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THE  
**FREDONIA LEADER**

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SUNY Fredonia's Student-Run Newspaper

**Campus Climate  
Survey Results**

See page 8

**Israel/Palestine Resources**  
**Switching from Google to Microsoft**  
**Battle of the New Bands**  
**Rosch Wrapped Fall 2023**  
**[OPINION] Do People Want to Work?**  
**[OPINION] Falling Deeper into Political Hell**

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# News

3 Israel/Palestine Conflict

4 Google to Microsoft

5 Reed Library

6 Model European Union

7 AI Future?

8 Campus Survey Results

# Life & Arts

10 Beach Tower

12 Cornflake Car Profile

14 Battle of the New Bands

16 Beachfest

18 Alex Erwin Profile

20 Culture Fest

22 Horse on Central

# Sports

24 Overseas for Sports

26 Winter Break for Athletes

28 Sports Team Collabs

# Opinion

29 Survey Results

32 Poetry

34 Your News Feed Might Be Lying

36 Do People Want to Work?

38 Playlist for your Mood

39 Political Hell

40 Rosch Wrapped Fall 2023

41 From the Desk Of: Alexandra Giles

43 Lovercolumn

# Scallion

44 Megan's Formal Apology

46 Horoscopes

Front and back cover: DREW PALUCH | Photo Editor

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"I had to grow against the uncertainty until it became known." – Alexandra Giles

Proud member of The Associated Collegiate Press.

# RESOURCE LIST



FOR THE



# ISRAEL/PALESTINE

# CONFLICT

**CHLOE KOWALYK**  
Editor in Chief

The Leader has been making a strong effort to cover the Israel/Palestine Conflict as the event unfolds.

We, as a student-run publication, have attempted to cover the event as best as we, as students, can understand.

The Israel/Palestine Conflict is an extremely complex situation with a deep history of in-depth foreign policy.

There is not currently an expert on Middle Eastern politics and international affairs on Fredonia's campus.

While there are professors in the Department of Politics and International Affairs with extensive knowledge in their studies and many current events, there is no one on campus with the expertise in the entirety of the event with all of its important details.

Thus, The Leader has been seeking accurate information as much as possible.

We have consulted Dr. Jonathan Chausovsky, an Associate Professor in the Department of Politics and International Affairs for some resources.

Our goal, as a fully student-run publication, is to inform and educate the student body.

Below is a list of resources with which students can begin to educate themselves further on the conflict.

## **Institute for the Study of War**

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

This resource provides daily updates on various global events as well as the Israel/Palestine Conflict.

## **Nicholas Kristof - The New York Times**

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/11/04/opinion/sunday/palestinians-west-bank-israel.html>

Kristof is an opinion writer for The New York Times.

He has written some important and informative pieces regarding the treatment of Palestinians throughout the conflict with Israel.

## **Lawfare Media**

<https://www.lawfaremedia.org/article/israels-supreme-court-issues-regressive-judgment-west-bank-deportations>

This article provides further background information on the Israeli government, especially the Israeli Supreme Court.

This piece also provides information on how the Israeli Government is able to ignore international law when in regards to the rights of Palestinians living in the West Bank.

## **Various Books**

There are also a variety of books available to purchase on the conflict.

Examples include:

The Shortest History of Israel and Palestine: From Zionism to Intifadas and the Struggle for Peace by Michael Scott-Baumann

The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: A Beginner's Guide to Objective Understanding Through a Fact-Based Journey From Past to Present by Peter Schwartzman

Or, to avoid purchasing through Amazon, we recommend speaking to employees at your local bookstore or library to see any historical books or political commentary on the conflict they may hold in their connection.

The Leader is also always looking for members of the campus community to provide their perspectives on the issue.

We have attempted to search for Palestinian students here on campus, but have been unsuccessful in our search.

If you would like to discuss how this conflict impacts you, please contact us at [leader@fredonia.edu](mailto:leader@fredonia.edu).



# The switch from Google to Microsoft

**ABIGAIL JACOBSON**

Asst. News Editor

The duo of using your phone to sign into Google on your laptop may no longer be dynamic.

Something new is coming to Fredonia which changes almost everything.

This upcoming semester, Fredonia will be migrating from Google's software services to Microsoft.

The question is, why?

Michel Kouadio, Fredonia's chief information officer (CIO), provided a reason for the migration.

"The core problem [comes] from the fact that our Information Technology (IT) infrastructure is siloed," said Kouadio.

Migrating from Google to Microsoft is not the main goal.

The migration is a step in the direction of the actual goal, where Fredonia wants to build a new infrastructure and to also enhance collaboration between Fredonia students and faculty.

"[The] main goal is to build that kind of ... IT infrastructure that is well-integrated," said Kouadio. "[And also] allows collaboration that [will allow] us to communicate better."

According to Kouadio, to achieve this main goal, Fredonia must switch to Microsoft.

"We need a platform that allows us to interact," he said.

That platform is called SharePoint.

SharePoint is an application where users can share, edit, organize and store documents. The application also allows users to plan events on a calendar and help manage your team's or your own work.

As of this semester, Fredonia students and faculty tend to communicate via email.

Kouadio believes that some students and faculty find email somewhat limiting.

"We want to make sure we're using a system that [is] purposefully built for collaboration and also brings ... tools that allow more collaboration and more interaction," said Kouadio.

Another reason for migrating is that Fredonia is not fully integrated into our system.

"We [are] trying to solve and ... have a more cohesive and coherent infrastructure," said Kouadio.

According to Kouadio, our system is made up of different areas, which creates problems and repetitive tasks that can bring a lot of inefficiency and delays, as well as waste time and money.

Kouadio knows this decision can bring different views.

"I expect to hear different voices," he said. "There'll be people with very different [opinions]."

Jennifer Hildebrand, the director of curriculum, has a different perspective of this change.

When Hildebrand first heard of the switch, it was merely a rumor. Now that the change is official, she has her concerns.

"I felt confused, frustrated and very worried," said Hildebrand. "[A ton] of the work that I do as the director of curriculum relies on Google Docs, Sheets, Drive, etc."

All of Hildebrand's documents, ranging from new classes, new majors and minors and more are shared and stored on Google.

Fredonia had also just recently switched from OnCourse to FredLearn this past fall semester.

For the most part, students and faculty believe that the switch was tough to get used to, and are still adjusting.

"To have another big shift looming ... created a sense of helplessness and exhaustion," said Hildebrand.

Some of the concerns voiced by faculty members include who and when would they teach them this new system and how the students will be affected by this decision.

Another concern, according to Hildebrand, was about information privacy.

"Questions and concerns have been raised about information privacy as we [were introduced to] a form of automated, artificial intelligence to share information with students," said Hildebrand.

Hildebrand can see Kouadio's reasoning behind this switch, however, she has one big concern.

"My concern isn't about whether we should do this, but about [how] we do it," said Hildebrand.

Hildebrand's opinion is more complicated than 'to switch or to not switch.'

She believes we must take a route where we educate the students and faculty, while also providing a smooth transition into this change.

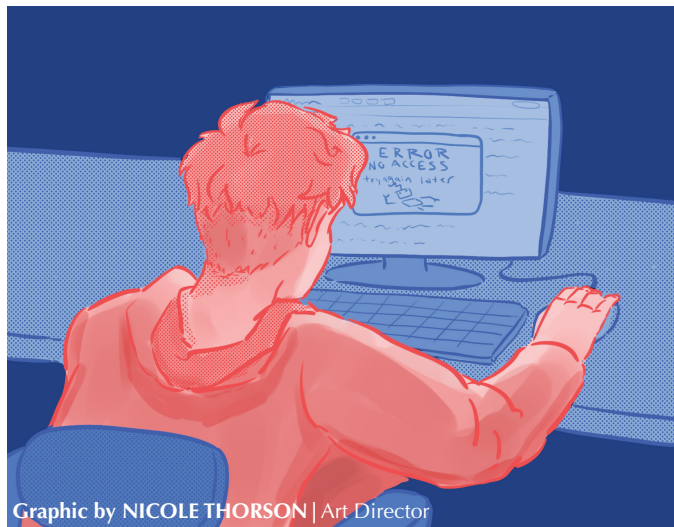
"We have a responsibility to our students, faculty and staff to make this big project as seamless, transparent and pain-free as possible," said Hildebrand. "I believe we all want to do what's best for our students, both current and future, and our employees."

According to Kouadio, his role isn't only to manage the technology Fredonia uses.

"[My role] is to deliver services that enhance student learning, promote innovative teaching and can [also] support knowledge discovery," he said.

While this change will soon be upon us and can bring different opinions, Kouadio believes this will be a better infrastructure for students to collaborate and communicate.

"Students are a core component," he said. "We want to make sure when students come to Fredonia, we find an environment that is really innovative and we know [the] learning outcome could be one of the best that you can get."



Graphic by NICOLE THORSON | Art Director



# Reed Library's 'Year of Open Science' initiative promotes research access, collaboration

**ROSEMARIE RAPISARDA**

Staff Writer

College students will agree that there are few things more frustrating than finding the perfect article for your research paper only for it to be blocked behind a paywall.

Inspired by the White House's recent open science initiative, Reed Library is making strides to prevent this from happening.

About a year ago, the White House and the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) launched the "Year of Open Science."

The purpose of this action is to advance national open science policies across federal agencies.

According to the White House fact sheet, there have been "new actions to advance open and equitable research, including new grant funding, improvements in research infrastructure and broadened research participation for emerging scholars."

In honor of this ambitious plan, Fredonia's Reed Library is hosting its own "Year of Open Science." Through new federal guidelines, the library is helping faculty members publish their research more openly.

The staff at Reed Library have continuously embraced opening research to the public by including free databases on their website. With the action of open science, they're shedding light on this research's importance.

Research and Information Literacy Services Librarian Christina Hilburger has organized this new initiative and will head events and workshops throughout the year. Reed Library is

even organizing a second Dryad workshop for researchers to learn about storing and sharing research data.

According to Hilburger, the goal of Reed Library's Year of Open Science is, "to usher in a transformative era in national open science policy."

She emphasized that by "embracing open-access publishing, open data and other open practices, the library is actively contributing to a more inclusive dissemination of knowledge, and helping to dismantle traditional barriers to access."

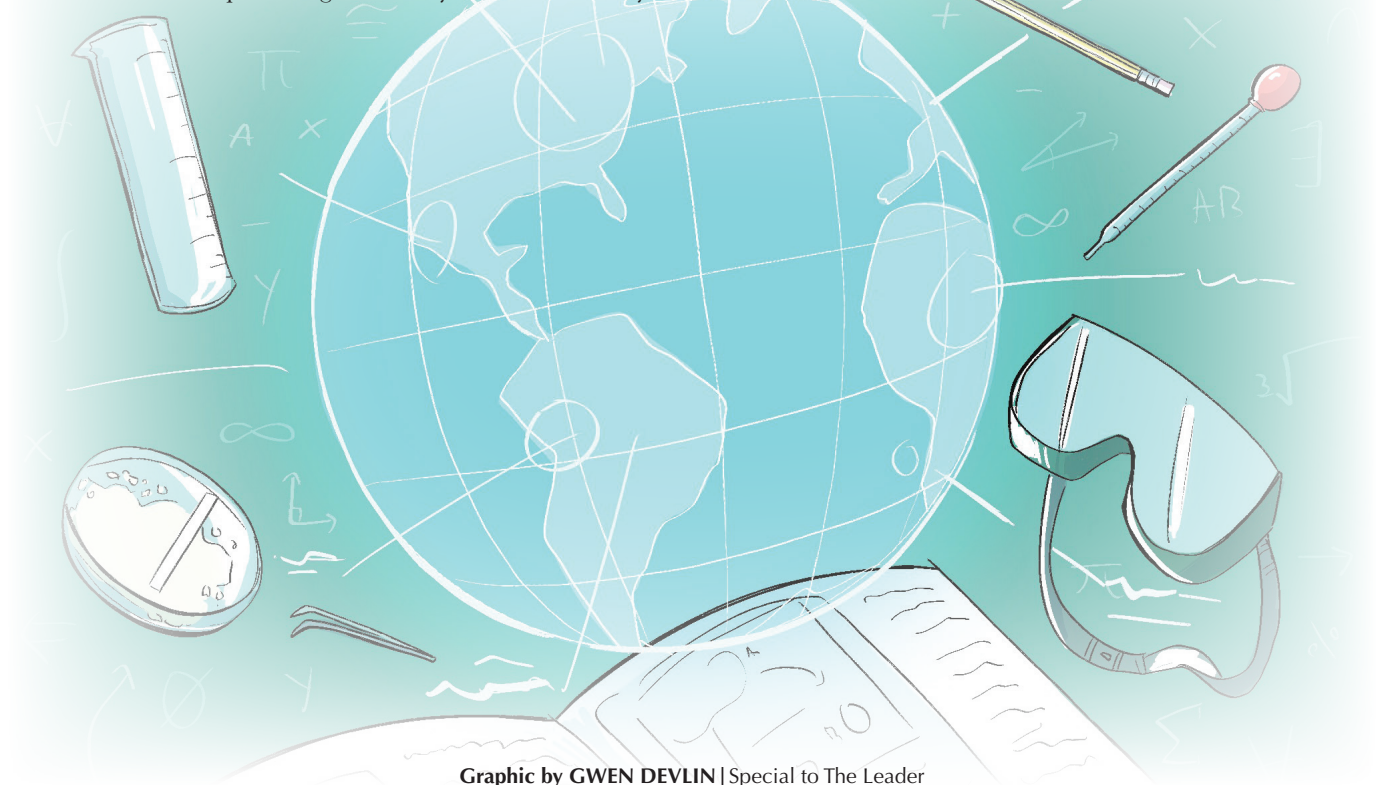
Hilburger also mentioned how, "adopting broader and more equitable access to scientific research is a moral imperative and a strategic move towards addressing societal issues efficiently."

These principles of open science have been successfully advocated for and are being slowly adopted in different research communities. Hilburger also discussed how the "Year of Open Science" impacted many areas, including being a catalyst for COVID-19.

According to a BioMed Central (BMC) Medical Research Methodology that Hilburger shared, there is a call for a wider adoption of open science practices. This is why there must be a broader endorsement of open science principles.

Hilburger asserts that in this way, we can remind ourselves that science should always be a rigorous, reliable and transparent process. The importance of this is even greater in the context of a pandemic, in which research findings are being translated into practice even more rapidly.

