

Diana Davis Spencer: What is Free Speech?

BY ELSIE CARSON-HOLT AND DAVINA SIENKIEWICZ

The name “Diana Davis Spencer” is a prominent one on campus—the cafe in the science center bears her name, as does the recently opened “Diana Davis Discovery Center Dedicated to Free Speech and Innovation.” This (wordy) name is to honor Ms. Spencer, who is an alumna from the class of 1960, Diana Davis Spencer graduated Wheaton with a degree in English. She is a lifetime member on Wheaton’s board of trustees, and donated \$10 million dollars to fund renovations to the science center. The Wheaton Wire reached out via email to Ms. Spencer regarding her philanthropic work, and to discuss the Foundation’s values of free speech and innovation. We asked Ms. Spencer about her time at Wheaton and how it helped shape her career and philanthropic work.

She told us; “In many ways... true education and thoughtful philanthropy share a common goal: problem-solving... Particularly when I was a student, Wheaton embraced the idea of a liberal arts education, in the classical sense. When done right, liberal arts colleges expose students to ideas and give them the tools to develop creative solutions. That’s what thoughtful philanthropy can do also. Beyond problem-solving, some lessons I learned at Wheaton that are still relevant today include confidence, the power of relationships, and respect for our past. Education is about taking risks, failing, and growing from your mistakes.”

Since graduating Mrs. Spencer has worked as “an activist, journalist, and leader in the philanthropic community.” She is now the President and Chairman of the foundation which evolved out of foundations established in the names of each of her parents. The goals of the foundation are drawn from a speech given by her father entitled Our Sacred Honor, and include “promoting national security, entrepreneurship, self-reliance, free enterprise, and to enhance quality of life by supporting the arts, education, global understanding, health advancements, and preservation of the environment.”

However, while the Foundation advocates for freedom and global understanding, it has come under fire from progressive watchdog Center for Media and Democracy (CMD). The Foundation’s 2020 tax filings, obtained by CMD, show the Diana Davis Spencer Foundation’s net assets at \$1.5 billion, and reported that the Foundation had donated \$3.7 million dollars



Photo courtesy of Davina Sienkiewicz.

An image of the entrance to the Diana Davis Spencer Discovery Center.

to thirteen different Foundations which CMD classifies as voter suppression organizations. The recipient of the largest portion of these funds was the Lawyers Democracy Fund, whose main issues are “voter identification, election integrity, mandatory voting and automatic registration.” In other words, they support stricter voter identification laws and oppose mail in ballots, policies which make voting less accessible to many. The Eagle Forum Educational and Legal Defense Fund also received a significant grant from the Foundation for an “election integrity project,” but has received criticism for filing an amicus brief asking the Supreme Court to prevent Pennsylvania from certifying their 2020 election results.

These grants distributed by the Foundation seem hypocritical to their stated missions supporting free speech, and when we spoke to her over email, we asked Mrs. Spencer about the importance of free speech and the dedication to it of her building. Mrs. Spencer said “We chose to dedicate this building to free speech and innovation because they are the bedrock of our democracy and defining characteristics of the American ideal.” However many feel her work does not support this, with her continued funding of controversial foundations coming into question.

The Diana Davis Spencer Foundation was recently mentioned in an article in The Guardian for their role in funding an organization which doxxed pro-Palestine Harvard students.

Amid the protests surrounding the war in Gaza, a group of Harvard students wrote a letter

stating they held “the Israeli regime entirely responsible for all unfolding violence.” In retaliation the Accuracy in Media Foundation (AIM) paid for a truck billboard to drive through the campus with the names and faces of students who had signed the statement, which quickly led to the personal information of these students being posted to at least four different websites, according to the Harvard Crimson. The article published by The Guardian on October 16th criticized Mrs. Spencer in connection to this event, citing Informing America Foundation (IAF) as the largest donor to AIM, and in turn citing the Diana Davis Spencer Foundation as the single largest donor to IAF, and Mrs. Spencer as a longstanding board member for IAF.

This removal from Mrs. Spen-

cer’s original foundation and personal philanthropic work creates questions over whether Mrs. Spencer and the Diana Davis Spencer Foundation support the message being sent with these billboards, but does not necessarily protect them from criticism. We asked Mrs. Spencer about challenges of philanthropy and deciding which organizations to fund, to which she said; “the greatest challenge is assuring we have partners who understand our mission, honor our donor intent and who will preserve our legacy.” She went on to say; “The solution is having a strong team dedicated to researching our potential partners and selecting the right candidates for our support. That includes looking at our partners’ financial stewardship and accountability, mission and shared values, and entrepreneurial drive. It also means understanding people.”

Diana Davis Spencer has long spearheaded the foundation, but in recent years her daughter, Abbey Moffat has stepped up into an executive role as the foundation’s CEO. Speaking to the legacy and the future of the Foundation, Mrs. Spencer told us “Well, to me, it means being a good steward of the Foundation’s money. We have never seen this money as ours. Instead, we have been privileged with the charge of caring for it and using it constructively to better society. My name is on the Foundation’s door but this mission started with my father and mother and I have every hope it will continue for generations to come. That means making strong, durable and mutually beneficial partnerships; and advancing the causes that matter most to us.” To read the full interview with Diana Davis Spencer visit the Wire’s website at www.wheatonwire.com

5 Ideas for What to Do When You’re Bored Over Break

BY ELSIE CARSON-HOLT

1. Make stew with the youngest member of your family and the oldest member of your family. If you’re still bored doing that activity, start asking the eldest member pointed questions about your family history.
2. Create an egg hunt for your friends—say that one egg has \$50 in it and then act surprised when no one can find it.
3. Take up a hobby! Try juggling, or the candama. Stage a heist, it doesn’t need
4. Become extremely knowledgeable about a kind of animal, identify a specific population near you and spend your break begging your family to come watch them with you, this can be anything from bears to deer to squirrels.
5. If it snows, put yourself in a trash bag and throw yourself down a large hill—to be a big one. Does a loved one have some special mement they would pay ransom for? Spend a few hours coming up with a scheme to nab it!

Letter from the editor

Dear Readers,

I am pleased to share The Wheaton Wire's last publication of the 2023 fall semester. You may notice that this issue is a little thicker than previous editions. Our contributors took on the 8-page broadsheet and we will be celebrating this issue on Friday, December 8th at 6:00pm in The Wire office located above the Club Hub in Balfour Hood. All students are welcome! The event will include food, free Wheaton Wire stickers, and a trivia event to test our readers' loyalty (with prizes for the top 3 winners!). Publishing has always been The Wire's thing so

we aren't exactly a club known for our events. It was a challenge to put together something other than a tab publication. The whole process of cultivating this event makes me think about the often unappreciated work of event planners. I recently attended the 2000s theme pub night for the class of 2024 and was impressed by the outcome and little details put into the event that I was able to just show up at. Since you probably don't hear it enough, shout out to those in Student Government, club leaders, and SAIL for making it all happen.

