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Women’s Cross-Country Wins First-ever Conference Title

By: Kemper Kosloski

The Big Blue women’s cross-country team made history in Warrenville this weekend. The team won their first CCIW conference championship in program history, edging out rival Illinois Wesleyan to capture the championship.

Alyssa Ruiz finished first for the Big Blue, placing fourth overall with a time of 22:48.00, followed by Kendra Culler-Gautschi who placed fifth with a time of 23:01.5.

The men’s team finished fourth overall, led by senior Bradyn Olmstead, who finished with a time of 25.07.4, earning him all-conference honors with a ninth-place finish in the conference.

Although the athletes competed on the course, head coach Andrew Craycraft understands the value of the alumni and the non-competing athletes off of it.

“I’ve responded to texts from over 50 alumni,” he said. “It was extremely rewarding to share this with them.”

Although these alumni did not capture the championship themselves, they contributed in a way that is just as valuable. They were able to see the vision that the team had for the years ahead.

“We’ve been building generations of athletes,” Craycraft said. “Although they may never have won a championship, their role was just as important as the runners themselves.

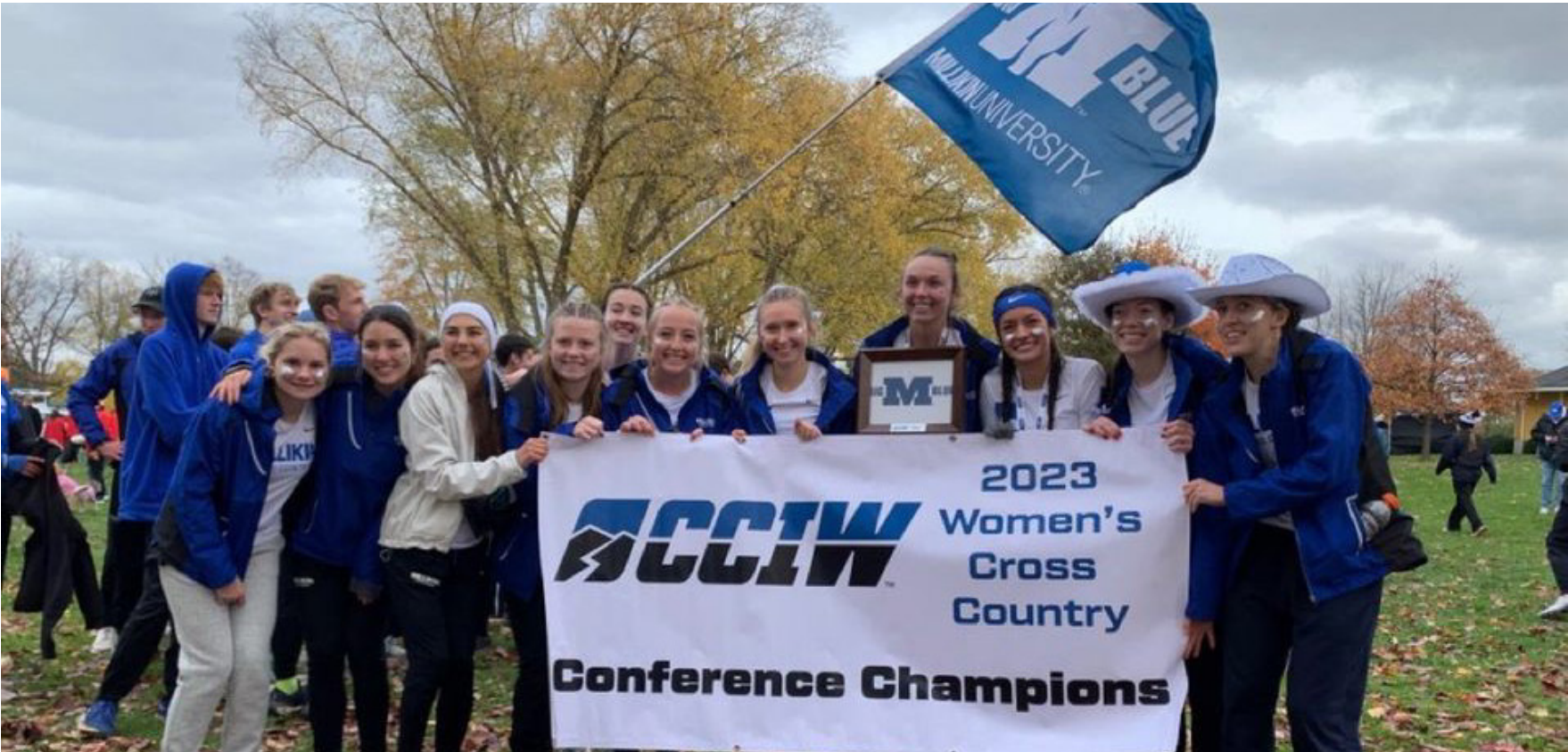


Photo courtesy of Millikin Athletics

They understood the long-term vision of this team, and they helped to build the program into what it is today.”

Changing up the message is what Craycraft believes helped create a shift in momentum for the team.

“Last year, we were too worked up about the potential outcomes of the races we competed in,” he said. “This

year, we focused on the process. We focused on taking care of each other and ourselves. We looked at what we could gain, rather than what we could lose.”

The team was able to create history through the hard work that they put in throughout the fall. The work that these athletes do is not for the faint of

heart.

“There is nothing convenient about what we do,” Craycraft said. “Our athletes wake up at 4:30 each morning to practice as a team. One of our top five women’s athletes can’t even make this time, so she practices in the evening. This just shows how much of a family our team really is.”

The two teams will next compete at the NCAA regionals on November 11th. This strong showing by both teams shows that they are ready to compete at the next level, not only individually, but as a family.

“The Moors” Captured Millikin

By: Sophie Nicholson

Amidst a theatrical season of YA musicals and rococo-era satires, “The Moors” stands out as a play that defies genre classification. A mixture of the contemporary and the classic, the comedic and the creepy, the sarcastic and the sentimental, Jen Silverman’s 2016 thriller comes to Millikin at the time we need it most.

“The Moors” is an abstract Brontean pastiche that reveals the damaging effects of isolation. Many of us can relate to these thematic elements since the collective trauma of the pandemic. The story is about two sisters, practical and power-hungry Agatha and alternately childish and treacherous Huldrey; their maid of many names; and their depressed Mastiff. The three coexist in isolation, but the arrival of a governess named Emily and an injured moorhen bring romance and murder into their lives.

The choice to put on a mainstage show that has a small cast like “The Moors” is an unusual one for Millikin. The faculty typically select larger productions to include more students. However, the big scale of the other shows selected this season allowed for director and adjunct Professor of Theater and Dance Denise Myers to tackle this ambitious play.

“It gave a lot of great acting opportunities to our acting majors,” Myers said. “So it turned out to be a perfect piece.”

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Myers chose this play because of its brilliant writing. Though “The Moors” has many aesthetic signifiers of a period piece, the characters’



relationships with one another and the themes the show addresses are decidedly modern. Myers hoped the show would resonate with audiences today.

“It’s a gothic thriller, it’s funny, it has female empowerment and queer issues, and the themes of people wanting to be seen and to be heard, so it’s speaking to a lot of different audiences,” she said.

Collette Phillips, a senior BFA musical theater major who played the sisters’ maid, described the importance of the show’s messaging.

“The Moors’ has so many important issues about relationships and isolation and abuse, and it sparks that conversation and makes you think about what it means,” Phillips said.

