

20 THE SPECTATOR

Four Years: Four Colors

Talia Wittenberg ‘25, Entertainment Editor

Everyone that goes to Berkley knows the designated class colors: freshmen wear white, sophomores wear green, juniors wear red, and seniors wear blue. However, the colors meant more to me than just representing what grade I was in, they represented how I felt that year.

As I reflect on wearing my generic white t-shirt at the pep rally freshman year, I realize that the color corresponds to the blank canvas of my high school journey, unpainted, sitting there ready for new possibilities. High school was a fresh start where I could leave my middle school years behind. With the two middle schools coming together there were more opportunities to make new friends and create new memories. That year, I had the best time at Berkley Days because I spent it with my new friends. Freshman year was full of new beginnings. Whether it was football games, learning how to study, or joining the soccer team. Overall, everything felt new and full of possibility.

Looking back on sophomore year, I remember wearing green—vibrant and full of life—which reflected the growth I experienced that year. This was the year that I established my roots, I found my people and determined my friend group. I found a balance between my school life and my social life. I took my first AP class this year, AP Government and Macroeconomics, and it was definitely an adjustment from all the classes I had taken the previous year. I learned that I need to prioritize my schoolwork in order to get good grades. I figured out which study methods work best for me and my learning style. Overall, this year I started to grow as both a student and a person.

Junior year, red, the color of passion, represented the incredible stress this year was for me. Between worrying about college, keeping up with all of my classes, and preparing for the SAT, I had no time to relax. I worked hard to stay on top of all of my work while still making time for my family and friends. In the beginning, I had a lot of trouble finding a balance between school and home. It wasn’t until second semester that I finally realized that I was only prioritizing my school work, not my relationships with people outside of school. I decided that I needed to change that, so I set aside a certain amount of time each week designated for just schoolwork. This way, I was able to spend more time with my family and friends. Overall, this year I learned how to find a balance between school and homelife.

Senior year, wearing blue just made sense because it represented how bittersweet this year has been. From the start of the year—packed with football games, senior events, and college applications—to now, it’s hard to believe I’ve already lived through nearly everything I’ve been looking forward to since freshman year. I can’t even comprehend how my time at BHS is almost over. I have loved every second of this year, and I will cherish these memories forever. I will never forget how much I enjoyed every football game, how much fun I had on senior spring break, and how much our grade has bonded over the past four years. While it is so sad to be leaving high school behind, I am excited to take my next step into the future. These past few weeks, I have been reminiscing on my high school experience. I have grown and learned so much since I first stepped into this school, and I can’t wait to see what the future holds for me!



COLUMNS

Leaving The Field, Keeping the Game

Nora Sleeman ‘25, Student Life Editor

When you reach your junior year of high school and begin working on college essays, the first thing you’re told is: Don’t write about sports. Too cliché. Too predictable. Too overdone. So, in an effort to stand out, I steered clear of the one thing that has probably shaped me the most—my sport, soccer. While I’m grateful for the advice (it helped get me into the schools I hoped for), I now realize the flaw wasn’t in the topic, but rather in the definition.

A cliché, by definition, is something overused and lacking in original thought. If there’s one thing soccer has never been for me, however, it’s unoriginal. In fact, it’s been the most creative part of my life. It’s taught me how to think for myself, how to lead, how to fail and try again, and how to grow into the person I want to be.

I started playing when I was three; a toddler running aimlessly on a giant field. Since then, soccer has been the one constant in a life that’s changed in every other way. But it was in high school that the sport began to truly shape me.

Freshman year, I was anxious. I wanted to prove myself, to catch the coach’s eye. I made JV, but didn’t get called up to varsity like some of my classmates. At the time, it felt like a failure. Looking back, it was exactly what I needed. I got the playing time that helped me develop confidence, I found my voice among the freshman class, and I started to understand what kind of teammate I wanted to be.

Sophomore year brought more growth. I made varsity and started contributing in real ways. I found mentors in upperclassmen who cared deeply about the team—and about me. I began learning balance: managing my first AP classes while juggling a demanding athletic schedule. For the first time, I felt like I belonged to something bigger than myself.

Junior year, I began stepping into that “upperclassman” role. It was my turn to set the tone, to mentor, to lead. I earned a starting spot, and with it, the confidence to speak up—on the field and off. I built bonds with younger teammates, and by the end of the season, I was named a captain for senior year. That moment wasn’t just about recognition; it was about responsibility. I realized I could be someone others looked to—not just as a player, but as a person.

Now, in my senior season, everything feels like it’s come full circle. I’ve found joy not just in winning, but in the people around me, and the lessons they continue to teach me every day. I no longer play with a desperation to prove myself, which is something I thought I’d never say. I play simply because I love the game—and the team. And that love is enough.

I am often asked by others, and the little girl inside of me, why I never tried pursuing soccer collegiately. Reflecting on this, I finally am beginning to accept the fact that all good things will come to an end. Though I may not technically be on a team going into my freshman year, the team I grew up with will stay with me forever. Soccer will never leave me, I will continue to play in different ways, but I feel content with the fact that the game has already given me more than I ever expected. It’s taught me how to be a teammate, and how to be a leader. It has given me compassion and resilience. It’s taught me how to show up—for others, and for myself. And most importantly, it’s taught me that sometimes, the most meaningful stories come from the very things we’re told are not meaningful enough.

So, to me, soccer is not a cliché. It is the thing that has contributed the most to how I see and carry myself. I hope that this sport will bring similar experiences and love for other players in this program, long after the final whistle blows for me.



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The Senior Sadness List: The hardest parts of graduating

1. SAYING BYE TO YOUR FRIENDS

3. GRADUATION SPEECHES

2. SENIOR VIDEO

4. CLAP OUT AT ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

E	G	E	L	L	O	C	R	G	L	O	E	O	A
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Y	E	G	E	W	A	O	O	P	I	T	N	L	S
E	C	S	O	T	T	T	P	A	S	P	E	S	T
N	N	L	A	R	W	R	A	L	C	R	E	Y	A
A	R	W	N	R	I	T	L	A	L	O	A	C	L
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O	O	O	G	R	A	D	U	A	T	I	O	N	I
A	L	L	N	I	G	H	T	P	A	R	T	Y	A
S	R	A	W	R	E	T	A	W	I	O	L	S	N
U	A	P	T	O	O	T	U	O	D	N	A	T	S

Senior Word Search Word Bank

PROM	CAP AND GOWN
GRADUATION	COLLEGE
CLAP OUT	ALL NIGHT PARTY
NOSTALGIA	WATER WARS
STANDOUT	SENIOR SUNSET

Read ahead to find out more about our graduating class!

Student Leadership Allie Capuano

Allie Capuano has made a tremendous impact on Student Leadership and Berkley High School as a whole. Starting in sophomore year, Capuano has contributed immensely with ideas to Student Leadership and loves how close the class has gotten over time. Last year, Capuano was elected as treasurer and now is the president of Student Leadership. She has led many impactful projects over the past couple years, including Holiday Family Adoption, which helps families in need during the holiday season. Along with that, she has learned so many important skills like communications and leadership through her time in this class. Capuano says, “I’ve really grown as a human being and every aspect of my life because of this class.” She loves getting to go to states with her class and getting close with them. “Every single year, the class gets closer and closer because of [states competition]”. This class has truly become one of her favorite things, and loves being involved with it. After high school, Capuano will be going to the University of Dayton for Political Science.



Student Leadership Ashley Rolands

Ever since sophomore year, Ashley Rolands has been an active member of Berkley Student Leadership. Currently, she is the Vice President of Student Leadership. However, prior to this, Rolands was elected secretary for her junior year. “That was a huge honor to win a board position as a junior.” From the first day, Rolands has loved this class. She has always felt super supported by everyone else involved. She said, “I had a lot of huge support... They motivated me to run for secretary my junior year.” Through Student Leadership, she has met many people and has learned so many things like communication, being determined, and so much more. She loves getting to plan activities like pep rallies, spirit week, and also loves getting to see the outcome of her work. Rolands says, “It’s all super rewarding planning all of these pep rallies and stuff.”. Along with that, Ashley says that it is one of the classes that she can apply what she does to her other classes. She’s learned to do things like, “stay[ing] dedicated to actual homework.” After graduation, Rolands will be going to the University of Pittsburgh for Film and Media Studies.