- Madison Morin

Unhinged horoscopes

BY RYLEIGH SEUFERT

Aries

(March 20-April 19)

Don't be afraid to leave your hometown.

Taurus

(April 20-May 20)

Don't spend all of your money from your winter job.

Gemini

(May 21-June 20)

Don't spend your time scrolling through TikTok.

Cancer

(June 21-July 22)

Don't go into hibernation.

Leo

(July 23-August 22)

Don't get back with your ex.

Virgo

(August 23-September 22)

Don't forget to add a chill pill to your cup of hot cocoa.

Libra

(September 23-October 22)

Don't stop being productive just because classes are over.

Scorpio

(October 23-November 21)

Don't do big holiday parties.

Sagittarius

(November 22-December 20)

Don't wait to set your resolutions until the new year.

Capricorn

(December 21-January 19)

Don't hold onto the drama from the fall semester.

Aquarius

(January 20-February 17)

Don't forget to reach out to your friends when you're at home.

Pisces

(February 18-March 19)

Don't fall back into old habits.

The Wheaton Wire staff

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Design Editor - Moira Sankey
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Arts & Culture Editor - John Morris
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Issue Writer - Ryleigh Seufert
Issue Writer - Lily Maguire
Issue Writer - Elsie Carson-Holt
Issue Writer - Casey Drury
Issue Writer - Keira Whitaker
Issue Writer - Amelia Verhar

Crossword answers from 11/1/23

Across:

- Theme of crossword since it's one day after Halloween → Horror
- The King of writing horror → Stephen
- The bloodiest Prom Queen → Carrie
- How many have they made now? They just keep coming → Saw
- Which project was about the witch? → The Blair Witch
- He does not say "blah, blah blah!" → Dracula
- Who can? The _____ can! → Candyman
- Please don't put your hand in the sewers → Pennywise
- That creepy doll → Annabelle
- Humans should not be turned into bugs. Please never do that again. Why are there three of them? Stop this. → Human Centipede
- Florence in a culty-cult-cult → Midsommar
- "Here... comes... Johnny!" → The Shining
- A serial killer for serial killers → Dexter
- That other creepy doll → Chucky
- Scary Saint Patrick's Icon → Leprechaun

Down:

- Jamie Lee Curtis slays, but doesn't actually do the slaying → Halloween
- Be careful of the full moon → Werewolves
- The worst Friday to ever Friday → Thirteenth
- Don't go in Octavia Spencer's basement → Ma
- Apparently now there's a creepy robot? → Megan
- 1994, 1978 and 1666 according to Netflix → Fear Street
- "Jason _____" (Not Derulo) → Voorhees
- Not to be confused with Edward Scissorhands → Freddy Krueger
- He wears a mask, but we all know who he is → Michael Myers
- She'll feed ya to the alligators → Pearl
- You wear clothes, he wears skin. Yeesh. → Silence of the Lambs
- Apparently you don't actually bury animals here → Pet Sematary
- The scariest person at church → The Nun
- Head rolling fun → Hereditary
- This family is seeing double → Us

Apply to become an RA for the Spring semester!

Hey Wheaties,

Have you ever wanted to build a positive community on campus, live in a single room AND earn \$8,600? Guess what?! You can do all of these things and more by applying to be a Resident Advisor (RA) for next year!

Being an RA is a unique and rewarding opportunity to make a positive impact on the community, contribute to a supportive living environment, and develop valuable leadership skills. Qualities that we believe you would be a rockstar at doing.

If you are interested:

- Submit an application with a resume and letter of interest by February 12, 2024
- Participate in group process and individual interviews
- Decisions will go out March 29th

We know that you would be a great Resident Advisor and we are so excited to read your application!



Actors and AI: What the Conclusion of the SAG-AFTRA Strike Means for the Television and Film Industry

BY MICHAEL
KANYONGOLO

At long last, the 118 day actor's strike has ended, following the end of the WGA writer's strike which ended in late September. For those of you who don't know the motivation behind the two strikes, as always they lie in pay, benefits, and now concerns over streaming and artificial intelligence.

Streaming essentially taken over the TV and film industry, as blockbuster theater releases see heavy losses in revenue and streaming platforms rapidly take up the majority of consumer watchtime. Before the strike, actors would see almost none of this revenue, no residuals for streams and no compensation simply because their work was on a new platform. For studios, this was great. Streaming services are a tricky business, and rarely release their view numbers, making it hard for studios already struggling with lower licensing fees. Not having to pay actors (or writers) helped to cushion this loss and keep numbers up in the wake of streaming.

But no longer. With the end of the strike comes rules that aim to rectify this unfair treatment. Now, once a show or movie reaches a certain threshold a payment is sent to the contributors, called a streaming participation bonus, similar to residuals. Through this actors will be compensated more fairly for their work and studios will no longer pocket the entirety of licensing fees. Streamers still have the right to withhold exact view and profit numbers, but it is still a strong step in the right direction.



Image courtesy of Twitter/X @sagafta

Along with changes in streaming practices, the strike ended with a base pay increase for all members of the union, equating to about 7% (2% more than the WGA achieved) and amounting to about a billion dollars in total salary gains. Another strong step towards fair compensation. With such enormous benefits following the strike, it is no wonder that the union vote in favor of the deal was unanimous.

However, this deal was not easily won. Any strike is costly, for both the unions and the studios. It was estimated that about 150 million dollars were lost per day as a result of the strike, not to mention the potential wages lost from participating actors. During this time actors were forbidden to work, except on specific union approved projects. Some of which were student productions, along with certain studio films, including A24, due to their lack of ties with the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers (AMPTP) which represents most major studios and acts as the liaison between them and the union.

It still remains to be seen whether next year's theatrical season will be irreversibly crippled, or

if studios will crunch to pump out the same amount of content with far less production time.

One way studios may make up for lost time is the ever-controversial use of artificial intelligence. The use of AI was one of the largest concerns in both the SAG-AFTRA and WGA strike, as rapidly advancing AI tools like Chat-GPT threaten the very existence of writer's rooms and AI actor recreations threaten the agency an actor has over their own likeness. We've seen actor recreations before - see Peter Cushing and Carrie Fisher resurrected by CGI in Rogue One, but so far they have mostly been used to briefly show characters whose actors have passed away. Now AI has the potential to fully recreate living actors for the purposes of film, something that has surely brought uncertainty into the hearts of performers across the world. Until now there had been no regulations or rules surrounding this entirely new practice, something that the actor's union wished to address by striking.

And address it they did. New rules agreed upon by the studios and actor's union state that informed consent must be given

before a studio creates an AI replica of an actor for any purpose, and that purpose must also be agreed upon by the actor in question. This also extends to the digital replication of background actors and their compensation. If an actor is called in for the creation of a digital replica, they must be paid for the full day and the estimated time for any work that the AI replica is being used for. In other words, it is just as expensive to use an AI replication as it is to employ the actual actor, with compensation always going to the actor.

