here are the basics of the program:

What is it? The Eagle-Tribune partners with local businesses to provide free digital access to our newspaper to anyone within the school at no cost to the school. This access encourages students to value the vital news coverage being produced by The Eagle-Tribune. They will build awareness and gain critical thinking skills in the process.

Who can participate?

This program will benefit teachers, students, and the broader school community.

Where does it take place?

You can access our newspaper online. Teachers can incorporate the program into their curriculums, even having reporters, photographers and editors visit your class.

When can we start benefiting?

As soon as we have your commitment to participate in Real News in Schools we will go to work to find a local business who wants to sponsor you. Once we have one, we will work with your IT Department to get the program up and running.

Why is this valuable?

There's a lot of fake news out there on social media and elsewhere. The Eagle-Tribune, founded in 1868 as the Lawrence Daily Eagle and a twice Pulitzer Prize winning publication, has a long track record of fair and accurate reporting that cuts through the misinformation.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
EAGLETRIBUNE.COM/REALNEWS

Seniors honored for embodying school values

By Angelina Berube

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NORTH ANDOVER — High school seniors who exemplified the school district's core values were celebrated for their accomplishments ahead of graduation earlier this month.

The Kindness Collaborative, in a partnership with North Andover Public Schools and AT&T, gifted Chromebooks to 39 seniors who have embodied the district's social-emotional learning expectations that highlight values associated with respect, achievement, inclusion, service and empathy, collectively known as RAISE.

A ceremony was held in the auditorium Friday for the students and their families. Students smiled as they also received a certificate of accomplishment and a backpack to hold their new electronic devices.

The students who received the Chromebooks were from a variety of backgrounds and identified as ones who have made a difference in the community, at school and among their classmates.

They were athletes, musicians, National Honor Society members and community volunteers. Other students took on jobs to provide for their families, took on learning English as a second language and participated in and led extra-curricular activities.

"Each of you have lifted RAISE values and made our community stronger," North Andover High School Director of Guidance Megan Pinksten said to the students.

Pinksten spoke about the students' contributions and how they worked hard inside the classroom, and out of it. She applauded the students for persevering through life's challenges.



In the center, students Kaylie Smith, Jason Jiang and Maria Guimares are joined by, from left, The Kindness Collaborative Director Alex Bromberg, AT&T Director of External Affairs for Massachusetts Edmund Donnelly, Superintendent Pamela Lathrop and Director of Guidance Megan Pinksten during a ceremony at North Andover High School on Friday.

Kindness Collaborative Executive Director Alex Bromberg said the students embodied what the school district stands for by going above and beyond in their community and for the benefit of their peers.

"This (gifting) wave really focused on the students that have lived and done things that were aligned with those raised values that North Andover focuses on," Bromberg said.

The Kindness Collaborative has worked alongside North Andover Public Schools since its inception in 2020. It also has a partnership with the town.

This project was a collaborative effort with AT&T and its initiative called the Digital Bridge, which addresses technological equity.

Edmund Donnelly, director of external affairs for AT&T Massachusetts, told the students he was impressed with their accomplishments. Afterward, he said, collaborations like ones with the Kindness Collaborative help close the digital equity gap in Essex County.

"Access to connectivity is vital in helping to bridge the digital divide and we are glad we can provide these resources to those that need them most," Donnelly said.

"We look forward to seeing these North Andover students make the most out of the digital world."

An additional 161 Chromebooks will be handed out at the school district's discretion.



North Andover High School seniors Kaylie Smith and Secil Garcia pose with their new backpacks during a celebration at the school.



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Health club offering free student memberships this summer

By Caitlin Dee

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SALEM, N.H. — Planet Fitness is offering high school students a free opportunity to stay active this summer.

High school students ages 14-19 are able to work out for free Planet Fitness at 92 Cluff Crossing Road, and at any Planet Fitness location in the U.S.

Besides Salem, local teens can take advantage of the offer at nearby locations in Derry, Londonderry, Plaistow, Methuen, Haverhill and Andover.

The High School Summer Pass program is entering its fifth year and aims to help students keep up with fitness during the summer.

“It allows teens the opportunity to prioritize their mental and physical wellness goals during a critical time when school is out and important academic and extracurricular programs such as sports, gym class and after-school activities are in recess,” Planet Fitness



Teen on plate-load leg press machine at Planet Fitness.

said.

While the program attempts to improve student's physical health, it also prioritizes their mental health. The company conducted a survey on the topic and found exercise often increases happiness.