Luckily for Reed Library and its team of staff members, the "Year of Open Science" has been proven valuable for the future of research.



Graphic by GWEN DEVLIN | Special to The Leader



Photo by ALEXANDRA GILES | Asst. Photo Editor

# Fredonia hosts SUNY Model European Union

**DAN QUAGLIANA**  
News Editor

On Saturday, Nov. 4, Fredonia hosted the State University of New York's Saturday Model European Union (SUNYMEU), a one-day simulation of the Council of the European Union.

Directed by Professor Raymond Rushboldt of the Department of Politics and International Affairs, the event lasted for approximately five hours and included the participation of more than 20 students hailing from colleges and universities across the entire state.

"Basically, it was a one-day version of the three-day standard Model EU [event in the spring]," said Alexander Fisher, a senior double-major in political science and writing.

"We had people come from other universities, like the University at Buffalo, and we discussed a few different policies," Fisher continued. "Everybody represented either a prime minister or a foreign minister."

Fisher acted as the foreign minister of France in the MEU event, meaning that he had to argue his points in the same way that the actual president of France, Emmanuel Macron, would argue them, even if he personally disagreed.

Just like in the real European Union, students acting as prime ministers sat on the European Council and discussed policies.

While students acting as foreign ministers sat on the Foreign Affairs Committee (FAC), which is technically part of the European Council, held separate discussions.

The FAC talked about the same foreign policy issues that the real FAC on the European Council would have talked about had they held an actual meeting here: opening accession negotiations with Ukraine, so they can join the European Union, and the Israel-Hamas conflict.

SUNYMEU is careful to stay neutral and not side with a particular member state, according to their website.

"We were presented with an agenda of about seven or eight

items, and our goal was to get through all of them to have a vote on them," Fisher explained.

He related how the student playing Viktor Orbán, the prime minister of Hungary, wanted to decrease the amount of immigration in the European Union, which is what the real Orbán believes. So the rest of the European Council had a huge discussion about immigration within the European continent.

"We made a compromise. Certain nations ended up taking more immigrants. So Germany, France and the larger nations took more immigrants, and Hungary took less," Fisher said. "And although it wasn't totally like how it would work in the EU, it was still an example of how legislation functions in that body of government, [which] I think a lot of us are less familiar with."

Students found it difficult to, in some cases, argue policies that they didn't personally agree with as they had to explicitly follow what the leader of the country they were representing would say.

"For me, I watched a lot of Macron's speeches," Fisher related. "I did a lot of research on France and their policies and the last 10 years of politics there. It wasn't as much of me contradicting myself as it was looking in a different lens that I wouldn't normally look at. You kind of come to some different conclusions and have some different discussions just because of the nature of the Model EU."

That's the purpose of the whole event — American students naturally pay more attention to American politics.

"We think about something like Ukraine very differently than France or Germany would, because it's right on their doorstep," Fisher said. "We were able to get some new perspectives on Europe that I really wouldn't have gotten had I not been a part of a model version of how the EU works."

SUNY's spring EU event will be held at Buffalo State University on April 12 to April 14, according to its website. If students are interested in participating, they can contact the SUNYMEU office at [sunymeubuffalostate.edu](mailto:sunymeubuffalostate.edu).



# AI: future or failure?

**KRYSTYNA PORTUGUES-KLOS**

Special to The Leader

The rise of artificial intelligence (AI) and different resources that “do the work for you” have become extremely popular with students, artists and professionals alike.

Research and Information Literacy Services Librarian Christina Hilburger of Reed Library believes that AI has the potential to be both dangerous and helpful, giving it the same likeness of social media.

On Nov. 7, there was a workshop for students surrounding AI, where discussions were held and questions were answered surrounding the topic.

At the workshop, students reported feeling lukewarm about AI.

They stated that they felt bombarded with new technologies coming out all the time, so something like artificial intelligence wasn't too surprising.

The faculty AI roundtable discussion on Nov. 15 recorded different perceptions.

The roundtable had some astounding remarks to make about AI and its capabilities, as well as its shortcomings in the academic world.

They have noticed that students have been interacting with AI, and some professors have begun using Turnitin as a platform to detect its use in assignments.

Turnitin is one of several programs that detects AI by recognizing patterns and tracking familiarity of relevant information.

Artificial intelligence programs like ChatGPT that have the ability to sound human can make the use of AI virtually undetectable.

There are ethical concerns when it comes to AI usage in the academic setting.

Job replacement problems, potential for bias and hallucinations are some of the more complicated matters that are approached in the topic of AI.

Hallucinations, meaning references that may not even exist, are an issue that arises when AI is asked questions that are more complicated, such as researching new evidence and constructing new arguments.

There is little to no existing material that the AI can read or reference for these questions, so the program will simply make something up instead. This can be a problem with research articles that require accurate references to go back to for study.

Comparatively, AI can also be extremely helpful in many ways. When it comes to comprehending historical documents, cursive that is hundreds of years old can be analyzed and deciphered into text.

Using artificial intelligence as a second editor for essays and other academic journals is also a perk of the program. Hilburger says that ChatGPT can help create new lines of basic code that can aid in the face of the Reed Library website.

When it comes to complicated research questions, AI can help you create new keywords and search terms to search for articles and journals to support your argument.

According to Hilburger, AI isn't going away any time soon, and neither are librarians. Librarians are constantly evolving along with new technology, and are studying new ways to incorporate it into the resources at their disposal. Hilburger, in collaboration with the Office of Online Learning, is creating a course on AI literacy for students to take in order to be well-informed on the proper uses of artificial intelligence.

This course is expected to be available in time for the upcoming spring semester.

Like social media, AI has the potential to be both dangerous and helpful.

With the innovation of new programs and the advancement of these internet resources, AI can both help and hurt you if you aren't careful and well-informed.

Is AI the future, or just a future failure?



Photo via Marketing and Communications



# SUNY Fredonia releases results of Campus Climate survey

**CHLOE KOWALYK**

Editor in Chief

SUNY Fredonia has officially released the results of the Sexual Violence Prevalence Campus Climate Survey Report.

This report was prepared by the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion here on campus.

The SVP Campus Climate Survey is administered to students and employees, and gauges their knowledge on Title IX, campus policies about sexual assault, how to report sexual assault and violence, the resources available on campus, the prevalence of sexual assault and domestic violence, bystanders and bystander attitudes, the amount of reports of sexual assault made to the University and reasons survivors and victims may not report, the differences between penal law and the University's policies and the awareness of affirmative consent.

This survey is administered every other year by all SUNY campuses. This means that SUNY Fredonia sent out its survey last March.

Those who received the survey had between March 20, 2023, and April 9, 2023, to fill it out. Results included those who were over the age of 18.

Out of the 3,189 students who were sent the survey last semester, only 271 completed the survey, indicating that this data is representative of only 8.5% of students on campus.

Out of this 8.5%, less than half of students indicated that they knew how to report an incident of sexual assault/violence, and 0% reported their incident of sexual assault to an on-campus resource.

A mere 14.8% made a formal complaint to the college.

The report states, "This is an opportunity for Fredonia to expand their education and advocacy work to let students know that resources are available to them and that they have multiple reporting resources who can assist them."

The Leader will be closely monitoring this to see if there are further means of educating students on campus about resources for those who are sexually assaulted, or for others to act as witnesses of sexual violence.

Although many students have received Title IX training as a part of new student orientation or as a result of being a campus club leader, these trainings target only specific groups of students.

The Leader will be waiting for the full student body to be offered events or programs to increase that knowledge of resources and how to report instances of sexual assault.

Of the 271 of students who responded, 46% reported unwanted sexual comments, sexual slurs or demeaning jokes.

A total of 8.4% had been forced into penetrative sex, and the same amount were forced into oral sex.

What would these numbers have looked like had more students responded?

Out of the 797 employees working at SUNY Fredonia at the time the survey was administered, 234 responded to the survey. This represents only 29.4% of faculty.

It is important to discuss the reported figures of those who

The SVP Campus Climate Survey is administered to students and employees, and gauges their knowledge on Title IX, campus policies about sexual assault, how to report sexual assault and violence, the resources available on campus, the prevalence of sexual assault and domestic violence, bystanders and bystander attitudes, the amount of reports of sexual assault made to the University and reasons survivors and victims may not report, the differences between penal law and the University's policies and the awareness of affirmative consent.

understand the concept of affirmative consent.

Affirmative consent means that explicit, informed consent must be given before engaging in a sexual act with someone.

85.4% of students were aware of this policy, along with 86.1% of faculty.

Although the report claims these are "high percentages," it is important to realize that this is about 40 students out of a very very small sample of respondents who do not understand that informed consent must be given before engaging in a sexual act.

Similarly, that faculty figure represents only about 29% of faculty, with at least around 33 of those faculty members not knowing what affirmative consent is.

All of the students who responded to this survey (100%) indicated that they understand that a person who is incapacitated cannot give consent.

However, faculty responses were not quite as high.

Only 96.8% of those 234 faculty responses were able to recognize that someone who is incapacitated is unable to provide consent.

That is about eight faculty members who do not realize that someone who is unconscious cannot provide consent.

These figures appear scary to many students, who attend classes almost entirely in-person now that the COVID-19 pandemic has mostly subsided.

Although student numbers for understanding affirmative consent are similar, for many, faculty act as trusted adults.

The lack of faculty knowledge of consent may be a factor of why 84.1% of staff members have reported that students have not disclosed to them whether or not they were a victim of sexual violence.

The Leader will be waiting to hear what exactly will be done to address these issues and lack of understanding of consent.

The data shows that a lot of work needs to be done to ensure SUNY Fredonia remains a safe place for students and other faculty members.

To hear a student voice on this matter, check out page 29.

# Results of the SVP Campus Climate Survey

**8.5%**

of students filled out  
the survey

**29.4%**

of faculty/staff filled  
out the survey

Approximately

**40**

students do not understand  
affirmative consent

Approximately

**8**

faculty/staff members do  
not recognize that an  
incapacitated person  
cannot give consent



# Life & Arts



Photo by HUNTER HALTERMAN | Staff Writer

## The 'Mom-ager' of Beach Tower

**HUNTER HALTERMAN**

Staff Writer

“You can’t underestimate the power of a local music scene,” says Connor Bessey-Nolan, manager of Beach Tower.

Fredonia’s music scene in particular is one that produces many different bands. The people behind those bands, though, often get overlooked.

Beach Tower, an indie/rock band of current and graduated Fredonia students, is one that many hold close to their hearts—and for good reason.

Beach Tower was formed in 2019 for Music Industry Club’s “Battle of the New Bands.”

Recently, Beach Tower has performed in large venues and opened for even larger bands. This past summer, they had the opportunity to perform alongside Culture Club in the Bethel Woods Center for the Arts in Bethel, NY—site of the 1969 Woodstock festival.

In the summer of 2022, Beach Tower performed alongside

Train at this same venue.

Throughout their success, it’s important to acknowledge everyone who helped it happen—most notably their manager, Bessey-Nolan.

Bessey-Nolan is a 2023 SUNY Fredonia graduate from Clinton, NY. He graduated with a bachelor’s of science in music industry.

He was always involved within the music scene, between going to shows, managing a band and serving as the music director for Fredonia Radio Systems from 2020-2021.

As music director, Bessey-Nolan was in charge of a team that actively listened to music sent to the station, organized it by genre and put it onto the airwaves.

Chris Sill, also a 2023 graduate, worked with Bessey-Nolan at this time by serving as the station manager. Sill looks back and enjoys the time that he spent with him.

Sill said, “even though it was the year we came back from the COVID shutdown, he always found a way to bring everyone’s spirits up.”



He also added that, “[Bessey-Nolan’s] passion for music is evident, even when meeting him for the first time.”

Relating it to Beach Tower, Bessey-Nolan was involved from the start.

“When they decided to form the band, they called me that night. So I think I can say I’m day-one Beach Tower,” Bessey-Nolan said.

When it comes to his responsibilities for the band, it’s a bit of a toss-up.

Cascio Fonseca, the lead singer of Beach Tower, says they “call Connor our ‘mom-ager’ for Beach Tower...He’s always making sure that we’ve got what we need when it comes to shows.”

Fonseca takes this one step further, saying, “He is always making sure that everyone’s okay.”

In addition to this, Bessey-Nolan also contacts venues and booking agents.

He said, “It’s pretty straightforward. You just kind of email them, tell them what you’re about, send them some links and be up front about when we can or can’t play. And it usually goes from there.”

The day of a show, Bessey-Nolan is in charge of getting the band to the venue on time with all the equipment, figuring out specific times and places to set everything up and getting the business aspect in order.

He said, “it’s just a lot of breaking down doors and saying ‘hey, what’s up, we’re Beach Tower.’”

Once the business is said and done for that night, though, it’s time to relax. “Once they’re on that stage and playing, it means I’ve done my job. And all that’s next is enjoying the music and loading out.”

Sometimes though, the manager isn’t entirely responsible for setting up shows. For Beach Tower, this was the case for their Bethel shows, where Bessey-Nolan said it was a bit of a team play. “Cascio works at Bethel Woods and they have this new artist program and we applied for it. And they enjoyed us.”

As for the second Bethel show, it wasn’t so rigid.

“They were like, we’re doing this program again and we genuinely all really like your music and want to have you back. [The staff] wear Beach Tower t-shirts welcoming people into the venue and it’s super cool,” said Bessey-Nolan.

This new artist program is a part of Bethel Woods’s “Emerg-

ing Artist Showcase,” featured on the Horizon Stage just beyond the main gates of the venue.

Eric Frances, CEO of Bethel Woods Center for the Arts, said on the Bethel Woods website, “not every performer at Woodstock was a household name in 1969... It’s in our DNA to support the next generation of artists, and what better way to get eyes and ears on talent than giving them a stage with thousands of people passing by.”

For Beach Tower, this sentiment is shared.

“I think it’s helped a lot in terms of exposing us to an audience that might not hear us otherwise. One part of that is we’re very closely associated with Western New York in general, which isn’t a bad thing but it’s sometimes hard to break out of that,” said Bessey-Nolan.

Overall, he feels as though these experiences with Beach Tower are a great learning opportunity for his passion within the music industry.

“I’ve learned a lot from classes which have kind of informed the process, but Beach Tower has been like learning as we go and it’s been incredibly helpful.”

