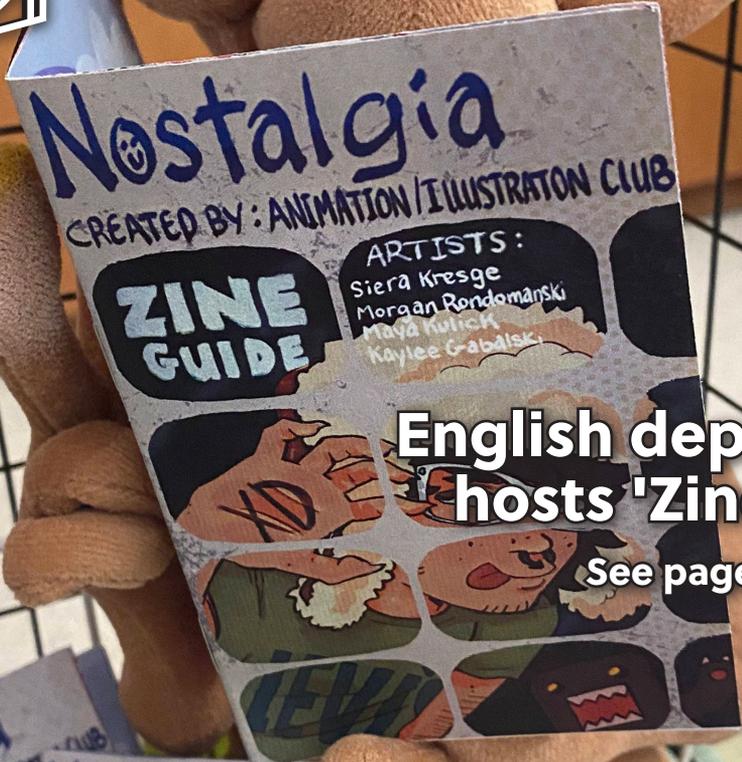




# THE LEADER

SUNY Fredonia's Student-Run Newspaper



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"Every time someone steps up and says who they truly are, the world becomes a better, more interesting place." - Captain Raymond Holt, "Brooklyn Nine-Nine"  
Proud member of The Associated Collegiate Press.

# Suspect in custody after car chase

**ALEX BUCKNAM**  
Managing Editor

On Saturday, March 7, police received a report of a gunshot at about 7:30 p.m. in Westfield, N.Y.

After an investigation, Westfield police officers determined 52-year-old Jahmaul Johnson of Westfield shot a woman during a fight at a home.

Johnson drove off and led police through a high-speed chase, reaching speeds of 100 miles per hour through the Dunkirk, Fredonia and Pomfret area.

Fredonia police said the suspect crashed his car in the town of Pomfret just outside the village of Fredonia before fleeing the scene on foot.

Students heard loud sirens and heavy police presents near campus. Initially, it was unclear what was happening.

Jasper Bateman, a student at Fredonia, checked a Facebook page under the name “Fredonia/Dunkirk News,” where he saw a post stating, “Fredonia police and rescue responding to Main and Cushing for a car-pedestrian accident. Avoid the area if possible.”

“Initially I thought that it was a really bad accident that required additional police force,” Bateman said.

Shortly after, another post in the same Facebook group stated that a suspect involved in a shooting ditched their car and was on foot in the area.

The post warned people in the area to stay indoors and remain vigilant.

As of Sunday, March 8, it does not appear that the two incidents were connected.

Students later received a phone call and email from University Police (UP) at 8:37 p.m. stating the department was working with local police to search for a suspect on foot.

The email continued, saying, “The campus community is advised to avoid that area of the town and to take precautions, including staying indoors for the time being, lock your doors and remain vigilant.”

Shortly after the alert, the Fredonia Office of Emergency Management issued a shelter-in-place order for the area. Students were made aware of the order through a Facebook post.

“Law enforcement is actively searching for an armed subject in the area of Van Buren, Chestnut, Farel and Johnson streets. Residents in this area are encouraged to shelter in place at this time,” the post stated.

Students reported feeling concerned and scared during the search.

“At that point I just wanted to get back to my house,” Bateman said.

Roughly 10 minutes later, UP announced to students that the suspect was in custody.

Johnson is being charged with first degree attempted assault; police have stated more charges are expected.

The woman involved in the shooting was taken to a hospital with non-life threatening injuries.

This story is developing.

*Jasper Bateman, mentioned in this story, is The Leader’s DEI chair.*



An overhead view of the area where Johnson was searched for and later caught, within three miles of campus. Image via Apple Maps.

# University leadership considering relocation of WNYF-TV

**ZACH HEIMAN**

Special to The Leader

SUNY Fredonia's own student-run TV station, WNYF-TV, has been broadcasting to the campus community since 1979.

Currently located in the basement of Hendrix Hall, some rumors have circulated that the university's administration may be interested in relocating WNYF's station.

Hendrix Hall is a part of the Andrews Dorm Complex, a group of residence buildings that have not housed students since Spring 2023; Hendrix itself went out of commission in Fall 2020.

"We did do a walk-through of the TV station due to a concern about accessibility," said Kathy Forster, director of Residence Life. "The group that toured the station presented the summary to [Vice President for Finance and Administration] Wayne Lynch, who shared with Markus Kessler [Director of Facilities Planning] and assigned the project for possible relocation to him."

The main entrance to the WNYF station is located at the bottom of a long set of stairs going down into a pit on the southwest side of the building.

During the winter, these stairs are notorious among the station's members for becoming very icy.

The only other way to get inside the station is by going through the loading bay of the Andrews Complex into WNYF's storage room.

The Andrews Complex also does not have any elevator access directly into the Hendrix basement.

According to Forster, Kessler was put in charge of the possible relocation project.

"Facilities Planning, Facilities Services and EHS&S [Environmental Health, Safety and Sustainability] conducted a tour of the existing location regarding accessibility," said Kessler.

The main factor in the administration's interest in relocating the WNYF station seems to be issues with the current location's accessibility.

"These proposals keep coming up due to the concerns of Hendrix being a closed dormitory that is far away from the rest of campus," said Sam Zotara, general manager of WNYF-TV. "The space also lacks elevators for students with disabilities."

According to Zotara, she was recently approached by Mark Kiyak, faculty adviser for WNYF-TV, who told her that "higher-ups" had expressed "serious interest in moving the station."

Kiyak declined to comment on the subject of relocation.

Neither Forster nor Kessler commented on the financial aspects of the station's relocation.