Cooper Eidson, a senior BFA acting major who played the family’s mastiff, views the show as a kind of morality play. As the only male-presenting person in the production, Eidson thinks that, while the show highlights a lot of women’s issues, it also explores controlling patterns men can fall into in romantic relationships.

“With a cast of five women and one man, I think it’s really telling that the only male part in the play is playing a dog as well,” Eidson said.

Students Describe Off-Campus Shooting

Br: Carin Houser

Two students were involved in a shooting off-campus at 6:57 p.m. Oct. 15. The students were traveling from an off-campus church function, to an on-campus one when the gunman opened fire.

The Decaturian has identified and spoken with the victims. Due to concerns regarding the safety of the victims, the Decaturian is not releasing the men’s names. To protect their privacy, the quotes from the victims will only be identified as the passenger or the driver of the vehicle rather than the name of the individual.

After leaving the off-campus function, the students attempted to make a left hand turn at the intersection of McKinley and Oakland.

“When you look left there’s like a train overpass,” the passenger said, “So you only see about two to three seconds ahead.”

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The intersection of Oakland and McKinley has been an issue in Decatur for many years. According to WAND News, a 2020 accident involving a city bus injured four. In 2021, another individual was hospitalized from a vehicle vs. bicycle accident at the same location.

Upon making their left hand



Photo Courtesy of Getty Images/iStockphoto

turn, the students were almost t-boned.

“We pulled out into what looked like there was nobody there,” the passenger said.

After pulling out to make their turn, a vehicle appeared. The driver had seconds to react, so he quickly completed the turn.

“We have a recurring joke that whenever [the driver] drives, we almost get into an accident,” the passenger said.

After their near-accident, the students continued their drive to campus. After driving through the stoplight at the intersection of Oakland and Ravina Park, a vehicle pulled up to the passenger side of the students car.

“This guy pulls up right next to us,” the passenger said, “It wasn’t like he was slowly passing us, he pulled up right next to it.”

After pulling up to the side of the victims car, the other

driver signaled for the victims to roll their window down. The passenger rolled his window down halfway.

The driver yelled at the men for cutting him off previously. The passenger believes he replied, “I was like I was like ‘Dude, I’m so sorry. Like that wasn’t our intention to do that.’”

At this moment, the gunman lifted his gun.

“I saw him lift up a gun,” the passenger said, “I saw the first muzzle flash.”

The passenger wrapped his hands around the back of his neck and ducked his head into his lap. Meanwhile the driver swerved into the incoming traffic lane so they could get distance between them and the gunman’s car.

“When he first started shooting, he was probably within eight feet of us,” the passenger said.

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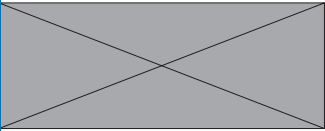
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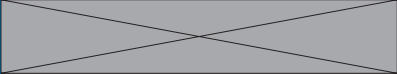
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Engage in the Conversation

The Decaturian was founded in 1903 to be the voice of all Millikin students. It is a resource available to anyone in the Millikin community.

We encourage all students to write letters to the Editor to share their voice.

What really bothers you about campus? What do you want to see more of? What issues do you think people need to be aware of?

The benefit of sending letters to the editor is that it will reach different audiences from your usual social media post because, as a press that published physical papers and that has a wider reach, our social media algorithms are more diverse than the average person.

Your voice can also become a permanent part of Millikin history, as almost all published articles—even if they are online-only—go into Millikin’s archives.

Access the Letters to the Editor:



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Off-Campus Shooting cont.

The Decatur Police Department has not yet released the amount of casings that were recovered from the scene. However, the passenger believes the number of shots fired to be around 10.

After swerving, the victims pulled into the Grace-Land Fairlawn Funeral Home parking lot.

“I was like, dude,” The passenger said, “I was like, ‘if this guy comes back, we can’t just be sitting here.’ So we both get out of the car.”

After exiting the vehicle, the passenger recognized that the driver had been wounded from the gun fire.

“He tried to start moving, and I can see that he was bleeding on his shoulder,” the passenger said.

The passenger reassured the driver that they were okay. They proceeded to hide behind a building.

The driver called his dad, who is a police officer at another town’s police department, while the passenger called 911.

“Thankfully, there was a police officer stationed like a mile and a half away,” the passenger said, “So she was there, within like, within a minute.”

Once the officer arrived, the passenger began to realize the extent of his own injuries.

“ I didn’t really feel anything,” the passenger said, “I felt my neck and I was like, ‘wow,’ when something really warm. My hand was covered in blood.”

The driver was taken by ambulance to the hospital first since he had sustained a more severe injury. The driver was shot in his LAT muscle, right under his shoulder and his neck was skinned by a bullet.

In the passenger’s ride to the hospital, he saw himself in the mirror.

“I end up getting in the back of this ambulance,” the passenger said, “ A guy and a girl are with me. And I couldn’t help but just be grateful that I

was still alive.”

Despite his life being inches from being over, in these moments he felt content with his life.

“ I was like, ‘If it all ends tonight,’ it was weird, but I was like, ‘I think I’m okay with it.’” the passenger said.

Both the driver and the passenger are strong believers in God.

“I’m satisfied with what God has done with my life so far,” the passenger said, “and when I was in there... I wasn’t thinking about my accomplishments or my aspirations for the person I wanted to be. I was just like, I’m so happy that I have given my life to Christ.”

The passenger sustained three injuries in total. Each of his injuries are from bullets grazing his body. He was grazed on his head, neck, and lower back.

According to the doctors in the ER, a half inch difference on any of the passengers wounds would have resulted in him being paralyzed, or dead.

“It was truly an act of God that we are both still alive and as well in shape as we are in,” the passenger said.

The driver and passenger are expected to make full recoveries from their injuries. The driver returned to Decatur Monday night to attend a prayer circle held for the victims. The passenger hopes to return to town as soon as he can, but is waiting for his concussion symptoms to subside before doing so.

The investigation surrounding this event is still ongoing, and the Decatur Police Department is asking for the public’s assistance. Anyone who witnessed this incident or has video surveillance footage of the shooting is encouraged to contact the Decatur Police Department’s Criminal Investigations Division (217-424-2734) or Crimestoppers (217-423-8477). They ask for patience from the community as they will release more information as it becomes

Prayers After the Shooting

By: Sophie Gibbs

Last weekend, two Millikin students were involved in a shooting. What could have been a tragic encounter turned into a tremendous show of faith. Both students involved were coming from one church event and on their way to another, and both are very involved in the faith community on campus. As soon as people from the church community heard about the accident, they arrived in droves to the hospital. Though they weren’t allowed in, they stayed outside to pray and provide comfort during such a scary time. But the community did not stop there.

The next day, a night of prayer was held at Renaissance church, to show support for those affected by the event. One of the people involved in the accident showed up and shared their story. Instead of fear and anger, they showed gratefulness, peace, and hope. They shared how the encounter made them feel closer to God than ever before. The speech moved everyone in the room; the strength of the Lord was undeniable in that moment. Many people embraced and expressed their gratitude that both students involved were alive. The night consisted of group prayer and talks from both Millikin students and adults involved in the church groups on campus. Each person shared their story about



that night and just how important faith is in those moments. Millikin has three prominent faith groups on campus: Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Intervarsity, and Newman Catholic. Each group hosts many big events per year, and have weekly meetings to go along with. Of every church event ever hosted on this campus, that one felt different. Not only were people coming together in faith, but also to

celebrate a miracle and give thanks to God for the safety of their friends. In times like this, community is more important than ever. One bible quote has stuck out since the accident: “You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good. He brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people.” Genesis 50:20.