This has huge implications. For studios, AI has always been looked at as a cost saving tool. It can perform the tasks of actors and writers without any form of salary or compensation, making it a cheap way to pump out ideas and content. The dystopian version of this sees a world where entertainment is soullessly made by a computer while writers and actors lose their jobs to AI. However, with the regulations now put in place by both unions, AI is just as costly as the real thing and cannot be used by studios to generate ideas, instead only being allowed as a tool for writers.

All in all, the conclusion of both strikes has left writers and actors with less to worry about in the present and future. Higher base pay, protections against AI, and fair compensation for streaming has adapted the television and film industry to the rapidly evolving 21st century, and ensures that the talented creators of the media we know and love will not be steamrolled by technology.

Taking Care of Yourself During Finals Week!

BY AMELIA VERHAR

As finals week approaches, the Wheaton Wire encourages you to take some time for yourself. Giving your brain a rest is just as important as your studies. Here are some tips for practicing self-care during a most likely stressful week.

Tip #1: Get some sleep!

Unfortunately, staying up until 3 AM studying at the library for an exam will not help you in securing an A (not that I would know from personal experience of course). It's important to get around 7-9 hours of sleep every night to function at your best.

Tip #2: Move your body!

Getting some exercise is great for clearing your mind after studying for long periods of time. It can be whatever exercise you like best: going for a walk, working out at the gym, or going for a bike ride. Remember that your physical wellness is just as important as your mental wellbeing!

Tip #3: Fuel your body!

There is no final exam or project that is worth skipping food for! Remember to fuel your body with nutritious meals and snacks during the week. Eating the right amount of healthy food will keep you energized and able to function at your best, although some Takis won't hurt too.

Tip #4: Stay hydrated!

No, that iced coffee from Starbucks shouldn't be your only source of hydration during the day. Water is even more important than caffeine, especially during this week. Carry a water bottle around with you that you can refill throughout the day!

Tip #5: Plan ahead!

Take care of your future self by making sure that you are prepared for your final exams and projects. Try using Google Calendar or to-do lists to stay organized. Find whatever system works best for you so that you can avoid feeling rushed or stressed out as deadlines come up!

Tip #6: Learn to say 'no'!

Your boss may ask you to pick up an extra shift, or your friends might ask you to hang out with them during this week. If you know that staying in would be the best decision for you, don't be afraid to say no! Setting boundaries is important in maintaining your mental health.

Tip #7: Treat yourself!

If buying an expensive latte or getting a sweet treat would lift your spirits, now is the time to treat yourself (I know I will)! It's important to find happiness in the little things during stressful times.

Tip #8: Be gentle with yourself!

Finals, school, and any other commitments you may have can bring up some extreme emotions. It is completely normal to feel stressed, overwhelmed, or burned out during this time. Be gentle with yourself and remember that taking care of your mental health doesn't make you lazy or fragile!

Tip #9: Take brain breaks!

Tackling large tasks can feel more manageable if you approach them in parts! Many people swear by the Pomodoro Technique; where you pick a task to work on for 25 minutes, take a 5 minute brain break, and repeat. Every 4 repeats, take a longer break of 15 to 20 minutes. This technique makes it easy to get started, avoid distractions, and manage your time efficiently!

Tip #10: Turn to your support systems!

If you are feeling overwhelmed with emotions and assignments, make sure that you rely on your support systems this week, such as friends and family. The Counseling Center is also available to provide in-person and online support. It is located here on campus, is confidential, and free!

We hope that these tips and tricks will help you practice self care as we all navigate this stressful time together. Best of luck, and see you next year!

Wednesday, December 6, 2023

The Body Hair Assignment

BY KEIRA WHITAKER

At the beginning of my sociology class on September 20th, Professor Justin Schupp introduced the Body Hair Assignment. He explained that the Body Hair Assignment was an optional assignment for extra credit but for a period of six weeks up until December 1st, if you identified as a female you could not shave your legs or armpits, if you identified as a male, you had to shave your legs and armpits, and if you were non-binary, you got to choose either one. The purpose of this experiment was for students to reject cultural norms. In order to obtain the extra credit you would have to provide a weekly log and a reflection paper.

In the paper, Professor Schupp made an error in the assignment which allowed female students to decide either to not shave their legs or their armpits. I was not paying attention so I did not realize that was an option until three weeks into the experiment.

To be honest, I was quite hesitant to sign up. I never thought

of not shaving my armpits since I normally shaved them once a week. As a child I did not really care about having hairy legs or arms. My sister would tell me that it would keep me warm during the winter. It was not until I was ten when I noticed that a majority of girls at my dance studio had way less hair than I did on their arms. I remember asking my mom for Nair Hair removal so that I could get rid of the hair on my arms. When I was in middle school I remember hearing boys say that “Girls can’t have hair on their arms and legs because they would look like a man.” Having it in your armpits was considered disgusting and unhygienic. Facial hair was a whole other story. Having a tiny bit of hair above your lip or having bushy eyebrows was frowned upon.

At the age of thirteen, I started to get extremely self-conscious of my body. Having body and facial hair being disapproved of was the least of my insecurities but I would still shave my arms and legs twice a week and pluck my eyebrows so that I would not get bullied. At such a young age,

I accepted that I had to follow the beauty standard that females and feminine presenting people had to get rid of their body hair and facial hair in order to be considered “feminine” and “beautiful.”

I wanted to find out what others thought about the experiment and their experience with body hair norms. Luckily one anonymous student was willing to share it with me. One of their first memories concerning body hair was when their mom warned them not to shave their legs because they said that their hair would come back darker. They thought that says a lot about how women are socialized and just those sorts of ideas about how body hair on women is undesirable. As they got older they started to care less, especially when they got to college. “You kind of realize it’s a little arbitrary about whether body hair is appropriate or not, and quite frankly I like the way I look with body hair. It’s nice to not have to shave my legs all the time. I guess to sum up I am sometimes conscious if my legs are all hairy and everyone I’m surrounded with has smooth

shiny legs, but honestly at the end of the day, Does it really matter anyway?” They felt that the body hair experiment was a breeze for them.

At the end of the day it is your choice whether or not you want to shave your body hair or not. I highly recommend trying out this experiment because it can really open your eyes. I interviewed Professor Schupp to find out what he wanted students to get out of the experiment.

And his response was “Part of the reason was for students to get a better understanding of the power of social structure but it was really for the individual to explore why they do these particular rituals in their life.” He wanted students to hopefully get impacted by the experiment about who they are and the things they do. The experiment definitely taught me many things and impacted me. I was very reluctant to do the experiment at first, but as the weeks went on I came to understand that not shaving your armpits or legs is not a big deal. It was one less chore I had to do and I ended up really enjoying it.