The stairs leading down to the entrance of the WNYF station. **Photo by ZACH HEIMAN** | Special to The Leader

“We would need engineers to disconnect and move all the equipment properly, as well as a beneficial space to relocate to,” Zotara continued. “We also need appropriate funding to create that said space and update/transport all needed inventory.”

This would not be the first time the WNYF studio moved to a different location.

In the early days of the club’s history, it was located in the now-empty Jewett Hall.

It bounced around campus a few times over the years before eventually landing at its current location in Hendrix in 1997.

Rumors of the station’s potential relocation have also repeatedly surfaced over the last several years.

When asked about similar rumors in 2024, Kessler told The Leader, “I think it’s in discussion, it’s not that they are disrupting anything, they are just kinda in an odd spot.”

Although Zotara speculated that the station could be moved to a remodeled space in Fenton Hall or back to its original location in Jewett, according to Kessler, the university has not yet looked at possible locations.

“At this time, no direction has been on the exploration of possible new locations,” said Kessler. “More than likely, exploring locations will not happen until the summer.”

In the midst of budget cuts, program cuts and other controversial financial decisions, the costs of moving the WNYF station have the potential to add on to the campus’ monetary stresses.



The green room at the WNYF station.  
Photo by ZACH HEIMAN | Special to The Leader



WNYF's studio, set up for an episode of 'News 11.' Photo by ZACH HEIMAN | Special to The Leader

# U.S., Israel launch strike against Iran in 'Operation Epic Fury'

**ALEX BUCKNAM**

Managing Editor

On Saturday, Feb. 28, the United States, alongside Israel, launched a major military strike against Iran.

The ongoing operation was nicknamed Operation Epic Fury.

The attacks marked one of the most significant escalations between the two countries in recent years.

The first few strikes targeted Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, as well as multiple Iranian air and naval bases.

U.S. officials said the targets were selected to disrupt Iran's military command structure and its ability to coordinate a response.

The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) claimed they were tracking Khamenei for months, coordinating their plan to attack based on his day-to-day schedule of when he would be above ground.

The CIA and Israeli intelligence moved up the attack when they discovered Khamenei was attending multiple high-level meetings with Iranian officials.

Later in the day, reports began to surface that the attacks killed Khamenei and other top Iranian officials. Iranian state media confirmed Khamenei's death the following day.

The announcement sent shockwaves across the region and raised immediate questions about Iran's leadership and political future.

It is still unclear who will permanently assume the role of the supreme leader.

Under Article 111 of the Iranian Constitution, a three-person interim council takes over the duties of the position if the role becomes vacant.

The council maintains authority until a new supreme leader is selected.

The interim council is made up of Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, Chief Justice Gholam-Hossein Mohseni-Eje'i and Guardian Council and Assembly of Experts member Alireza Arafi.

The group is responsible for temporarily overseeing the country's political and military leadership. Iranian officials have not said how long the transition process may take.



Graphic via Columbia University.



President Trump is briefed on Operation Epic Fury. **Image courtesy of whitehouse.gov.**

Following the attack, President Donald Trump announced that the strikes would continue at full force. “They will continue until all of our objectives are achieved,” Trump said in a video posted to Truth Social.

The statement signaled that the operation was not intended to be a single round of strikes.

Trump later elaborated on what he meant by “our objectives.”

He said the goal of the operation is to weaken Iran’s military leadership and eliminate what he called threats to U.S. forces and allies in the region.

Trump said the operation is also meant to prevent Iran from launching further attacks against American bases and Israel, and for a regime change.

“We are targeting the systems and leadership responsible for aggression in the region,” Trump said. “Our objective is stability through strength and making sure Iran can no longer threaten American troops or our allies.”

Iran responded quickly to the attacks.

Within hours, Iranian forces launched retaliatory strikes against United States military installations across the Middle East.

Several bases in Israel, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait were targeted.

Some of the strikes successfully reached their targets.

Military officials said air defense systems intercepted many incoming missiles, but several still made an impact.

During an attack that occurred at the port of Shuaiba in Kuwait, Iranian missiles struck a facility used by United States forces stationed in the area.

The attack killed six United States Army Reserve members.

Initial reports from U.S. Central Command said three service members had died.

As additional information was gathered and rescue operations continued, the number of confirmed deaths rose.

Officials said several additional service members were injured in the strike.

Trump announced the deaths in a video posted to Truth Social.

“As one nation, we grieve for the true American patriots who made the ultimate sacrifice for our nation,” Trump said.

The president added that the country will pray for the recovery of those wounded in the attack.

Trump also warned that the casualties may not be the last.

“And sadly, there likely will be more before it ends. That’s the way it is,” he said.

Military officials say the situation remains ongoing. Additional U.S. and Israeli strikes have reportedly continued against Iranian military infrastructure.

Some targets include missile launch sites, command centers and weapons storage facilities.

Pentagon officials said the operation is focused on limiting Iran’s ability to respond with further large-scale attacks.

“Our forces are continuing defensive and offensive operations as necessary,” a U.S. defense official stated.

For now, both sides appear to be preparing for continued confrontation.

Iranian leaders have vowed retaliation, while U.S. officials say operations will continue until military objectives are met.

“We will respond to every act of aggression,” Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei said on state television.

As of now, the attacks between the United States, Israel and Iran are ongoing.

Air defense systems across the region remain on high alert, and additional military assets have been moved into position.

Officials say the coming days will likely determine whether the conflict expands further or begins to stabilize.

“This situation is still developing,” a U.S. defense official said. “Right now, the focus is protecting our troops and responding to threats as they emerge.”

The Leader will provide updates as they come.

# Police Blotter

## UNIVERSITY POLICE DEPARTMENT SUNY Fredonia

The Police Blotter, run and shared with The Leader by the University Police Department (UPD), aims to provide information to students, faculty and the community in and around SUNY Fredonia. All information is provided on the University Police Department's website, <https://www.fredonia.edu/about/offices/university-police/blotter>. The Police Blotter will continue every issue, with new information regarding any new criminal acts that occur on the SUNY Fredonia campus.

*All information printed in The Leader's police blotter is a matter of open public record. No retractions or corrections will be made unless a factual error is shown. Anyone who is cleared of charges has the right to have so printed. It is the responsibility of the accused to provide notice and proof of the dropped charges.*

### Off-Campus:

**Saturday, March 8:** A suspect is in custody after a high-speed chase that came after a shooting in Westfield.

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# News Editor

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# Life & Arts

## 'Children of Grass' puts poetry on display at Marion Art Gallery

**SETH CAMPBELL**  
Special to The Leader

Currently, a man on the far end of the Marion Art Gallery, cloaked in grayscale, stares forth at visitors.