News

Reynolds “Cautiously Optimistic,” Amid New Academic Year

By: Carin Houser

After another long year of financial stringency for the university, President Jim Reynolds is cautiously optimistic about Millikin's current financial position. With the data currently available to him, Reynolds does not expect another round of cuts this year. “We talk a lot about we can't cut our way to prosperity,” Reynolds said, “I think that we've had to do the necessary things to help us to start to deal with a pretty significant financial issue that we faced. And we've done that and so now it's really about recruitment and retention,” According to Reynolds, retention for first-year to second-year students is up 4% this semester. “One year is not a trend, but I feel like we've made some difficult but good decisions and we have a good group of people that are working on the issues going forward,” Reynolds said. When Reynolds came to Millikin in 2020, he knew the university had some financial issues to straighten out, but he was unaware of the magnitude of the situation.

“When I first got here, I think in one of the very first public discussions we had it was around a \$10 million deficit,” Reynolds said. The \$10 million deficit had approximately \$8 million in operating costs, and \$2 million in debt payments. Since the declaration of financial stringency, the deficit has been cut in half. “We've been able to cut that in half by paying off some debt and by some of the other things that we needed to do,” Reynolds said. While the university remains under financial stringency, Reynolds believes Millikin is on the right track. “We're at a turning point and I think that we've made that positive turn,” Reynolds said. This year marks the 4th year President Reynolds has been the President of the university, but COVID has made each year drastically different and unpredictable. Not only did COVID prevent Millikin from putting on its iconic performances, such as Vespers, but it hindered high school drama clubs. “When I look around campus and I think about the fine arts,” Reynolds said, “We've lost stu-

dents in the fine arts because many of them didn't have the chance in high school to do those sorts of things,” Now that COVID restrictions have been lifted, and high schools have been able to gather for performances, students are being given the opportunity to engage in the arts before going to college. “We have a much better chance recruiting more students into the arts,” Reynolds said. In addition to the arts program returning to normal recruiting practices, Millikin is renovating and rearranging spaces such as West Towne to give students better opportunities. The new agribusiness program in the Tabor School of Business has officially kicked off as well. When the university is financially stable enough to no longer operate under financial stringency guidelines, the university will declare an end to the status. While the status does mean the university has work to do, Reynolds wants to emphasize the difference between financial stringency and financial exigency. “Financial stringency is really more of a technical term or a term of art,” Reynolds said,



“The idea is that we are not in any way going bankrupt. [Declaring this] was a way for us to employ some different actions so that we could try to manage our way out of the financial issue. It's different than financial exigency, which really says

we're going out of business and faculties,” Reynolds contributes Millikin success to our strong academic programs, good faculty, and dedicated staff members.

The Wall is Finally Blue

Freshman Works with APO to Obtained her Gold Award

By: Madelyn Cummins

The football wall has finally been repainted after looking like an eyesore for years. The project took dozens of hours and many helping hands to complete, and the fresh blue paint can be admired from the football field all the way to the Center of Theatre and Dance, directly in front of where the new athletic facility is planned to be built. It's a small splotch of hope, which has been long overdue for Millikin. “It was a big project, and I needed to do something for my Gold Award in Girl Scouts.” Morgan Potter, a freshman Exploratory Studies major, said. The Gold Award is the highest award one can earn in Girl Scouts, and not many achieve it. It requires a lot of paperwork, a minimum of 80 hours of service, and determined dedication. Potter was able to complete all those hours and the logistical side of the project in a little over a month. “I started early August, and the deadline was September 30th.” Potter said. Alpha Phi Omega, the only service-based, co-ed fraternity on Millikin's campus, had been looking to fix up the football wall for some time. “We had wanted to work on it for a while because we knew how bad it was.” Riley Kell,

president of APO, said. “Then Morgan, who is one of our pledges, needed a Gold Award project for Girl Scouts. She approached us, and we were like ‘Yeah, of course!’ “It was a really great way to give back to the campus.” Kell said. When Potter was nearing the end of her project, APO stepped in with resources and manpower, helping to efficiently finish the wall before the deadline. “You have to complete all 80 hours by yourself.” Potter said. While some organizations or scout groups allow others' service hours to count toward the requirement minimum, Girl Scouts does not. Though repainting a wall looks simple on paper, there were a few hiccups and setbacks Potter experienced on her path to completion. “There were so many different layers of paint on the mural that we didn't know about. It didn't look like a great start, and it got worse when we started scraping.” Potter said. “There were four or five different shades of blue underneath.” Potter said. “So it was really nice to see it all just become uniform and flat. That was probably my favorite part.” It was frustrating, putting in a full days' work scraping the wall, and then coming back the next day to mold or morning

dew that would have loosened up even more gunk – making the process seem never-ending. Members of APO helped Potter for only four days, and the rest was up to the devoted Gold Award candidate. Not only did Potter plan out and finalize the tedious paperwork involved with the award, she was also able to apply herself and artistic talents in a way that benefited her community. “Watching the Gold Award project take place, the actual action part, is always entertaining.” Tara Becker, vice president of membership and alumni liaison of APO, as well as a Girl Scout leader, said. “She did a fantastic job.” Becker said. Having been through the award process as a recipient herself, Becker can appreciate the time-commitment and hard work that is needed in order to complete a project of such high caliber. The fruits of Morgan Potter's committed efforts, along with APO's willingness to help, is an excellent example of what the university has always done right. By banding together to help their community in little – and in this case, not so little – ways, successes such as this one showcase the admirable characteristics the Millikin population shares.



Potter stands in front of her completed project
Photo by Melinda Potter



Damage on the wall in May 2023
Photo by Carin Houser

Poe In the Pit:
Our Favorite
Spooky Millikin
Tradition

By: Sophie Nicholson
Poe in the Pit is a time-honored tradition in the Millikin English department. With a storied history dating back to late-night poetry readings at the Fairview cemetery, students and faculty alike return year after year to share in the spooky tradition of snacks, games, and poetry reading. The English club is holding this year’s Poe in the Pit in the CTD ground floor lobby on Wednesday, October 25 from 6:00-9:00 p.m. Millikin students from all departments can attend for free. Everyone is encouraged to dress up and compete in the annual costume contest for a chance to win some spooky prizes. The current iteration of Poe in the Pit was pioneered by Millikin English alum Gwen Klinkey, who ran Poe in the Pit the last four years. “We always read at least one Edgar Allan Poe story. ‘The Raven’ is the one we have to do every single year. We’ve done trivia pretty consistently, which is a hit, and we play games, we have snacks,” Klinkey said. Sophomore English literature and professional writing major Anna Quick looks forward to continuing Poe in the Pit as the new president of English club. “This is a great opportunity for the English department to share what we do and to continue an ongoing tradition that people of all majors can enjoy,” Quick said. Many of the English faculty also look forward to Poe in the Pit, having attended the event for years. Professors come in costume and compete against students in the trivia contest. “The professors who’ve been doing it year after year are looking at us and they’re having fun because we’re having fun,” said Page Shields, a senior professional writing major. “The more into it we are, they meet the energy times ten.” Beyond celebrating literature, Poe in the Pit is simply a good time. As midterms have come and gone and assignments continue to pile up, this Halloween celebration offers a chance for students to socialize and de-stress. “It’s something that’s just fun,” Quick said. “It’s an opportunity to get into the Halloween spirit.” More surprises may be in store, but you’ll have to turn up to find out! Support English club by attending Poe in the Pit this Wednesday from 6:00-9:00 p.m.