Beach Tower was such an impactful part of Bessey-Nolan’s life that he attributes some of his success to them.

He does, however, mention another person completely unrelated.

“My brother has been a pretty big influence on being a good hypothetic[al] person trying to understand and work through things. He’s just a really smart guy.”

For now, Bessey-Nolan is taking some time after graduation to relax, but continues to work with Beach Tower for their shows.

And he has a dream gig in particular—sharing a stage with the band Beach House, an indie rock band from Baltimore, Maryland. It may not be for the reason you’d expect though.

Along with being a big fan of the band, he also shared that Beach Tower gets confused for Beach House often, because of the similar naming. “We were at Milkies, [Beach Tower] was on stage, and [one of the fans] was like ‘I thought you guys were Beach House for a second, I’m sorry I called you Beach House.’”

As for the dream venue, Bessey-Nolan hopes for Madison Square Garden in New York City.

“We’re taking it to the top, shooting for the stars,” he said.



Photo by HUNTER HALTERMAN | Staff Writer

# Cornflake Car:

## A student thriving in the music industry

**NYELA RENNIE**

Special to The Leader

Asia Toyryla is making waves in the national and international music scenes from the little Western New York town of Fredonia.

Toyryla is a student here at SUNY Fredonia. She is currently majoring in music industry and minoring in economics.

Her artist name is “Cornflake Car,” and with over 6,000 monthly listeners on Spotify, and a song titled “clueless” with over a half a million streams, Toyryla is not your average college student.

She stands out for having a great capacity to juggle her academic endeavors with her own independent career in the music business.

Toyryla entered the music industry at a young age of 14. She was exposed to a variety of genres and instruments throughout her childhood because she was born into a family of musicians.

She is heavily inspired by her father and brother who are both successful within the music industry.

Her father Michael is the singer and guitarist for the band Tijuana Danger Dogs. Her brother Keagan has over 30,000 monthly listeners on Spotify, and a single that has grossed almost three million streams titled “misbehaving.”

Her passion for music expanded as she experimented with different instruments, but it wasn't until she discovered her niche of songwriting that she realized her true calling.

She started singing at open mics and small venues in her area after her relatable lyrics and melodies immediately attracted the attention of friends and family.

When it was time to choose a college, Toyryla decided to pursue her passion for music by enrolling in SUNY Fredonia's renowned Music Industry program. This program, founded by Armand Petri, former producer of The Goo Goo Dolls, is known for its comprehensive curriculum and industry connections.

Overall, the program was the perfect fit for her aspirations.

Toyryla wanted not only to hone her musical skills, but also to gain a deep understanding of the business side of the music industry.

How Toyryla has been able to balance her academic work with her blossoming profession as an independent musician is one of her journey's most impressive features. This endeavor has been greatly aided by her lecturers and mentors at Fredonia.

Toyryla frequently mentions the encouraging environment at the university, as professors actively promote students' aspirations while also serving as lecturers and industry professionals.

Toyryla's coursework in the Music Industry degree covers a wide range of topics, including music marketing, copyright law and artist management.

Her capacity to apply these ideas to her own musical career distinguishes her from other musicians. For instance, she has utilized her marketing expertise to establish a strong and powerful presence, developing a dedicated fan base through social media and multiple streaming platforms. Toyryla seems to master the importance of branding and how it can influence an artist's success.

She has taken full advantage of the Music Industry major at SUNY Fredonia, while also being an active part of HAIL! Fredonia Records for two semesters.

Toyryla is currently an A&R (Artist and Repertoire) lead for a local band called Oscars Cash. Her dedication to her craft is evident in the professional quality of marketing and promotion of the band.

Toyryla has also been proactive in networking with fellow students and industry professionals.

She collaborates with classmates on music projects, creating a supportive and creative environment. Additionally, Toyryla frequently attends workshops and seminars organized by the university, where she learns from industry veterans and gains insights into the ever-evolving music business.

One of Toyryla's most notable achievements during her time at Fredonia is her ability to balance her academic commitments with a thriving music career.

She got the opportunity to perform at the Local Lo-Down's acoustic night last semester. As mentioned before, her singles have garnered thousands of streams on various platforms and even campus-wide.

Through dedication and hard work, Toyryla has successfully built a brand around her music, proving that she can apply what she learns in the classroom to the real world.

Toyryla is dedicated to giving back to the community in addition to her outstanding musical and academic achievements. Her music is a vehicle through which she frequently donates her time to play at neighborhood fundraising and charitable events.

The principles her family and her experience at Fredonia taught her are reflected in her dedication to using her talent for the benefit of society.

Toyryla dreams of an even brighter future as her academic career advances. Her goals for her music career include signing with a major record company, going on tour around the country and more. She intends to keep developing her music.

Toyryla has the knowledge and abilities necessary to successfully negotiate the difficulties of the music industry thanks to her experiences at Fredonia.

Toyryla's social media accounts are as follows:

Instagram: @asiatoyryla

Spotify: cornflakecar

YouTube: cornflake car



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Poster by ALEX SQUIER | Special to The Leader



# Battle of the New Bands brings another three acts into the music scene

**ELENA FITZGERALD**

Special to The Leader

The Music Industry Club is back at it with another Battle of the New Bands.

This event exists as a tradition that has brought many bands together that are now integral to the Buffalo music scene.

The event was planned mainly by Ahmani McKoy, events coordinator of the Music Industry Club (MIC). It featured three performances and multiple vendors that ranged from student artists to off-campus businesses.

The three performances included No Resolution, Mike Hogan and Chatterbox.

Putting together Battle of the New Bands is a semester-long process that starts with the mixer in October. The preparation continues with auditions in early November, which culminates in the show itself on Dec. 1.

There was an especially great interest for performers this year as there were initially six acts auditioning for Battle of the New Bands. When speaking to the President of MIC, Jasmine Torres, “that’s the most we’ve had in four years, so the fact that we [had] that many auditionees was fantastic.”

The setting up of the show itself in the Williams Center Multi-Purpose Room (MPR) proved to be a long process, with Sound Services and MIC starting in the early afternoon, and the event itself starting at 7:00 p.m. Even as the event was just starting, the MPR filled with students and supporters ready for the concert to begin.

First to perform was No Resolution, which included Bridget Brown as lead singer and guitarist, Kaiden Ruiz as lead guitarist, Ryan Tejada as the guitarist and keys player, Nick Boggio as the bassist, Nick Russo as the drummer, and Brodie Atkinson as the band’s manager.

Although it was challenging following their formation, No Resolution has really enjoyed working together during rehearsals for Battle of the New Bands. “The writing process was really tough at first,” said Ruiz, “but we pulled it together. It was just getting to know each other.”

No Resolution began with an instrumental song with melodic features throughout the group and a strong rhythmic part from the drums. Following this debut piece were originals like “The First One” and “1024,” carrying through their alternative rock sound.

Their performance of “1024” was recorded, and they are hoping for a release in the near future.

Mike Hogan was a solo act that performed second, something that has not been seen prior at Battle of the New Bands. Alongside him was Micah Doig as his manager.

When recounting the process of Battle of the New Bands, Hogan talked about how Doig convinced him to take the steps in auditioning.

“He’s actually responsible for me being here in the first place... If it wasn’t for him I wouldn’t even be sitting here right now.” In response, “It’s a true blessing to work with

Mike” said Doig.

Mike Hogan’s performance truly filled the space with his smooth voice and intricate guitar playing. With original songs like “Mind of Markus,” “The Blacktop” and “Psychonauts,” he was able to mix folk influences with complex and impactful lyrics.

Last in the lineup was Chatterbox, with lead singer and guitarist Isabella Mowers, guitarist Connor Rankin, bassist Marc Guilliod, drummer Kevin Stevens, and manager Suzy Scaccio.

Chatterbox is a multi-genre group, with clear influences of indie folk, country and jazz. These influences can be seen as Mowers and Stevens are both jazz studies majors that form Mowers’ and Rankin’s country duo, Two Peas in a Pod.

From the start, they were able to work together and the writing process went smoothly. Guilliod reflected on getting to the performance, “it’s a breath of fresh air to finally be able to do what we want in front of people and share our art.”

Chatterbox commanded the stage between the band members, and it was evident that they all loved being on stage. The began with a cover of “Scooby Doo,” and followed up with originals “Walk in the Park” and “Fast Lane.” Their songs featured catchy lyrics and complex rhythms in the instrumentals that worked together to make the group a whole.

With five minutes to vote after the last performance, the crowd moved over to cast their votes. Micah Doig won the prize of best manager and Chatterbox won Battle of the New Bands itself. It was also announced that the winner would be playing in Fredchella, an event for the Spring semester.

A congratulations is in order for everyone who participated, and it is exciting to see the new musicians impacting the music scene.



All photos by CHANDLER COTTER | Staff Photographer





# The Local Lo-Down's 'Beachfest' brings sunshine amidst cold weather

**ISABELLA INZINNA**  
Staff Writer

The weather might be cold and windy, but that didn't stop the Local Lo-Down from picking a beach theme for their last concert of the semester.

Nov. 11's Beachfest was the last concert of the Fall 2023 semester hosted by The Local Lo-Down.

Many students were puzzled by the beach theme, especially considering the chilly weather, but the hosts had an interesting explanation. Jordan Budd, the A&R lead, host and executive producer, and Elena Fitzgerald, the field interview lead, suggested that the beach theme was not the original idea.

Budd said, "We wanted to do a themed show, but we just weren't sure what to go with. We wound up booking some surf rock and surf pop bands before the theme was decided."

Fitzgerald added, "The booking aspect really gave us the beach theme."

The final lineup was as follows: Fruitfly, Starjuice, Beach Tower, Johnny & The Man Kids and The Burkharts.

It's safe to say that the crowd wasn't disappointed with the theme regardless.

The bands were very interactive with the crowd, which seemed to be a good attention grabber. The first set even had the crowd on the floor, listening to the first song like a storytime.

Aside from the bands, there were also vendors in the basement of Mainstreet Studios, where the concert took place. The basement, usually only used for bathrooms, had open doors that night. With a bit of redecorating, there were SUNY Fredonia artists selling items such as art and jewelry.

Fredonia Radio Systems (FRS) was also selling CDs throughout the night.

Another fun feature of this concert was the photo booth setup. There was an ocean view with the words "The Local Lo-Down" projected onto a white sheet. Available props included beach chairs, pool noodles and a photo frame so attendees could take pictures.

One of the funniest features of the show had to be the beach balls. Two beach balls were tossed around the crowd, and many attendees got a good laugh just seeing one of the beach balls hit a performer's head.

Aside from the crowd, the bands seemed to enjoy the beach ball. At least some of them did.

The lead singer of Johnny & The Man Kids, John Marciniak, said, "Hey guys, I don't know if I'll be able to but I'll try to hit the ball back. I love this thing; it's been so fun."

If you don't know, the Local Lo-Down is one of FRS' legacy shows. The show first started up in 2013 as a showcase of artists based in Western New York. This is FRS' only show with a video component.

If you want to learn more about the Local Lo-Down, you can visit [fredoniaradio.com](http://fredoniaradio.com) which also has links to the YouTube playlist.

After the Johnny & The Mankids set, The Burkharts closed out the night.

However, even with their set over, the Mankids were not done performing. The Burkharts invited the band up quite a few times to join in on certain songs.

With such positive feedback, it's safe to say that the audience is hoping for more themed shows in the future.



All photos by ISABELLA INZINNA | Staff Writer





# Fredonia Alumnus Spotlight: 'The Merch Gremlin'

**DOMINICK CORSI**

Staff Writer

Friendly, passionate, enthusiastic, inspirational, silly.

The list goes on.

These are just a few characteristics that Alex Erwin's collaborators and friends would use to describe the former Fredonia Radio Systems personality.

Erwin's legacy at Fredonia Radio Systems is well-versed through his involvement in a plethora of shows, support of local artists and positive impact on the culture at Fredonia.

After three days of being a theatrical design major, Erwin made the switch to audio production and discovered his passion for music, radio and all things audio.

"What I liked about theatrical design was all the tech stuff and equipment. Using lights and sound things was cool," Erwin said. "I knew as soon as I came to Fredonia that I wanted to be a part of a club and FRS hit all the bills. I love audio; I love music; I love podcasts."

While the behind the scenes aspect of Fredonia Radio Systems is interesting enough to want to join the club, being an on-air personality and contributor is something Erwin was able to do so naturally.

"I love getting into the nitty gritty of editing and producing, but I also love to spit silly on-air," said Erwin. "If I had to choose to do one for the rest of my life, I'd probably do the behind-the-scenes work, even though I love spitting silly. That's a real tough question."

The natural conversion to a contributor (and eventually a staple) for Fredonia Radio Systems is evident in the number of long-running shows he hosted or worked on.

Erwin eventually assumed the role of Station Manager, a remarkable reward for his consistency at Fredonia Radio Systems.

"Just the Facts" is Erwin's longest-running show, running for about two years.

The show's origin is a perfect representation of how easy and rewarding it is to get involved at Fredonia Radio Systems.

Erwin's most common collaborators, Chloe Kowalyk and Hunter Halterman, were Erwin's co-hosts for a 5-10 minute long casual talk show where the three hosts shared interesting and unique facts about a specific topic.

Kowalyk mentioned that the show was a great way to decompress from the stresses of being a college student.

Halterman remembers the iconic moment that the trio conceptualized "Just the Facts".

"Chloe, he and I were sitting in his common room of Hemingway and [Erwin] pitched the idea of starting a High Noon Friday segment. We sat there throwing out ideas; originally we were going to do a segment about video games," Halterman said. "I threw out some loose idea about discussing random obscure facts, and Alex was instantly on board. We started talking about the name, and Alex threw out 'Just the Facts.' Two years later, us three created over 50 episodes and had so many adventures together."

"Just the Facts" is worth the listen for a taste of on-campus ban-

ter and is still available on the Fredonia Radio Youtube channel.

Erwin's work ethic and clear intention to take Fredonia Radio Systems to the next level were noticed and appreciated by friends and peers.

"He was always the first person to walk into the radio station and the last one to leave. He started the archival project, which helped digitize and preserve our old reel-to-reels and other old content," Kowalyk said. "He also began posting frequently on our YouTube page, which helped get student voices and shows more exposure. Alex's dedication to the station was unmatched."