Upon entrance to the gallery, visitors looking left will see a woman dining with a horse.

These are photographs in the newest art exhibition residing in the gallery, "Children of Grass: A Portrait of American Poetry."

Created by photographer B.A. Van Sise, the exhibition will inhabit the gallery from Tuesday, Feb. 24 to Sunday, April 19.

This exhibition displays Van Sise's lifelong love of poetry, with him being a descendant of the influential poet, Walt Whitman.

Featuring 51 poets spanning a wide variety of styles and backgrounds, each poem is a different story regarding a different life.

In terms of poetry's value, to Van Sise, it comes down to the connection that it provides to readers.

"Poetry's biggest value (to me, anyway) is that it teaches empathy; it allows the creator to provide a lens on their life," says Van Sise.

"...Let's say that I... and all the readers of The Leader all went to the same protest together. And we're all asked to write a poem about it," he said. "Not a single one would have much in common with any other. Everybody feels something different; everybody sees something different."

Van Sise will be coming to McEwen Hall on Friday, March 27 at 4 p.m. for a Visiting Artist Program Lecture.

This lecture, along with the exhibition, is free for all visitors.

In terms of what the exhibition offers to Fredonia students, Marion Art Gallery director Barbara Racker believes it can help broaden horizons across campus.

"The exhibition allows visitors who come to the exhibition because they are interested in contemporary photography, to discover some of the best poets/poetry in the U.S.," said Racker.

Van Sise's mission often honed in on this purpose.

He didn't wish to solely follow his own taste, trying to instead give a vast overview of America's finest poets.



Students tour 'Children of Grass: A Portrait of American Poetry' in Marion Art Gallery. Photo by SETH CAMPBELL | Special to The Leader



Students tour 'Children of Grass: A Portrait of American Poetry' in Marion Art Gallery. **Photo by SETH CAMPBELL** | Special to The Leader

“Almost all the poets who are featured were suggested by the poets already included, rather than from the fickle whims of my own taste,” said Van Sise. “The result is that you've got a lot of different poets with a lot of different backgrounds and a lot of different outlooks and a lot of different styles.”

“I'm excited for students to go and do what I did- read some poetry, "meet" some poets, maybe find something that really hits their wavelength or something that really doesn't.”

And in terms of what those already familiar with poetry can stand to gain, Racker believes the same effect can occur.

“Visitors who come to the exhibition to see the poets' portraits and read their poems are introduced to the artistic freedom of contemporary photography,” she said.

Indeed, these photographs are the result of plenty of artistic freedom.

There are photos ranging from a well-dressed man in clown makeup to a woman stepping through a torn American flag.

And, of course, the aforementioned dining horse is there, too.

The woman depicted in the photograph is acclaimed poet Joy Harjo, and the photograph/poem goes by the title “Drowning Horses.”

Harjo will be coming to Fredonia for a poetry reading on Friday, April 2, at 5 p.m.

This, like the exhibition/Van Sise's lecture, will be free for all visitors.

For newcomers to her work, Reed Readers will be exploring Harjo's work and its themes prior to her visit.

These meetings will be occurring Wednesday, March 25 and Wednesday, April 1 at 1 p.m. at Reed Library's garden and are open to anyone.

Of course, Fredonia is just one stop for Children of Grass's touring journey.

For Van Sise, the feeling is something like his child leaving home.

“People who have children will tell you that one of the great joys of it is when the kid grows up and becomes their own person, moves beyond you,” said Van Sise. “The work's gone beyond my command; my kid is its own person. Of course, my kid is going off to college!”



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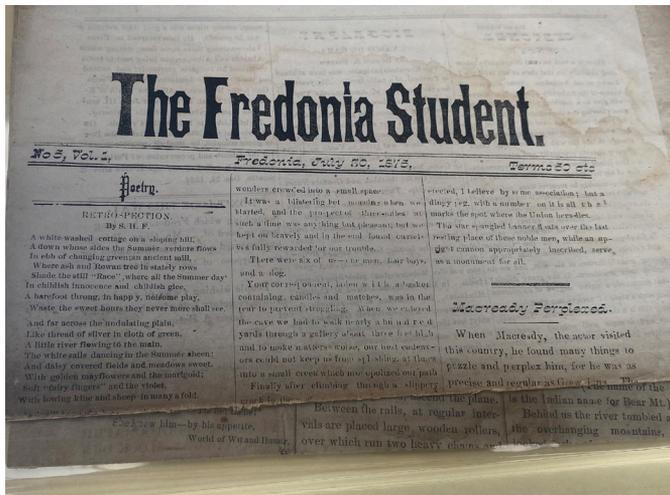
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# English department highlights student creativity with 'Zine Fest'



A copy of 'The Fredonia Student,' a student magazine published on July 30, 1875.

Photo by MATT VOLZ | Editor in Chief



Nadia Christina presents 'Antigo-Zine' and '8 Thingz I Rly Rly Like' at 'Zine Fest.'

Photo by IZZIE NOELLE | Photo Editor



Justin Hoock presents 'Rock a Little' at 'Zine Fest.'

Photo by MATT VOLZ | Editor in Chief



Morgan Randomski and Maya Kulick table for Animation Illustration Club during 'Zine Fest.'  
**Photo by MATT VOLZ | Editor in Chief**



Kaylee Gabalski draws a 'Really Bad Pet Portrait' at a table run alongside Rylee Crandall at 'Zine Fest.'  
**Photo by MATT VOLZ | Editor in Chief**



Burning Books, a Buffalo-based bookstore, sold books and stickers at 'Zine Fest.'  
**Photo by MATT VOLZ | Editor in Chief**

# Office of International Education commemorates International Study Abroad Day

**EMILY SCHULTZ-CONE**

Special to The Leader

If you are a student looking to study outside the country, it is never too early to start planning.

On Monday, Feb. 23, SUNY Fredonia's Office of International Education (OIE) celebrated International Study Abroad Day.

At Fredonia, nearly 10% of students will study abroad in their college career, and the OIE is designed to help students plan for their experience.

Jessica Gatto, the Associate Director of Global Citizenship, held two informational meetings.

There, students were encouraged to ask questions, grab pizza and enter for a chance to win a bag of foreign snacks.

"The meeting helped me narrow down where I might want to go and the program that would be best for me," Ryan Osborne, a student who attended the meeting, said. "It also gave me more information about the financing options available."

Gatto reviewed the various types of programs, including their requirements, scholarships and the application process.

If you're curious about studying abroad, but didn't get the chance to attend the meeting, you're in luck.