David Sach is Ready to Act as the Tone-Setter of the Wheaton Fencing program

BY CADEN CHARPENTIER

For most of us, including me, the extent of our knowledge of fencing begins and ends with the Olympics, and games on the Wii. Particularly Wii Sports Resort. Now, that was a special game. We all remember those days. We’re not here to talk about that though.

Year after year, the sporting environment in Norton is getting more and more exciting. There is a clear ambition. In 2023, we saw it expand. That theme is going to continue in 2024.

Beginning next fall, as many of you may know, fencing will increase the total of varsity teams at Wheaton to 25. According to the NCSA (Next College Student Athlete), there are over 430 D-III schools in the United States. The Lyons are slated to become just the 16th Division III school in the country with a fencing program. When discussing programs with both men’s and women’s sides, Wheaton will become just the 11th D-III school.

It is not every day that you see collegiate programs begin from literally ground zero. David Sach, the ex-head coach of the Tufts University women’s fencing team is up for the job.

The sport many people view as niche is in his blood. Growing up in the United Kingdom, Sach was given the choice at

his private school (the UK’s version of public schools) to either run cross country in the rain outside or stay dry and fence. The choice was easy for him. Equipped with the tools to reach his goals at his school in east London, Sach went on to win five back-to-back Junior National Championships as a competitive fencer.

He never had a plan to go into coaching as a career, but it just all seemed to fall into place. Medford, Massachusetts was his workplace for over six seasons, impressively guiding the Jumbos from seventh to second in the conference within a four-year span. Sach’s teams were practically invincible in his final two campaigns, losing just 13 of the 54 matches played.

“The fact that it was a dual-gender team was interesting to me,” Sach said on what drove him away from Tufts and toward Norton. “It got to be honest, the Athletic Director’s vision of what he wanted to do with the sport in general at the school, trying to raise the profile of the school through sport, that resonated with me.”

For him, this was always viewed as a challenge. Not one that he could not take on though.

“Sometimes you have a club team that translates into it, but to start completely from scratch is always going to be just an amazing challenge. Also, you

get to set the tone and the team environment for the sport.” None of this is going to happen overnight. It’s about taking one step at a time. Sach is already thinking about five years down the line. That’s the campaign in which he has pinpointed as the time his team intends to compete for the conference.

“That would be the dream,” said the 2023 United States Fencing Coaches Association National Coach of the Year finalist.

From the minute he was officially announced as the coach back in June, the ex-Tufts leader has been in the process of securing a full team ahead of the program’s kick-off.

“I’ve met with over 150 people already for next season to try to get a team up and running early. I’d like to have a full team next year. I’ve done a lot of recruiting, a lot of traveling, a lot of going to events.”

It isn’t your normal recruiting that everyday college coaches do. Similar to what Alana Burgess, the leader of the Water Polo team is experiencing, Sach is essentially trying to sell a product that has not even hit the store shelves yet. No history for people to go off of. Imagine going on Shark Tank without any prior sales. All you have is the tools, a strong commitment, and a track record of success. That’s what Sach is doing but in front of stu-



Courtesy of Tufts University

dent athletes. It’s all about the concept and his ambitious and courageous personality.

“It’s a brand new program, people are obviously cautious about it,” Sach said on the topic. “It makes the recruiting more interesting, shall we say.”

The fencing savant is still learning day in and day out. This is uncharted territory, even for him. What he’s doing is not for the faint of heart. It’s going to be quite some time until we see fencing lifting banners in Norton, but it has to be said that Wheaton picked the right guy to kickstart a project that begins at the bottom of the mountain.

Start reading the rule book folks. Sword fencing is coming to campus. I would recommend finding a book and beginning to dive into it now (there are a lot more rules than you think).

Wednesday, December 6, 2023

Winter break book recommendations

BY ELSIE
CARSON-HOLT

Six Winter Break Book Recommendations

Monsters: A Fan's Dilemma by Claire Dederer

One of my favorite reads this year was Claire Dederer's searching book, part memoir and part piece of cultural criticism. She examines our post Me Too society, but looks more deeply at the question of "can you separate the art from the artist?", instead interrogating what it means to live in an age where we are overwhelmed by biography.

Dederer is the first writer I have encountered who has managed to get to the heart of the tension that lies at the heart of the question: "can you separate the art from the artist?" For her, what fans are grappling with is that something is lost either way. Dederer looks at the struggle as not just a philosophical or moral query for society to decide, but an intimate and personal one. She says that "what I've been through as a woman and the fact that I want to experience the freedom and beauty and grandeur and strangeness of great art—this is at the heart of the matter." It is by far the most moving point about how to enjoy art by terrible people I have seen. In *Monsters*, she explores that tension, and the place that art and its makers hold in our lives beautifully.

How Far the Light Reaches: A Life in Ten Sea Creatures by Sabrina Imbler

Another 2023 nonfiction read, though starkly different in content, is Sabrina Imbler's *How Far the Light Reaches: My Life in Ten Sea Creatures*. Imbler is both a committed scientist and deeply imaginative writer, their prose is matched only by their knowledge of marine animals and biology. I'm in *How Far the Light Reaches*, Imbler profiles ten different sea animals, each of which lives in harsh or remote environments. But in doing so, as the title implies, Imbler also reflects on different pieces of their own life: queerness, their ancestry, coming of age and their experience as a queer scientist of Asian descent in a white, male dominated field.

Imbler exquisitely weaves together memoir with ocean science, and in doing so not only imparts upon the reader their own reverence for strange oceanic creatures, but also draws parallels between how sea life survives and adapts to how communities and marginalized identities survive and adapt.

Someone Will Love You in All Your Damaged Glory by Raphael Bob-Waksberg

Moving on to fiction, Raphael Bob-Waksberg's profoundly lovely and wacky short story collection about love was so good that I read it twice over the course of two months. Bob-Waksberg is best known for being the showrunner for "Bojack Horseman", which I admittedly have not seen, but seems to be widely acclaimed.

The book featured 18 short stories, which range from two

strangers who lock eyes on the subway and proceed to stay on for years in hopes that they will talk to each other to a group of superheroes whose powers only exist when they get drunk. The stories are surreal and dark at points, but Bob-Waksberg manages to balance both emotional vulnerability and absurdism to create a series of striking stories about all the different kinds of love.

Dog Songs by Mary Oliver

In *Dog Songs*, Mary Oliver pays a touching tribute to the dogs she has had over the course of her life. It is a deeply earnest poetry collection (sometimes, overly sentimental, especially when she takes the voice of the dog). Still, there is a truly wonderful sweetness to the poems, and makes for a nice rainy day read.

A Little Devil in America: In Praise of Black Performance by Hanif Abdurraqib

A Little Devil in America: In Praise of Black Performance is an acclaimed essay collection from poet and writer Hanif Abdurraqib from 2019. *A Little Devil in America* is in constant conversation: Abdurraqib addresses the reader and himself, the resulting effect is that of having a conversation with your most intelligent and emotionally attune friend.