“Ninety percent of teens say exercise helps them feel happy, with 88 percent noting improved mood after

COURTESY OF PLANET FITNESS

exercise,” Planet Fitness said.

The program has successfully helped teens across the country develop beneficial exercise practices during the summer.

The program will run through Aug. 31. Visit planetfitness.com/summer-pass for more details and to register.



Teens keeping fit during the summer by exercising on treadmills at Planet Fitness.



Teens stretching in the Planet Fitness's functional training room.

NORTH ANDOVER

Schools update bullying prevention plan

By Angelina Berube

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NORTH ANDOVER — The school district is updating its plan on how it addresses bullying, cyberbullying and retaliation within the school community.

The district's Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan was last updated in December 2010. An updated plan was considered earlier this month.

The proposed updated plan applies to all who are involved in bullying either as the perpetrator or target. The current

and proposed plan were both built on social-emotional learning expectations that highlight values associated with respect, achievement, inclusion, service and empathy.

Superintendent Pamela Lathrop said a major change to the proposed plan is a new section detailing the “prohibition of bullying and retaliation.”

The section outlines the district's strict policy on prohibiting bullying, which includes cyberbullying, and retaliation within its schools and during its programs and activities.

Bullying and retaliation

will not be tolerated on school grounds, properties immediately adjacent to school grounds, any school-sponsored or related activity on or off school property. This extends to school bus stops, on school buses or any vehicle associated with the school district or one of its schools, according to the updated plan.

The updated plan also prohibits bullying through technology or electronic devices even “at a location, activity, function or program that is not school-related” if the acts create a hostile environment

at school for the target or witnesses, infringe on their rights at school, or materially and substantially disrupt the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Retaliation of any nature against someone who reports bullying or provides information during an investigation is also prohibited, as outlined in the updated prevention plan.

The new section also provides applicable definitions for terms used such as bullying, cyberbullying, retaliation, perpetrator, target, school grounds, principal and

a hostile environment.

Lathrop said the plan was also updated to be consistent with Massachusetts General Law and the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education requirements and regulations.

This includes the definition of bullying according to state law. The updated plan states students found to have engaged in bullying or retaliation may face disciplinary action such as long-term suspension.

District employees who

engage in bullying or retaliation will be subject to termination of employment.

The plan is intended to be updated biennially.

Each principal, or their designated person, is responsible for implementing and overseeing the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan at their schools.

If approved after the second reading, the new plan would also add more tasks to the administrator investigation procedure form. The process is used in situations where bullying is alleged.

Long-struggling Greater Lawrence track among state's elite

By David Willis

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ANDOVER — Tony Sarkis had a simple request when he took over the struggling Greater Lawrence Tech track program.

He wanted his athletes to believe.

The veteran coach asked that each and every Reggie simply to in his staff — and more importantly believe in themselves.

“Once the kids believe in what you’re saying and what you’re doing, and they start buying in, you start to build a foundation of hard work and competition,” said Sarkis. “Then the kids start to believe in what they can do with hard work and dedication. They start building pride in themselves, building self-esteem and believing they can do something special. Just because they’re inner-city kids, they can do anything that anyone else can do. These kids can be anything they want to be.”

That simple adage has been the roots that have grown a program that struggled for decades into an emerging powerhouse.

“When I was a freshmen, the track team wasn’t really getting recognized,” said star hurdler Jaheid Ortiz. “A lot of people just kept asking, ‘What’s a Reggie?’ But this new generation of athletes is finally earning Greater Lawrence track some recognition. For us to make this program bigger than ever is incredible. It’s an honor.”

How far has the Greater Lawrence track program — which now features approximately 150 athletes compared to roughly 60 when Sarkis took over six years ago — come? The numbers are truly staggering.

Prior to last spring, no Reggie athlete had ever gone to track nationals of any kind. This spring, 11 members of the 2025 team already have their trips set to Adidas Nationals in North Carolina.



REBA SALDANHA

After years of struggles, the Greater Lawrence track team is now producing some of the top talent in the region and the state of Massachusetts.

From 2012-2023, only one Greater Lawrence athlete **total** appeared in our Eagle-Tribune High School Track “Honor Roll” — which features over 200 athletes each and every week during the spring.

Last week’s Eagle-Tribune Honor Roll featured Reggies in the top-10 in 11 different boys events and and seven different girls events. That includes the area boys leader in the 100-meter dash, Gustavo Varela (11.03), and six events with a Reggie in the No. 2 spot — Elizardo Melenciano (400, 110 hurdles, 400 hurdles), Juan Guzman (shot put), David Burgos (discus) and Ortiz (100 hurdles).