Erwin's commitment to providing the highest quality content for the audience and providing the best resources for contributors at the campus station is captivating.

"His dedication to music was also shown through the relaunch of The Local Lo-Down, a podcast at FRS that interviews local artists and has them perform live sets on air," Kowalyk said. "Alex was integral to relaunching The Local Lo-Down, along with alum Mel Fajardo and current student Jordan Budd. He also introduced a video component to the show."

The Local Lo-Down is still running with Budd and Erin Wagner as hosts, and Sebastian Spisak and Elena Fitzgerald as producers/leads.

Erwin's love for music, live performances and merchandise influenced his most recent project, Merch Gremlin Records.

Merch Gremlin is a continuation of Erwin's philosophy he followed at FRS.

Local artists deserve recognition for their contributions to the music scene in any way they can get it.

Erwin started Merch Gremlin to help different artists build their platform and gain more of a following.

The idea of Merch Gremlin came from Erwin's self-proclaimed obsession with the merch that different bands would have available during their time on the Local Lo-Down.

"Jordan would call me the 'Merch Gremlin' because I would always ask the band what merch they had. So I kind of took that name and started Merch Gremlin Records," Erwin said.

Merch Gremlin Records was made to repurpose and produce cassettes, while also collecting different types of merch from the Fredonia and Long Island music scenes.

"All bands should be able to have their songs in physical form. There's nothing cooler than holding a piece of music in your hand," Erwin said.

It's widely known that the streaming era of music is upon us, but there are also many downsides to the commercialization and digitalization of music.

"Smaller artists are not represented enough, especially when it comes to physical media. It's very unfortunate. Artists don't get paid that much from venues themselves," Erwin said. "They make most of their money to complete their projects through merch. I wanted to highlight their merch to kind of help them continue doing what they love; making music. So I thought why not continue that passion?"

Erwin has carved out a reputation of being an ally to artists around Fredonia, even going out of his way to provide exposure for local artists and content for Fredonia Radio Systems.



“Alex has done so much for the radio station that he would even interview artists at shows he went to during breaks or summer vacation,” Kowalyk said.

It’s only right that the Merch Gremlin has its own line of merch as well.

Accessories, stickers and more have been created in the Merch Gremlin name.

Erwin stressed that his involvement with FRS isn’t exclusive to just him, audio production majors or other majors.

“It’s super important to get experience by getting involved as much as you can. You’re not gonna find success if you just stick to the coursework, and that’s it. The thing about getting involved with some of the student media is it’s also a ton of fun,” Erwin said. “There’s events all the time. [At FRS,] there’s always people in the station, either planning shows, playing Super Smash Bros or doing schoolwork.”

Fredonia Radio Systems thrives by giving students creative freedom and the experience of being in a functioning station.

“I definitely think that Alex, Hunter, and I’s involvement with FRS really made a significant impact in our academic careers,” said Kowalyk. “Getting to have hands-on experience with audio equipment helped us learn the skills we need for our future

careers or future projects in general.”

Since graduating in the spring, Erwin hasn’t left Fredonia behind, and has stayed in touch with his friends and trying to stay involved from afar, in his home area of Long Island.

He even attended Rockin’ the Commons in September, and even ran a stand for Merch Gremlin Records.

Now, he is hosting a show on WCVF 88.9 through Fredonia Radio, which he pre-records and edits to be broadcasted on air.

His impact on Fredonia Radio Systems goes far beyond contributing to a few shows or working behind the scenes.

Erwin’s positive and welcoming attitude is reflected in the station itself.

Halterman, current Fredonia Radio Systems general manager, has continued to keep the station thriving and credits Erwin for his growth in involvement with it.

“Honestly, I’m not sure if I would’ve ended up in the general manager position today if it weren’t for Alex pitching the possibility of a High Noon Friday segment,” said Halterman. “Because of that segment, my involvement in the radio station grew, from High Noon Friday segment to High Noon Friday producer, to production director, to general manager. And I owe it all to that silly Alex Erwin.”



Photo by DOMINICK CORSI | Staff Writer



# Culture Fest gallery



All photos by ALEXANDRA GILES | Asst. Photo Editor







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Asst. Design Editor**



# The Horse on Central Ave.

**MITCHELL HORUCY**

Asst. Sports Editor

When creating sculptures in 1992 for a Boston, M.A. sculpture show, Marcia Belliotti had no idea one of her creations would lead to almost 30 years of local fame.

Belliotti, a resident of Fredonia, crafted a total of 15 sculptures for a sculpture show she was attending, one of which was a life-sized model of a horse. The horse is brown and is made out of chicken wire and fiberglass.

After returning from the show, she was able to get all of her sculptures through the door except one, the horse she had made. Without a plan on what to do with the horse, Belliotti left it on their porch without a second thought.

Soon after the horse made its debut on the porch of the Belliotti household, it quickly became a can't-miss novelty on Central Ave.

Belliotti had this to say on the horse and its rise to fame, "We had people honking, coming up to me and my husband to talk about it. We decided to leave it up."

The horse has not had an easy life, however. Early on, people tried to vandalize it, or even take it.

In response to people doing things of this sort, it's now epoxied to the ground and locked up to the house to prevent anyone from pulling off a heist.

When FredFest was at its peak, the horse was a popular "toy" for partiers to attempt to climb and ride. To combat this, it was covered with a ton of Vaseline so that anyone who tried to get on top of the sculpture would slip off.

Over the years, it has become a frequently used stop in scav-

enger hunts done by clubs and greek life at Fredonia. Her first interaction with the horse being a stop on scavenger hunts was a couple of years after the horse debuted.

"I heard the doorbell ring and opened the door to the men's rugby team," said Belliotti. "They were very respectful and asked for a picture with the horse, which was interesting." She said ever since then it's been a bit hit amongst scavenger hunts.

A shrub has grown in front of the horse making it a bit more difficult to see it at first glance which has made the famous project take a dip in popularity amongst Fredonia residents and students.

Emma Horucy, a graduate of SUNY Fredonia, happened to live a few houses from the horse for two years. She also noticed it one of the first times she arrived at Fredonia during her freshman year.

"It always brought me a little bit of joy as I walked past it on my way to campus," said Horucy. "Whenever I had friends visiting, it always caught their eye."

The horse house isn't the only house on Central Ave. with some fame in the Fredonia area. Writer Mark Twain also lived on the road during his short stay in the village.

About a quarter mile down the road, Twain completed his two-year stay at 36 Central Ave.

After lecturing at Fredonia's Normal School Chapel, now One Temple Square, he fell in love with the place. It was noted that he enjoyed the area's "intelligent and attractive" audience.

However, his time here was short-lived. He made several bad investments and suffered some unfortunate experiences in his personal life that led him to leave.



Photo by MITCHELL HORUCY | Asst. Sports Editor





Art by @ostrichmower | Special to The Leader



# SPORTS

## From Overseas to Fredonia: Why do players 'cross the pond?'

**MITHCELL HORUCY**

Asst. Sports Editor

For many Fredonia students, coming to school doesn't even require crossing a state line. However, in the case of Alon Haimovitz and Peter Buerfent, they both had to cross the Atlantic Ocean to find their way to Fredonia.

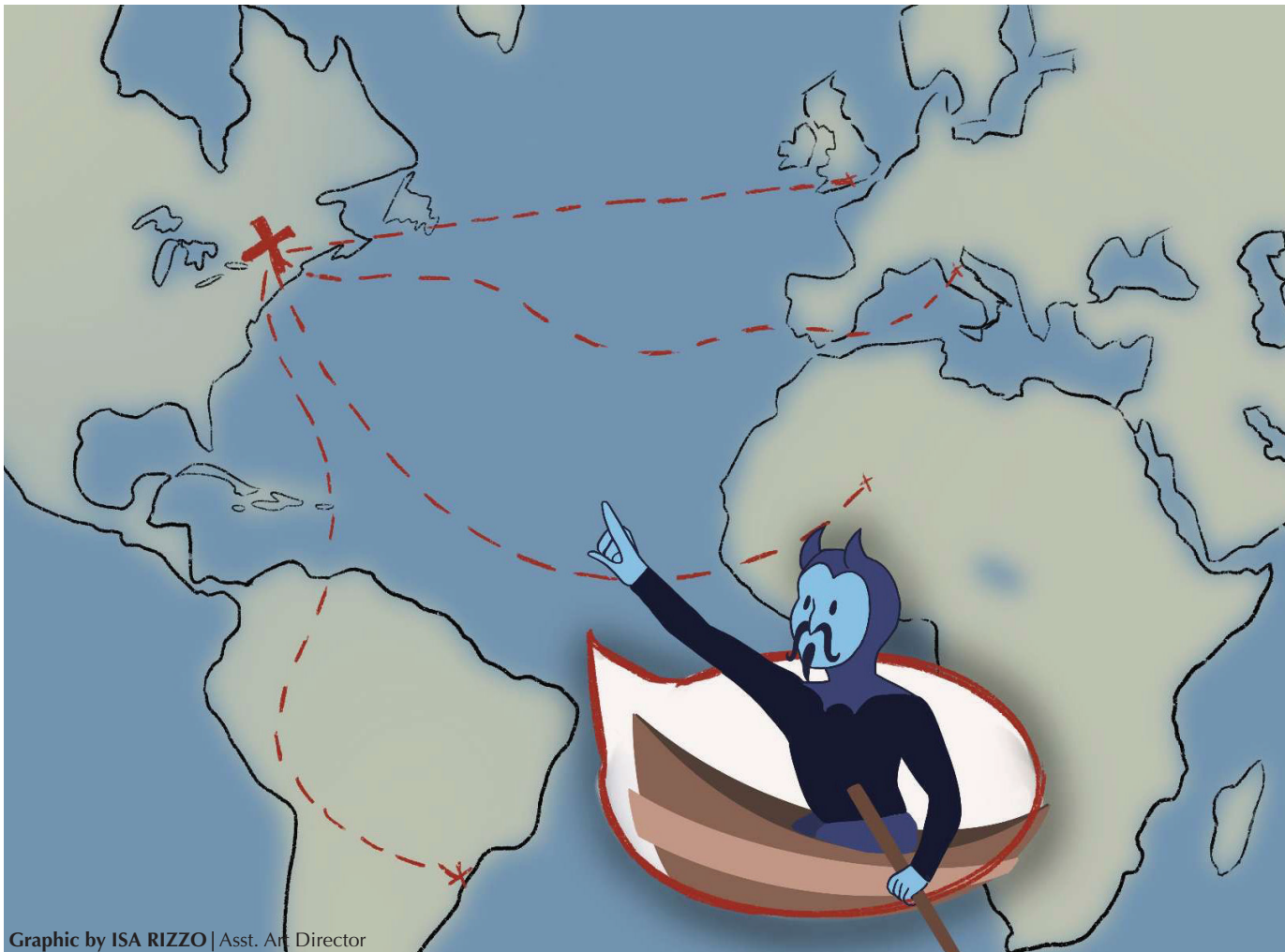
Alon Haimovitz, a senior on the men's basketball team, is from the city of Herzliya, Israel.

Peter Buerfent is just beginning his Fredonia journey as a freshman on the men's hockey team. He's from Cologne, Germany, home of the world-famous Cologne Cathedral.

When asked about the differences between their hometowns and Fredonia, both said it's almost a different world.

"I'm not really proud of it, because it's not really representing me, but our twin city is Beverly Hills," Haimovitz said of his hometown.

The city lies on the eastern Mediterranean coast with the coldest temperatures being just 50 degrees during January.



Graphic by ISA RIZZO | Asst. Art Director

Buerfent echoed this sentiment, saying that his move has “been a change,” and one of the biggest adjustments is the lack of public transportation. He mentioned that back in Germany, he was able to take the metro everywhere.

Playing a sport at an American university was never originally in the script for either Haimovitz or Buerfent.

Neither one of them ever considered it being a possibility until about a year prior to their arrival to Fredonia.

In Haimovitz's case, he was playing professionally in Israel until the COVID-19 outbreak happened, which led to the termination of his contract.

At the time, his agent knew Coach Smiley and told him, “There’s going to be a phone call, just be ready.”

After about a 20-minute talk with Smiley, he made up his mind and decided that he wanted to come to Fredonia.

For Buerfent, his journey here was not as simple as Haimovitz's.

In Germany, after finishing your u20 (under age 20) season, you have to turn professional. However, if you aren't a top player, it's difficult to develop and improve as a young player.

He began to reach out to different Division III hockey programs. Head Coach Jeff Meredith showed interest in Buerfent and the rest is history.

Both Haimovitz and Buerfent mentioned that one of the main reasons they decided to make the journey here was opportunity.

“I get to study during my time [here], where in Germany I would have had to decide between hockey and education,”

Buerfent said.

While there may be benefits to traveling overseas for school, there's also some downsides.

One of the biggest that they both mentioned was not being able to see their families or go home for breaks, apart from the major breaks between semesters.

Haimovitz, however, said that he only gets to go home during the summer months from the end of the Spring semester until the start of the Fall semester.

He stays at school for all the breaks including Thanksgiving and winter break.

Buerfent said that luckily, he is going to be home for Christmas, but will have to be back on campus on Jan. 2.

Like some people, they didn't know a ton about Fredonia before coming here. Both were able to visit the campus before officially coming to school, but other than that, they had very little knowledge of the area and Western New York as a whole.

“The one thing I knew is that there's an iconic clock tower next to Thompson [Hall],” said Haimovitz.

Buerfent and the men's hockey team will end the semester with back-to-back home games on Dec. 8 vs Potsdam, and Dec. 9 vs Plattsburgh.

The men's basketball team doesn't have a home game the rest of this semester, but they open up the Spring semester at home against SUNYAC rival Brockport on Jan. 23 at 5:30 p.m.

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# 'Big Blue Sports Podcast' airs on WCVF 88.9 through Fredonia Radio

**MATT VOLZ**  
Sports Editor

Make sure to tune in to “Big Blue Sports Podcast” on WCVF every Wednesday at 11 a.m.!

Each week, I'll provide updates on our Fredonia sports teams, the Bills and Sabres, and any other pressing sports stories.

In the previous episode, I talked about how the Bills season has gone south in light of their loss to the Eagles, but there still may be sports-related hope with recent success from Fredonia teams and the Sabres.