Students at Fredonia currently have access to over 600 programs offered throughout the SUNY school system.

With options in over 60 countries, there is something for everyone.

The programs are broken into three categories: study abroad, exchange and faculty-led.

Study abroad is the most common way for students to study outside of the country.

This program typically extends throughout the entire semester but can be extended to last even longer.

With all international study options, students will get needed credits towards their major, minor and/or Fredonia Foundations.

Full-time programs, including study abroad, award 12+ credits per semester.

It, however, has the potential to be the most expensive option out of the three.

With study abroad, students are subject to the foreign universities' tuition prices.

These prices are typically more than those offered here at Fredonia. Gatto said the most expensive trip she approved through study abroad came out to over \$40,000.

But, of course, it depends on which university/country you plan on visiting.

Another way you can travel abroad through SUNY is with faculty-led programs.

Students who join a faculty-led program will receive 3 to 6 credits.

These programs typically consist of a few weeks abroad over summer or J-term.

Since they are shorter in length, the price often ranges between \$4,000 and \$5,000, making it a more affordable option.

If you want a longer program but the cost of study abroad scares you, don't worry!

There are plenty of scholarships and financing options available.

However, if you're still uneasy, the exchange program may be a better fit for you.

The exchange program also stretches the length of a semester, allowing students to really get a feel of where they're staying.

With this program, universities partner with foreign universities. For every student sent from one school, another must be sent back.

This way, students only have to pay their Fredonia tuition in order to experience study abroad.

The downside is that it's harder to get into, and you may also be waiting a while for an opportunity to open up.

Gatto said they send students through the exchange program as often as they can.

Still, usually only one student is sent every semester, or every other semester.

Fredonia has a partnership with Niigata University in Japan. Niigata University is located in Niigata Prefecture on the west coast of Japan's Honshu Island.

If you are a student interested in studying in Japan, now may be the perfect time to start your research.

On Wednesday, March 4 and Thursday, March 5, Niigata University's Dr. Hadley, a professor of sociolinguistics and Western culture studies, returned to Fredonia to join Gatto in two informational sessions.

The two discussed our exchange program and studying abroad in Japan.

If you were unable to attend either meeting, you can always reach out to the OIE at [fredonia.edu/academics/international-education](http://fredonia.edu/academics/international-education).

*Happy St. Patrick's Day  
from The Leader!*

# SPORTS

## Braun announces retirement after 27 years as volleyball coach

**MITCHELL HORUCY**

Sports Editor

It was 1999 when a freshly graduated student from SUNY Cortland was hired to be the next head coach of the Fredonia women's volleyball team.

Now, 27 years later, he steps away from coaching after a storied career.

Geoff Braun isn't one to gloat about his accomplishments as a coach, whether it's his 455-267 win/loss record or his five SUNYAC coach of the year awards, which has only been won more by one other coach since his debut season in 1999.

However, the countless players he's coached will.

Alyssa Torpy, a member of the team from 2005-08, remembers "Coach Braun" for his energy on the court, but also who he was as a person off the court.

"He was always constantly available to us if we needed anything," said Torpy. "If we needed an ear, if we needed any sort of resource, he always made himself very available to us."

Jenna Sovo, a team member from 2007-2010, also spoke on his presence off the court, especially as a new college student.

"He always held us accountable, not just on the court, but in our academics as well," said Sovo. "He was another safe space we could go to if we needed."

In 2008, he coached his way to not only his most successful finish, but the best finish in school history.

Finishing with a 29-10 record, the team won the SUNYAC championship, beating Cortland and New Paltz while not dropping a set in either game.

It capped off a season of conference play that saw the Blue Devils go a perfect 10-0.

The team would go all the way to the round of 16 in the NCAA Tournament, winning two games against nationally ranked opponents.

He had five players earn individual recognition: Kaitlin Erdman was named SUNYAC West MVP; Amy Bertrando and Alyssa Torpy were named First-Team All-SUNYAC; Chelsea Senn was named Rookie of the Year; and Leanne Maloney earned Second-Team All-SUNYAC honors.

The team was inducted into the Fredonia Hall of Fame in 2024.



Geoff Braun gives instructions to his team during a timeout. **Photo by TRAVIS BERNHARD** | Sports Photographer



Geoff Braun yells instructions onto the court.  
**Photo by TRAVIS BERNHARD** | Sports Photographer

During the run, Braun was a calming presence during a time that was not very calm.

Rebecca Allen, a member of the 2008 team, praised his steady coaching style, even as the games got bigger.

“He’s a big proponent on keeping emotions in check and not riding that emotional roller coaster,” said Allen. “He would always be the same coach walking into the gym, whether it was Saturday morning practice or a Sweet 16 match.”

Allen was an assistant under Braun from 2019-23, and she got to see how Braun operates.

She mentioned that when she first started coaching under him, he spoke about the consistency of a coach.

He instilled a “drop your baggage at the door” mentality to be the best possible coach you can be for your team.

If you know anything about Braun, you know how difficult that could be, with his son, Keaton, battling acute lymphocytic leukemia for the past 18 months.

The 2008 team still has a group chat they use to keep in contact with each other, as well as Braun.

When they heard about Keaton’s battle, they sprung on the opportunity to help in any way they could.

As a team, they got the family eight weeks of services around the house to help out the family.

When I spoke to Braun in the fall about his family’s journey through this battle, he mentioned how he quickly found out that everybody wants to help.

Allen, Torpy and Sova weren’t surprised that this was the case and mentioned that it’s just a testament to the impact he’s had on everyone around him.

All three spoke about the family that Braun built with his program, creating a bond that will outlast one’s time at Fredonia.

For Allen and Sova, they were on the team when Braun’s wife, Kate, had Keaton.

They both remember that entire process as if they were members of the Braun family.

Torpy also said she believes everyone on the team considers themselves “one big family.”

Before Allen joined as an assistant to Braun at Fredonia, she coached the volleyball team at her high school post-graduation.

When she received the offer, she immediately reached out to Braun.

He set up a meeting and provided her with a three-inch thick binder including almost anything one could need to coach a volleyball team.

Whether it was on or off the court, Braun impacted countless lives.

He’s unsure what the future holds for him and his professional career, but he’s excited to pursue opportunities that allow him to spend more time with his family.

The next stop for Braun is the Fredonia Hall of Fame.



Geoff Braun looks on from the bench.  
**Photo by TRAVIS BERNHARD** | Sports Photographer

# Norton calls it a career after decades with women's basketball program

**ANNIE GONDEK**  
Special to The Leader

The Fredonia women's basketball team finished with a 13-12 record, but the final game marked something bigger than the end of the season — the retirement of assistant coach Richard Norton.