DECA Madelyn Grzegorzcyk

Madelyn Grzegorzcyk had a significant effect on DECA, the national business association, along with Berkley’s marketing class. Since sophomore year, Grzegorzcyk put in an immense amount of work and commitment to create strong, astute innovations. These contributions helped lead her to a future full of leadership, and strengthened her public speaking skills at DECA. Grzegorzcyk said, “DECA has taught me professionalism, teamwork, and real-world business concepts. Most importantly, DECA has shown me the value of hard work and persistence, and has inspired me to pursue a future in marketing.” Through this, Grzegorzcyk has also gained experience from working at the school store “The Bear.” Grzegorzcyk explained, “Being part of DECA has made my high school career more meaningful. It gave me opportunities to compete and connect with like-minded peers.” Similarly, Grzegorzcyk shared that her favorite DECA memory was last year when she and her Deca partner Marlen got called to the stage as finalists. After all the time and effort they put into their project, she said “it was very rewarding and made everything worth it.” Furthermore, Grzegorzcyk hopes that future marketing students have a successful experience too. She advised future DECA members or incoming marketing students to “always try and step outside of your comfort zone and get involved early. Don’t be afraid to take risks, ask questions, and put in the work—DECA is what you make of it, and the more you give, the more you’ll grow and gain from the experience.” Ultimately, Grzegorzcyk will use the skills that she learned and built through participating in DECA to grow her career in sports business at University of Oregon.



DECA Annabel Sturtz

Senior Annabel Sturtz began Berkley High School’s marketing course her sophomore year. Since then, she has thrived, utilizing great determination and diligence to build off of her profound ideas and creativity. Additionally, Sturtz joined the technical student business organization, DECA, becoming a two time finalist in DECA and making it to internationals this year. Sturtz has gained extensive experience with the organization and uses skills she learned in marketing to help her through each competition. Sturtz shared that DECA has allowed her to learn the skill of multitasking by “increasing my work stamina and taught me how to work well with others.” With this, Sturtz has also worked in Berkley High School’s store “The Bear” while enrolled in the marketing class. She spent time focusing on how to continuously improve the store, keep the customers satisfied, and grow the business. “My favorite memories from DECA are in ICDC in Orlando, and we got the gold certified certificate after my partner and I completed our project on the school store.” Thus, she encourages future DECA students to “pick a project that you are passionate about and to not argue with your teammates.” Initially, she suggests that if you go with the flow while also working hard, you will step into the role of leadership and find success in your DECA journey, similar to her. This is now helping her continue her profession in Supply Chain Management at Michigan State University.



4 SENIOR STANDOUTS

Art Lex Quisling

Labeled “the art kid” since they were little, Lex Quisling has known from an early age that art was their passion. Having taken at least one art course every year since the sixth grade, they have gotten to work with numerous mediums; however, digital art continues to be their favorite yet. Some of their favorite memories that remain consistent in each art class are “during the early stages of a project when it looks a bit rough to start and I’m in class with my friends, so we’re all just poking fun at the pieces and having a good time with each other,” Quisling described with a smile. As of this year, Quisling is enrolled in four art courses at Berkley, with plans to attend the College of Creative Studies (CCS) with a focus in animation. Perhaps one day we will get to witness their art on a big screen—wishing you the best of luck!



Sources of Strength Shoshana Loomer

Ever since Shoshana Loomer joined Sources of Strength, she has taken on a very active role in the class, whether that was leading different activities or creating innovative ways to bring mental health to the surface of Berkley High School. Sources of Strength has taught her that mental health looks different for everyone and that mental health has many different perspectives. Before joining the class she had different connotations about mental health, but after her time leading this class, she has come to see it in a different light, enabling her to better help the BHS community. Reflecting on her last three years as a member of the class, Loomer says, “Sources of Strength has changed the way I view the world and the people around me.” Additionally, she says that her time in the class ultimately changed the way she is able to treat people. Her favorite memory is putting the “Gratitude Tree” on display in the “T” each year. She adds, “I’ve been a part of the group who collaborates on making it each year, and it’s super cool to see our class get everyone involved in making it.” Her last words to current and future students of BHS are “even when school gets hard, you can’t feel ashamed to ask for help from teachers and peers because that is what they are there for!”



Diversity Council Veah Green

Despite having only one year under her belt, Veah Green is an outstanding student in Diversity Council! She explains her role this year was stepping up to the plate as a class leader and recognizing that while there wasn’t as much planning of events to do, there were still many things to do around Berkley High School to orient students to focusing on diverse communities. Green says, “Making posters, decorating the hallways, and getting the student body involved was a key role this year for me.” She adds that being in the class was very eye-opening, especially in terms of how many communities and cultures can really be celebrated at school and how that changes a school dynamic immediately. “Being able to impact [her] community positively and feeling like [she] can help people every day” was one of the things that she will take with her as a learning experience for all that she will do in the future. Her favorite memory all year was the annual “Culture Fest,” where many people got to come and try new foods. Her advice for all students is “even when there are days where you feel like there’s nothing to do, always remember you can always strive to make your community a better place!” Green is headed to Grand Valley State University next year to study Criminal Justice and Psychology!



Podcast Alex Kraus

Alex Kraus has been a part of podcasting since the beginning of his junior year. Over the past year, Alex and his friend Hunter Knaus had the opportunity to create a podcast, BHSPN, that they publish weekly. The class has helped Alex grow in many ways, like making conversation much easier to navigate, and improved his communication skills. While many classes at school may feel boring or hard, podcasting has always been something that he has looked forward to, making it a highlight of his highschool experience. One of his favorite moments was working on the early episodes of his podcast. When he first started, he spent a lot of time talking about the Detroit Lions, a fun topic to dive into. The early process was a challenge, and it helped him build a foundation for what has become a successful podcast. For anyone who might consider taking podcasting in the future, Alex advises you to come up with a plan. Having a potential idea before entering the class is a great way to get started. But, also, keep an open mind and be ready to explore new opportunities. The skills Alex has gained from podcasting, such as communication and creativity, will carry with him for whatever his future holds for him.





Yearbook Leah Rizak

Leah Rizak has been a part of yearbook for four years. Since she was a freshman, she has immersed herself in yearbook, meeting many new people and helping underclassmen. She is a big part of this community and has learned so much. From freshman year to now, she has gotten so much insight about writing and photography. Rizak's role in yearbook has helped her to become a bigger member of the school community by taking pictures of sports, clubs and classes. Her advice to future students is not to be afraid to pull people out for quotes because it gives you the opportunity to get to know so many people. Rizak says, "My favorite memories are meeting my other editors because I wouldn't have ever met them if we weren't in the class together". This year she is the co-head editor and believes this class has impacted her entire future by showing her what she wants for her career. When coming into this class, Rizak was unsure of what she wanted to do, but this class led her to the right path as she has committed to Michigan State University and is majoring in public relations.

Yearbook Kaylin Matthews

Kaylin Matthews' journey with yearbook has been nothing short of impactful. Since her freshman year, she has spent time in yearbook as such a dedicated member. Through this class she has learned many things about photography and writing. She has documented school events taking pictures or writing about them which gives her such great opportunities like photographic, writing, and social skills. Matthews' high school career has changed a lot through her involvement in yearbook, with the class being one she chose to work on during her free time. Despite being a commitment, it has been worth it for Matthews. Matthews states, "My favorite memories are taking varsity football pictures and this year I also got to take all of their senior pictures which was so fun." Matthews will be attending Grand Valley State University and majoring in Pediatric Nursing. Matthews' experience throughout this class has been amazing and she believes everyone should join this class.



News and Broadcasting Luke Romo Demerre

Luke Romo Demerre has been a member of News and Broadcasting for all four years of high school. Despite originally joining the class on a whim, his involvement grew into something very meaningful. Demerre has become someone others can rely on, acting like an anchor for the people who turn to him for help. Through his experience in News and Broadcasting, Demerre has learned lessons regarding the importance of patience and that his way is not always the best way. Additionally, News and Broadcasting has had a significant impact on Demerre's high school career, playing an important role in helping him get accepted to his dream college, the University of Michigan. One of Demerre's favorite memories from his time in News and Broadcasting was this year's senior bear awards. For incoming Berkley High School students, or anyone joining News and Broadcasting, Demerre's advice is simple yet important; don't be afraid to make mistakes. It's all a part of the learning process, and any growth that comes from it will be worth it. The experience Demerre has gained in News and Broadcasting such as leadership, patience, and communicational skills, will certainly shape his future, preparing him to do well in college and in any future path he chooses to follow.