Wednesday, Dec. 6 marks the final episode of the semester, and keeping with “Big Blue” tradition, I will be ranking my top 10 favorite sports moments of Fall 2023!

“Big Blue Sports Podcast” airs live on WCVF 88.9 FM in Dunkirk and Fredonia, and it is streamed worldwide on [fredoniaradio.com](http://fredoniaradio.com).

In addition, past episodes of Big Blue Sports Podcast can be found on Fredonia Radio's YouTube channel, @Fredonia Radio, in a playlist titled "Big Blue Sports Podcast."



ALINA MARSH | Staff Artist



# The winter 'break' isn't much of a break for student athletes

**MATT VOLZ**  
Sports Editor

As the fall semester comes to a close, many students are preparing to pack up and head home for the month-long break.

However, while most people are enjoying their time off, some Fredonia sports teams will be back on campus, carrying on games and practices as usual.

The men's and women's basketball teams will be returning to Fredonia shortly after the calendar shifts to 2024, as will the hockey team.

"Sometimes, it's weird when no one is on campus," said hockey Captain Kurri Woodford, a senior business major.

"You walk into Starbucks or Cranston when it's open, and there's no line."

According to Renee Park, a senior exercise major on the women's basketball team, "For the people who live in the dorms, they very possibly are the only ones in their dorm, and that's just creepy."

Despite what might be an eerie feeling of an empty campus, the routine of practices and games doesn't change.

The hockey team has practice at 3:30 p.m. every day, with additional workouts sprinkled in. "Our coach probably doesn't want us to sit around the house all day," Woodford said.

Their games will remain on Friday and Saturday nights, with the exception of a game at Brockport on Tuesday, Jan. 9—their first game back from break.

The men's and women's basketball teams will be playing three games a week, taking to the court every Tuesday, Friday and Saturday. Both squads will return to action on Friday, Jan. 5 in Plattsburgh.

Starting with this game against Plattsburgh, both teams will be playing exclusively SUNYAC opponents for the rest of the season.

In conference games, home-court or home-ice advantage can make all the difference. With non-athlete students gone, some of that advantage will be missing.

"It's a lot different to play in front of," said Park.

She added that many of the players' parents who live close enough to Fredonia will come to watch the games, and the other teams on campus will pack the stands if they aren't playing at the same time.

The hockey team, due to the nature of their schedule, won't have to worry too much about empty seats. At worst, they will only be playing two home games without other students on campus. Those games will take place on Friday, Jan. 19, and Saturday, Jan. 20—the weekend that students return.

"A couple of games at home, we can stand without fans," Woodford said. "But when people start coming back to campus, it lightens the mood of everything and brings campus back to life."

With the rest of the student body still on break and no classes to keep them occupied, it would be understandable if some of the athletes became bored or lonely. However, both Park and

Woodford said that their respective teams have found a way to combat that.

Last season, the women's basketball coaches put together a scavenger hunt through Dods Hall and Steele Hall one afternoon, and Park recalled the event as one of her favorite memories as a member of the team.

She said that the team enjoys spending time together as a group, and they'll often spend time at each other's houses during those few weeks.

According to Woodford, the hockey team likes to make a habit of doing lots of things together as one big group, whether it be holding team dinners or hopping on video games after practice. He believes that the time spent together is key to creating a tight-knit team culture.

"It's a great team building exercise, and no one really knows it because, like, you're just doing the same routine every day but you're doing it as a team and as a group to build that camaraderie for the season," he said.

Park also believes that the effort their team has poured into crafting a good locker room culture has helped them to achieve the success they've found so far this season.

"It's really hard to have success ... when you don't have a good culture. We've worked really hard at building that up this year," she said. "I think having all last year and then having basically the same group back this year has really helped that because we're all friends already and ... we want successes for our teammates just as much as we want them for ourselves."



It's really hard to have success ... when you don't have a good culture. We've worked really hard at building that up this year. I think having all last year and then having basically the same group back this year has really helped that because we're all friends already and ... we want successes for our teammates just as much as we want them for ourselves."

**—RENEE PARK**

Senior Exercise Major,  
SUNY Fredonia



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# Fredonia athletes 'tryout' team collabs

**PARKER GURNETT**

Staff Writer

When it comes to the Fredonia campus, it almost feels like home.

The small and quaint campus helps you feel comfortable and connected to fellow students. The same could be said about Fredonia sports.

Being a small Division III program on a little campus keeps many of the teams close-knit and connected. For this issue, we will be taking a dive into what being a part of the Women's Basketball team means to its athletes, as well as how their relationship grows as a team at Fredonia.

When you think of a sports team, the term "family" typically comes to mind. That is exactly what the culture is like within the team.

The team supports each other just like any family would, and it helps the team greatly.

A common occurrence here at Fredonia is seeing full sport teams supporting other Fredonia teams at their home games. The teams do this for a variety of reasons.

"We want to support other teams in hopes that they will also support us when the time comes," said Allie Wandell, a junior forward from Newark Valley, N.Y.

Wandell also mentioned that, "We love going to the men's basketball games and starting chants in the crowds and doing celebrations together. It makes our team closer and it shows school pride."

Teams support one another to also gain points for the "Devil-4-Devil initiative" according to women's basketball Head Coach Sarah Cartmill. The Student Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC) is composed of representatives from each team. The Devil-4-Devil initiative, "gives points to teams who attend their fellow Blue Devil home contests, which go towards an overall Blue Devil's Cup award at the end of the school year,"

said Cartmill.

Sometimes, the men's and women's teams travel together, which is great for bonding. "Traveling with the men's team is great. I would say we are closest to them out of all other full teams on campus," said Wandell.

Wandell continued, "Traveling with one another makes us closer because we are at each other's games supporting. Both of our teams have great personalities, so we're hoping they will join in on our bus karaoke this year."

This time together helps build a strong relationship within the teams and corresponds to on-the-court support as well.

Typically, when you go to an athletic event on campus, you will see a wide variety of team coaches helping with other team's games. This is because a number of head coaches have responsibilities to be the Administrator on Duty (AOD) for home contests and will help with staffing the game and organizing the staff and game-day operations, according to Coach Cartmill.

This is typical for many Division III schools.

However, many athletes also work for the school with jobs like "Ball person, stats keeping [and] running the scoreboard," said Cartmill. This helps the team because typically athletes will cheer while working.

"I also think we are trying to make a difference as athletes at Fredonia because the past couple of years, a lot of our teams have experienced loss. This year, out of all the years I've been here, athletes are really contributing to support one another," said Wandell.

Fredonia has been on the wrong side of the win column in years past, but many athletes are supporting each other more than ever and are therefore helping the sports culture be great at Fredonia, regardless of teams' records.

Positive sports culture is the key to a successful sports team and the student athletes of the Fredonia State Blue Devils seem to be doing all they can to create this positive culture.

The opinions voiced by writers and artists in the Opinion section of The Leader reflect those individuals' opinions, not those of The Leader as a whole.

# OPINION

Only stories clearly marked as Editorials reflect the opinion of The Leader's executive staff.

## Survey results feel successful to administrators, leave students feeling less than secure

**MARISSA BURR**  
Opinion Editor

*Trigger Warning: sexual violence, brief descriptions of assault.*

The results are in, and they aren't stellar.

In March 2023, the campus began administering an online survey in order to gain information about the student and staff community's knowledge about topics surrounding sexual assault, the Title IX Coordinator and consent.

Participants were asked many questions, but the statistic that stood out to me was that 42.9% reported that the person who victimized them was affiliated with the campus community.

As a transfer student in my first semester at Fredonia, this was concerning.

As a survivor of sexual assault, this was terrifying.

In 2021, while living in an off-campus apartment in Buffalo, I was assaulted by my roommate who was a recent graduate of Canisius University (College, at the time).

He was a successful cross-country runner and a future high school health and physical education teacher. This man was quite well-known throughout our small college, so despite the fact that he had graduated, I was terrified I would encounter him on-campus and he could hurt me again.

It disrupted the following three semesters and ultimately led to transferring back to my hometown college just so I wouldn't be forced to look over my shoulder everywhere I went. So, I know how hard it is to have the perpetrator be a part of the place you're supposed to feel comfortable.

The fact that almost half of the students surveyed—which can be extrapolated into a large percentage of the campus population as a whole—share this feeling with me is nauseating.

I'm aware that sexual assaults can occur anywhere, and statistics show that no university is immune, but that doesn't make me feel better about the results released in this survey.

If you look at the SUNY Fredonia website ([fredonia.edu](http://fredonia.edu)) where they list these results, they have not pulled out statistics concerning the amount of students and staff that have been harassed or assaulted. You actually have to download the form and scroll through sixteen pages to get the full picture.



Photo by DREW PALUCH | Photo Editor

Continued onto next page



It states that the students are “generally aware” of the definition of affirmative consent.

But what the hell does that mean?

Everyone knows the definition of murder, but that doesn't mean people still don't kill others. Just because the students know what affirmative consent means doesn't mean they won't assault someone.

My own assaulter, if given this survey, would probably check the box saying he understood what consent was, but his actions showed a lack of caring.

He was a “stand-up” member of the community and anyone you asked would've never believed that he was capable of sexually assaulting his roommate who was four years younger than him.

He worked with kids in a youth sports program, had another part time job at weddings and was in the school newspaper representing Canisius many times for his accomplishments as a runner. Yet, this is the same man who choked me until I couldn't breathe and caused permanent damage to my body.

The results Fredonia should be looking at are the number of students who have suffered sexual violence, not how many could mark on the computer that they understood that assaulting someone was wrong.

Let's look at their word choice. To them, “generally aware” translates to 85.4% of the surveyed population. I don't know if that's necessarily something to be proud of. Especially when looking at the fact that 100% of students recognized that someone who is incapacitated is unable to consent, but only 96.8% of faculty and staff did. Even though recognizing it and actually refraining from taking advantage of someone being unable to consent are two different things, it's severely concerning that 3.2% of the faculty and staff would not think that someone who is incapacitated would be unable to consent.

Growing up in the United States as a woman, I always feared adults more than my peers when it came to the possibility of being assaulted.

Since my own assault happened when I was 18, I'd only just begun to realize that adults were now my peers. I will cross streets, carry pepper spray or keys between my fingers and have an escape plan anytime I am alone in public out of fear.

These fears aren't unfounded. According to the Rape Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN), 13% of undergraduate and graduate students are assaulted.

The campus climate survey separated the types of assault into specific categories, and none of the results were close enough to zero for my taste. Here are three of the most concerning numbers:

17.3% - have been fondled, kissed, or rubbed in private areas without giving consent.

8.4% - have received or been forced to perform oral sex without giving consent.

8.4% - have been sexually penetrated without giving consent.

So what is the campus feeling? Well, they're certainly proud

of themselves, at least that's what their language conveys. Towards the end of the survey results, there's a section entitled “Discussion and Next Steps,” where aspects of the data are separated into successes and challenges.

One of the challenges listed is “high instances of sexual harassment identified.” The first sentence in its explanation is that, “Overall, there are low incidents of sexual violence reported by students, faculty and staff at Fredonia.”

### Key word: reported.

As proven by the survey, 0% of the students surveyed reported an incident to on-campus resources. National reporting rates according to RAINN show that 32% of non-student females report, but only 20% of student females reported in comparison.

Yes, a lot of things keep people from reporting sexual violence, but if the national average for one sex is 20% and SUNY Fredonia's numbers across all sexes is 0% for those surveyed, that should be seen as more than a challenge. That is a failure.

Our campus knew what it was doing by omitting that word from their results. If 42.9% of your community listed that they were victimized by a person in the campus community, but none actually reported it to the campus, then changes need to be made immediately.

Don't hide behind a word that makes you look better. You'll show off your successes, so admit your failures.

Our community's safety should be your priority. I am scared to walk on campus alone because a lot of the time I don't feel safe walking in the evening hours.

Writing for The Leader means I have late-night meetings and office hours and I could be leaving after 9 p.m. sometimes. There aren't enough lights near the Williams Center or the parking lot by Steele Hall where I'm often forced to park, far away from the secure buildings. A recent photoshoot at Igoe Hall had me traveling around in pitch-blackness at 6 p.m. with nothing but my phone's flashlight to guide my way.

I've also been on-campus for almost an entire semester and haven't seen a single University Police officer in the buildings, only in their cars.

Having staff attend mandatory training and hanging posters informing students about Title IX resources is only helpful in the aftermath. What is actively being done to prevent sexual violence from happening so often?

I suggest a heavier law enforcement presence in the buildings and on the paths we walk on, especially this time of year.

Not only is the sun setting earlier, making it so it's dark before some leave class or meetings, RAINN reports that more than 50% of college assaults happen between the beginning of August to the end of November.

Complaints made by students or staff also need to be taken seriously no matter the degree to which someone has harmed or threatened them.

If anyone on campus is brave enough to express concern, there should be immediate action taken such as walking them to classes or changing classes or housing.

If the school shows students that they care about what they're

worried about, more reports might come in when something bad does happen. It will also build a level of trust and security that an online survey never could.

What else can the campus change? There is so much that is able to be done just to promote awareness about consent, the Title IX office, other resources on campus, dating violence and assault.

It can be as easy as making informative posters. If they were created and listed the contact information for different organizations on campus, that could help those who have been victimized know who to talk to. Hang these posters on every stall door in the bathrooms around campus (mens, womens and all-genders) and possibly have tearaway phone numbers.

Campus can also hold events all throughout the year, not just in April during sexual assault awareness month. Calendars are available and planning committees can target dates that pose the most risk to students.

This can include orientation week when a lot of people are new on campus and can be overwhelmed by the crowds and unfamiliar opportunities.

Within my first week of being in college I had broken boundaries I had set for the last 17 years because it was all so new and I had so much freedom.

Reminding students they don't have to do anything they're uncomfortable with could be really helpful and help improve the new-student experience.

Other events could include sorority and fraternity recruitment times, if there's a bar crawl in town or large party weekends in the town.

Halloween is also such an important time to be reminding the campus community about consent because of the costumes, possible large amounts of inebriated people and going out after dark.

I saw nothing this year outside of friend's Facebook pages about having affirmative consent and not taking advantage of people, and you would think that following the results of this survey, Fredonia's administration would be more worried about it.

### **I am pleading with them to do better in the future.**

Working with the communications department would also be a wise move. The Fredonia Radio Station has a show called "Lovecall" where they discuss different things about relationships.