A Little Devil in America chronicles the ways in which American culture is deeply indebted to Black artists and creatives. He does not provide a

comprehensive history of this subject, and says that to do so is impossible. Rather, Abdurraqib discusses the artists that he personally feels grateful for, and using deeply moving and lyrical language, informs the reader of the way that those artists have shaped his life. The passages which detail his struggle with depression and his mental health are particularly arresting, so much so that the last page brought me to tears.

Only Good Indians by Stephen Graham Jones

Only Good Indians by Stephen Graham Jones is one of the only horror books that I have ever enjoyed reading, and that is a testament to the way that Graham Jones is able to completely grab the reader's attention with flawed characters that the reader is able to engage with dealing with an unsettling and captivating plot.

The book revolves around four friends who are part of the Blackfeet tribe of Montana. After killing a pregnant elk on land reserved for tribal elders, the four men are haunted by what occurs that night for a decade to come. The premise of an elk haunting is admittedly somewhat off putting, but the Jones is an incredible storyteller that is able to create striking imagery, moving between violent horror and supernatural horror to tell a story of tradition, identity, and guilt that will stay with you for a long time after the story resolves.

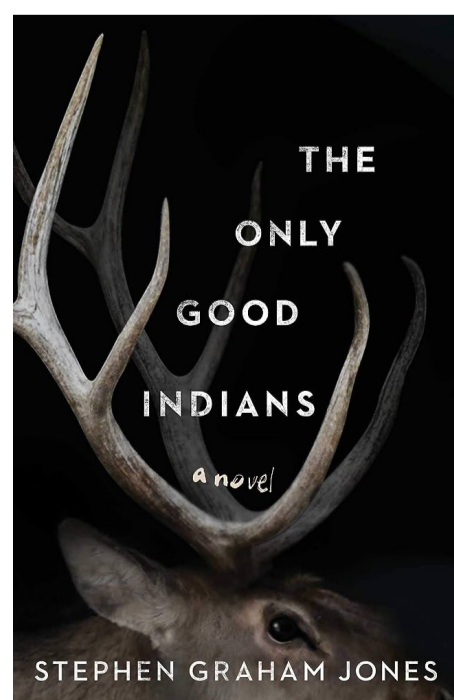
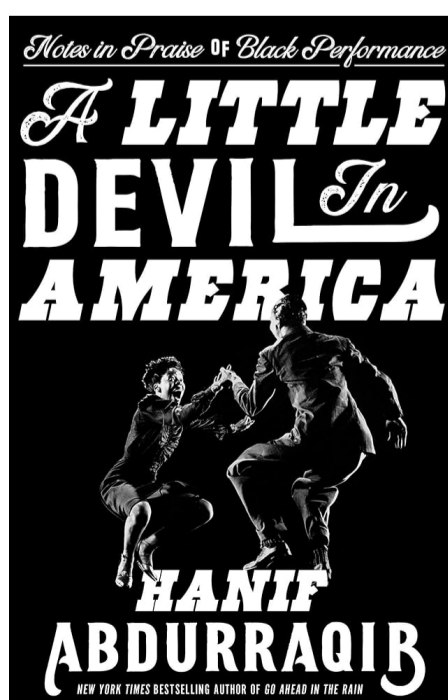
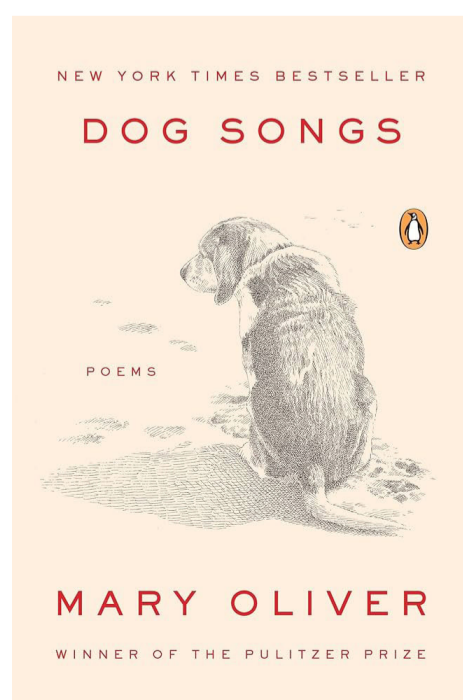
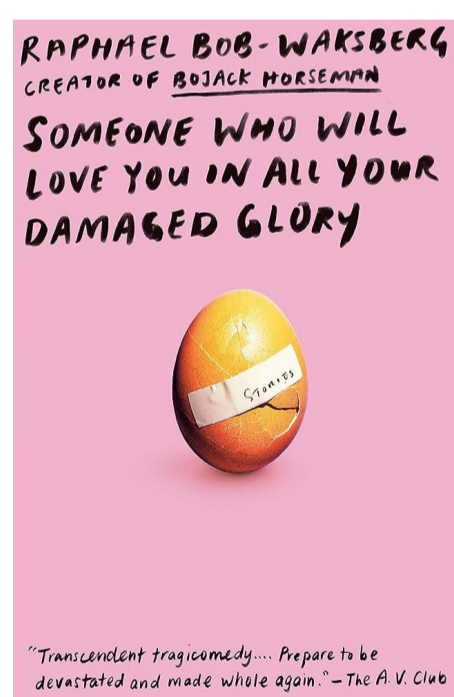
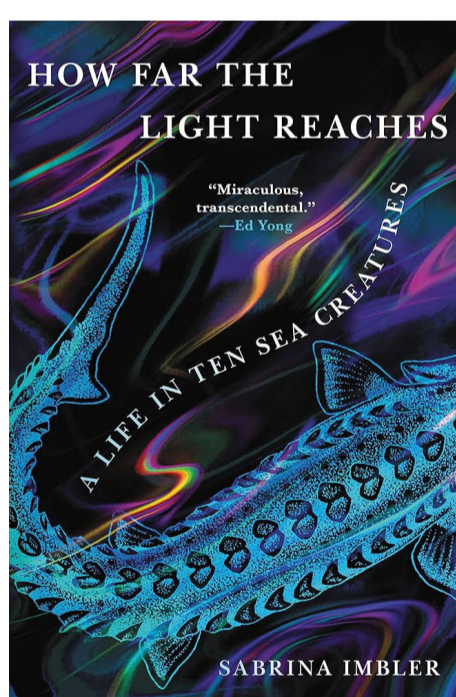
All photos below are courtesy of Amazon.

MONSTERS

A Fan's Dilemma



CLAIRE DEDERER



The Remake Plague

BY RYLEIGH SEUFERT

This was written in April of 2023, so some statistics may be outdated.

The 2010s saw the outbreak of the live-action plague. At first, it was mostly contained and wasn't spreading. The disease was discovered in the '90s, but it slowly died out and lurked underneath the industry, waiting for its time to strike. Then, the year 2010 hit. The plague was unleashed. The growth was slow, but it was spreading fast. It took a few years to infect the whole studio, but surely it did. The demise of unique and original stories was near. Now, in the 2020s, the sickness has spread everywhere, completely draining every ounce of creativity and wonder from the studio, leaving everything they make sad and lifeless, tainted by the stench of greed.