News and Broadcasting Tamia Spann

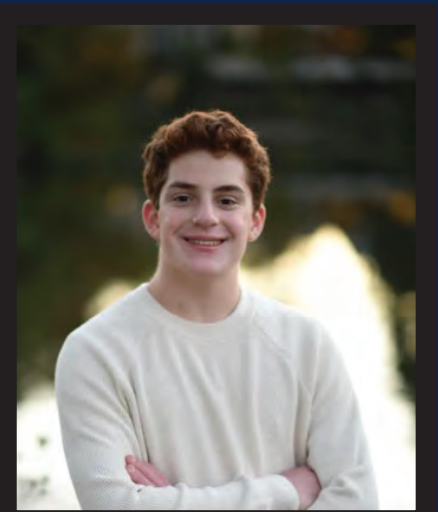
Tamia Spann has been a member of News and Broadcasting for four years. Throughout her time, she has made significant contributions in planning events, handling announcements, and working on the senior video. These efforts have led her to receive the Senior Bear Award, a recognition she is proud of. This class has had a major impact on Spann, playing a part in her decision to switch her college major from oceanography to digital storytelling. Additionally, she mentions that being involved in News and Broadcasting has helped her build more friendships and connect with staff members, positively impacting her high school experience. A few of Spann's favorite memories include working on the senior bear awards and video, as well as contributing to announcements. Her advice to students considering News and Broadcasting as a class, and even just incoming students, is that, "it's harder than it sounds but it's a lot of fun and worth it" referring to News and Broadcasting as well as high school in general. The experiences she's had in News and Broadcasting will undoubtedly shape her future in a positive way, especially as she moves forward in digital storytelling at Oakland University.



6 SENIOR STANDOUTS

ORCHESTRA Ari Sklar

Ari Sklar has been playing the violin since he was in first grade. Sklar joined the school orchestra in sixth grade, and as he quickly excelled, he was playing in the Symphony Orchestra at the high school by eighth grade. Sklar has shown excellence in his musical talent, becoming concertmaster at the high school. Sklar states that orchestra has taught him how to be a good leader and work well with others, which he has applied in various aspects of his life. In orchestra, Sklar has developed a community that has helped him grow as a person and introduced him to many amazing people. Some of his favorite memories from orchestra are going to Panera after competitions with the rest of the group, and the time when Mr. Moy taught the class how to Waltz. He also cherishes the moment when the group got all ones at the district festival this year: a win that was well deserved. He advises future orchestra students to practice playing their instrument as much as they possibly can at home. And for incoming Berkley students, Sklar recommends finding a community for oneself as it will make the high school experience more enjoyable and much less lonely. Sklar is attending the University of Michigan in the fall with the plan of playing in student orchestras and continuing violin lessons.



ORCHESTRA Shira Mendelson

Shira Mendelson began playing the violin in fourth grade, and in the eight years since then she has become a talented violinist. Although she was originally placed in concert, Mendelson ended up in the symphony orchestra as a freshman and attributes much of her success to this experience due to the confidence it gave her. Mendelson shared a favorite memory throughout her time in orchestra, describing, "The two years I went to orchestra camp—which is when we go to some YMCA place at the beginning of the year and we practice our songs for the fall concert—and it was so much fun living and sleeping in the same quarters, especially because everybody was able to become friendly." Currently, Mendelson is unsure whether she will continue to play as an undergraduate at the University of Michigan; however, she confesses it would be fun to play in an orchestra of some sort. After four years of being in the symphony, Mendelson's advice for aspiring orchestra students is to come in with the mindset that you like to play, but that ultimately your reason for staying is the friends you make along the way.



CHOIR Kate Arnold

Kate Arnold has been an active member of the Choir program at Berkley for all four years of high school. She joined Encore in her sophomore year. Choir has positively impacted her high school life in many ways. It has improved her mental health by allowing her to do what she enjoys, and it has become her favorite class of the day. Choir has had many memorable moments for Kate over her last four years. Her favorites include concerts that the choir holds multiple times a school year, and Encore competitions in which the Encore group travels together to an out of state competition. Being chosen for the senior standout means a lot to her, since she loves helping others enjoy her passion for music and being chosen for a standout culminates her helping others. Her advice for future students is to do what you love, and follow your passions throughout high school! Kate will be attending Eastern Michigan University and majoring in developmental psychology.



Drama Grace Comstock

Since sixth grade, Grace Comstock has been deeply involved with the Berkley Drama program. She has been so dedicated to it that she has tried to be involved with Drama in every way she can. Drama has been such a big part of her life that she has become more “confident” and “content with who she is”, as well as “making lots of friends” from being in the program. Whether it’s voice lessons, helping on set, or memorizing lines, Comstock knew what she wanted to do with her time after school. She loves tech week because “everything comes together, and we get the full picture— lights, band, everything.” She has built great memories by hanging out after shows with the cast and crew. In the fall, she will be attending DePaul University for film. Some advice she has for students is “don’t get into your head about not getting the part you want, and try to get involved in stuff backstage as well.”

Drama Lilah Conger

Lilah Conger, a four-year member of BeDrama, has participated in numerous productions. She loves being a part of everything that goes on inside of it. Conger shares how BeDrama has impacted her, saying, “It has definitely helped me grow my confidence and make new friends. It also helped me find new ways to respond to challenges.” Having participated in the program throughout her entire high school career, some of Conger’s favorite memories were, “Doing green room before every show (a room where the actors gather before the show starts) and energy warm-ups.” Since it’s her last year in BeDrama, she offers some advice to incoming freshmen or those thinking of joining Drama: “There are going to be a lot of moments when you think, ‘Why did I join this?’ But it always works out in the end and is super fun.” After high school Conger is going to attend Oakland University and major in psychology and social work.

Band Harper Stacey

When BHS students think of the marching band, most will picture Harper Stacey leading their performances during events like football games. Stacey began her high school marching band career her freshman year and was promoted to drum major her sophomore year. This has included important roles such as “leading the whole band for rehearsals, gamedays, and planning any extracurricular events.” Though this is clearly a time-consuming and difficult role, Stacey appreciates the “strong leadership skills” the organization gave her and how it “has helped grow and exemplify [these leadership skills].” Through her experience with marching band, Stacey has met some of her favorite people, saying, “I’ve made a huge family through this program.” Over the four years, Stacey expresses that there are too many amazing memories to count, but some of her favorites are going to Leo’s Coney Island after football games and having their “pre game” where they “go in the tunnel and play ‘power’ and everyone is clapping and playing which is a lot of fun.” Overall, this organization has left an everlasting positive effect on Stacey, and she advises future members to “take advantage of the friends that you make through marching band and get close with everyone because you spend so much time with them.”

Band Ann Redman

Ann Redman’s commitment and enthusiasm for the band are why she is one of the band’s spotlights. Redman’s passion for band began in fifth grade, and she has played all four years here at Berkley. She has been a part of so many different band opportunities: jazz band, marching band, and the pit orchestra for the school’s musicals. Redman’s favorite part of the band is meeting all the new people and being involved in something bigger than herself. The band has taught Redman many things, primarily how to be a team player. While she can only play her instrument, she must also rely on 60 other people to play their parts. Also, it’s nice for her to spend time with her friends, so that she gets to be creative with their music. Band has allowed Redman to make new friends, including many who are outside of her grade, so it makes sure to broaden her horizons. Redman said, “My favorite memory is band camp in the summer, learning the music, working on the show, and hanging out with friends is a lot of fun.” Her advice for all of the future BHS students wanting to follow in her footsteps is, “make sure to get involved as much as you can, and just try to play your instrument as much as possible, because the more you play, the better you’re gonna get, the more fun you have.” Redman plans on attending the University of Wisconsin in the fall, majoring in Biomedical Engineering.

8 SENIOR STANDOUTS

MVP ATHLETE Sam Niyo

Throughout the athletic department, there are countless leaders, but one leader, Sam Niyo, stands out. Niyo was the captain of both the boy's soccer and basketball teams. Niyo has been a part of both teams all four years of his high school career and was on varsity for three. Niyo has been All-League twice in soccer, has received five All-League Academic awards, and was an All-State academic for both sports. Throughout high school athletics, Niyo says, "I have practiced a lot and worked hard. I was able to make an impact in both sports, and I've had a lot of success." Sports have given him many relationships, he says, "I have made a lot of friends from both the soccer team and the basketball team, that I wouldn't have had." He explained that both sports have taught him leadership skills, as he was captain of both teams. Niyo then explains how basketball and soccer have impacted his career, he says, "Every day, every year, I have a practice or a game, and I think my life would be very different -definitely more boring- without them." While on the soccer team, Niyo says his favorite memory was "beating Troy Athens this season, in the district semi-finals." As for basketball, Niyo says beating Royal Oak was his favorite memory. Niyo will be attending the University of Michigan in the fall and will be majoring in Sports Management. For all upcoming student-athletes, Niyo's advice is to, "Don't be afraid to be loud, and be yourself. It's only going to help you if you are out there talking, trying your best, and having fun."