From 1987-2023 only one Greater Lawrence athlete earned a spot on our Eagle-Tribune All-Time area Honor Roll. This spring, Melenciano has broken into the all-time rankings in the 110 hurdles (No. 8, 14.44) and 400 hurdles (57.57) and Ortiz is the first Reggie **ever** to break into the all-time girls rankings (100 hurdles, 15.96).

Last spring, Melenciano became the first Greater Lawrence athlete to earn

Eagle-Tribune track All-Star honors since 2012, and the second since 1995. And three weeks ago he became the first Reggie to earn a victory at the Andover Boosters Meet.

“The level of competition is amazing,” said Greater Lawrence athletic director Mike Nelson, a strong supporter of the team. “It’s not just that they are great athletes, but they are truly passionate about track. Track isn’t their second sport anymore. They are treating it as seriously as any other sport, and are committed to excellence. It’s an amazing atmosphere. And Tony is a very special coach.”

Sarkis takes charge

The concept of building a program was nothing new to Sarkis, a physical education teacher now in his 26th year at the school.

In 20 years as head football coach, he long ago built the Reggies into one of the region’s most consistent contenders — including the 2007 Division 3A Super Bowl title — and made the wrestling program a powerhouse before stepping down in 2008 due to family obligations.

But track was not initially an obvious fit.

“I did track for one year at Lawrence High,” he remembered with a laugh. “But athletes and coaches love to compete. I took some time off from coaching wrestling, but then my kids got older, and I started helping out with the indoor track team. That head job opened, so I took that, then the spring track job opened and kind of fell into my lap.

“I got a lot of my football coaches together and we said we were going to do this together. We started going to seminars and doing our homework. We dedicated ourselves to doing it. We kept exploring what we could do better with the program and we went to clinics and did anything we could to learn what needed to be done.”

Hall of Fame help

In search of insight from a successful track coach, Sarkis called across town to his longtime acquaintance, Hall of Fame Andover High head coach Peter Comeau.

“Tony called me and asked me how to grow the program,”

said Comeau, now in year No. 33 coaching track or the Golden Warriors with seven All-State team titles. “Before Tony, Greater Lawrence would just do six dual meets and if a kid qualified for states he would go. They didn’t run Saturday meets or invitationals. I encouraged him to get out there and do more meets, and invited him to Andover Boosters. He also came by a few of our practices and saw how we do things. I told him he was doing the right thing being the boys and girls head coach. And he still calls and asks me questions.”

Sarkis said Comeau’s help has been invaluable.

“A lot of how we run practices here came from Andover,” said Sarkis. “We wanted to emulate what Peter does. He opened up his program to us, and he showed me how he breaks things down and handles different events, and we have definitely benefited from that.”

Comeau feels the sky is the limit for Sarkis and his program.

“I think Tony is a special coach,” said Comeau. “He has ‘It,’ and by that I mean

passion. He is very driven and passionate about the kids. If you have passion for the kids, you will do great things. It’s all about passion, and he has it. A lot of people want to be great, and they don’t have the passion. Tony has it.

“To have 150 kids at Greater Lawrence is amazing. There are Merrimack Valley Conference schools that don’t have close to that many. I believe Greater Lawrence could contend in the MVC, the best league for track in the state. They are doing amazing stuff there.”

Pride in success

Varela, who was also an Eagle-Tribune All-Star running back for Sarkis in football, said the breakout success of the team is something the group takes a great deal of pride in.

“It means a lot to us seeing the program rise to new heights,” he said. “I know how hard coach Sarkis and his coaches work, and to see all that effort turn into success is huge. To me, it’s great bringing this success to the school. Anytime a sports team here at Greater Lawrence is thriving, it helps the school and puts a smile on our faces.”

Melenciano agreed, “The success of of the program shows the neighboring cities and schools that Lawrence kids can be great athletes. The success shows that being in a lower division (Division 4) doesn’t define how good it can be.”

And while the success on the state level is sweet, its the small wins that mean the most to Sarkis.

“Anytime you can bring light to the inner city kids, it’s very meaningful,” said Sarkis, brushing aside a tear. “They can do anything they put their minds to. I have been very blessed to work with these kids. Seeing their hard work, dedication, and the pride they take in being a part of this program is very, very special. It makes me emotional, because it’s setting them up for success in life.”

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