By: Madelyn Cummins

10.25.23

Tonight was my very first- and unfortunately last- time attending Poe in the Pit. Whilst Poe’s spooky stories and poetry have always struck my fancy, my lack of energy and struggles with introversion kept me away. But not tonight. I even blocked out my work schedule for this event. Upon arrival, there was a slight chill that shot through my lungs- even though it was well over eighty-degrees and sweat was accumulating around my hairline. It was dark, with warm yellow lights sprinkled around the floor level of CTD. No-Face was sitting at the far end of the room, observing the festivities quietly, toying with a thick tome. It was unclear as to who was sporting that costume, but one thing was obvious: they had impeccable taste. Others were dressed up in less impressive costumes aside from Strawberry Shortcake. She was adorable, obviously my favorite costume there. Strawberry Shortcake was my childhood, Strawberryland like a second home. We gathered into a circle- a horribly misshapen attempt at a circle, which I jokingly commented that it was a home-school circle (a running joke in the homeschooling community, because for some odd reason homeschoolers can’t form a circle, let alone line up straight. Probably because we defy social norms and strict authority that requires us to fall into place.) but no one seemed to get the reference. Line by line, we each took turns reading Poe’s The Raven. No-Face began the train of oral recitation, reading the entire first section of the infamous poem. Then it was passed along, ritualistically. It was almost cultish. But in a good way. Maybe. The rhythm was broken by attendees who passed along the poem, not wanting to read, and perhaps that’s where things began to grow questionable. There was a thud, and we turned to see that the balloon decorations had fallen down. It knocked my can of soda, spilling all around my bag and onto the copy of Poe’s collected works that I brought along, just in case the event called for more spooky stories or poetry. Now, CTD is new and therefore not haunted. Yet. But a chill ran through the air after the balloons fell. Perhaps the fans that had been set up were generating more airflow, but coincidence or not it was un-

settling. The ghost-clad individual resumed reading. The room became drafty, blowing their sheet about. No one was complaining, though, for they all were sweating underneath their sweaters or cumbersome costume fabric. “Quoth the Raven nevermore.” They passed along the text. Right as the next reader opened their mouth, the lights went out. Something crashed, and the monitor’s advertising the season’s plays and musicals went black. The doors behind me flung open, and a strong breeze whooshed in, nearly knocking Strawberry Shortcake’s hat off. It was successful, however, in sweeping No-Face’s mask off. Only darkness remained where the white plastic mask had been sitting. No-Face was faceless. Which was more sickening than it should have been. “How dare thou disrespect the great Edgar Allen Poe?!” No-Face bellowed. Someone beside me screamed. The faceless creature was staring at me. Even with no eyes, I felt its burning gaze. I stepped back and tripped, landing on the refreshments table. Glass crunched beneath my elbow, and something sticky warmed my stomach, presumably an opened can of soda. I attempted to get up, but my stomach burned so hot that I couldn’t breath. The girl dressed as Strawberry Shortcake came quickly to help me up, but started screaming. The attendee dressed up as a Minecraft character was mid-air, his pickaxe lodged straight into his stomach. He started crying blood, which was rather odd, but nowhere near as bizarre as his frozen smile. The windows went black. Everything went black. Only the ghost was visible in the pitch dark of the room. Screams erupted, so intense that my ears started ringing and my dinner felt like it was less in my stomach than in my mouth. I clutched my stomach as I wretched, realizing that the centerpiece- a glass Frankenstein’s monster- had impaled my side completely. A laugh emerged from my throat, a little too violent and high-pitched. I frantically patted down my jeans. Where was my phone? My pockets were empty. I tried calling out for the others, but all I heard were their agonizing screams. A cool breeze surged through my hair, the sound of bones cracking coming from the right left my stomach tumbling. A girl screeched nearby, spewing a litany of curse words.

Then it went silent. A white light pierced through the windows, nearly blinding me. My eyes adjusted to the brightness, but I wish they hadn’t. Thirteen lifeless bodies lay sprawled across the floor, some flung over the couches and one lying sacrilegiously atop the piano. Blood pooled around each one’s stomach. I hurled again. No-Face was nowhere to be seen. The girl dressed as Strawberry Shortcake groaned. I crawled over to help, lifting up her blood-stained bonnet: her eyes had been gouged out. After seeing her eye sockets bloodied and empty, I wish mine had been too. The world tilted sideways, my legs took on their own conscience and scrambled to the corner where my bag was and sprinted to the nearest exit. The door was locked. I ran to the next one. Locked, too. The only place left was the restroom, and so I locked myself into a stall, located my phone and tried calling the police. The battery was dead. I swear it was at least a 60% charge before I left my apartment. What the heck was happening? Something rattled the stall door. So this is where I die? In the women’s bathroom of CTD, attending a spooky-turned- massacre of an English event? After what felt like hours, the lock slid slowly to the left and the door swung open, creaking. I squinted my eyes shut, hard. I felt an icy cold hand on my arm. Shaking violently I opened my eyes, one at a time. It was security. A long moment passed, our eyes locked. Trustworthiness was not the feeling he was conveying, but there was no other option. “They’re all dead. Did you see them?” I whispered, feeling nauseated. He looked at me with empty eyes, and guided me out of the building, onto the patio. Ambulances and police cars were parked in the grass. Blue and red lights were

flashing, but I couldn’t hear the sirens. Odd. Perhaps they wanted to keep this under wraps, as Millikin always tends to do with incidents such as these. The security guard was waving at me, which was also odd. I waved back. He was whispering something, but I couldn’t hear it. One of the paramedics also was whispering something to me, but why be so quiet? No one is going to hear this conversation aside from the police and me. They carted out the bodies. One by one. Slowly, like a funeral procession. I got sick again, my stomach screaming in pain as any contents from the past few days emptied itself in the grass. Someone patted my shoulder, the female officer was saying something. Whispering, yet again. “Why are you whispering?” I asked. I couldn’t hear my own voice. What was happening? She produced a pad and pen, and wrote on it. Can you hear anything? I shook my head. She scribbled some more. OK We are going to bring you to the ER and then ask you some questions about what happened. Do you need anything? My stomach filled with ice. I shook my head again. They drove me to the hospital. I couldn’t imagine the ambulance bill, but right now all I wanted to do was turn back time and never think about Edgar Allen Poe ever again. The paramedic, whose eyes were a beautiful deep green, smiled sadly at me and put up his hands, counting down from 10 to 1. Then he put something over my nose and he started to look really wonky. Like I was looking at his reflection in the pond. His eyes turned to a deep purple, then black and then he didn’t have a face. I tried to scream, tried to kick him away but I was strapped down. My vision went out. Falling. Falling. Falling. Like in an endless pit of darkness.