MVP ATHLETE Madi Bonsall



Berkley High School has a lot of outstanding athletes, but one who particularly stands out is Madi Bonsall. Bonsall has been a part of both the soccer and basketball teams here at Berkley. She is a three-year varsity soccer athlete and a four-year varsity basketball player. Bonsall has been All-League in both sports. For soccer, she was also All-District, All-Region twice and All-State honorable mention. She believes that she has stayed "very dedicated and practiced really hard" in both of her sports. Both basketball and soccer have greatly increased her confidence in what she can do on and off the field. She continues, "They have taught me how to persevere, and it is hard work, which is the key to success." Throughout her high school experience, sports have played a major role. For Bonsall, sports have "made high school a lot better, and it has allowed me to build strong relationships. It has also helped me stay on top of my schoolwork, as I am constantly busy." Bonsall's favorite memory on the basketball team was winning districts her freshman year. She said, "It was a really cool experience cutting down the net. Although I didn't play much my freshman year, it was still really cool being a part of the team." Her favorite soccer memory was when she found out that her club soccer coach, Pablo Ripodas, would be joining the coaching staff. Bonsall will be playing on Northern Michigan University soccer team and will be majoring in Exercise Science. Bonsall's advice for future Berkley athletes is to "keep working hard. Sometimes it can feel really overwhelming. It's not easy being a student-athlete and trying to balance sports and school, but even when it gets hard, keep persevering, you will gain a lot in return!"

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SPORT STANDOUTS

THE SPECTATOR 9



Cross Country

Sammy George

FAVORITE MEMORY: “Junior year there was a very muddy and rainy meet. Everyone was miserable warming up, but as soon as we got off the line, we all got super hype.”

ACHIEVEMENTS: 3 time All League, Mr. Cross Country Award, Highest GPA on Team

YEARS PLAYED: 4 in total, 4 on varsity

COLLEGE: University of Michigan, Major: Economics and International Relations/ Public Policy.

QUOTE: “Just Do It.” -Nike



Cross Country

Abby Short


FAVORITE MEMORY: “I made lots of memories at cross-country camp.”

ACHIEVEMENTS: League meet champion, Cross Country Dream Team

YEARS PLAYED: 4 in total, 3 on varsity

COLLEGE: Michigan State, Major: Mechanical Engineering

QUOTE: “Play your heart out.” - Kobe Bryant



Track

Chris Lofton

FAVORITE MEMORY: “Team dinners because they really helped us bond”

ACHIEVEMENTS: Captain, top 5 in the region junior year, qualified for states senior year

YEARS PLAYED: 4 in total, 4 on varsity

COLLEGE: University of Memphis, Major: Business, running on the track team

QUOTE: “I’m always working to improve my game and stay focused” - Sheduer Sanders



Hockey

Charlie Price

FAVORITE MEMORY: “Freshman year when I was able to play with my brother who at the time was a senior.”

ACHIEVEMENTS: Captain for 2 years, made regional finals 3 of the 4 years.

YEARS PLAYED: 14 in total, 4 on varsity

COLLEGE: Miami University, Ohio, Major: Finance

QUOTE: “Work hard, dream big.”



Skiing

Antoinette Serra-Gagnon

FAVORITE MEMORY: “My last ever race, because knowing that was my last experience with my team showed me how far I’ve come, and that’s special to me.”

ACHIEVEMENTS: Shaving time off of her first skiing race ever.

YEARS PLAYED: 2 years in total, 2 years on varsity

COLLEGE: Western Michigan University, Major: Aviation Flight Science

QUOTE: “You can have it all, you just can’t have it all once.” - Oprah Winfrey



Football

Caleb Collins

FAVORITE MEMORY: “Getting a win after two years. The 2025 class had a really rough go the past years, so that was pretty eventful.”

ACHIEVEMENTS: Being able to grow with his friends, captain of the team.