Title IX, ANEW Center or the PAWS coordinator—all of whom were cited as resources within the campus climate survey—could work with them and do a special on unhealthy relationships and support if you've experienced trauma within one.

Our publication, *The Leader*, is also always accepting stories for the five sections from writers who are interested in something as simple as a topic or event that should be highlighted for students.

Student media is just that—for the students. The word can get out quickly through social media, the internet and so many other avenues.

Those who experience the horrible things measured in this

survey may never recover. Not all will be brave enough to come back to a college campus after and continue their education—I almost didn't.

A university not protecting its students is to blame when they don't come back.

The initial fault is on the perpetrator, but anyone who cannot provide adequate support in ensuring their safety should also be held accountable.

I'm a third-year student who is from the community but only recently started attending Fredonia, yet I already see so much room for improvement.

I feel called to action due to the results of a survey that I wasn't even eligible to take! This campus's survival relies on students' continued desire to attend.

If I had one thing to say to every resource for students on campus, it would be to make yourself more visible. Students are going to be less likely to seek you out if they aren't familiar with you. Become a face they can trust, and make our campus community better.

To my fellow survivors of sexual violence on this campus: You are strong and you have survived. These results may be terrifying, and you may even be questioning if it's right for you to continue on this campus.

Do what you need to do to feel safe, and don't let anyone pressure you to make a decision one way or another.

Let me tell you, I started and stopped three semesters in a row, and my family, friends and school all thought I should just give up and go on without a degree.

Their acceptance of this drastic change of my life at someone else's hands infuriated me, and I took it as a challenge. I went back to school and took a one-credit course and worked on the newspaper at Canisius.

There I found my voice and a support system so strong it started to pull me back together. It was so hard to leave them, so hard to leave the school I'd fallen in love with, and I hate the man who assaulted me for many reasons but forcing me to feel uncomfortable at that college enough to leave makes me see red.

I will never get back what he took from me, but I sure as hell can control the amount that he disrupts of the rest of my life.

You can do the same.

These results show that you are not alone in this, as horrible as that is. I hope that no one ever has to experience what I did, which is why I'm using my voice.

It wasn't loud enough the night it really mattered, but I'm on a mission to make sure that never happens again.

Keep going, whenever you're ready, for you.

You're stronger than them, and they don't own you. No survey will ever be able to measure your strength to push through and continue on.

The following code will bring you to the survey results.





# Poetry by Anna Smith

## To Those for Whom I Am Enough:

Thank you for listening  
when no one else will.

I try my best,  
genuinely,  
to laugh and play along  
with everyone else,  
to blend with the status quo seamlessly  
when others don't even need to try.

But even when I try,  
I can see the look  
on someone's face  
when I blurt out  
A nonsensical one-liner  
or an "Anna" joke  
and it barely even registers  
because they subconsciously see  
that I'm not  
like them.

Even so,  
I still  
lower my voice when asked,  
sweeten my voice when expected,  
deepen my voice  
when needed.

In some ways,  
this is what it is  
to be "me."

But to those rare few  
to whom I give the key  
into the unwavering parts of Me

They see that I am not so quick to change:  
Never so quick to addle  
Never so quick to subdue  
Never so quick to want to entertain—

I simply am a sitting frog stuck to a calm, floating rock.

And to some,  
that is boring.  
But  
to those who actually listen, and get me,  
that is enough.

So too is it  
enough for me.

## The Luxury of Knowing:

There is a certain strength in knowing  
that things will never be the same.

You see,  
there was a time  
when I was a  
"sweet summer child,"  
yet unscathed by injustices dealt to me over the years  
and having to face the many, many imperfections of my own  
character.

There was also a time  
when I mourned the loss  
of this uncut, untarnished and unaligned  
version of myself.

But I am now 22,  
and to retain  
that innocence  
would be to undo  
how I've gotten here.

You and I are fallen creatures  
taking residence on a rugged crater  
that bears an uncertain tomorrow for us  
a tomorrow that is sometimes unpromised,  
and sometimes unbearable.

But such is the way of being:  
Things can be broken.  
Things can be ugly.  
Things can be unfair.

But such is also the way of being:  
Things can be fixed.  
Things can be beautiful.  
Things can be made just.

It all comes with the luxury of knowing,  
the one gift that's afforded you with age.  
It's the luxury of knowing that things have happened to you,  
sometimes terrible things, sometimes strange things,  
and that things may never be the same,  
but that thankfully,  
things will never have to be the same.

# Poetry by Marissa Burr

**MARISSA BURR**

Opinion Editor

## **An ode to my professors:**

I promise I'm doing my absolute best.  
Every day I wake up, excited for the opportunities ahead of me.  
I'm lucky enough to be able to spend my days  
    Honing my craft  
    Learning new techniques  
Writing. There's so much to write.

But once I feel like I'm finally soaring,  
something comes along and clips my wings.  
Whether it's the monsters inside my head  
    banging pots and pans together  
    demanding my attention,  
Or the slow spread of a virus  
    taking over my body  
suspending me in a thick sludge  
    unable to escape,  
    even to follow my passion.

It seems as though I'm flaking,  
as if every unfortunate event is an excuse.  
I don't mean to, I really try to come.  
I adore the time spent in the classroom  
and loathe the things that keep me away.

So again, I apologize.  
Nothing I do is on purpose,  
nor meant to be malicious.  
It's not easy to move away from everything you know,  
nor work every day just to survive.  
Please continue to have faith in me,  
I promise I'm doing my absolute best.



# Your News Feed Could Be Lying To You

**MARISSA BURR**

Opinion Editor

For some SUNY Fredonia students, the 2024 presidential election is the second time they have had the ability to influence who will spend the next four years in the Oval Office.

But for others, this is the first time they will be eligible to vote, so it is key that along with producing well-educated students, the university must also contribute to the number of informed voters that will hit the polls starting as early as this November. However, knowing what information provided by politicians is accurate has become increasingly difficult since the new age of voters have been alive, so it is important that Fredonia students know how to determine if the information they're presented with is credible.

In the age of the internet and social media, consumers are able to get updates on everything from tragedies to arrest reports to election results to celebrity affairs without even clicking a link.

Those who want to stay well informed may have news outlet apps downloaded on their devices and programmed to send notifications with every top story that is published throughout the day.

Information is available to us faster than ever right now.

On the surface, this appears to be a strictly-positive advance in the way the world consumes news, and it can be adapted to fit anybody's preferences.

But, in the age of fake news and post-truth, the speed at which people are able to hear about things can be dangerous.

News can flood in at ten stories an hour, but is the information as accurate as it is expeditious?

Now, imagine someone heavily-involved in politics has these high-speed alert systems enabled on their X (formerly known as Twitter) account.

By following their favorite politicians on these platforms, everything those leaders say is sent directly to their supporters. Again, this is not inherently a negative thing; after all, involved viewers no longer have to wait for the six o'clock news to hear what went on in the government that day.

So, the politician makes a statement in order to inform voters about their stance on a hot-topic issue and then provides supportive evidence to back it up.

But, their sources are less than credible once the information is cross-checked and reexamined by their opponents' experts.

The rival will come out and debunk what was falsely presented, but the original politician can come back out and say the experts weren't reliable and the cycle continues, with the facts being thrown to the side in favor of emotions and beliefs.

That's what post-truth is after all according to the Oxford dictionary: "relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief."

In simpler terms, sources are hand-picked in order to help support a certain idea in order to appeal to people's emotions. The prefix "post" as seen in other words including post-war and post-game refers to taking place after something; in this

case post-truth refers to existing in a time once the truth is no longer relevant.

Despite being added to the Oxford dictionary following its popularity in discussions surrounding the 2016 U.S. presidential election and the Brexit referendum that same year, post-truth existed long before any of our times according to an article by the European Center for Populism Studies (ECPS).

The phrase was just "less notable before the advent and other related social changes." Populist movements—those claiming to be in support of the common man—that are using social media to further their campaign seem to correspond with post-truth politics.

New York Times writer William Davies is quoted in the article from the ECPS in saying "'Individuals have growing opportunities to shape their media consumption around their own opinions and prejudices, and populist leaders are ready to encourage them.'" This can mean only reading news articles or watching broadcasts from strictly politically one-sided outlets or only checking the facts from pieces where you disagree with the content.

So what does this mean for today's media consumer? How can voters be both accurately and thoroughly informed?

Media literacy in education could be the solution, as well as tighter regulations over media and political language and rhetoric reports the Political Studies Association. Using all forms of communication, this is the ability to access and analyze information that is presented to you, evaluate it, create with it, and act in a way that makes a difference.

By building their media literacy, university students everywhere have the power to become a more "successful student, responsible citizen, productive worker, or competent and conscientious consumer." according to the National Association of Media Literacy.

What someone takes in through whatever forms of media they choose to use—whether that's a newspaper, magazine, social media, website, literature or television broadcast—must be accurate in order to build a community of well-informed citizens that can make the world a better place.

If leaders do not place value on providing that accurate information, that duty must be taken on by the public in order to ensure stability and success.

"Individuals have growing opportunities to shape their media consumption around their own opinions and prejudices, and populist leaders are ready to encourage them."

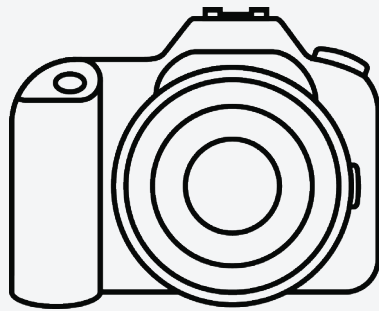
**—WILLIAM DAVIES**

Writer,

*The New York Times*

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WEBSITE



INSTAGRAM



# DO PEOPLE NOT



**MARISSA BURR**  
Opinion Editor

I'm sure we've all heard it from a Boomer or Gen X spouting off at the mouth once again about something they know nothing about: "Nobody wants to work anymore."

Of course, the nobody that they're referring to is usually those of the younger generations, Millennials and Gen Z.

They are using the constant short-staffed businesses and endless job postings as evidence for their claim, but if they tried to back it up by actually interviewing those younger than them, they would not have much of a leg to stand on.

Why?

Because we as young people do want to work, we're just no longer accepting crap working conditions or holding out hope for lazy employers to call us back.

Don't believe me?

Let me tell you about the lives of three young roommates who have been struggling to make ends meet since 2021 despite wanting nothing more than to work and make money.

# WANT TO WORK?

Their names are changed in these completely factual retellings in order to not face backlash from any employers—because yes, that is something that can happen.

We'll start with Margot.

At 18, Margot ended up in a big city for college and was attending classes full-time, which meant 18 credit hours a semester.

Because dorming was too expensive, Margot was living in an off-campus apartment with her two close friends.

Due to her class schedule, she had scattered availability but still plenty of time to be able to fit in a part-time job if her employer could work with her.

Unfortunately, said employer decided to take advantage of Margot and give her the shift that no one else wanted: Opening at 5:00 in the morning.

This may not have been so bad if not for the fact that Margot didn't have a license or a car and lived a half-hour's walk away.

Her employer knew this and still thought it was a good idea for a young woman to walk alone in the dark every morning for 30 minutes through the East Side of Buffalo.

The public transportation systems didn't even run at that time. In the seven months she worked there, she was harassed by multiple men that were prowling in the early hours when they knew people would be vulnerable.

Eventually, it became too dangerous for her to be walking by herself, so she had to resign.

It wasn't that Margot didn't want to work, but she didn't want to continue being petrified of being kidnapped or assaulted.

Next, let's talk about Katie.

She actually had a pretty nice job in the local mall and enjoyed working there.

It was customer service, so not the most rewarding of positions, but she didn't mind. For her, management was the problem.

Her store manager hated call-offs, even for sickness—despite this being late 2020 and early 2021—because God forbid she had to come out of the office and actually do her job.

This same manager had even told Katie that no one actually had food poisoning when they said they did.

Instead, the manager insisted that if these employees were really sick, they wouldn't have been able to pick up the phone (which would have meant no-calling no-showing, something that the manager also looked down upon).

Well, Katie was a dedicated employee who, despite being in college full-time, worked 30 hours a week and was soon promoted to a sales lead position.

One night, when she was the manager on duty, she passed out in the back room from pain due to a cyst the size of an orange holding residence in her side.

She wasn't found for at least 20 minutes according to coworkers, and emergency services had to come to bring her to the hospital on a stretcher.

Management was pissed when they heard about this because that meant someone else had to come in to close the store.

While admitted to the hospital overnight, the only messages Katie received from her managerial team were ones asking

when she was coming back because she was supposed to work the next day.

A good friend of hers, who was the assistant manager, told her she “really screwed them over” by going into the hospital.

Katie quit while still hooked up to an IV and never looked back. She had been the most dedicated worker there, but in the end, she was nothing more than an employee to them.

Katie put up with a lot of abuse from her superiors in the workplace, but completely disregarding her health has never been something she just ignored.

Finally, we'll talk about Lucas.

He did everything right, and graduated in 2023 with two different bachelor's degrees in his field.

Immediately, he started applying for jobs and going on interviews.

From most, he got absolutely nothing back, not even a response that said they'd received his application.

Some got back to him and scheduled an interview, but ultimately decided on someone with “more experience.”

How can someone earn experience if no one takes a chance on a graduate?

He had student-taught in two different schools and observed in half a dozen others.

He was more qualified than most of the other candidates he had gone up against, but no dice.

A few schools had him do a mock-lesson and gave him multiple interviews, even going so far as meeting with the superintendent.

Yet here he sits as only a per diem substitute.

Lucas wanted nothing more than to get a full-time job, put down roots and work hard but the employers jerked him around and gave him no respect.

If someone with two college degrees—a slip of paper which every boomer demands our generation gets if we want to be successful—can't get a job even when there's a nationwide shortage in that field, maybe it's not the applicant's fault. Maybe the hiring system is broken.

So do any of us actually want to work?

In these conditions, hell no.

Millennials and Gen Zs are starting our own businesses and working for ourselves because the older generations that complain about us every chance they get won't actually give us proper working conditions.

We are demanding respect, basic human decency and fair working conditions.

No, we will not stay five hours after we're scheduled without even being asked.

No, I don't intend to go above and beyond at a minimum wage job that tries to deny my time off to go to a funeral.

I mean, people have made entire influencer careers just from reenacting terrible experiences they've had at their jobs.