Norton was celebrated for his retirement on a day the team calls "Norton Night."

"The team and I decided that for all of his time and dedication here at Fredonia, he deserved to be recognized," said junior basketball player Meghan Kruszka.

The girls warmed up for their game against Potsdam in T-shirts with Norton's face on them.

"I had no idea the scope of what they were planning," said Norton.

Along with posters and photos, Norton was surprised with a scrapbook organized by Kruszka.

"His daughter, Emily, reached out to me about the same idea, so we collaborated on our letters that we collected," Kruszka said.

The scrapbook consisted of letters not only written by current players, but by coaches and alumni as well.

"It was something that was beyond words of describing how emotional and how wonderful it was to kind of tie up my career with," Norton said about the evening.

The night ended with a 74-32 win against Potsdam, and a postgame gathering to celebrate Norton's time at Fredonia.

All the efforts put into "Norton Night" were a reflection of the impact he had on his players.

"He made Fredonia feel like home," Kruszka said when thinking about how she came to Fredonia and having walked onto the basketball team.

"Although I came here to play basketball, he puts all of that aside and truthfully cares about all of his athletes as people and wants to see us all succeed off the court," she added.

Norton started his first season with the women's basketball program in 2012.

But he has always been around Fredonia.

Norton graduated from the school in 1987, and he came back at first as an assistant soccer coach.

He then joined the women's basketball program as a volunteer basketball assistant, focused on recruiting.

This led to his assistant coach position in 2012, in which he worked with four different head coaches.



Rich Norton addresses the women's basketball team after a win over Potsdam on 'Norton Night,' Friday, Feb. 13, 2026.

Photo by TRAVIS BERNHARD | Sports Photographer



Rich Norton is honored before 'Norton Night,' Friday, Feb. 13, 2026. **Photo by TRAVIS BERNHARD** | Sports Photographer

Despite the team's sadness, they understood his decision. "We were happy that he decided to put himself first," Kruszka said. "For his whole life he has dedicated his time [to] being a coach putting players before himself and now he finally gets to enjoy his time seeing his grandkids, working out, and playing golf."

Norton's retirement allows him to fill his time with more things that coaching doesn't allow as much time for.

He plans to spend time working in a fitness business and spending more time with his daughters and granddaughters.

"They're growing and I'd like to spend some time with them and travel a bit," he said.

Despite lots of potential for women's basketball to make it into the playoffs, they fell to Canton in their final game of the regular season, pushing them out of the running.

"We had a tremendous season, and nothing can take that away from us," Norton said.

However, Norton has high expectations for the future of Fredonia women's basketball.

"I really do think that this team can win a championship in the next year or two," he said.

While the following years will be without Norton, he will still be a lasting member of Fredonia Athletics.

"Although he isn't our coach, he isn't going anywhere and will always be a part of our lives," said Kruszka.

For Norton, the feeling is mutual.

"I'm honored to say that I'll be a Blue Devil for life," he said.



From left: Grace Alexander, Kailee Bladin, Shaliyah Helmick and Caitlyn Wagner warm up in their 'Norton Night' T-shirts, Friday, Feb. 13, 2026. **Photo by TRAVIS BERNHARD** | Sports Photographer

# Men's basketball concludes season of development, hard work

**EMILY BROWN**

Special to The Leader

SUNY Fredonia's men's basketball team recently concluded its season, marking a year of development and key moments for the program.

Players and coaches say the season highlighted both the challenges and improvements the team experienced.

Entering the season, Coach Sean Smiley said the team had high expectations but struggled to maintain consistent momentum throughout the season.

"It was a frustrating year," Smiley said. "We had an unbelievable group of guys and had some pretty high hopes coming in, but we just never really caught a rhythm."

Several close losses early in the season made it difficult for the team to gain confidence, Smiley said, adding that those games can often shape how the rest of the season unfolds.

Despite the setbacks, Smiley noted that the team made progress offensively and adapted quickly in certain areas of the game, as players adjusted to the pace of college basketball.

Team captain, Ethan Sokolowski, said the transition to the college level was a learning experience for many players, especially younger teammates who were adjusting to the intensity of the game.

"I think expectations didn't really meet reality for a lot of the guys," Sokolowski said. "Once they realized how intense and difficult things actually were, it was a lot."

Injuries and a limited number of available players also created challenges throughout the season.

According to Sokolowski, the team sometimes struggled to maintain full practice.

"There were days at practice when we had eight guys," the captain said. "It was hard to push each other and keep the same level of energy when everyone was getting mentally and physically drained."

Still, the team experienced moments that showed resilience.

One game that stood out to both the coach and captain was a hard-fought home game against SUNY Canton.

"That was a dogfight the entire game," the captain said. "But we pulled it off at the end, and it showed that we had that fight in us."

Smiley also pointed to several games that demonstrated the team's competitiveness, including matchups that were decided late.

One memorable moment came during a comeback attempt against Elmira College earlier in the season, when the team rallied from a 13-point deficit to force overtime before ultimately falling short.



Head coach Sean Smiley gives instructions to his team, as assistant coach Vincent Shioleno looks on.

Photo via **EMILY BROWN** | Special to The Leader

"That one hurt a little bit because of how hard we worked to get it to overtime," Coach Smiley said.

The season also helped the captain grow as a leader, especially in understanding how to motivate teammates with different personalities and experiences.

"You've got to realize everyone needs their own level of guidance," Sokolowski said. "You can't lead everyone the same way."

The captain said he focused on leading by example and helping younger players understand what is required to succeed at the college level.

"I just tried to show them how things need to be done," he said. "I think we improved and learned a lot during the second half of the season."

As the season progressed, Smiley said he was proud of how the team continued to compete, even after playoffs hopes became unlikely.



The seniors of the men's basketball team, from left: Martin Garza (#14), Ethan Sokolowski (#11), Kofo Laditan (#23) and Antowan Holmes (#3).  
**Photo by TRAVIS BERNHARD** | Sports Photographer

“Our guys fought the entire year,” Smiley said. “They kept coming to practice and kept competing even when we were eliminated from playoff contention.”

Although the team did not achieve the results it hoped for this season, both the coach and captain said the team remained committed and continued competing throughout the year.

Looking ahead, Smiley said the team hopes to build on what players learned this season and continued working toward one of the program's main goals: returning to the conference playoffs.

“We have the right people in the program,” Smiley said. “Now we just have to keep improving and take the next steps.”