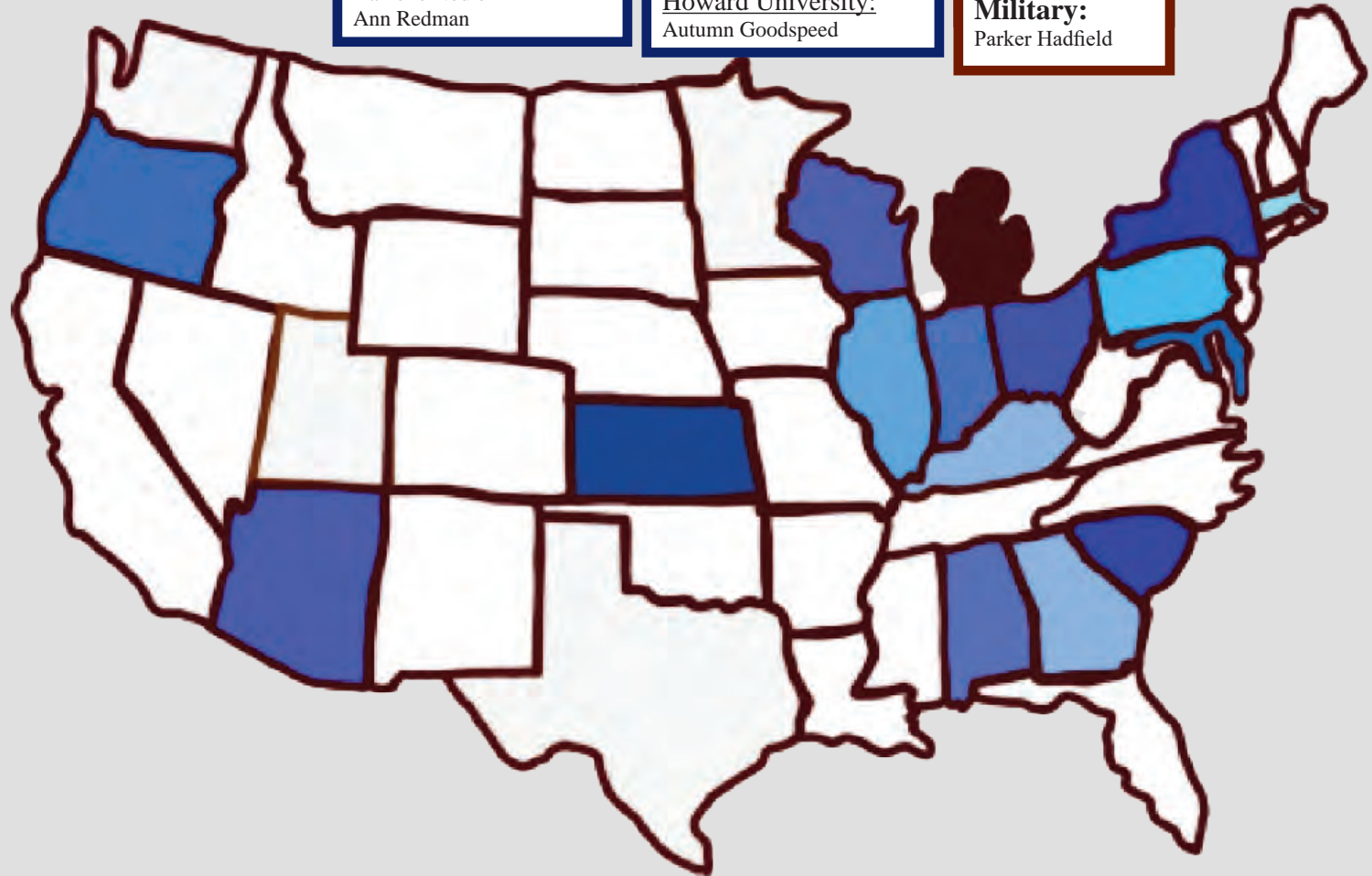
YEARS PLAYED: 4 in total, 3 on varsity

COLLEGE: Trade School at OCC

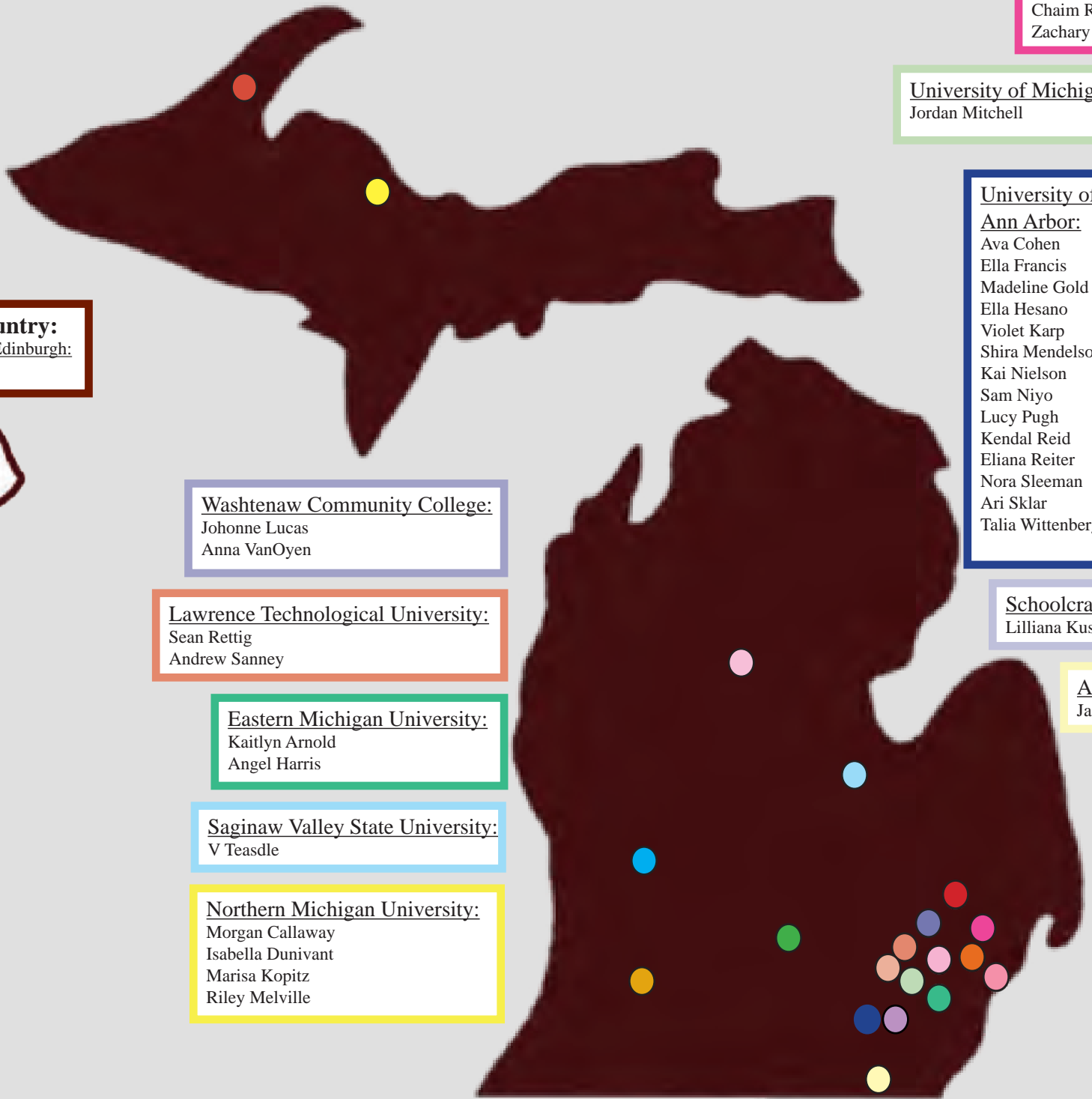
QUOTE: “Keep working even when no one is looking.” - Anonymous

BERKLEY COLLEGE MAP

Alabama <u>Alabama A&M University:</u> Bryce Armstrong Christopher Lofton	Indiana <u>Indiana University:</u> Justin Findling Jacob Friedman Ethan Roth	Ohio <u>Case Western Reserve University:</u> Alexandra Valencia Arcila <u>Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine:</u> Lucia Pietraszewski-Tesolin <u>Miami Univeristy:</u> Charlie Price <u>Tiffin University:</u> Brooke Schall <u>University of Dayton:</u> Allie Capuano	Gap Year: Braden Collins Alexa Gilman Garrett Johnson Yuval Levy Isaac Matthews Cameron Mercer Abigail Minor Amelia Odett Ayssa Skoczylas Samuel Wittig
Arizona <u>Arizona State University:</u> Shoshana Loomer Rhys Rubenstein	Kansas <u>University of Kansas:</u> Aidon Lelli	Trade School: Abbott Belanger Keagan Campbell Aaron Cook Robert Laczkovich Anisa Vanhorn	
Georgia <u>Georgia Institute of Technology:</u> Jack Saltsman	Massachusetts <u>Massachusetts Institute of Technology:</u> Emile Jenkins	Working: Michael Bradley Ava Cartwright Andrew Curry Kyle Gabriel Ashlyn Gonda Colin Lloyd Nicholas Momper Nicholas Riedy	
Illinois <u>DePaul University:</u> Lucy Cohen Caroline Egnotovich <u>Loyola University:</u> Léla Kyles Je'da Kyles Avery Nicholson Taylor Ricks Ruqaya Siddiqi Sabiya Siddiqi Moe Svireff	Pennsylvania <u>University of Pittsburgh:</u> Ashley Rolands Ella Pochron	Military: Parker Hadfield	
	New York <u>Columbia University:</u> Emily Castone		
	Wisconsin <u>University of Wisconsin:</u> Ethan Frank Danielle Nodler Ann Redman		
		South Carolina <u>Clemson University:</u> Nick Campbell	
		Washington D.C <u>Howard University:</u> Autumn Goodspeed	



2025



College for Creative Studies: Lex Quisling	Central Michigan University: Chloe Hunt
Oakland University: Owen Burmeister Rocco Cusumano Hannah Fairman Amelia Mlutkowski Jack Peña Chaim Rosenthal Zachary Wagner	Michigan Technological University: Jacob Carter Elliott Hall Alexandra Heroy Zachary Marutz Hannah Schueler Eliza Sweik
Madonna University: Madison Newton	Grand Valley State University: Case Bishop Laila Edelma Véah Green Alexander Kraus Kaylin Matthews Brian Mitchell Delaney Reed Harper Stacey Memphis Stillwell
Wayne State University: Zachary Bahash Lily Bernstein Lillian Garska Alex Johnson Anna Kacin Leilah Kakaire Evian Kelsey Emma Sove Morgan Stearn	Michigan State University: Miyah Allison Benjamin Babcock Ephraim Ball Sadie Bancroft Elizabeth Bruce Jessie Burns Hannah Collins Theresa Crowe August Cumming Aidan Darrah Lauren Eastman Zeinab Erreghaoui Samuel Feiler Christopher Griffin Joshua Harlam Margo Hartzell Alana Horwitz Hailey Kirkwood Lily Larson-Wolbrink Sienna Mullins Nathaniel Neuser Sophia Novell-Regester Reed Reynolds Leah Rizak Matthew Rucinski Karsen Savage Cecilia Shaw Abigail Short Aynsley Smith Sophia Snell Zachary Steiner Gretchen Stief Annabel Sturtz Gabriel Vieder Avery Weingarden Zach Weingarden Alana White Leah Wine
University of Michigan, Dearborn: Jordan Mitchell	Western Michigan University: Ashten Bellamy Alexandra Crockett Jessica Gleason Madi Schindler Antoinette Serra-Gagnon Sari Wagner
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor: Ava Cohen Ella Francis Madeline Gold Ella Hesano Violet Karp Shira Mendelson Kai Nielson Sam Niyo Lucy Pugh Kendal Reid Eliana Reiter Nora Sleeman Ari Sklar Talia Wittenberg	Oakland Community College: Benjamin Baldwin Emily Bayliss Danielle Betteridge Christopher Buchanan Caleb Collins Emma Daguanno Nathanael Dejene Kyle Deladurantaya Nicholas Elias Spencer Gildenpfennig Isabella Kozlowski Kennedy Kristian Amanda Lemons Malina Magolan Gunnar Manista Robbie McDowell Nora McGrath Alex Milfer Heather Mrosewske Erin Owens Alexandros Papanastassiou Johnny Paprocki Ethan Pollard Nathan Raimi Gabriella Rice Arlo Sanfield Nolan Tudrick Andrew Twiss Megan Wienczewski Steve Wilson Evan Young Olivia Zacklan
Washtenaw Community College: Johonne Lucas Anna VanOyen	Lawrence Technological University: Sean Rettig Andrew Sanney
Eastern Michigan University: Kaitlyn Arnold Angel Harris	Saginaw Valley State University: V Teasdle
Northern Michigan University: Morgan Callaway Isabella Dunivant Marisa Kopitz Riley Melville	Adrian College: Jack Thornton



Soccer

Jessie Burns


FAVORITE MEMORY: “Team dinners, especially the team dinner when Water Wars was going on, and we were all trying to help each other out.”

ACHIEVEMENTS: Winning games, moving up in OAA white, gaining leadership skills, and personal growth

YEARS PLAYED: 13 years in total, 3 on varsity

COLLEGE: Michigan State, Major: Business

QUOTE: “Nothing is impossible, the word itself says I’m possible” - Audrey Hepburn



Soccer

Kai Nielsen

FAVORITE MEMORY: “Going out to be with the team and team dinners.”

ACHIEVEMENTS: Broke the school record for most goals in a season and first-team all-state honors in Division One

YEARS PLAYED: 13 years in total, 3 on varsity

COLLEGE: University of Michigan, Major: Physics

QUOTE: “Burn the boats.” - Coach Steve



Tennis

Ethan Frank

FAVORITE MEMORY: “Winning a match at States this past year and being with this team.”

