



The High School View

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Coach shortage impacts student athletes

BY NIKEYA TANKARD, IZZY ANTHONY, AND NICK CARPENTER

As spring sports registration opens, the ongoing coaching shortage continues to present challenges for student-athletes, leading some to transition away from sports they have played for years.

According to Athletics Director Mark McCarthy, who has been in the position since 2009, retention of coaches is on the decline, requiring new coach recruitment for nearly every season. "We have a need for qualified coaches," he said.

This year, girls basketball will lose its varsity coach of six years, Melissa Braillard. Ms. Braillard, who also teaches math at MVRHS, is stepping down to spend more time with her family as her children's own sports schedules begin to take up more time. "It's a big commitment to be a coach," she said. "As a mom, I don't get

to see my kids that often, so it's really difficult to manage that time."

Mr. McCarthy echoed this sentiment. "Although I'm trying to increase our coaching salaries, the time you put in doesn't equal the money you're paid. Coaches have to have the ability to have a flexible work and family schedule," he said. "Issues surrounding family responsibilities are a huge factor when deciding whether or not you'll apply for a coaching position."

Ms. Braillard cites traveling as an added challenge of Island coaching: "It takes multiple hours to travel. When you are coaching off-Island, you go to a game in the town next door, and you get home and are able to have dinner with your family. That's not the case here."

The coaching shortage has had an acute effect on the MVRHS girl's lacrosse team. The team filled its head coach position two months ago after months of vacancy, which had



ILLUSTRATION: OLIVIA MACPHERSON

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raised uncertainty about the upcoming spring season.

Senior Clara Mikos has been on the lacrosse team for all four years of high school. She said, "We [the team] weren't thinking we were go-

ing to even have a season until a couple of weeks ago."

Clara has played under a variety of coaches during her time at the high school. "This will be my third new coach in only four years," she said.

"I have experienced firsthand how few coaches there are on-Island. The inconsistency is probably the hardest part."

Senior Elena Giordano has decided not to play lacrosse this season after being a member of the team since her freshman year. Elena spoke to the struggles that arise when turnover is high. "It's been hard to build a team. It's hard to build team chemistry when every season we have a new coach walking in," she said. "It takes a while to get to know everyone's strengths and weaknesses on the team, and it takes more than a season to do that."

The girl's lacrosse assistant coach, William Brown, who teaches history at MVRHS and has been coaching for three seasons, is also stepping down this year due to family commitments. Mr. Brown believes that challenges of coach recruitment and retention stem from a variety of sport-specific factors. "Our numbers have never been massive," Mr. Brown said. "There's not that parent-booster fan base that you

have with football, baseball, or hockey," he said. "That tells me there's still growth that needs to happen with the girls lacrosse program."

Mr. McCarthy cited the limited number of qualified coaches on-Island as a contributing factor to the ongoing coaching shortage. "The pool of people available to coach is finite due to our population and geographic limitations," Mr. McCarthy said. "Some sports have deeper roots here, like football and basketball, whereas young sports like lacrosse are difficult because the number of available alumni is less."

For athletes like Clara, the uncertainty around whether or not the season would move forward has led to players losing interest or opting into other sports and activities. "The interest hasn't really been there because our season has been so uncertain. People are looking to play other sports and do other activities," said Clara. "[The coaching shortage] really reduces the emphasis on the sport and the enthusiasm surrounding it." **HSV**

Tasting tables promote cultural appreciation

BY NIKEYA TANKARD AND NATALIE WAMBUI

Every Friday in February, Martha's Vineyard Regional High School's (MVRHS) cultural clubs and cafeteria staff have teamed up to celebrate Black History Month through the tastebuds.

MVRHS' equity and access coordinator and Black Student Alliance (BSA) supervisor Sheryl Taylor and her club members unveiled "tasting tables" in the cafeteria on Feb. 9. During the lunch block, they set up tables in the cafeteria with small portions of culturally significant dishes for students to try, along with pamphlets explaining the historical origins and cultural

significance of each dish.

"The purpose is to expose people to foods that they might not ordinarily eat, and to showcase foods that are traditional foods in different cultures," said Ms. Taylor.

On Friday, the BSA club offered peach cobbler and red velvet cake, both of which were prepared by cafeteria staff. Peach cobbler, a staple of many soul food menus, is beloved in part because it's less finicky and easier to make than its cousin, peach pie. Red velvet cake is often served on Emancipation Day, or Juneteenth, to symbolize the blood shed during enslavement.

History department chair and AP African American History teacher Ena Thulin

believes the tasting tables appeal to a wide range of the student body. "I think there are more students who are trying to become knowledgeable about African American history," she said. "[This month] is an opportunity to celebrate the accomplishments of African Americans throughout history and bring that awareness to students, people, and our society."

Junior and BSA member Nyoka Walters sees food as both a way to honor one's cultural heritage and witness the evolution of that heritage. "Culture and cuisine have deep connections in Black culture," she said. "It stems from slavery and the environments Black

people come from, but also develops with new culture Black people create."

In addition to the tasting tables during the month of February, the cafeteria staff prepared a traditional Jamaican lunch for the whole school on Feb. 16. The meal featured jerk chicken, rice and peas, and vegetables. Cafeteria head cook Marc Brasefield led the preparation of the Jamaican menu. "It's not hard whatsoever — and I think the response is huge," he said.

The enthusiastic student response was evident in the long line stretching outside the cafeteria as students waited to taste the Jamaican cuisine. Junior Josephine Powers said, "I don't normally eat this type



BRADY VOUGHT

Junior Caiden Gardner and senior Bryonie Brown welcome students to the tasting table, a collaboration between the Black Student Alliance and cafeteria staff.

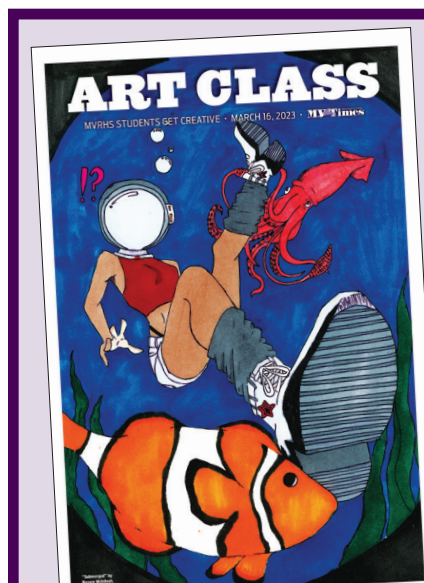
of food, but it was good."

For the rest of February, the cafeteria staff and BSA club hope to present a new cultural dish each week. "Ultimately, we hope to incorporate more cultural comfort foods and diversify our cafeteria offerings," Ms. Taylor explained. "Every Friday we're mak-

ing something special," Mr. Brasefield said.

Sophomore and BSA member Xeandre Miller reflected on Friday's lunch: "I think the response was very good and encouraging. Many people like to learn, try new stuff, and love food — just like me." **HSV**

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