The Disney remake plague literally started at the beginning of the 2010s. On March 5, 2010, Tim Burton's *Alice in Wonderland*, the first Disney movie released in the 2010s, was released. Although not the first live-action remake the studio had produced (The 90s gave us 101 *Dalmatians*, 102 *Dalmatians*, and two separate live-action adaptations of *The Jungle Book*), it was the first in this new wave that would end up taking over the entire studio.

I'll admit, I didn't hate Burton's take on the classic story when it first came out (and I still don't). Maybe that was because I was seven years old when I first saw it, but maybe it was because it was still a somewhat fresh concept. We hadn't yet been forced to consume the never-ending soulless takes on (what still are) beautifully animated films.

After *Alice in Wonderland*, it was a few years before we saw another remake. Though the studio was still putting out movies that were based on previous works, they weren't outright copies and still had some creativity to them. For instance, 2014's *Maleficent* is technically a live-action retelling, but it's not just *Sleeping Beauty* in live-action; it's a backstory of *Maleficent* and how she became the evil villain that we saw in the original. My problem is not with these movies.

I never had any strong opinion about the matter either way until 2019. That year saw four (!) separate live-action remakes from Disney. *Dumbo*, *Aladdin*, *The Lion King* (though in this case, it's technically counted as animated since it's completely in CGI), and *Lady and the Tramp* all came out within an eight-month span. Since then, I have been adamantly anti-remake. Slowly, my resentment has been growing with every eye-roll and groan when another is announced. But now, I am more fed up than ever.

On April 3, The Rock announced on Twitter that *Moana* would soon be added to the list of films getting the live-action treatment. This announcement comes not even seven years after *Moana* first premiered. With the other remakes, the least amount of time between the original has been twenty-two years. Though this movie is still in development, it could very well be released before the original is even ten years old.

With the other remakes, it could at least be argued that these older stories (especially the ones made over half a century ago, as with *Cinderella*) deserve a revamping for the new youth, that enough time has passed, and it would now be fun to see these old stories in a new form. But that doesn't seem to apply to *Moana*.

As of right now, The Rock is returning to play his role as Maui, and Auli'i Cravallo will be reprising her role as *Moana*. So, if they are recreating the same exact movie with the same exact lead cast, what is the point?

The Rock claims that he is making it to get more representation for Polynesian people, but why couldn't they just create a new story that centers on Polynesian people and stories? I'm not exactly the right person to be talking about representation, but I do believe there is a better way than just recreating the same stories over and over.

I think it's pretty clear that the motivation here is money. Why would you need to come up with a new idea when you can just revamp the old ones? The *Lion King* remake grossed over \$1.6 billion worldwide. *Aladdin* grossed \$1 billion. Clearly, Disney can get away with reusing the same old ideas. In fact, the five live-action films produced by Walt Disney Studios that made over \$1 billion were all either remakes or sequels.

Though they made a pretty chunk of change, that doesn't seem to reflect their quality. Although I am not one to say that critic ratings are the most important, *The Lion King* got a 52% critic rating on Rotten Tomatoes and *Aladdin* 57%. It seems that nostalgia alone is getting butts in seats and money in Disney's pockets.

The fact that these movies are being made instead of original ideas deeply depresses me. Imagine every time you walk into a theater, all of the choices are stories you've seen before.

Aside from the aspect of being lazy and reusing old ideas, the issue with live-action remakes is that they are essentially disregarding the entire art form of animation. To say that these movies need to be remade is to say that animation is inferior.

This tells people that you should watch an animated movie and go, "Wow! I can't wait to watch this story with real people and CGI animals!"

Animation should not just be the blueprint. So many animated films could not be made in live-action. How would the wondrous, dreamlike visuals of fantasia be shown in live-action? Lord, I hope I will never see this happen in my lifetime. How could the candy-filled tracks in *Wreck-It-Ralph* be shown with CGI? How will live-action *Stitch* look?

In my opinion, live-action just cannot capture the same magic as the animated originals. Many people had their own stupid reasons to hate the new live-action *Little Mermaid* (this will not be a discussion about the race swapping; all I have to say about that is people need to grow up); the most recent reason that has sparked outrage is the look of Ariel's sea creature friends, Sebastian and Flounder.

At first glance, I was absolutely appalled. How could they take this character (who admittedly doesn't really look like a crab) and make him look so...dull? His realistic look starkly contrasts the magical under-the-sea look of the movie.

Though Studio Ghibli (hopefully) has enough dignity to never let this happen, imagine what a live-action *My Neighbor Totoro* would look like. Devoid of all style and substance. How would *Totoro* himself even look in CGI? What about the soot sprites? *Catbus*? None of the characters would have the soul that makes Ghibli movies have such an impact. I would probably no longer describe the movie as feeling like a warm hug.

Everything that makes animation feel so special is lost in live-action. Animation can do what live-action can't. The suspension of disbelief is inherently built into animated movies as we're already aware that it does not equally represent our real lives. We can easily watch a cartoon lobster sing to a couple about kissing in the middle of the water and feel charmed. We don't have to make it feel like it could theoretically happen. We don't have to make it look like our world, but it fits into that world.

A CGI Sebastian is going to pull you out of the story (aside from his HORRID design) because we don't see talking crabs in real life. Making things look like how they would look in our real-life rides animated movies of all the magic that we get from the original world it was built to be in.

This issue may be most prevalent in Disney movies, but it's starting to become clearer and clearer that we're in the era of reboots, remakes, and sequels. Every single one of the top ten highest-grossing American films

of 2022 fits into one of those categories. Not a single one was a stand-alone film not based upon a pre-existing franchise. The same for 2021.

I haven't even touched on the remakes of non-animated films, and quite honestly, I don't think I have the patience to. Though I don't want to get too far into it (because I honestly don't think I have the mental stamina to look at something that will just depress me with the state of cinema today), franchises are also causing a huge drought of creative and new content. Though it's a bit off-topic, I believe it's worth at least touching on.

The over-reliance on franchises and sequels is getting out of hand. Since Marvel pulled off the feat of telling a large story over a decade, other studios took note. It seems that every movie is getting the franchise treatment or a sequel today, even when it's not needed.

This is yet another symptom of Disney's influence on the media market. With Marvel, Disney was able to build up the most comprehensive film universe to date, spanning 31 films and 12 series over 15 years. After the roaring success of the MCU, it seems that every studio wants to cash in on it, so fewer and fewer original stand-alone films are being made. Not every film needs a sequel/franchise/prequel/TV show/whatever else they can think of! Some things are better left contained in a two-hour film!