ACHIEVEMENTS: Two-year varsity captain, Most Improved Player junior year, and States senior year

YEARS PLAYED: 10 years total, 3 on varsity

COLLEGE: University of Wisconsin-Madison, Major: Psychology

QUOTE: “Move your feet.” - Sam Subia



Tennis

Lucy Cohen

FAVORITE MEMORY: “Our match against Groves my sophomore year because we went into a third set and everyone was watching us and cheering. We ended up winning, and it was so exciting.”

ACHIEVEMENTS: Most Improved Player sophomore year, States sophomore and junior year, and captain senior year

YEARS PLAYED: 5 in total, 3 on varsity

COLLEGE: DePaul University, Major: Communications and Media

QUOTE: “Positivity on 6, 4 5 6... Positivity!” - Lucy Cohen



Volleyball

Alana White


FAVORITE MEMORY: “When we played at Shrine Catholic school. It was our senior night, so there was a big crowd in the stands, and I was also playing against two of the people I played club volleyball with. I felt like I was on fire that night overall with my play, and I just had such a good time with my team and playing against my old teammates.”

ACHIEVEMENTS: Captain senior year, All league senior year, District Championship sophomore year, Regional Championship sophomore year

YEARS PLAYED: 8 years total, 3 on varsity

COLLEGE: Michigan State, Major: Pre Nursing

QUOTE: “The strongest people aren’t always the people who win, but the people who don’t give up when they lose.”



Softball

Brooke Schall

FAVORITE MEMORY: “Winning districts my freshman year because it was the last year I was playing with my sister. We all played great, and they were such fun games to play in!”

ACHIEVEMENTS: All-Region and 4 years on varsity

YEARS PLAYED: 12 years in total, 4 on varsity

COLLEGE: Tiffin University, Major: Exercise Science, playing on the softball team

QUOTE: “Believe you can and you’re halfway there.”



Golf

Ella Hesano

FAVORITE MEMORY: “Shooting my best score on nine holes of a 36. It was so rewarding to see all of my hard work pay off. That was also the moment that I won the individual OAA champion.”

ACHIEVEMENTS: 3-year captain, 3-year MVP, 2024 state qualifier, individual OAA blue division champion, earning a spot on the Berkley Athletics Hall of Fame.

YEARS PLAYED: 7 years total, all 4 years on varsity

COLLEGE: The University of Michigan, Major: Economics

QUOTE: “Concentration comes out of a combination of confidence and hunger.” - Arnold Palmer



Golf

Justin Wolfe


FAVORITE MEMORY: “When I shot a 71 in my first tournament as a senior and won the division.”

ACHIEVEMENTS: MVP junior year, All-League junior year, currently ranked 2nd in the state for an 18- hole average

YEARS PLAYED: 4 years in total, 3 on varsity

COLLEGE: Indiana University, Major: Media Advertising

QUOTE: “There’s no pictures on the scorecard.” - Papa (his grandpa)



Basketball

Jacob Friedman

FAVORITE MEMORY: “We have pretty long seasons, and going to practices on weekends can be hard, but being with the boys and laughing and going through tough times together has brought us closer as a team and made us better friends.”

ACHIEVEMENTS: Captain senior year, All League First team, All District Honorable Mention

YEARS PLAYED: 5 years in total, 2 years on varsity

COLLEGE: Indiana University, Major: Neuroscience

QUOTE: “Make it happen.” - Michael Jordan



Basketball

Hailey Kirkwood

FAVORITE MEMORY: “Beating Plymouth in an overtime game this year.”

ACHIEVEMENTS: Captain senior year, team MVP award, outstanding Senior Athlete award, OAA All-League junior year, Detroit Free Press Dream Team honorable mention junior and senior year.

YEARS PLAYED: 14 in total, 3 on varsity.

COLLEGE: Michigan State University, Major: Data Science

QUOTE: “Pressure is privilege”- Billie Jean King



Baseball

Spencer Bajcz

FAVORITE MEMORY: “Winning districts my Sophomore year where I caught both games.”

ACHIEVEMENTS: Winning All-District and All-Conference in both 2023 and 2024, and being a captain this year.

YEARS PLAYED: 12 (4 in HS) in total, 3 on varsity.

COLLEGE: Undecided, Major: most likely pre PT, planning to play baseball.

QUOTE: “Talent may get you on the field, but it’s effort and attitude that will keep you there” - Ken Griffey Jr.



E-Sports

Rocco Cusumano

FAVORITE MEMORY: “Definitely winning together as a team.”

ACHIEVEMENTS: “Best Player of The Week,” Mario Kart, Smash Bros team got top 16 in the State for the ESports competition.

YEARS PLAYED: 2 in total, 2 on varsity.

COLLEGE: Oakland, Major: Psychology

QUOTE: “That’s what a championship takes — never losing focus, commit to the goal, continue to improve mistake by mistake you make along the way”– Steve Arhancet



Swim

Jack Saltsman

FAVORITE MEMORY: “(Swimming at) leagues with the team. Everyone was there and we all had fun cheering each other on. There was a lot of enthusiasm. We got to see all the teams we swam against during the season, and overall, there were lots of achievements.”

ACHIEVEMENTS: Rookie of the year, Freshman year, MVP junior year, captain senior year, Bear of the Year senior year, placed at leagues

YEARS PLAYED: 11 in total, 4 on varsity.

COLLEGE: Georgia Tech, Major: Mechanical Engineering

QUOTE: “You can’t put a limit on anything. The more you dream, the farther you get.” - Michael Phelps



Swim

Lucy Pugh

FAVORITE MEMORY: “After the meets, we all did a splashy cheer in the water.”

ACHIEVEMENTS: Senior Captain, 4-year state qualifier, All League 2022, 2023, 2024, All State 2023, Academic All-State, 2 school records, 2 pool records, 13x on the BHS top 6 record board

YEARS PLAYED: 12 in total, 4 on varsity.

COLLEGE: University of Michigan, Major: Environmental Studies

QUOTE: “Practice like you have never won. Race like you have never lost.” - Simone Manuel



Dance

Ruqaya Siddiqi

FAVORITE MEMORY: “We were about to perform at a basketball game and we were one person short, so we were all freaking out. But then we realized that Lilah (another teammate) was in the stands and of course coach Morgan had an extra uniform for her and she performed with us. It was a really funny but successful moment for us.”

ACHIEVEMENTS: Captain for 2 years

YEARS PLAYED: 12 in total, 4 on varsity.

COLLEGE: Loyola University Chicago, Major: Undecided, English or Science Research

QUOTE: “Progress, not perfection, is the path to success” - Unknown



Figure Skating

Madeline Gold

FAVORITE MEMORY: “This was the first year that states were out of town, so it was really fun to be able to travel with a team. Figure skating is such an independent sport, so it was my first experience, and I love all of my teammates, so it was a fun time.”

ACHIEVEMENTS: Co-captain, 2nd place at states junior and senior year

YEARS PLAYED: 14 in total, 4 on varsity.

COLLEGE: University of Michigan, Major: mathematics, playing on the intercollegiate figure skating team

QUOTE: “Winning is not about how many medals you get, it’s about what you accomplish. Just be the best you can be,” - Coach Candance LaFerle



Unified

Delaney Reed

FAVORITE MEMORY: “Beating Royal Oak in a soccer game.”

ACHIEVEMENTS: Working as a team, improved skills

YEARS PLAYED: 2 in total, 2 on varsity.

COLLEGE: Grand Valley State University, Major: Biology

QUOTE: “It’s hard to beat somebody that never gives up” – Megan Rapinoe



Unified

David Onorati-Phillips

FAVORITE MEMORY: “Going to Little Caesars Arena.”

ACHIEVEMENTS: Making a lot of baskets, and beating Royal Oak in soccer

YEARS PLAYED: 2 in total, 2 on varsity.

COLLEGE: Undecided

QUOTE: “I like unified. It’s cool, it’s inclusive, everyone’s on the same team.” – David Onorati-Phillips

SPORT STANDOUTS



RUGBY

Riley Melville

FAVORITE MEMORY: “I recently went to tropical 7s. It was super cool playing against people from Canada and Alaska and meeting a bunch of new people in the rugby world. ”

ACHIEVEMENTS: 3 year Captain, invited to tryout for the Midwest Baby Birds team, played in an international tournament

YEARS PLAYED: 4 in total, 4 on varsity

COLLEGE: Northern Michigan University, Major: Biology, playing on the Northstar Rubgy team

QUOTE: “You have power over your mind - not outside events. Realize this, and you will find strength.” - Marcus Aurelius



RUGBY

William Just

FAVORITE MEMORY: “Playing last year in the rain, and the field got very muddy.”

ACHIEVEMENTS: Scoring goals with his team

YEARS PLAYED: 2 in total, 2 on varsity

COLLEGE: Wayne State, Major: Secondary Education

QUOTE: “Enjoy the process.” - Unknown



LACROSSE

Jack Thornton

FAVORITE MEMORY: “Beating Salem 8-5 in my senior year as it was taking revenge on them for Salem beating us during hockey season.”