So readers, next time you or someone else tries to say that the younger generation doesn't want to work, feel free to cite the atrocities listed above.



# A playlist for every mood: Telling a story with a song

**MARISSA BURR**  
Opinion Editor

If there was a way to do it safely, I know I would be reading while driving.

I've never been able to get into audio books either, especially with stories I'm unfamiliar with.

Luckily, there are a few good songwriters out there who can create the perfect tale and set it to music.

Put these all together on a playlist and you've brought the term "musical library" to a whole other level.

And what's the best way to get people interested in a new book without spoiling it?

You give them a little blurb.

## **"Drivers License" by Olivia Rodrigo**

To start this playlist, we've got a song that has the exact same opening that your road trip may have: A car starting.

As this transforms into piano, we start hearing the story of a young girl freshly able to drive. But instead of being overwhelmed with excitement, she's taking one of her first solo rides while mourning a relationship.

As the verses continue, the theme of young love rings true as Rodrigo grapples with the fact that her ex seems so much better off after ending the relationship than she is.

She felt as though she was lied to and the feelings of betrayal haunt her on this ride.

## **"Must Have Been The Wind" by Alec Benjamin**

This is a heart-wrenching story told from the perspective of a bystander to an abusive relationship.

Benjamin sings about how he lives in the apartment under a woman, and one night a glass shatters and she seems to be in trouble.

When he goes to check on her, she's shaken up, apologetic and denies that anything bad has happened. But, the young man can't forget the interaction and feels the need to protect his neighbor.

It isn't easy, but something leads him back up to that apartment.

## **"Singing in the Rain" by Jeremy Shada**

To align with his "Vintage" album, Shada gave his song the same title as Gene Kelly's version in the movie from the 1952 classic.

While that tone was jovial and optimistic, this adaptation is the opposite. Instead, we're met with a love story that didn't have a happy ending.

It isn't like its classic predecessors, and doesn't end with true love's kiss before fading to black. For Shada and the listener, life without true love is darker.

## **"Young Love and Old Money" by Elizabeth Gerardi**

Everybody loves the classic forbidden lovers trope, and what story fits that more than a girl from a rich family falling in love



Graphic by JOHN LEAHY | Special to The Leader

with a commoner?

They both know their relationship is wrong, but the passion is so strong that they can't bring themselves to stop.

While this secret love affair is going on, the girl faces pressure from her family to marry for fame and wealth.

Which will win: young love or old money?

## **"The Last Great American Dynasty" by Taylor Swift**

Every Swiftie knew at least one of her songs had to be on this list. She is the master of lyricists.

So what better than to pull a song from the album she wrote based on a world she imagined in which the house she bought had a rich history?

Newcomer Rebekah meets Bill and they fall in love and live their lives to the fullest. But when Bill's weak heart once again leaves Rebekah alone, she becomes an outcast in the world she married into.

With all of the money left to her, she goes wild and it makes us question whether she had acted out of love or greed.

## **"Friends to Lovers" by Melina KB**

A good ending always ties back to the beginning, which is why once again the listener is sent to high school amidst a rocky love affair.

This time, our protagonist is still in her relationship, but she's playing second fiddle to the girl's best friend.

A fast pace song means a quick succession of events including unknown hickies, prom and claims that nothing is going on.

However, most high schoolers find themselves going from friends to lovers, so why couldn't it happen twice?

For a full list of the songs that inspired the series "A Playlist for Every Mood," follow @gummymnb's playlist of the same name on Spotify!



# Falling deeper into political hell

**CHLOE KOWALYK**

Editor in Chief

It seems now more than ever, the United States is full of hate. More often than not, that hate is a result of differing political opinions.

According to a Pew Research Center article by Drew Desilver, Democrats and Republicans are the furthest apart ideologically today than they have been in 50 years.

On average, Democrats have become more liberal, and Republicans have become more conservative.

Similarly, only around two dozen moderates are serving on Capitol Hill, as compared to the over 160 moderates who served in the 1970s.

A few months before the 2020 presidential election, Pew Research Center found that most Democrats stated that they would not date someone who supports Donald Trump, and most Republicans said the same about those who support Hillary Clinton.

It's clear there is an increased hatred between Democrats and Republicans.

Why has this polarization between Americans due to politics increased so much within the past few decades?

Elizabeth Kolbert, a writer for the New Yorker, theorized that several key ideological factors play into the stark difference between our major two political parties and the demographics of their membership.

These factors were most prominent in the 1950s and during the civil rights movements.

The Republican Party increased white and male membership as Richard Nixon's Southern Strategy took hold.

Unity between Republicans intensified with opposition to events such as the feminist movement, Roe v. Wade and civil

rights protests occurred.

These intensely influential events left different groups separated from different parties, creating an imbalance of members between parties.

As mentioned, the Republicans, also known as GOP (Grand Old Party), held more white male members.

Comparatively, the Democratic Party began to gain more women and members of minority groups.

It's clear today that some of the most stark differences between Democrats and Republicans lie within a few core beliefs that these groups deem to be most important.

These ideological differences include abortion, immigration, foreign policy, racial equality, LGBTQ+ rights and climate change.

My theory is that the introduction of mass media, such as social media, television, radio and print publications also contribute to the mania caused by the media.

It is incredibly easy to entertain your confirmation bias—seeking out information that reaffirms your previous beliefs, regardless of whether or not the information is accurate.

False data and misinformation are incredibly prevalent online.

People are quick to start a performative political movement online simply by using a few buzzwords that get people going.

In addition, many people are becoming lazy when it comes to educating themselves.

Frequently, people do not research policies or politicians before voting, and are often uneducated on their policy.

Former President Trump was quoted saying that he “loves the poorly educated,” attributing this as one of the factors of his victory in the 2016 election.

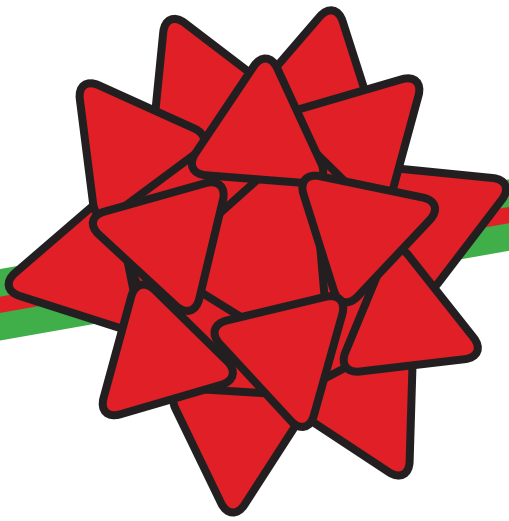
This lack of knowledge leads to a lack of understanding between political parties, and more importantly, the American people.



Graphic by **ROEN CLOUTIER**  
Special to The Leader



# ROSCH WRAPPED 2023



## LUKE VILLAVICENCIO Special to The Leader

Here we are, another semester nearly finished.

While I'd love nothing more than to move on to the potentially restful break, I figured it would be nice to take a second to reminisce about this concert-filled fall.

After seeing everyone and their mother's dog's cousin post their Spotify Wrapped recently, I decided to take it upon myself to start a "Wrapped" that's much more local to Fredonia. So let's cozy up near the fire in Starbucks with a grande cup of sugary nut milk and our favorite instruments and take a look at the very first Rosch Wrapped (Fall 2023).

(Note: performances that are included are not limited to just Rosch Recital Hall, I just like alliteration.)

We started off the semester with the electrifying presence of Brittain Ashford, known for her role in the original cast of *Natasha, Pierre, and the Great Comet of 1812*. She helped inspire music and theater students alike with her solo concert on Sept. 9 in Rosch. Ashford, as a visiting artist, was very fitting because her residence was eventually followed by our campus' very own rendition of the *Great Comet of 1812*.

Fredonia's version was performed in the Marvel Theatre on the weekend of Oct. 21. I found myself unable to get away from hearing other student's five-star reviews throughout the weeks after, which is what solidified its place in this year's Rosch Wrapped.

Earlier in the month of October, the first Student Composers Concert of the semester took place. After hearing all the great music written by Fredonia students, to the surprise of everyone in the audience, the head of the Composition, Music Theory and History Department and the Chair of the Department of Theatre and Dance, Rob Deemer, came on stage. "This is my 17th year teaching here at Fredonia, and I've heard a hell of a lot of Student Composer Concerts," said Deemer. "That was the best first Student Composers' Concert I've ever heard, and probably one of the best I've ever heard since I've been here at Fredonia."

We then saw the wonderfully talented Valerie Coleman, who was brought as this academic year's Claudette Sorel Visiting Artist. As shown last year with the equally delightful Chen Yi,

this series of events were smash hits—the recital halls were packed with professors and students who came to welcome the sound of Coleman's beautiful music. This visit began on Oct. 12 with the enlightening Women in Music roundtable discussion featuring Coleman, Emily Schaad and conductor of the Buffalo Philharmonic, JoAnn Falletta. It was a wonderful experience in and of itself and I highly encourage anyone interested to watch the recording of the talk. This was followed by a lecture and composition masterclass given by Coleman. A collection of Coleman's chamber works were performed by Fredonia professors in Rosch Recital Hall. Her piece "Umoja, An Anthem of Unity" was played by the Fredonia Symphony Orchestra in King Concert Hall that Saturday.

We then arrived at the second Student Composers Concert, which took place on the night of Halloween. This concert in particular has always been a blast for students—everyone dressed in wacky outfits and came together to listen to their friends and peers perform student works.

Now, we've had some great visiting artists and student performances, but I would be remiss if I didn't mention all of our prestigious faculty performances and recitals. Here are a few in particular to note:

Professors David Rose and Sean Duggan put on a wonderful showing of the viola paired with different keyboard instruments. The Faculty Composers Concert consisted of electrifying works by Andrew Martin Smith, Rob Deemer, Paul Coleman, and a new addition to the composition, Emily Joy Sullivan, among others.

Distinguished Professor James Piorkowski played beautifully through many of his original solo works for the classical guitar. A lovely violin and piano recital featured professors Jessica Tong, Isabel Ong and I-Fei Chen. The Ekstasis Duo performed, with Natasha Farny playing cello and Eliran Avni playing piano. Glenn Einschlag put on an inspired concert on his bassoon.

Let's also not forget the recital "Sophisticated Lady" put on by Natasha Farny, Barry Crawford, I-Fei Chen and Laura Koepke. This performance exclusively included works by female composers and will be performed this January at Merkin Hall in New York City!

So many performances in what seemed like so little time!

I unfortunately had to skip over some but I'd like to put out a poll towards the end of next semester to see what everyone's favorite performances were next time around!

But for now, we must conclude the first ever Rosch Wrapped.

Thank you to everyone for all the amazing performances and, as our own Andrew Martin Smith would say, do great musical things! See you all next time!

# Alexandra Giles, Assistant Photo Editor:

## Change yourself, change the world

FROM THE  
DESK  
OF

### ALEXANDRA GILES

Asst. Photo Editor

It seems that every other day, the cultural sands we stand on shift, forcing us to adjust our footing and understanding of our collective place in the world.

With my final contribution to The Leader, I want to share my experiences with change and how I eventually learned to embrace it.

When I was younger, change seemed to be a distant concept. Living in the sleepy Canisteo valley meant I was isolated from most of the changes influencing the wider world.

My former high school classmates often called it the “most boring town” in the entire state. I enjoyed the comfort of consistency for a number of years during high school.

That’s until I reached my senior year, 2020.

As the classroom conversations changed from the daily gossip to post-graduate plans, I realized that many of my wonderful classmates would be leaving my world forever.

I had become complacent with the high school ecosystem and was now under threat of losing so many connections.

I vowed to spend the rest of the year focusing on connecting myself to my teachers and classmates.

This was all well and good until the COVID lockdown occurred. With the whole town going remote, it became impossible to form any lasting connections.

After a socially-distanced graduation ceremony, I said my goodbyes and shifted my focus towards Fredonia.

I attempted to follow the same methods I developed during high school and by the end of the Fall 2020 semester, I was completely burnt out.

I had left little time for myself or the possible friends in my courses. I needed to make a change.

In the spring, I decided to join a few clubs, one such club being WNYF Television. There I learned how to collaborate with others to create wonderful shows.

My schedule did become unwieldy at times, and trying to balance production schedules with my academics proved to be a great challenge. In the end it was worth it, because I found great value in the friends and shows we made together.

Even with my newfound happiness from the TV station, I realized there was still something amiss.

While I was proud of the work I was creating in and outside of the classroom, I wasn’t happy with the name attached with them.

More importantly, I had finally come to understand that I wasn’t happy with the body I was born with.

I needed to change myself.

With the encouragement of my sister Rachel, my friends and co-workers at WNYF, I decided to embrace my true name, Alexandra. I haven’t looked back since.

Changing yourself can be the hardest thing in the world.



Photo by DREW PALUCH | Photo Editor

The fear of judgment from peers and the uncertainty of something new can be paralyzing.

It froze me for many years in high school. Once I arrived at Fredonia, I realized that the world continues to shift with time and being simply content the current state of life would never last.

To become the woman I’ve always wanted to be, I had to grow against that uncertainty until it became known.

As a photographer for The Leader, I see people fighting their uncertainties and winning all over this great campus. I’ve captured moments where people are taking that first step, whether that be getting on stage for standup, or voicing their opinion during model EU conferences.

Looking back on my experiences here, I’ve come to understand that change is incredibly important to the health of the individual.

Without it, I would still be the same quiet kid who didn’t know what her place would be in the world.

Through support by friends, practice and action, growth can happen.

I am so grateful for my time here at Fredonia for helping me find my own way, and I hope the same for you, dear reader.

Thank you for time,  
Alexandra R. Giles





# Lovercolumn:

## Safe sex and contraceptives

### THE ELECTRICIAN

Executive Producer and Host of Lovercall

### THE ARCHITECT

Lovercall Producer

### THE QUARTERBACK

Lovercall Host

Hello!

We are The Electrician, The Architect and The Quarterback: producers and hosts of the radio show Lovercall right here at Fredonia. Lovercall is an anonymous late-night talk show about love, relationships and more. Students who come on the show use a codename to protect their identities when discussing potentially personal topics, hence the codenames of the writers of this column.

“The Electrician” is a 21-year-old cisgender female student who uses she/her pronouns and is a senior at Fredonia.