As for the future, I'm very conflicted about how to feel. On the one hand, I want to completely give up on the future of cinema in this stage of American capitalism, with Disney seemingly having its foot in 75% of the media that is being released. Also, the list of Disney's live-action remakes is growing larger and larger, and I don't anticipate it slowing down anytime soon. *Snow White* and *Mufasa: The Lion King* are both slated to come out next year, and there are 11 other remakes that are yet to have a release date.

On the other hand, I've seen a lot of original films with original concepts in the past year. The top ten list of highest-grossing movies for this year so far includes five movies with original concepts (*The Super Mario Bros. Movie*, *M3GAN*, *Cocaine Bear*, *Dungeons and Dragons: Honor Among Thieves*, and *Jesus Revolution*), and although some are based on already existing IP's, I would still consider them original since they're not directly related to any other movie.

Still, we are not even halfway through the year yet, so I expect this list to change greatly within the coming months (especially with the release of two more Marvel Studio movies and three more DC Studio movies). I guess it's a waiting game to see what happens.

The College Bubble: Befriend or Break?

BY MADISON MORIN
CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS ISSUE

Howard Street: A Soap Opera
The racing track squirmish of the 1930s was short-lived, confined to its time, and largely unknown. The soap opera that is Howard Street is the more well known town and gown issue that persists to this day.

Wheaton, in many ways, has built itself as a self-sufficient institution, not needing to rely on the town for much, but Howard Street has been a point of contention for years. The first street ever named in Norton, between route 140 and 123 in the town's center, Howard Street happens to cut through a section of campus in which Wheaton has slowly acquired all of the surrounding lands over the years. In 2004 Wheaton president Dale Rodgers Martial failed to negotiate ownership of historical Howard Street. Martial asked the town selectman if they could give Wheaton the road since Wheaton has owned the surrounding land since the early 1990s. The college had also paid to have a waterline placed in Howard Street at the cost of \$500,000 (although it was mostly at the benefit of dormitories) and According to a Sun Chronicle article, President Martial said the town had spent an estimated \$10,000 in the past 12 years or more to plow and police the street.

“Thus for all practical purposes, Howard Street is a college street,” said Marshal. For the college, the appeal of owning Howard Street would be that they would no longer have to deal with the town every time a modification is made, but townspeople and some selectmen opposed the idea of giving away Howard Street at no cost. “We will not be abandoning the street until we know what Wheaton is offering,” said selectman Bob Kimball.

Finance committee member William Goveia saw the transfer as reasonable, “This is not a big deal.” He said Wheaton “has done as much as any organization does in town.”

At the end of the day, however, the fate of Howard Street was in the hands of residents in the town hall that day, and Wheaton's offer of \$200,000 was determined to be not enough. The proposal did not receive the necessary votes to pass. Selectman Bob Kimball who supported the transaction after hearing Wheaton's selling price wrote in 2021, “This issue [Howard Street] has been a long tenacious conversation between the college and the town” He continued, “The old townies, most of which have passed on and moved on, always had an issue with the college and the lack

of real estate taxes paid to the town, even though the college is one of our larger taxpayers.” Howard Street remains an unresolved issue to this day. 2003 Tensions over Iraq
A year prior to the Howard Street case, the Iraq war was announced. A Wheaton student hung an American flag upside down on an on-campus “Theme house”, (A themed on-campus student apartment). This particular one was political-science-themed. There was also a small protest accompanying this flag demonstration on April 4th where students held up upside-down American flags. One student is seen holding a sign saying “Support our troops bring them home.”

According to a Sun Chronicle article in 2003, the students received “harassment, death threats and a four-inch rock thrown through their living room window.” and “The students removed the banner because they felt unsafe, but they still held the same stance on the war.” Public Safety made the students evacuate their home twice because of death threats. One member of the house said, “It's ironic that people say we ought to turn our flag upright to show that we support the troops fighting for our freedom when we're not even safe in our own town,” Bickford said. “We've been subjected to terrorism.”

The Sun Chronicle also wrote an editorial on the incident. They claimed that the perpetrators of violence against the students should be prosecuted, but they are “pleased that the Wheaton students have removed their inverted flag — which many veterans and others find offensive — but deplore that they were intimidated into doing so.” They also said that they “applaud the students for replacing the flag at their student residence with a sign bearing the text of the First Amendment.”

The flag replacement did not settle tensions, however. The incident was an immense disruptor of the bubble.

“This demonstration of Freedom of Speech definitely set the town and college back a few years. The anger from our veterans over the upside down flag caused quite a roar.” He continued “The flag incident stirred up the negative emotions again between the townies and Wheaties! I knew all of the veterans who were involved and can assure you they attended the TM [Town Meeting] in 2004.” Said Bob Kimball when asked if there was a connection between the Iraq protests and the defeated Howard Street proposal.

The Local Bubble-breaking actions that come outwardly from the college often blend into a mush of tensions for many

locals. Whether it is Wheaton as an institution asking for a piece of land, or students protesting against traditional views, maintaining things as “the way it has always been” is essential to many locals and any time the college breaks the bubble, whether it is as an institution or through students' independent actions, it threatens this core of status quo.

The blending of tensions between the Iraq War flag demonstration and the ownership of Howard Street is an example of the spillover of student town tensions into administration town tensions. Students' independent actions affected the college president's efforts to buy Howard Street. Colleges often fail to notice what Bob Kimball described: the Norton residents involved with student town conflict are also often the residents who attend town hall meetings and vote. The cause and effect seems so obvious but is somehow constantly overlooked by higher education.

Another aspect often overlooked is how well-intended efforts towards interaction can have consequences when bubbles have been formed, and colleges become out of touch with a town's priorities.

As I have seen from Colby and Wheaton's past attempts to become involved in town affairs, the effort from a college to break the bubble can be hard-Colby today, and Wheaton in the 1930s approached the issue of the bubble worrying about the town image. But even when coming from good intentions, bubble-breaking actions often come coated in intellectualism, and college's failure to shed this, or even recognize it as existing plays to their disadvantage. — whether it is referencing New York City Writers in a Town Hall meeting, or suggesting a town's fine arts scene be revitalized when 72% of kids are on free or reduced lunch.

The transition from Colby to Wheaton In my senior year of high school I started to spend less time physically on the Colby Campus, I slipped into more of a town “local” role. The only time I get a taste of the inside bubble is when I would pick up Colby's student paper, The Echo, to see what other college journalists are up to. Last spring I stumbled across an article called, “The poor don't understand the rich, and the rich don't understand the poor.” The title immediately took me aback. In the article, Arts & Entertainment Editor, Milo Lani-Caputo, uses vivid imagery to explain the beautiful, the ugly, and the culture shock of his experience growing up in rural Maine and attending an elite liberal arts college.