ACHIEVEMENTS: Setting the school record with nine goals in a single game against East China

YEARS PLAYED: 4 in total, 3 on Varsity

COLLEGE: Adrian College, Major: Business Administration, playing on the lacrosse team

QUOTE: “Complacency kills” - Aidan Dewitt



LACROSSE

Gretchen Stief

FAVORITE MEMORY: “Scoring my first goal, and everybody came running to me!”

ACHIEVEMENTS: Getting pulled up for districts junior year

YEARS PLAYED: 2 in total, 1 on varsity.

COLLEGE: Michigan State, Major: Undecided

QUOTE: “You miss 100% of the shots you don’t take.” -unknown



CHEER

Alex Heroy

FAVORITE MEMORY: “The process of learning new things, like hitting stunts.”

ACHIEVEMENTS: Co-captain

YEARS PLAYED: 3 in total, 3 on varsity

COLLEGE: Michigan Tech, Major: Mechanical Engineering

QUOTE: “A good cheerleader is not measured by the height of her jumps but by the span of her spirit.”-Unknown



My High School Journey, Sticker by Sticker

Lucy Cohen '25, Editor-in-chief

My collection began with a sticker of a stack of books, topped with a mug labeled “Luke’s”, the diner from my favorite show at the time, “Gilmore Girls”. I loved the way it looked in the bottom left corner of my laptop, adding color to the boring gray plane. That sticker was the start of a meaningful collection of stickers which I can now look back and reflect on. I realized that many of them represent pivotal moments in my high school career. Although some were challenging, they are all moments I would never take back.

Take freshman year for example: as much as I liked being a freshman because of the new start it gave me, I was also having a hard time socially. I felt lonely when I would walk into the crowded cafeteria with nowhere to sit. One of my old friends from elementary school called me over to come sit with her and that became my daily routine. I was grateful to be included in their plans and group chat, the official invitation to the group. In the bottom right of my laptop, I added a plain black sticker filled with the words “Choose kindness”, inspired by my kind friends taking me in and accepting me. Now when I look at it, as a senior about to graduate, it reminds me that I should always be kind to everyone because that is often how friendships are started, something I will have to do a lot next year.



10th grade felt like I was waiting in a long line for a roller coaster. It was tedious, boring, and full of anticipation for what was to come. Classes were hard, but I knew they would get even harder junior year. I was grinding through driver’s training, knowing I wouldn’t get my license until August. I was preparing for my first AP test, AP Biology, which I was sure would not go well. I was stuck in limbo, in between being fresh out of middle school and starting to think about my future after high school. A sticker on my laptop has the phrase “Enjoy the little things,” written on it, which became my motto that year. I found joy in spending time with my newfound friends, going out to lunch, being a part of the varsity tennis team and taking a bigger role as copy editor of The Spectator. Now when I look at it, it reminds me to take in the small but enjoyable moments of my final weeks of high school before I leave for college. If I could go back and give advice to my sophomore self, I would tell her to not take those little things for granted,



savor and value the fun moments I had because I will never be a high schooler again.

The lesson of enjoying the moment was put to the test during my junior year. The summer before schools started I decided to fill my schedule, leaving very little downtime for myself. I knew it would be hard, but I wanted to load up to have strong college applications. With all of the difficult classes and extracurricular obligations I took on for my college applications, it felt like I was sinking in the deep end of the pool, struggling to stay afloat after overcommitting. It was such a big leap from 10th grade. I also was having to start to think about college, and I had no clue where I wanted to go - never having had a “dream school” - so I had to start my research. Imagine having to decide where you want to go for dinner, except you have to go to the restaurant for four years. On top of that, I was tutoring weekly for NHS hours, I was playing tennis three days a week to prepare for the season in the spring, and I was balancing nightly homework for several of my classes. On the left side of my laptop, there is a sticker with a turtle wearing roller skates with the “slow your roll” above it. That phrase was something I had to tell



myself a lot throughout 11th grade. I realized that destroying a year of my life for some abstract unknown college admissions board wasn’t, in fact, worth it when I started to feel tired all the time and I was only putting in 50% effort into my commitments. I decided to drop some of my after school activities so I could have more time for myself to do what I loved rather than what I had to do, like painting, going for walks, and playing the guitar. Now when I look at it, it reminds me that it is a good thing to have some down time, and I should always make time for myself, even when the work is hard.

After waiting and waiting, I finally got to the front of the line for the rollercoaster that is my senior year. The ride started immediately, going up and up as I was working on my college applications, the anticipation growing bigger. It felt like junior year all over again, stressful and busy. I was finishing up my college applications and starting a new load of difficult classes. Once my applications were submitted, the cart of rollercoasters tipped over the top, flying downhill as everything started rushing at me. My first decision from a school came, and another, then the first semester ended, another decision, then it was February break, another decision, and senior spring



break was quickly approaching, the tennis season started, I made my decision on where I was going to go, and then I found my roommate, took my placement tests, and registered for orientation. My mind has barely caught up with the fact I’m done with high school forever after May 20th. But, regardless of what my mind is telling me, I am going to DePaul University in Chicago next year. Just recently, I added a sticker with the school’s logo on it to my laptop. When I look at it, I remember how grateful I am for all of my friends and experiences I had at BHS. But it also reminds me how excited I am to start a new chapter of my life in Chicago, as I take the lessons I learned in high school to start anew!

Poodle Costumes and a Chili's Gift Card: Why I'll Never Stop Celebrating

Violet Karp '25, Editor-in-chief

I love birthdays: not just my own, but all birthdays. I think it is so awesome and spectacular that there is a designated day for everyone on the planet to dedicate time to celebrate themselves. I always give my full effort for my friends' and family members' birthdays: I plan parties, make and build elaborate gifts, write long, genuine notes within birthday cards that I treat like quasi-love letters, each one expressing my deep gratitude and appreciation for the birthday person's place in my life. I get beyond excited when a birthday is coming up. From my 5th birthday that was puppy themed, in which I dressed up in an entire poodle costume, to my 12th birthday party, which was 80s themed, when I attempted to perm my own hair, birthdays give me an excuse to get creative with my self expression.

When my own birthday comes up, I feel so loved as the people around me treat my birthday as I treat theirs. However, throughout high school, it seemed as though my birthday enthusiasm was not always matched by those around me. For example, on my 16th birthday, I had never been more excited. Not only was it one of my favorite days of the year, but I was also going to get my license. The combination of new found independence and upcoming celebration was overwhelming. So, I gave it everything I had, more than ever before. I picked out my outfit weeks in advance, made dinner reservations, and decorated my entire house with the help of my close friends, who were coming over to celebrate. Everything was nearly perfect, except when a couple hours before people were supposed to arrive, I got a text from one of my guy friends. "Sorry Violet, none of the boys can make it tonight anymore."

I was absolutely devastated.

In a mixture of anger

and disappointment, I couldn't help but feel a sense of betrayal. When it was their birthdays, I always showed up with enthusiasm, got them presents, and even threw a surprise party for one of them. I could not believe that they didn't care to put in the same effort for me. But there was nothing that I could do about it. So, my other friends still came over, and while it was a smaller celebration than originally planned, we still had a good time. It wasn't until after 12 a.m. that I got a phone call from one of the boys who didn't show. "Come outside," a voice boomed. Before I could ask any questions, the phone hung up. So, suspiciously, I walked outside. There, in the pitch black night, sitting in a circle in my backyard, were all of my guy friends. They apologized for not being able to make it earlier and gave me a birthday card that included a \$10 Chili's gift card and a couple of loose quarters. Though it may not have been the best gift, it was something, and I had never felt more appreciated. The fact that the people I cared about showed up for me was enough. As my disappointment dissolved, I realized a key lesson; even though people may not share my enthusiasm, it should not take away from my own happiness. True friends will always be there for you, even if it doesn't look the same as how you are there for them. People share affection in different ways. Regardless of how others feel, birthdays give me such great excitement, and I'm so glad that there will always be more room for celebration every year to come. As I move into my college years, I will continue to celebrate those around me, and even though they may not be as excited as I, my birthday will still be my favorite time of the year.

18 THE SPECTATOR

Leaving Doesn't Mean Forgetting

Zeinab Erreghaoui 25', Opinion Editor

As Seniors approach the last day of school, the hallways start to feel smaller, the morning bells ring softer, and the faces I have been seeing for the past four years of my life start to disappear. The end of senior year is bittersweet because we are focused on sharing our last few moments with the people we grew up with through events such as prom, senior sunrise, senior sunset, the senior prank, football games, homecoming, and other gatherings. It's a slow realization that one of the biggest chapters in our lives, which I have been looking forward to since I was a young girl, is coming to an end.