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Arts & Entertainment

Troye Sivan’s “Something to Give Each Other” Is Bold, Provocative, and Carefree

By: Eli Bland
When I was a freshman in high school I really started to fall in love with pop music. Artists like Lorde and Billie Eilish showed me how it can be so much more than just what’s on the radio. Not long after, I discovered Troye Sivan who opened me up to a variety of different pop subgenres that I still adore today. Charli XCX with hyperpop and Magdalena Bay with synthpop just to name a few. Now nearly six years later, Sivan returns with his third studio album and reminds me why I fell in love with his music and pop as a whole. “Something to Give Each Other” hones in on what I believe Sivan has always been capable of as an artist. Bringing in even more inspiration from his experimental contemporaries, this record feels like a

throwback and a trendsetter simultaneously. Opener “Rush” is the perfect example of this, bringing in ’80s style group vocals with a booming house inspired synth line you could only hear in 2023. “What’s the Time Where You Are?” and “Honey” continue this vibe quite well with more house and breakbeat elements atop Sivan’s captivating voice. Single “One of Your Girls” is a definite highlight. Sounding like it could be on Daft Punk’s “Random Access Memories,” Sivan describes this song as an “ode to the straight boy,” where straight is more or less in quotes. Then “In My Room” brings in a nice latin pop feel with help from Guitarricadela-fuente. The midpoint of the record is home to the ballads “Still Got It” and “Can’t Go Back, Baby.” Both work incredibly well in

their own way, dealing with feelings of wanting to get over someone but there’s still that little part of you that’s holding on, thinking the spark could come back but it just won’t. “Still Got It” has a great use of organs while “Can’t Go Back, Baby” works in a somber, ascending piano melody. Both could be great additions to any heartbreak playlist. This is where we get to the most contentious song on the record “Got Me Started.” The second single for the album has had fans divided ever since it released. If you were on the internet at all around 2016-2017, you’ll instantly recognize the song being sampled here. Sivan makes use of Bag Raiders’ song “Shooting Stars,” specifically the iconic synth melody that soundtracked countless memes last decade of people, cats, and any kind of object

swirling around in space. Sure that may sound silly on the surface, but putting the memes aside, Sivan delivers one of the most invigorating pop bangers so far this year. The sample is incorporated perfectly into the song’s structure and cadence and makes it that much more playful and charismatic. Speaking of silly, the next track “Silly” is an energetic, tongue and cheek electro-pop jam that acts as a great hook for the end of the record. “How to Stay with You” closes things on a bittersweet note. Produced by frequent Charli XCX and SOPHIE collaborator A.G. Cook, Sivan croons of a relationship on the rocks while layers of synths and horns make the track a triumphant send off. “Something to Give Each Other” is a leap in the right direction for Sivan. Even if a few moments are still a bit on the

safe side, the emphasis on more synth and electro-pop sounds is nothing short of irresistible. I only hope Sivan continues down this route and gets even more innovative.

My rating: 7.9/10



Millikin in the Stars

By: Riley Kell

Aries
21 March – 20 April
something or someone is going to challenge you

Taurus
21 April – 21 May
Don't let others make decisions for you

Gemini
22 May – 21 June
don't hide your capabilities instead harness them and make them a superpower

Cancer
22 June – 22 July
there are many adventures ahead of you

Leo
23 July – 22 August
Someone from your past will be making a comeback

Virgo
23 August – 23 September
you're going to face a predicament but you are going to overcome it

Libra
24 September – 23 October
You are going to have to choose between the past and future

Scorpio
24 October- 22 November
You are going to start to let the walls you built fall

Sagittarius
23 November – 21 December
You may have bad news coming your way

Capricorn
22 December – 20 January
All of your dreams will come true

Aquarius
21 January – 19 February
Don't be afraid to share your most inner thoughts

Pisces
20 February– 20 March
Don't be afraid to define yourself as you want rather than how others do

Drake’s Lengthy “For All the Dogs” Somehow Still Falls Short

By: Eli Bland

Drake’s fourth album in two years continues his streak of filler tracks and a lack of enthusiasm. Ever since 2016’s “Views,” Drake has continued the trend of not releasing any cohesive bodies of work. His albums instead have felt like really boring playlists. A few songs could be worth putting into your rotation, while the other handful could be a cure for insomnia. “For All the Dogs” is no different. Albeit, a few more standout tracks this time around but not by much.

The record starts off relatively strong. “Virginia Beach” sets a nice introspective tone with a heavenly Frank Ocean vocal sample. The album continues to interest me with cuts like “Amen” and “First Person Shooter.” Though, I think it’s just because both songs are carried by their featured artists, Teezo Touchdown and J. Cole respectively. Other features like Yeat and SZA also make some notable appearances later on the record. But those are just features, what about the

main event? Where’s Drake? To be honest, Drake is the worst part about this whole album. To reiterate, he just seems like he doesn’t care that much anymore. You have tracks like “8am in Charlotte” or “Tried Our Best” where there’s definitely more resemblance of care and thought put into them. But on nearly every other track, being 16 of the 23 mind you, Drake sounds like he’s on autopilot.

The latter half of this record is just such a mind-numbing slog to get through. No notable tracks, yet nothing downright bad either. It just all goes in one ear and out the other.

I really don’t think Drake could care less about the actual music anymore. To him, it’s always been more about quantity over quality. Again, this is the guy’s fourth hour plus album he’s released in just over two years. The man’s only goal at this point just seems to be streaming numbers and chart placements, not the art itself. And “For All the Dogs” proved it.

My rating: 5.2/10



Poetry Pit

By: Leah Flint

Yearly tradition

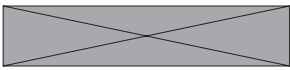
The neighborhood kids and I run through the streets with wild abandon —

Our minds focused on one thing.

Wind whips our faces

Determination courses through our bones

A footrace to the “king-size candy bar” house.



Views and Opinions

THE SQUIRRELS.

By: Madelyn Cummins
The fall semester is as spry as the color-changing trees on campus and students alone aren't the only mammals populating the leaf-coated sidewalks: squirrels have their fair share of the paths, as well. The squirrels roaming Millikin's campus strut about as if they own the place. They slink unnaturally close to your feet, stare you dead in the eyes, and then slowly retreat up their chosen tree trunk. It's terrifying. And yet, perhaps they do own the place. The fluffy-tailed rodents run rampant across the campus lawn and sidewalks, marking their territory with a terrorizing gaze and dominant stance. Do they know something that we don't? Millikin has an abundance of lore, mainly the ghosts that supposedly haunt Albert-Taylor and Blackburn Hall. What other secrets does the campus hide in its depths? And what are the squirrels not telling us? Why are they so precariously confident in the wake of the stampede of students rushing to their 9am classes, half-awake and wishing they would have set their alarms ten minutes earlier? The creatures infamously stalk you, and their bravery only heightens when no one else is around but you.
But then, once you are within sprinting distance of a building, they back down. Are they wary of the ghosts wandering Shilling's creaky staircases? The PMC's grandly deteriorating inner crown molding and pink walls? Are they afraid

of imminent death the same as we are?
Or are they immortal, and fear the wrath of something more formidable? But why fear something if you are immortal? If you "own" the grounds?
What is being omitted from the general knowledge of students? Do faculty know these reasons? For the squirrels tend to leave them alone, for the most part. How many attacks have there been, if any? Do they go rabid in the light of the full moon?
Their eyes become more beady as the days grow shorter and shorter. Sometimes, they seem red in certain lighting. It's impossible to decipher if the irises reflect the orange hue of the leaves or if these squirrels truly have an inner evil.
If you listen close enough, often you can hear faint screaming at midnight. Is it some poor soul taking a night stroll, or is it an unsettling correlation that relies too heavily on the imagination? Either way, the squirrels have to eat somehow. And not one student has seen these rodents with an acorn in their jaws.
What does that say? One can only assume the worst, however, no bodies have shown up.
Yet.
All Hallows Eve approaches rapidly, and the creatures scurry about more frantically each passing day. More and more of them creep about, watching students' bustling feet trek by. Their gaze unfaltering. Eyeing each shoe intensely.