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# 5th Quarter: Bills add Moore, trade Johnson as free agency begins

**MITCH HORUCY**

Sports Editor

After what I thought would be a calm offseason and free agency for the Bills, they've made a plethora of moves before free agency even opened.

Starting with the biggest move they made, the team traded a second-round pick to the Chicago Bears for D.J. Moore and a fifth-round pick.

I love this move for the Bills. Josh Allen isn't getting any younger — he turns 30 on May 21 — and wide receiver is still a big need.

Moore isn't what he once was, amounting to 761 total yards and seven touchdowns this past season.

However, I don't think the numbers tell the whole story.

From Weeks 1 through 9, he managed 457 yards, compared to just 279 over the rest of his 2025 campaign.

This is more a product of the emergence of Luther Burden and Rome Odunze.

While Odunze battled injury during the second half of the season, Burden had 70% of his 682-yard receiving total from Week 10 on, which is when Moore saw his production dip.

In Buffalo, Moore won't have to battle with many other wideouts for targets, with his only two competitors being Khalil Shakir and Dalton Kincaid.

He may not put up a 1,200-yard season like we've seen him do before, but he will add a proven deep threat and a receiver that can consistently get open in man coverage, something the team hasn't had since Stefon Diggs and John Brown.

Moving into free agency, the team had work to do to get below the cap floor.

They worked on that by cutting Dane Jackson, Taylor Rapp and Curtis Samuel.

They also traded Taron Johnson to the Raiders in a late-round pick swap.

I expected three of the four, but Johnson was a bit surprising.

He's been a high-level nickelback since he came into the league in 2018, gaining a Second-Team All-Pro nod in 2023.

This past season, though, his play took a bit of a dip.

Combined with a new defensive scheme by Jim Leonhard coming in, it made sense to move on.

He leaves after having possibly the most iconic Bills moment since the Allen era started, with that play being his 101-yard pick-6 against Baltimore in the divisional round of the 2020 season.

A final player who wasn't a part of this wave of cuts who I think is a worthy trade candidate is Dawson Knox.

He's become a staple of this era of the Buffalo Bills, but the team saves \$9.4 million if they cut him.



Taron Johnson intercepts a Lamar Jackson pass and returns it for a 101-yard touchdown, Saturday, Jan. 16, 2021.

**Image property of the Buffalo Bills.**

To me, that's a no-brainer.

With those five cuts, as well as restructures to Allen, Moore, Spencer Brown and Ed Oliver, the Bills should have roughly \$30 million to spend in free agency.

This is according to [StickToTheModel.com](https://www.sticktothemodel.com), a great website.

The team has a few free agents that I'm sure they'd love to bring back, but that simply isn't possible.

The players I'd bring back are David Edwards, Shaq Thompson and Brandin Cooks.

In the free market, Buffalo likely won't be making any big splashes, with many under the radar signings as fans have come accustomed to.

Starting on defense, there are three guys I really have my eye on.

On the defensive line, I'd bring Leonard Floyd back for a reunion.

Since Allen's 2018 rookie season, he's the only player to have double digit sacks in a Bills uniform, having 10.5 in 2023.

He had a bit of a down year this past season with only 3.5 sacks, but in his prior five seasons he posted at least 8.5 sacks every year, including two 10.5-sack years.

The next guy I'm interested in is Ja'Quan McMillian.

He may be too expensive for the Bills, but there's a chance they take a little bit of a swing and get a guy who thrived under Leonhard in Denver.

He plays primarily in the slot, meaning he'll essentially replace Taron Johnson.

The Broncos also placed a second-round tender on him, meaning he can still talk to other teams in free agency, but the Broncos have a chance to match whatever offer he is given.

Chances are low Brandon Beane can pull this off, but he would be a great signing.

The final defensive player is Seattle safety Coby Bryant.

He will also likely be a bit on the expensive side but would become the starting safety alongside Cole Bishop.

He was great on a Super Bowl-winning Seahawks defense and would be a great addition to the backend of the defense.

Moving to offense, the only position I'd really like to see a move be made is at receiver.

I spoke about him at the NFL trade deadline, but he was picked up by Seattle, and the rest is history, Rasheed Shaheed.

I spoke about the deep threat that Moore brings; Shaheed may be a top 10 deep threat in the NFL, as well as being a great returner to pair with Ray Davis.

It'll be interesting to see what market he gets, but if the Bills can add him, the offense could enter the conversation of best offense Allen has ever had.

At the time of reading, it's possible, even likely, that some of these dominos have fallen, but it should be entertaining to see what happens.



Leonard Floyd (#56) sacks New York Jets quarterback Zach Wilson, Sunday, Nov. 19, 2023. Image property of the Buffalo Bills.

## Kansas invalidates licenses in blatant discrimination

**JASPER BATEMAN**

DEI Chair

On Thursday, Feb. 26, thousands of transgender folks received a letter in the mail from the Kansas State Department of Revenue invalidating their license because it does not match their assigned gender at birth.

This is discrimination at face value, and many of the recipients of these letters are suing the state of Kansas with the help of the American Civil Liberties Union.

As a trans guy, this infuriates me and makes me genuinely scared of what states can do regarding basic human rights, simply for the act of discrimination in attempts to erase trans identities.

Being trans does not affect your driving ability, and taking away someone's driver's license does not simply erase their identity.

“Being trans does not affect your driving ability, and taking away someone's driver's license does not simply erase their identity.”

— Jasper Bateman

Other states should read the room and try not to follow Kansas regarding these outrageous laws.

I believe that many legislative decisions such as this have no purpose but to make trans lives harder.

What if someone who falls under the trans umbrella and received the letter had a very important appointment to go to the next day, and they were charged a cancellation fee or missed a procedure because they couldn't drive themselves?

What if they or someone they knew was having a life-threatening medical emergency and had to be taken to the hospital?

What if their dog was dying and they needed to rush them to an emergency vet?

These are real-life scenarios that many do not think about until it happens to them, and not being able to drive is a dangerous inconvenience.



Graphic by **CONNIE KLINGER** | Special to The Leader

So many people rely on their cars as their main form of transportation to get to and from places in their daily lives.

In Kansas, driving with an invalid driver's license can result in fines up to \$1,000 and/or six months in jail.

That is money a number of people, not only trans folks, do not have laying around.

It can be very hard to set aside even \$100 for a ticket, as many people are living paycheck to paycheck, especially if they are a college student or have low income.

Jail time is just straight up ridiculous in this circumstance because they were not given a grace period to fix their license and avoid complications.