But leaving high school doesn't mean forgetting.

I won't forget the teachers who believed in me before I did, the friends who kept my secrets safe, the moments in classes where everyone would burst into laughter, and the quiet times where life still felt okay. I won't forget those who pushed me into trying new things, which ultimately challenged me to grow as a person, even when it felt comfortable to stay the same.

Through high school, we fail and get back up because we learn from our mistakes. That's the good side of high school; we learn who we were, who we wanted to be, and then realize who we've become through our experiences.

To me, high school was more than education and an opportunity to go to college. It gave me memories that will turn into storytelling for my future kids. For example, the time my car got hit, and when I was hiding in my opponent's backyard from 5 a.m. in hopes of getting them out during water wars, or the time I nearly died from freshman pushback. All of these memories, hitting me all at once from freshman year to senior year, have left me with options to pick and choose. Specifically, decisions such as choosing friends, a future career, and simply picking up new hobbies. It was possible because I was open to the idea of trying new things that were out of my comfort zone.

So no, I will not forget about the endless highs and lows high school gave me. It was the first place that allowed me to take a fall and get back up. Where I learned perfectionism was a myth, and that failure is another word for growth. High school gave me all of my firsts- first friendships, first time failing, and first heartbreak. All the laughter, cries, giggles, smiles, and arguments will not be forgotten; instead, it will be taken into account how it shaped me into the person I am destined to become in the near future.

Despite everything, high school didn't always feel like home to me in the beginning. But as I approach the end of this chapter, my feelings toward high school have changed because I've realized that it's impossible to forget something that meant so much. So, when I walk across that stage, I will leave a piece of me behind in every hall and classroom. And I will take everything that high school taught me into the next chapter of my life.

COLUMNS

A Letter To The Freshman I Used To Be

Christina Tubbs 25', Photo Editor

I've been thinking a lot about who I was at the start of high school. This is what I wish I could've told that version of me. Freshman year didn't change my life. I didn't suddenly find my 'people,' discover a hidden talent, or have some big high school movie moment. In fact, I spent most of it trying to figure out who I was supposed to be and getting it mostly wrong. But what I learned afterward, piece by piece, did change everything.

Coming into high school, I thought it was all about fitting in. I didn't realize it's actually more about figuring out where you don't want to fit in and being okay with that. I tried to blend in wherever I could, even if it meant quieting parts of myself to match the people around me. I joined clubs I didn't care about, laughed at jokes I didn't find funny, and convinced myself that fitting in was the same as belonging. But over time, I learned that real confidence isn't about being accepted by everyone; it's about feeling comfortable enough to stand out. The moments I stopped chasing approval were the ones where I started to find people who actually saw me.

Freshman me thought being 'smart' meant never asking questions. I believed that if you have to ask, you clearly didn't get it, and that meant you were behind. So I just kept quiet, nodded along, and pretended to understand even when I didn't. But here's what I eventually learned: the smartest people I know aren't the ones who always have the answers; they're the ones who aren't afraid to admit when they don't. They speak up, ask questions, and stay curious. They treat confusion like a chance to grow, not something to hide. Once I stopped worrying about looking dumb, I started learning much more.

That lesson in asking for help didn't just apply in the classroom; it showed up in my relationships too. I wish someone told me it's okay to grow apart from people. It doesn't mean something went wrong; it just means you're growing. Freshman year, I was convinced the friends I started with had to be the friends I ended with. So when things started to shift, when conversations felt different, when we stopped laughing at the same things, I thought I had done something wrong. But the truth is, people change. Interests change. Values change. And sometimes, you just drift. That's not failure; that's life. The real ones might stay, and some might circle back later, but letting go of the idea that every friendship has to last forever is one of the most freeing things I've learned.

The pressure to have it all figured out doesn't just affect your friendships; it creeps into how you see yourself, too. You're not behind just because someone else looks like they have it all together. Everyone's faking it a little freshman year. Even the ones who walk the halls like they've lived there forever. It's easy to assume that everyone else has found their group, their purpose, their rhythm, but most people are just as unsure, anxious, or overwhelmed as you are. They're just better at hiding it. What you see on the outside doesn't always match what someone's going through inside. I spent too much time comparing my behind-the-scenes to someone else's highlight reel, not realizing that confidence isn't something you start with; it's something you build at your own pace.

You won't remember most of the awkward moments. The times you stumbled over your words, said the wrong thing, or didn't know where to sit-- those will fade. But you'll remember the moments you were brave. The time you spoke up even though your voice shook. The day you joined a club alone, walked up to someone new, or admitted you didn't understand something. Those are the moments that shape you, even if they don't feel big at the time. Freshman year isn't about having everything figured out. It's about showing up, messing up, and learning who you are in the process. If I could tell my freshman self anything, it's this: You're doing better than you think. Keep going. It gets clearer and better than you can imagine.

Taking Senior Year One Letter At A Time

Sophia Yunker '25, Staff Writer

Senior Year is a roller coaster of emotions, chaos, and way too much coffee. From zoom flashbacks to the all-night senior party, there's a word that describes each and every part of the senior year journey. Helping you survive the ever-growing realization that high school is coming to an end, this "Senior Dictionary" guides you through the slang, struggles, and madness that is senior year.

A - "All night senior party" - A chaotic farewell event where high school seniors celebrate graduation by cramming in four years worth of memories, junk food, and endless dancing.

B - "Burnout" - The seniors' natural state of mental or physical collapse by overworking, under-sleeping, and exploring the endless opportunities of what to do after graduation.

C - "College Applications" - The time-consuming, stressful procedure where seniors try to summarize their entire life in 650 words or less.

D - "Diploma" - A fancy piece of paper that marks your survival of years of group projects, quizzes, cafeteria food, and the dreading feeling of senioritis.

E - "Exhausted" - The official energy level of a high school senior who survived running off of damaging amounts of caffeine, vibes, and the distant promise of graduation.

F - "FOMO" - or fear of missing out, a condition of senioritis that is prompted by seeing numerous people attend a certain function and feeling strong jealousy because you aren't there.

G - "Graduation" - The day when seniors finally trade in their class textbooks for a lifetime supply of unexpected adulthood.

H - "Homework" - A form of torture consisting of never-ending work used on students to test their time management, procrastination, and willpower.

I - "Iced Coffee" - The magical drink that turns high school seniors from zombies to productivity-machines.

J - "Jobs" - The necessary activity seniors take on to fund their own college funds, caffeine addiction, and shopping habits.

K - "Karma" - The universal law that ensures the universe is keeping score, typically after an act such as skipping class or cheating.

L - "Late" - The innate state of seniors to arrive late to class and turn in assignments past the deadline with no regret.

M - "Memories" - Those magical moments from your school career that hit you like a tidal wave.

N - "Naps" - Brief comas disguised as quick breaks that seniors swear will last 10 minutes, then wonder what year they're in when they wake up 3 hours later.

O - "Overwhelmed" - The default emotional setting for seniors after juggling college applications, finals, and the existential dread of leaving your childhood behind.

P - "Prom" - A rite of passage where seniors dress from head to toe in their fanciest clothes and spend more time taking photos than actually dancing, yet somehow still leaving with terribly blistered feet.

Q - "Quit" - What most seniors threaten to do at least twice a week; giving up and not doing any work. Typically followed by a quick TikTok break and the slow completion of another nagging assignment.

R - "Recommendation letters" - Letters written by your favorite overworked teachers that consist of exaggerated accomplishments and skills in their class.

S - "Senioritis" - A highly contagious academic condition that affects high school seniors, typically arriving at the start of semester two, followed by months of chronic laziness, procrastination, and loads of naps.

T - "Throwback" - A sentimental memory full of cringe Snapchat filters and first school dances.

U - "Unbothered" - A mental state adopted by high school seniors after realizing GPA stress is so last semester.

V - "Vibes" - The indescribable energy that defines senior year; an exhilarating blend of nostalgic hallway walks, senioritis, and emotional old yearbook discoveries all while making it to the final reach of your teenage years.

W - "Water Wars" - An annual senior tradition disguised as a harmless game, but is actually a stressful operation that includes water guns, betrayal, and short term alliances to fill your last weeks of high school.

X - "Xtreme" - The level of effort, stress, and procrastination high school seniors reach when completing applications, studying for the last tests of the year, and celebrating the last days of high school.

Y - "YOLO" - AKA you only live once, the rebellious mindset of high school seniors making reckless yet memorable decisions in order to live life to the fullest before they officially enter adulthood.

Z - "Zoom flashbacks" - Sudden mental spirals that are characterized by memories of breakout rooms, sleeping through class, and the awkward silence following a glitching screen after a wifi crash. Triggered by the familiar yet traumatizing ding when entering a zoom call.