Do they have heels? Can they escape or do we have a chance? Perhaps their thoughts don't circulate exactly in that regard, but their eyes hungrily tell of those desires.
Sometimes their shadows linger in my apartment window, looking a little too large for comfort. Often, I can hear the tap-tap-tapping of their clawed feet, climbing the gutters and scratching away at the siding. But only when the moon is full.
My dog started growling at something out the window. It was dark, the clouds shadowing any light as if a harsh storm was brewing.
It grew gradually. Tap-tap-tap-tap-tap. Tap-tap-tap. Louder and louder each moment that passed. Suddenly white light shone through the grooves of the blinds.
The moon. It was full. Tap-tap-tap-tap-tap. Tap-tap-tap.
The tapping grew more rapid and resolute, soon followed by a high-pitched screeching sound. Then slight crunching. I opened the blinds and saw that the glass had been split into what closely resembled a spiderweb. In the corner two black eyes stared at me, soulless and unnerving.
My heartbeat went wild, ringing in my ears making my cheeks go hot. How was it this high, on the third level? There were no ledges or trim to stand upon.
Its eyes glinted red around the edges, unwaveringly intent on mine. It raised one paw and let it hover over the window crack, its claw-like nail burrowing

into the center. For a split-second it seemed that the squirrel would come down alongside the glass, but it didn't flinch as shards fell into a resounding crash around my desk and into the cup of steaming tea. My breathing hitched. What on earth was happening? Its beady eyes stared me down, sizing me up. My dog whimpered again louder and it turned into a nasty growling. The squirrel broke eye-contact with me, its eyes squinting at the small black dog not much bigger than itself.
It screeched loudly, so high-pitched that the bathroom mirror cracked. My dog squealed, pawing at her ears. Then the squirrel launched its rather large body at her. It seemed to have grown in the time between my window shattering and it's noticing my of pup. My dog yelped at the surprise attack, then started gnawing on the creature's neck.
It was like lightning. Perhaps it really was a strike. All at once a storm of squirrels surged through my window and onto my bed, making a bee-line to my poor dog. My body froze, knees locking. Everything went cold. My best bet was to run, but something loud screamed and they looked up from the ragged remains of my dog. A pool of blood and matted hair stained my bed sheets, and the creatures' horribly sharp incisors dripped with saliva and her blood.
Another scream. This time I felt it come from my own throat. I turned and twisted my ankle on the bedpost, falling down with a thud. Scrambling



to get up, I felt what seemed like a hundred needles puncture my back. I failed to grab onto something, anything. My hand grasped onto my umbrella but it was too late. I felt a hotness run across my neck. I couldn't swallow, couldn't feel anything. I tried to crawl away but my legs and arms weren't moving. My eyes were watering. Something was stuck in my throat but I couldn't swallow it down.
I tried to scream, but nothing happened. I tried again, attempting to call out to my dog. To what was left of her. Everything was blurry and dark liquid dripped into my vision.
The clouds rolled slowly over the white moon, sirens wailed in the distance. What they were for, I likely would never know.

NEW JAZZ ICON, OR POPSTAR WANNABE?

By: Madelyn Cumins
Does Icelandic-Chinese singer Laufey deserve her overly bewitched fanbase, or is this up-and-coming jazz musician overhyped already? Laufey Lín Jónsdóttir- adoringly known as Laufey by her dedicated fans- has recently surged in popularity not only among jazz enthusiasts, but mainstream pop listeners, as well. Upon releasing her second studio album, Bewitched, TikTok and Instagram flooded users' pages with song covers, as well as videos of Laufey and her twin Junia, who often accompanies her sister with the violin. Listeners enjoy the mellow, warm jazzy undertones in each of the songs Laufey releases, and the sweet yet melancholic atmosphere brought on by the melodic chords are dreamy even to the most deaf of ears. A graduate of Berklee College of Music, Laufey is no novice to composing. She released her first single, Street by Street in 2020, propelling her straight into the limelight alongside other pop icons such as Dodie and Stephen Sanchez, both of whom she has collaborated with. Not only is she an insanely talented vocalist, Laufey can play cello, guitar and piano- and compose music completely by herself. Working alongside and performing with the Icelandic Symphony Orchestra and LA Philharmonic to transpose her music for an orchestra, her musical ability has charmed the entire world. The modern approach she brings to the jazz genre is captivating, incorporating bedroom pop and soft contemporary

jazz into her albums to cast a spell on all who listen to her songs. Yet there is a certain controversy with classifying her music as jazz amongst the purists. Is Laufey truly reviving jazz- which never needed revival- or is she creating her own subset of the genre? This promising singer-songwriter has opened up an entirely new style of music for the newer generations, and while it isn't "pure jazz", jazz connoisseurs can get off their high horses and step back to appreciate the versatility that jazz has always brought to the music genre. Laufey's music is no different. Her music speaks of love, heartbreak and longing, just as many jazz vocalists have sung about in the past. Why is Laufey garnering such dislike if her music is reaching millions in such a short amount of time? Being an original fan, it is rewarding to see her hard work and diligence pay off. And whilst it's annoying that her tour tickets were sold out in seconds by newbie-fans, watching as a new wave of jazz-lovers surface in this generation is beautiful. The newest album, Bewitched, which was released on September 8th of this year, is largely different from her other hit singles and EPs. After listening to her discography for a while, the listener gains a sense of stylistic choices specifically pertaining to her music. Which is brilliant, as many artists take years to find their own groove and music style. Jazz is jazz, having its own easily recognizable sound; yet Laufey's voice, both vocally and musically, is unique on its

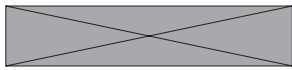
own merit. She takes her listeners on a journey through heartbreak and hope, accomplishing what she set out to do in this album exquisitely. Each song in Bewitched is carefully crafted and wholly distinctive on its own, but weaves a tapestry when listened to in succession. In comparison with her first album, Everything I Know About Love, it's more playful in tone and lyric and retrospective in parts as opposed to the more melancholic tension and thoughtfulness of EIKAL. Bewitched contains this polished softness, whereas EIKAL has more raw grit- which lends itself in its own favor, as it takes time to gain confidence in one's own voice and musical choices. Laufey's 2nd album is more pop-reminiscent while retaining the catchy- and heartbreakingly relatable- lyrics and rhythms of her older songs. This album leans on the retrospective side of love and loss, contemplating the what-ifs concerning love. Beginning with "Dreamer", a hopeful and bossa nova-like tune that turns into a promise unto herself not to fall in love again. It captures the magical feeling of the entire lineup early on with the intro and light piano throughout. Up next is "Second Best", leaning into the regret of falling in love with someone who is in love with another person. It gives context to "Dreamer", with the why and how of its sentiments. The song ends with the possibility of growing from this experience, but for now will remain in the shadows of another lover.