“The Architect” is a 20-year-old cisgender male student who uses he/him pronouns and is a senior at Fredonia.

“The Quarterback” is a 19-year-old cisgender male student who uses he/him pronouns and is a sophomore at Fredonia.

On each episode, the hosts and guests of Lovercall participate in a variety of segments. The cast discusses a relevant news story, a date idea, a wacky game and a main topic for the episode.

Listeners also write into the show, either via Fredonia Radio’s Instagram, @fredonia\_radio, on Yik Yak, or through the QR code provided in this column.

We typically answer the questions asked right here in this column, so be sure to look out for student stories and questions in future columns.

The show is now being streamed weekly on Wednesday nights from 10 p.m. to 12 a.m. on WDWL 89.5 on [www.fredoniaradio.com](http://www.fredoniaradio.com).

This column runs in conjunction with Lovercall and can be found both in print and online at [fredonialeader.org](http://fredonialeader.org).

### Date idea of the week

We hope to provide our fellow students with a fun and unique date idea in every column. These “date” ideas aren’t just for romantic partners — you could go with your friends, your class-

mates or you can even go solo for a fun activity in Fredonia.

In honor of Spotify Wrapped and Apple Music Replay being sent out to users, we here at Lovercall recommend taking some time to listen to each other's music.

Taking turns, play a song from each of your top songs or artists from 2023. And for those of you that disagree with your top songs, feel free to throw in a couple that aren't on your list.

The bonus is that you can do it anywhere and anytime — whether you're sitting on the couch at noon playing Connect 4, or in the car heading to Denny's at 1 a.m. for a late night grand slam.

For partners, this is a good way to learn about each other's tastes and get more comfortable with one another. For some, music is incredibly important and can represent many deeply-rooted emotions, so taking some time to share that with someone else may be equally as important.

It shows trust and comfort within a relationship to open that door for someone else, and it may mean a lot to a person that you're sharing.

Or who knows, maybe you also got some silly songs to share and can have a nice laugh about it.

And for those doing this solo, listening to some of those songs from your past can help show your growth since that time. Maybe you were a Slipknot fan that turned into a Swiftie, or maybe you didn't change genres at all, both exemplify an interesting look at your self-discovery.

### Safe Sex and Contraceptives

This past week, we covered an incredibly important topic on Lovercall.

We discussed different methods for safe sex and contraceptives, including how to properly utilize contraceptives.

We here at Lovercall believe that although abstinence is the only way to truly prevent pregnancy, this advice is not adequate for adults and college students going through this period of self-discovery.

Frankly, telling someone not to have sex does not provide any information and is not safe for someone who may not be informed about the risks of having unprotected sex.

First, it is important to discuss the various forms of contraceptives. Below is a list of the most common contraceptives used by people today:

## **Condoms**

Condoms are potentially the most common form of contraception.

There are both “male” and “female” condoms.

Male condoms refer to those used by penis-owners.

They act as a barrier between the penis and their partner’s genitals/other areas that may come into contact. Male condoms act to catch semen preventing the partner from being exposed to it.

Not only are male condoms used to prevent pregnancy as they catch any discharge, but they are also used to help prevent spreading sexually transmitted diseases.

These forms of condoms are about 98% effective.

It is important to remember to check your condom package for an air bubble to ensure it has not been pierced, ensure it is not expired and be sure to only use one condom at a time. They are not reusable.

For new condom users, we recommend Trojan ENZ condoms, which come in a blue and white box. These condoms utilize a water-based lubricant, which helps avoid any intense chemicals that may break down the condom, which could cause it to break.

Extremely importantly, we here at Lovercall do NOT recommend the Lifestyles brand condoms that can be found in Freddy’s Locker and other locations on campus.

These condoms are prone to breaking.

Female condoms, while less common, have a similar purpose as male condoms.

Female condoms are worn by those who own vaginas, but can also be utilized anally.

These condoms are almost like small pouches, and are inserted into the vagina before engaging in sex.

The condom then serves as a barrier, preventing semen from coming into contact with an egg.

Female condoms are less effective than male condoms, as they are only 79% effective.

## **Birth Control**

### The Pill

The birth control pill is a hormonal form of contraception, which means that hormones such as progestin and estrogen are released, which prevents pregnancy.

An active pill is taken daily at the same time for three weeks, and then an inactive pill is taken for one week while the user ovulates.

To go on a birth control pill, you first need to talk to your doctor and get a prescription.

With most insurances, birth control pills are covered. The pill is 91% effective, as people often forget to take the pill daily.

Additionally, birth control pills do not protect users against STDs. “The Electrician” shared that while she does experience occasional symptoms from being on the pill, her experience has been overall positive, and she recommends it for those just starting birth control.

### IUD

An IUD, or intrauterine device, is a small, t-shaped object that is inserted into the uterus.

IUDs are inserted by a medical professional.

There are two major types of IUDs: copper and hormonal.

The copper IUD is made of copper and is inserted to help protect against pregnancy.

These kinds of IUDs may lead to heavier and more painful menstrual cycles, but protect against pregnancy for up to 10 years.

Hormonal IUDs are similarly placed on the uterus but release hormones to avoid pregnancy.

Hormonal IUDs also stay in place for up to 10 years. IUDs do not protect against STDs, but they are very effective in preventing pregnancy. Planned Parenthood estimates they are 99% effective.

## **Other Methods**

There are several other forms of contraception available. Be sure to talk with your doctor or a trusted person for advice about which methods may work best for you.

## **Resources**

There are a multitude of resources available that have further information regarding contraceptive methods.

Below is a list of reliable and authentic websites that can provide further information.

### **Planned Parenthood:**

<https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/birth-control>

### **National Institute of Child Health and Human Development:**

[https://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/contraception/more\\_information/resources](https://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/contraception/more_information/resources)

### **Center for Disease Control and Protection:**

<https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/contraception/index.htm>

## **Reach out!**

Do you want to ask the authors of Lovercolumn a question?

Do you need advice?

Fill out the form by using this QR code.

Interested in being a guest on Lovercall? Email [frs@fredonia.edu](mailto:frs@fredonia.edu) or visit Fredonia Radio Systems, located in McEwen Hall 115 and open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

*“The Electrician,” “The Architect” and “The Quarterback” are members of Fredonia Radio Systems and are involved in the production of Lovercall.*





# THE SCALLION



Satire for Fredonia

## My apologies ... (not clickbait)

**MEGAN KIDBY**  
Scallion Editor

\*sigh\*

I've made a severe and continuous lapse in my judgment.

On Nov. 23, I made a horrible mistake.

At around 2:30 p.m. EST, my grandfather entrusted me with the most sacred part of a white person's Thanksgiving: the macaroni and cheese.

Unlike Colleen Ballinger, I will actually create a formal apology that not only expresses how sorry I am but will also not include a HORRIBLE ukulele song.

Here is that apology:

Thanksgiving, a time dedicated to gratitude and togetherness, carries a special significance for all of us.

Except for those that don't celebrate Thanksgiving...but that's besides the point.

It is a moment when we come together to celebrate the blessings in our lives, sharing laughter, stories and of course, a hearty meal.

Unfortunately, my contribution to this year's feast fell short of the standards my family holds dear.

The mac and cheese, a dish that carries its own nostalgic and comforting charm, became an unintentional casualty of my missteps in the kitchen.

I want to acknowledge the impact this may have had on the overall experience and assure you that I deeply regret any sense of letdown or frustration it may have caused.

In reflecting on the events leading up to the mishap, I have identified several areas where I could have exercised greater care and attention.

Perhaps it was the rush of the holiday preparations or an oversight in the recipe, but I am committed to understanding and rectifying the mistakes

that led to the subpar outcome of a dish that is typically a highlight of my Thanksgiving spread.

More than a simple dish, mac and cheese holds sentimental value as a symbol of comfort and tradition.

I understand the importance of this meal to families, and I am genuinely sorry for any disruption my mistake may have caused to the cherished atmosphere of our Thanksgiving gathering.

I want to assure you that I take full responsibility for the lapse in judgment and execution that resulted in the less-than-perfect mac and cheese.

While I cannot undo what has been done, I am committed to learning from this experience and taking proactive measures to ensure that such oversights do not occur in the future.

I have already begun researching and practicing different techniques to improve my culinary skills and enhance my contributions to our shared meals.

It is my hope that this apology can convey the depth of my regret and the earnestness of my commitment to making amends.

Thanksgiving is a time for forgiveness and understanding, and I sincerely hope that you can find it in your heart to accept my apology.

I understand the effort and care that goes into orchestrating a seamless holiday gathering, and I am truly sorry for any disruption my actions may have caused.

If there is anything I can do to rectify the situation or contribute positively to future celebrations, please do not hesitate to let me know.

I value our time together and the bonds that make our gatherings special, and I am determined to ensure that my contributions add to the joy and warmth of our shared experiences.

I look forward to the opportunity to demonstrate my commitment to making amends and creating more joyful memories in the future.

*I always loved the first snow fall of the season*



*From the way the moon reflects off the snow..*



*to the sound of crunching foot steps*



*It honestly is the best time of the year.*



Comic by NICOLE THORSON | Art Director



# HOROS

**JACE JACOBS**

Asst. Scallion Editor, Aspiring Favorite Child

Hey guys, it's me, Jace, your favorite amateur astrologer. I don't know if everyone knows this, but the holidays are quickly approaching, which means my mother has demanded Christmas lists from both me and my 30-year-old sister. To be fair, she asked for them in August, but neither of us is good at time management, so here we are! Per a recent conversation with her, many items on my list have been "banned" (she refuses to buy them). Rather than let this issue die a peaceful death, I am exposing this injustice by assigning each zodiac sign to a banned item. I refuse to take this injustice lying down!



## Aries

"Bluey" Magnets

Every Aries I've ever met loves the show "Bluey", which makes sense considering it's a masterpiece and a national treasure. This magnet set has made the banned gift list because I "have too many magnets" on my fridge. Please note that this is my mom's fault as she loves buying me novelty magnets.



## Taurus

Cow-Shaped Storage Ottoman

Not only is this funny haha because Tauruses are represented by the bull, but it's also cool because us Tauruses are practical but fun-loving people. If I can have something to store my junk that looks fun, that's the option I'm going with. This has been placed on the banned gifts list because I made the mistake of accepting a wicker basket for my storage needs. In my defense, my parents are downsizing and I needed something to throw all my craft supplies in sooner rather than later.



## Gemini

"Schitt's Creek" Hand Towels

Geminis are genuinely one of the funniest zodiac signs, and I choose to believe they all love "Schitt's Creek" almost as much as I do. This is banned because my mom says I have "too many novelty hand towels" (again, this is because of her) and that I need to "add more fun items" to my list. And yet, almost all of my fun items are banned!



## Cancer

Desktop Vacuum Cleaner

Every Cancer I've ever met is a certified hot mess and is usually a mid-home-work snacker, like me. This means your desk is also probably covered in crumbs, regular dust and maybe paper scraps if you're a collage-style journaler like me. This desktop vacuum is compact, comes in cute colors and it's powerful! It's banned from my gift list because it's "not fun enough."



## Leo

Cactus Socks from LookHUMAN

Leos love a good innuendo and a subtle joke that others might miss. I think Leos would find the slightly phallic cactus socks from LookHUMAN almost as funny as I do. Even though I am in desperate need of new socks literally all the time, these were banned from the list. My mom's only comment when I asked why was "Don't be gross, Jace."



## Virgo

Remote Control Fish Balloon

Virgos love being silly and goofy, and I think if they were allowed to bring something absolutely ridiculous into their lives, they would take that opportunity so fast. Ever since I was a child and I saw the infomercials about RC fish balloons, I've always wanted one just so I could pilot it around my house. My mom thinks this is "stupid" and genuinely asked what I would do with it. My answer was to finally live a joyful life after 21 miserable, fish-balloon-free years. She didn't think this was funny.

# COPES



## Libra

**The Original Edition of my Favorite Book**

Although Libras might not be the biggest readers, I think they can appreciate the desire to have multiple versions of one thing, especially if you're emotionally attached to it. When I lovingly asked my mom to buy me the paperback version of my favorite novel, *Red, White & Royal Blue*, she said no because I already own two collector editions. When I pointed out that one of those collectors' editions is in a language I can't read, her response was "Oh my God."



## Scorpio

**"More than Shipmates" by Philippa Young**

As the spiciest of the zodiac signs, I believe that Scorpios also enjoy spicy novels. *More Than Shipmates* is a spicy novel Instagram has recommended to me several times, and since my mom likes to give my sister and me a gift bag full of books each Christmas, I decided to add this to my list not thinking she would look into what it's about. As you may have guessed, I was wrong. She told me to "stop putting smutty novels" on my book list. I cannot be stopped.



## Sagittarius

**"Joelle the Bigfoot" Squishmallow**

Sagittarius is one of the most childish signs, but in my opinion, no one can resist a good Squishmallow! I love the Bigfoot Squishmallows because of their stupid little faces and dumb little legs. When I requested another bigfoot, my mom said "You have three, you don't need more." I vehemently disagree with this, and I know that all the Sagittarius reading this do too.



## Capricorn

**A New Massage Gun**

Every Capricorn I've ever met is stressed out all the time, and I feel like all they need is some form of relief. Now I have a janky old massage gun that I took from my parents' house, but it is so loud and so bulky that I really want a new one. My mom just straight-up said I shouldn't have taken the old one if I was just gonna turn around and ask for a new one. All my Capricorns out there, I hope you see my side of things. I just wanted some stress relief.



## Aquarius

**Black Glitter Insulted Tumbler**

Aquarians are typically always on-the-go and enjoy having their coffee with them as they head out the door. I am very much the same way, and I thought this black tumbler with rainbow glitter expressed my personality with the ability to keep my iced coffee cold! This was placed on the banned gift list for what I will admit is a pretty valid reason. My mom is a sales representative, and one of the lines she reps is a tumbler line. She can get one like this for free.



## Pisces

**Sandals That Look Like Lobsters**

I love weird people, and as one of the weirdest zodiac signs, I adore all of the Pisces in my life! Similar to Taurus, Pisces also appreciate items that are funny along with being functional. The only item on this list that has been banned for being "too ugly"/"too weird" is a pair of sandals that look like lobsters. I think they're hilarious and would be good replacements for my pair of sandals that fell apart last year, but I have been asked to find something "more normal".