Milo is a current junior studying

physics, who grew up in a town not far from mine where he lived next door to Amish communities and worked summers as a farmhand to save up money for the school year. Coming to Colby as a first-year, he found some things were very different from the small-town life he was used to. Milo describes himself as “Too nerdy for my hometown, and too country for Colby” but he also holds a great appreciation for both places. When talking about the rural experience Milo writes, “Some think that rural people are racist, intolerant, ignorant, the list goes on ... I can't say that some rural people don't match this description — they do. Certainly, some rural people are dismissive of higher education. But the majority of the country folks that I know are compassionate and tolerant. They take good care of their families and their communities and they are proud of their way of life. They don't feel that they need to have a college education to live their lives,” he writes.

I wondered if Milo's statement about rural folks holds true in Norton, and how this plays into Wheaton's town involvement.

There are, of course, positive liaisons between Norton and Wheaton. There is Melanie Barrick, owner, and founder of Sweet Stuff Bake Shop whose business has been close with both Wheaton students and the Norton community. There is late Wheaton professor Paul Helmrich who was an involved member of the Norton community, having served on the Norton Finance Committee for over 50 years.

There is Bill Goveia, lifelong Norton resident, 45 year Norton town official, Sun Chronicle columnist, and Wheaton supporter. In an interview with Goveia I asked what could be done to encourage involvement both ways, he mentioned the rebuilding of linking programs that don't exist anymore. Gouveia remembers the name of his pen pal from Wheaton when he was in grade school. “It made the college more than just a place,” He said “It was all relatively minor, but you don't see it being promoted that way (anymore)” He mentioned.

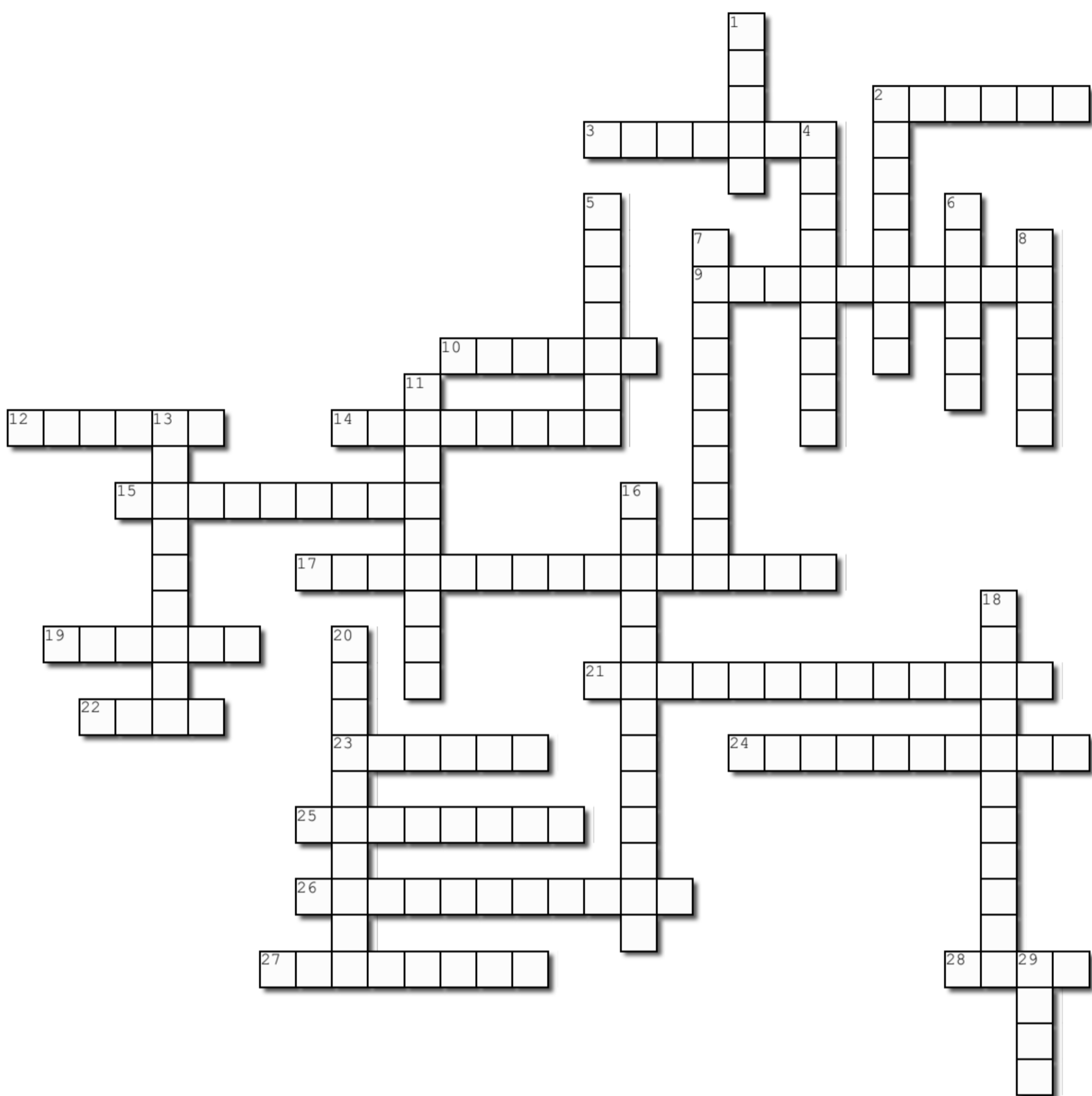
“You would think that a college would be smart enough to reach out to the people themselves. There are probably limited rewards to it... What difference does it really make in the end... until you need something? And, the college hasn't really needed a lot,” he said. “I know the college can do more, and I know that the town can do more, it just takes effort, time, and commitment.”

Continues in next issue.

Wednesday, December 6, 2023

Wheaton Wire Crossword

BY LILY MAGUIRE

**Across**

2. You can play it on a pond, rink, field, street, or Canada
3. The Boy Scout Troops usually sell them to fundraise
9. Winterized roller blading
10. The last week of school is everyone's fav
12. What the holiday's are for
14. A natural disaster AND a DQ dessert
15. An insult based on something beautifully innocent
17. A classic Christmas film played for 24 hours straight on Christmas day
19. They brighten up your tree or house
21. A swapping game that totally never ends in a fight
22. A Wheaton Professor with a ROCK(ET)ing Holiday song
23. This crossword's theme parallels with the theme of break
24. An intramural sport that heats up just as the weather cools down
25. It will always burn your tongue on the first sip
26. "Do you know the muffin man?"
27. If there's snow in the Dimple, at least one person will do this
28. "_____ lands on top"

Down

1. You'll find them in every mall around this time of year
2. Are all the Christmas movies the same? Yes. Yes they are.
4. These aren't your mother's ordinary winter boots
5. The OG nine reindeer for the sleigh
6. The perfect murder weapon
7. The annual Wheaton craft fair!
8. The coffee-milk of winter drinks
11. They belong outside, but we bring them in for *decor*
13. An underlayer to protect bare skin from bellowing winds
16. An iconic Christmas song
18. A yummy treat to bake
20. Lands very own jetski
29. He finds that some people really are worth melting for