"Haunted" opens with a beautiful couple measures of cello, delicate and reminiscent of the lover in the previous song, telling this story of heartbreak in reverse chronological order. It's dark yet charming, like a candlelit dinner in drizzling rain. It bleeds straight into "Must Be Love", where the narrator is hopelessly enamored with their lover, falling hard and fast experiencing this happiness that they have never in the past. "California and Me" backtracks from this reverse-chronological order of the album, where Laufey's lover leaves for an old flame, calling this behavior wicked, regretting how she couldn't convince them to stay with her. It runs straight into "Nocturne", a pretty little piano interlude, which gives a sort of calm breath of air to the album. An intermission of sorts, and it's hauntingly beautiful. Usually, it would be a bit jarring to have all lyrical songs and then a pure instrumental one, but its placement works well. It serves as a thoughtful lull in between the album. "Bewitched", the ending song and album namesake, plays brilliantly into the dreamlike beginning with an almost enchanting conclusion, wrapping up the lineup's longing and regret with a magical flourish. Whereas many listeners fell in love and were introduced to Laufey from her hit single, From the Start, (which is also included in Bewitched) and in turn drawn into this new album, her older EPs will forever hold a special place in the hearts of original fans. They have this nostalgia to them, a

timelessness that sounds akin to old-timey jazz but with a new spark. It's not to say that Bewitched isn't a masterpiece, as many artists nowadays don't always produce honest, raw and musically mature music. That is what makes Laufey an incredible creative in her own right- she's forging ahead in a genre that has been overshadowed by pop and even electric in the past decades. The storytelling this album accomplishes is brilliant, almost falling into redundancy but being nuanced and different enough to identify each song as a single piece of art on their own. While jazz still is quite popular, it's important to highlight these budding composers and vocalists who are contributing to the genre in an authentic and thoughtful way. And though many don't appreciate the masses deeming Laufey as the new face of jazz, she can be seen as a gateway drug- introducing unsuspecting listeners to an entire new musical avenue.

Become a Columnist!

Contact Editor Carin Houser at cehouser@millikin.edu



Views and Opinions

No Trick, No Treat

By: AC Carson

What's not to like about Halloween? There are ghouls, ghosts, goblins, the usual scary stuff. On top of that there's candy involved, and everyone loves candy, right? As a kid many of us I'm sure couldn't wait for that special time of the year. The time to decorate your house, school, and even businesses in the best Halloween get up. When it comes to this holiday, the first most important thing is getting candy. That's what everyone looks forward to. Going house to house or even at a Trunk or Treat saying the famous "Trick or Treat". The second most important thing to do is find the best costume. Whether it be a superhero, cartoon character, monster, celebrity, etc. It's a fun process. Kids all over the world and sometimes even adults dress their best from head to toe with makeup, wigs, fangs, and other accessories that complement their outfit.

I admit as of just a few years ago, I would've been cool with doing all of that, however because I've gotten older and even from a religious point of view, I've stopped participating in it. Halloween even to me was one of the best holidays of the year. A family tradition of ours was going to the mall to get candy. When not going to the mall we went to Harvest fest at churches and instead of celebrating Halloween, we still dressed up and celebrated the harvest and the season of Fall. Thinking more about it, I dislike the idea of being hunted, possessed, sacrificed, or pranked on in a scary way even if it's for pretend. I also believe that dressing up whether scary or unscary during this time of year and doing a Trunk or Treat is inviting creepy, horrific, and unknown spirits to come in. Into our homes, schools, businesses, churches, and into ourselves. In addition to that, the ones that go too

far into Halloween make those who don't celebrate it dislike it even more just by their actions. Many get engulfed so much so that they change during this holiday and take on these characters in the worst way. People start to engage in inhuman acts and validate callous pranks that cause others to be paranoid, invoking horror and fear into their lives. I don't understand it and don't think I want to. As many know, besides the games, candy and other festivities that happen around this time, Halloween is associated with witches, ghosts, sacrifices, raising of the dead and other things of that nature. That in itself has me wondering, are we as Christian believers supposed to dress up or acknowledge Halloween to begin with? Even if we don't dress up as things some consider evil, would dressing up and calling it a Trunk or Treat be just as bad? Yes, we watch it on TV and poke fun at those things, but

when it boils down to it those things to a believer of Christ are real and they're not for the betterment of us and in a way to a believer it's toying with evil. I've heard stories and biblical stories of people really getting possessed by unknown spirits. I've heard of people in real life taking on the role of a Vampire drinking human blood. There are stories of some becoming real Frankenstein, and all sorts of other monsters due to experimentation and those are some things I'd rather not participate in. There are people who have spoken of casting spells and getting spells cast on them and having to deal with the consequences of it. There are documentaries of people conjuring up spirits to speak to them or even to hunt people and play with their lives. People share their points of view on human and animal sacrifices going on. In addition, the most key issue is the crime rate all over the

world is at its highest during this period. For example, Jenny Weaver, an ex-witch who used to celebrate Halloween, tells the origins of it, why believers shouldn't celebrate it and all that happened to her in the process of being a part of this lifestyle. At the end of the day, I know many do not look at Halloween in this manner, but I do. This is not an attack or to diminish those who do celebrate it. It is rather to keep in mind what you're celebrating and who you are celebrating for besides the candy, games, and other festivities. Even if Halloween is all tricks and treats, it is No Trick and No Treat to me. To those who do choose to celebrate this day, watch your surroundings, look out for others and all around Be Safe!

Curry Express Food Review

By: AC Carson

When it comes to food, I'm open to trying new things. New cuisines, new flavors, new everything! I've even experienced trying foods from different cultures. As far as Decatur, Illinois we have a variety of food places. We have diversity here when it comes to foods such as, soul food, Mexican food, Chinese and Asian food. Though these cultures have good food, the menus and common dishes are not very different than anywhere else you may travel. You can spot these kinds of restaurants in several towns that you may travel to and that's a good thing. What about something different? Something outside the box as some would say. Decatur, Illinois has just done that by introducing a new Indian restaurant to its people. Yes, there are Indian restaurants in Decatur, and some have been here for years might I add. However, to some such as myself Indian cuisine wasn't as talked about or popularized in my family. That is until just recently Hickory Point Mall gave us Curry Express, and I had the opportunity of trying Indian cuisine for the very first time. Before walking into Curry Express, I was experiencing different emotions. Not knowing what to expect, I was both eager and a bit nervous. After all this was a different cuisine for me, and it would either be a hit or miss. After walking into the restaurant all that nervousness went away when I was greeted with a big smile and

welcomed by the worker there. "Hi Welcome to Curry Express! How may we help you?" was his response. I responded with a hello as well and informed him that this was in fact my first time here and with an even bigger smile, suggesting I try samples. Samples of some of their items and since I'd already looked at their menu prior to coming, asking for what to sample wasn't an issue. I sampled their Chicken Curry and their Butter Chicken. They were both amazing two different chicken dishes with a wide array of spices, flavors and even colors.