The transgender pride flag. **Image via Wikimedia Commons.**

“I believe that many legislative decisions such as this have no purpose but to make trans lives harder.”

— Jasper Bateman

Not to mention, how do they expect those affected to get to the Department of Motor Vehicles to change their gender marker on their license?

They can’t drive due to the consequences.

I have no doubt that this situation caused those affected to feel upset, unheard and invalid.

Another point to mention is that a driver’s license is a common form of government issued ID that is used in daily life.

Not having a valid driver’s license can mean that you cannot purchase certain items requiring an age verification, get loans, cross the border, board a plane, verify your identity at banks, doctors’ offices, the emergency room and so much more.

Really, though, why do so many people care what trans folks do with their lives, and how does being trans affect your driving?

More people need to see that trans folks are actual people who have jobs, hobbies and dreams.

They are still the same person they have always been, just in a way that they feel most comfortable.

“Really, though, why do so many people care what trans folks do with their lives, and how does being trans affect your driving?”

— Jasper Bateman

Being trans is a constant stress of acceptance between yourself and the people around you.

Adding more stress through the legality of one's identity really should not be as much of a problem as it is.

If you know someone who is openly trans, be kind to them. Good luck with midterms!

“More people need to see that trans folks are actual people who have jobs, hobbies and dreams.”

— Jasper Bateman

# Lovercolumn: Crushes

## THE QUARTERBACK

Executive Producer of Lovercall

## THE MUSICIAN

Lovercall Producer

## BUMBLEBEE

Lovercall Producer

Hello!

We are The Quarterback, The Musician and Bumblebee: producers and hosts of the radio show Lovercall, right here in Fredonia.

Lovercall is an anonymous late-night talk show about love, relationships and more.

Students who are guests on the show use codenames to protect their identities when discussing potentially personal topics, hence the codenames of the writers of this column.

This is your reminder that none of the hosts or guests are professionals, and everything stated is based on personal experiences.

“The Quarterback” is a 21-year-old cisgender man who uses he/him pronouns and is a senior at Fredonia.

“The Musician” is a 23-year-old gender-fluid person who uses they/she pronouns and is a senior at Fredonia.

“Bumblebee” is a 19-year-old questioning person who uses he/she/they 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 can submit their questions or seek advice via Fredonia Radio’s Instagram, @fredonia\_radio, on YikYak or through the QR code provided in this column.

We answer your questions live on the radio, then add them to this column in case you missed the episode.

The show is broadcast weekly throughout the semester on Wednesday nights from 10 p.m. to 12 a.m. on WDVL 89.5 on fredoniaradio.com.

This column runs in conjunction with Lovercall and can be found in print or online at fredonialeader.org.



## Date idea of the week

We hope to provide fellow students with fun and unique date ideas in every episode.

These date ideas aren’t just for romantic partners — you could go with your friends, classmates or even go solo for a fun activity in Fredonia.

This week, get ready to spill some tea with the ones you love, because you’re having a gossip night!

Think back to middle school, when your biggest concerns in life were finding out who your best friend had a crush on or studying for a math test you definitely weren’t prepared for.

On the weekend, some of you may have had those stereotypical sleepovers, ones where you stay up late to giggle, gossip and play sleepover games like Truth or Dare or Never Have I Ever.

Some of you, though, may not have had those types of sleepovers, even though you always wanted to.

If you fall into the second category, this date idea is for you!

This date idea is flexible; it can easily be done with friends or with your significant other.

Now, we at Lovercall understand that an entire night of gossiping about others can be boring or even mean at times.

We encourage you not to go that way with this idea.

Instead, think of it as a slumber party with the ones closest to you!

If you want to have a little gossip session but don’t want to speak ill of people you know, why not spill some tea about celebrities?

This week's date idea is:

Gossip Night!

Also, remember that not all gossip is bad — sometimes, it can be positive!

For example, you might chat about how your friend who just got dumped is way too good for someone like their ex, and they deserve the world.

(In Lovercall's eyes, they ABSOLUTELY do!)

Whoever you choose to do this date idea with, remember that the whole goal is to have fun and enjoy each other's company!

### Crushes

Crushes, almost everyone gets a crush once in their life, where your heart feels light but heavy at the same time.

Crushes are a natural thing that people get when they feel attracted to someone.

This can be through fictional characters, celebrities, or everyday people you may know.

When you have a crush, it looks different for everyone.

Maybe it's one where you want to always be near them, or make sure they have anything they want like someone to vent to.

Any way you go about the crush, you still feel a slight love for the person and should like them for who they are.

When you think you're starting to gain feelings, it's important to determine if it is a crush or not.

Many people throughout time have thought they had a crush when their thoughts were just on how the person made them feel or the attention they received.

I have had to question in the past whether or not I like the attention they give me or if I love them for who they are.

I've asked myself this question a lot, and friends too when they question their own feelings.

Another thing is, after this question, one would think of the person's personality, hobbies, what they like and what they don't like.

Sometimes in cases where you are there more for the attention you can't name those things or you don't know your crush that well.

Not to say you shouldn't pursue a relationship with that person but try to possibly find out those things because the idea and attention someone gives might not be enough for an actual relationship.

Another thing you can do is talk it over with trusted friends about your feelings.

Talking over feelings in any situation is good and when it comes to talking about potential crushes.

This has even saved me multiple times when I talk over a crush with someone and then they say mention stuff that is a harsh ick to me that person cheated in the past or something like that.

Obviously try to confirm it, but they can give their input on whether it is or isn't a crush and tell you about their thoughts on pursuing that relationship.

Once you've recognized your feelings, you can go onto determine what you want to do with that crush but understanding if your "crush" is an actual crush is a good first step to understanding yourself and your feelings more.

Reach out! Do you want to ask the creators of Lovercolumn a question? Do you want advice? Fill out our form using this QR code.

Interested in being a guest on Lovercall? Email [mvolz@fredonia.edu](mailto:mvolz@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 Quarterback," "The Musician" and "Bumblebee" are members of Fredonia Radio Systems and are involved in the production of Lovercall.*



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# THE SCALLION



Satire and parody for Fredonia

## Fredonia classified as designated wetlands

**DONOVAN ANDERSON**

Special to The Leader

The sidewalks that we take every day on campus have been there for generations.

They had an initial plan before being built, and further changes occurred as time went on.

Many people are aware of why more sidewalks are built over time — desire paths.

Desire paths occur when pedestrians bypass some walkways in favor of another, often quicker or more convenient path.

These become evident over time, especially where any grass is killed, leaving a perfect dirt path between cement walkways.