After sampling I let him know these were the dishes I'd like to order. He began telling me about their platter dish which includes two entrees and a side of rice. Butter Chicken is a specific dish that originates from Amritsar in India and contains specific ingredients. While Chicken Curry can come from anywhere in the world and contain almost anything you want. On the Curry Express menu, they give a brief description of them both. Butter Chicken is Boneless roasted chicken chunks in a creamy sauce of cashews, tomatoes, butter, and other spices. Chicken Curry is boneless chicken chunks cooked with mild spices, onions, and herbs. I also ordered an appetizer called Somosa, a South Asian pastry that can be filled with potatoes, onions, peas, meat, or fish. In addition to their Garlic naan,

and Masala Tea. While waiting for my order to be finished, the owner and I sparked conversation of how they came to be here at Hickory Point Mall in Forsyth, Illinois Mall. He Expressed to me that Curry Express is a Family-owned business. It is now at this moment run by him, his wife, and his brothers. This Curry Express started in 1997 Jamaica Queens, New York City and were one of the best Indian Cuisines in town. Curry Express had been running for 23 years until Covid-19 hit them hard as it did many other businesses. Not being able to bounce back from it due to limited

food supply, social distancing and other aspects, the business ran slow. Later the opportunity arose to bring Curry Express to Forsyth, Illinois. Soon after he settled, bought a house for his family and has been thriving ever since. The service for the most part was outstanding. The owner as well as his wife showed great hospitality, and were warm and welcoming to me as well as others that came in. Everyone made sure that the customers were getting the right dishes, as well as getting them in a timely manner. Curry Express's staff were very knowledgeable on their menu items and didn't hesitate to let customers know of their food seals and specials. Presentation wise, it was different, but looked exactly like what they're called, curries and

stews of such. All the dishes were colorful in their own way, with hints of green, red, yellow, orange, and other colors making them distinct from each other. When it comes to taste, whatever flavors, or ideas you have in your head, throw them out. It's nothing like you could imagine. Now to each its own but for me the flavors were exquisite! As I said previously, I ordered their Butter Chicken, Chicken Curry, Somosa, Garlic Naan =, and Masala Tea. Not any of the dishes had the slightest similarity between them. From sweet and spicy to creamy and savory the flavors and ingredients used were worth the experience. I personally liked the Chicken Curry over the Butter Chicken. It had hints of ginger, garlic, onion, coriander and much more. The Samosas were very nice with the spicy potatoes, peas, and onions that were in it. In addition to coming with two different sauces. One savory and sweet, the other sauce tasted of mint, vinegar, and other spices. The Garlic Naan an almost flatbread/pita bread combination was salty, buttery, herby and had much garlic. The Masala Tea was okay but wasn't all the way up to my liking due to the different flavors it contained. I wouldn't get it again but that shouldn't stop anyone else from trying it. The food was served hot and stayed hot from the time I left the restaurant, until I got home to eat it. It was

fresh, nothing tasted old, or like it had been sitting for long amounts of time, it was just right. Curry Express had a lot of variety of food items with about 10 different entrees to choose from. Two or more rice's, a host of appetizers, two desserts and Indian style sodas and drinks including the Masala Tea. Meats ranging from chicken, to fish, lamb and even goat. All with a wide range of vegetables and or sauces to go with. They have other breads beside the Naans. There's chutneys and other common Indian specialties on the list. It is also vegan and kid friendly! Overall, it was a great experience and there's much more that I'd like to try such as, the Tandoori Chicken, Samosa Chaat, a dessert they call Gulab Jamun and even another Indian style drink. I'd say for everyone try it just to have the experience, there's a dish for everyone I'm sure and will not let you down.

Sports

Women’s Soccer at Best Win Percentage Since 2010



By: Sophie Gibbs
Women’s soccer is currently sitting at their best win percentage, overall and in conference, since 2010. Their overall record is 6-5-3, with a win percentage of 0.536. Last year, the team only won five games, and did not qualify for the postseason conference tournament. This year, their conference schedule yielded a 2-2-3 record for a 0.500 win percentage, and secured them a spot into the

postseason tournament. They lead the College Conference of Illinois and Wisconsin (CCIW) in points overall per game. This includes goals and assists. Millikin’s success could largely be credited to outshining their opponents in nearly every offensive category. As a team, they have more overall goals and goals per game than their opponents, winning that battle 27-21. They also take significantly more shots, and in turn

more shots on goal, than their opponents. The Big Blue have 188 shots on the season, compared to 144 from their opponents. They also have 92 shots on goal, where their opponents only have 62. The Big Blue is led offensively by senior forward Bailee Blecker, returning 2022 CCIW player of the year. She is in the top ten in the conference for goals, shots, shots on goal, game winning goals, and

overall points. Defensively, the team is led by Sophie Dorgan, a senior goalkeeper who has started every game, and played all 90 minutes of 11 out of 13 games. Dorgan was also named the CCIW student athlete of the week on October 3 of the 2023 season, for allowing no goals against two conference opponents, North Park and Illinois Wesleyan. Millikin currently sits at fifth in the conference going into postseason play.

The Hidden Opponent Volleyball Game

By: Sophie Gibbs
Last Wednesday, the women’s volleyball team hosted a mental health awareness game in partnership with the nonprofit organization The Hidden Opponent (THO). Each player on both teams warmed up with a shirt that had THO’s logo and “Mental Health Matters” on the front. THO has hundreds of campus captains around the country, working to spread awareness about mental health and mental illness in athletes. I am the campus captain here at Millikin, and also a part of the volleyball team. Before the game, I gave a speech on the importance of taking care of mental health in college athletes. I gave some statistics from the NCAA Student-Athlete Well-Being Study in the Fall of 2021: fewer than half (47%) of the respondents felt they would be comfortable personally seeking support from a mental health provider on campus, 94% of respondents that participated in a women’s sport reported they felt overwhelmed by all they had to do, and 88% of respondents felt mentally exhausted.

Not only does declining mental health affect your performance on the court, but off the court as well. Personal relationships, grades, and overall wellbeing can be negatively affected if someone neglects their mental health. Over recent years, the topic of mental health has become less taboo, as more and more research comes out about it and more public figures open up about their own struggles. In the world of athletics, the stigma around mental illness has been slowly changing, as more and more teams hire team psychologists and have team discussions about mental health. The purpose of mental health awareness games like this one are to shed light on the topic, and publicly discuss the risks of treating mental health as less important than physical health. Though we are making progress, THO’s main goal is to completely break the stigma and make sure every single athlete knows that they are not alone.



Social Media in Sports

By: Sophie Gibbs
Social Media has changed the world of sports at every level. Almost all high level professional athletes and college athletes have sponsorships and brand deals. Social media can either boost or break a career - it is much easier to reach out to college coaches and get your name out there in high school, but there is also the possibility for scandals and old posts to resurface and cost someone their scholarship or their spot on a team. Social media is also important for getting more fan engagement and overall publicity. Apps like Instagram and X have risen as major contributors in a team’s exposure. Many teams must keep up with social media to stay relevant in the current climate. Team accounts can promote their own game days, players, and special games or offers. The difference in fan engagement can be seen in the mens and womens basketball teams here at Millikin. The men’s basketball team has an Instagram account that has lain dormant since 2020, with only 500 followers. They do not post on that app about game days, player awards, or any special events that might be happening at certain games. They rely on the app X and through word of mouth to get people to come to their games. In contrast, the women’s basketball team uses social media heavily to their advantage. In season, they post about every gameday, every award, and every event they host. Out of season, they post about what players have been up to, summer camps, fundraising events, etc. Their Instagram account has 1,490 followers, with daily engagement. Their X account has 3,236 followers, and they post frequently on that app as well, compared to men’s basketball’s 1,732 followers. Now, there are still a lot of people that show up to both games, usually with no real discernable difference between attendance numbers. However, there is usually a lot more excitement about teams that use social media to promote their games and their players. Softball and volleyball are also consistent with their online presence, and many people come to both of those games as well. Volleyball has had a mental health awareness game, a rivalry night against Illinois Wesleyan, and numerous free cookie or free hot-dog nights. This has been posted about and circulated around each time they have a special offer game and most often, those are the games with the highest attendance. Ultimately, college teams should recognize the importance of social media in the athletics world, and work to use it to reach a bigger audience than ever offered before.

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