One area on campus has particularly designed pathways, with that being the grass quad next to the high-rise student housing.

At eye level, the pathways are like any other, but when seen from above, the design connecting so many different entrances to the dorms becomes clear.

These varying angles facilitate efficient movement for students, allowing them to take whatever path works best for their destination.

Living in Gregory Hall the past two years gave me a unique experience: wishing for one more sidewalk.

Looking at a map, you will see a round, brick-lain area where five pathways meet.

Every time I parked my car after a long day, I arrived in that area with its comfortable benches and decorative bushes, looked longingly across the grass at my window on the side of Gregory Hall and turned toward the Williams Center to avoid getting my shoes dirty.

This inconvenient turn must have cost me seconds, perhaps even a minute(!) in lost time that I could have spent staring out my window at the lack of an extra walkway.

So, I started digging into why there is no path between that point and Gregory Hall.

As many who have lived in that area on campus could tell you, the quad gets very wet when it rains.



Photo by DONOVAN ANDERSON | Special to The Leader



Photo by DONOVAN ANDERSON | Special to The Leader

During heavy rainfall, this grassy area doesn't have the most efficient water drainage, and pools of water can form next to the walkways.

While investigating this one rainy afternoon, I was measuring the water with a ruler and taking runny notes on a damp pad of paper, tearing the saturated page with every other pen stroke.

This pooling is already inconvenient since the walkways also collect water at times, but the answer to my question appeared to be right under my now wet nose.

It occurred to me that this grass without efficient drainage and which floods at times must have gained an important ecological distinction.

The areas between the walkways in the quad are clearly Designated Wetlands.

According to the EPA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, "Wetlands are areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or ground water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support... a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions" (EPA.gov).

While there don't appear to be any other wetland-specific plants in the area, the continued survival of the grass through these floods indicates the possibility of a biological resilience to the copious liquid.

An important detail to keep in mind as we consider the marshy tendencies of this area is the fact that a designated wetland is legally protected land, safe from malignant and damaging construction.

Anyone who wants to build upon a wetland must obtain proper authorization from the government first, and the work must be laid out and cleared before construction can begin.

If the school wants to expand the pathing on campus, administrators would need to waste precious time applying for and obtaining the proper permits necessary, going from what some would consider only requiring a couple weeks at most turns into a year's long project that outlives the students currently attending.

We may never get to appreciate the seconds spared unless we take immediate action!

I'm here to suggest a solution to our problem.

Instead of continuing to suffer being mere seconds late to class or spend likely over a decade getting approved to construct on these Wetlands, I propose we petition and strike for the EPA to remove Wetlands as a legal designation, therefore nullifying any current rules and regulations about building upon them.

This would allow the school to begin construction as quickly as possible. We could get construction crews in by next week to dig up that ugly, muddy grass and lay down some more pristine concrete.

I'll be sending pamphlets by mail to every homeowner in the tri-state area to gauge support.

Ideally, we will have enough signers by next Friday so the EPA can remove that statute, and the university can start its construction by Wednesday the following week.

If anyone needs me or would like to sign my petition, I will be soaking quietly in the Campus Marsh and starving myself like Ghandi in the hopes the EPA will take their action prior to our proposed timeframe.

I'll just be trying to expedite the process a little, so any support or donations will be greatly appreciated as I'm sure I'll be hungry after my fasting.

Together we can work toward a World with No Wetlands!

# HOROS

**IZZIE NOELLE**

Photo Editor

Hi friends! I've been watching a lot of YouTube recently, and I realized ... I have a really long watch-later list. Like suuuuu-per long. SO, in an effort to reduce that list, I figured you could help me! Today I'm gonna tell you what video on my YouTube watch-later you should watch based on your zodiac sign! And yes, I've watched all the videos I listed now.



## Aries

**“analyzing the outfits in mean girls” by ModernGurlz:**

You're pretty judgmental on occasion, and I feel like you'd enjoy videos like this. Enjoy looking deeper into the outfits in “Mean Girls.”



## Taurus

**“PART 2 OF THE FURBY VIDEO - more of your haunting toy stories” by Matt Rose:**

This video has some nostalgia for old toys, but also, it's so funny. I think Furbies are so haunted, but some of these comments are so weird.



## Gemini

**“When you watch Megamind as an adult” by BubbleFlix:**

You could use a good laugh, and I think this video is perfect. It had me laughing, especially since it's been so long since I last watched it.



## Cancer

**“pov: right person wrong time [a hopeless romantic playlist for unrequited lovers]” by cherriepoppie:**

Lean into your emotional side with this playlist. Let out whatever's got you stressed and just let the music do what it's meant to.



## Leo

**“I Paid Bakeries \$5000 To Recreate AI Cakes!” by Rosana Pansino:**

Okay, I don't like AI, but I think this is something else that's interesting. AI food always looks so weird, and the cakes are interesting in person. This video is definitely interesting.



## Virgo

**“This Channel Is DUMBER Than 5 Minute Crafts” by KallmeKris:**

This whole video is so insanely chaotic, and it will definitely make you laugh with its stupidity.

# COOPES



## Libra

**“I Paid Dress Makers \$5000 To Recreate AI Dresses” by Mia Maples:**

As a Libra, I think this video is so interesting. Looking at these dresses that a computer created and seeing what the seamstresses could create was so cool. Very fairy tale.



## Scorpio

**“making scenarios about your special person in your head — a playlist” by strrawbrr:**

I feel like you’d want something in the background, and this playlist is kinda perfect for that. Hopefully you enjoy!



## Sagittarius

**“No Sewing!! Ball Gown Tutorial” by Exa Letric:**

I think you’d enjoy a fun little project. Maybe you have nowhere to wear the gown, but that doesn’t mean you can’t have fun and make it anyways!



## Capricorn

**“The Coraline Bug Theory” by Karsten Runquist:**

A good theory video would appeal to your personality I think. You’re typically into some more serious stuff, and I think this is the perfect mix of fun and serious.



## Aquarius

**“The Call of Cthulhu as Told by Dr. Seuss” by KURbzVO:**

I just know you love a good conspiracy theory. “Call of Cthulhu” has a lot of conspiracies and wild theories in general. This version is just so funny, please watch it.



## Pisces

**“Say No More | Short Film - Narafi 2025” by Joppe Persyn:**

A short film about relationships, honestly very funny. I will admit, the beginning is a little jarring but stick with it past that and it’s a good movie. I love the concept, plus one of the people who worked on it is my friend!

PRIZES

FREE!

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TO GET A ♥  
☆ PRIZE! ☆  
♥

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