



# The High School View

The High School View is staffed and prepared entirely by students from the Martha's Vineyard Regional High School, and published on their behalf by The Martha's Vineyard Times.

## Students bring seaweed exhibit to life

BY NATALIE WAMBUI

This fall, the MVRHS "Community Art" class, led by art teacher Tiffany Shoquist, played a central role in creating an immersive experience for the Martha's Vineyard Museum's latest exhibit, "The Secret Life of Seaweed."

The project began when Anna Barber, the museum curator, approached Ms. Shoquist at the end of the last school year with an idea: transforming the museum's ceiling into an underwater world using fabric seaweed created by students. The exhibit officially opened on Oct. 4, featuring multiple components, including the student-made seaweed installation that transforms the space into a serene underwater environment. Ms. Shoquist explained that "there are three parts to the exhibit — one with items from the museum's archives, another hands-on room, and an in-between space with a microscope set up, where visitors can look at real pieces of seaweed."

Ms. Shoquist notes that the museum had previously started working on the proj-



Students from the high school's "Community Art" class set up the seaweed display at the Martha's Vineyard Museum.

ect. "They had planned the exhibit already, but Anna wanted to add an immersive element," Ms. Shoquist explained. "She had this vision

of covering the ceiling with fake seaweed, so it felt like you were underwater when you walked through." With the museum's resources

and enthusiasm from the class, the project began to take shape.

When the idea for the Seaweed Project was pre-

sented to the students, it sparked immediate interest: "We looked at images of seaweed, and some students even went out to the beach for inspiration." The museum's support in providing the materials motivated students further. "Just having all those supplies was inspiring," she added.

The students experimented with techniques like sewing, gluing, and using wire to create realistic textures. Junior Nova Smith, a student in the "Community Art" class, said, "We spent the first few days looking at pictures and sketching mockups of how we could make the seaweed look realistic. After that, it was all about bringing those ideas to life."

The project also extended beyond the classroom, with other students and community members pitching in. Ms. Shoquist said, "Random kids during flex or after school came in to help out," and Ms. Kurtz, an MVRHS history teacher, lent a hand. The collaborative spirit was a crucial part of making the installation

happen.

For many students, the Seaweed Project offered a unique, hands-on experience. "I liked it because it was just a very crafty thing to do," said Aedan Coogan, a senior who helped set up the exhibit at the museum. "It was creative, and I got to work alongside other students and other staff members. We pleated the fabric to make the long black seaweed strands look realistic."

Senior Vivian Baxter, another student, echoed this sentiment. "We used all sorts of materials, and it was really cool learning how to sew and assemble the pieces in ways I hadn't done before," she said. "It was mostly about making seaweed, but it was enjoyable because it was something different."

The exhibit is now fully operational, offering a comprehensive experience for visitors. "If you go today, you'll see everything in action," Ms. Shoquist added. Vivian, who briefly visited the exhibit, expressed her excitement: "It's so pretty. I want to go back and really walk through it, and see everything we created." **HSV**

## AP courses: Do they hurt or do they help?

BY LULU WHITE

What motivates these students to take college-level courses in high school? What are the possible effects of these classes on our students? In recent years, 1 in 4 Martha's Vineyard Regional High School (MVRHS) students have taken at least one Advanced Placement (AP) class per year. Compared to the national average of around 1 in 17, our school has a significantly higher percentage of students taking college-level courses.

At MVRHS, we offer 21 AP courses, more than half of the total subjects offered by the College Board. Many students take advantage of this fact, taking all core subjects in AP classes junior and senior year, sometimes with the addition of AP electives.

One such student is junior Emily Boyd, who is currently taking 5 APs, and took AP U.S. History last year. She has a genuine interest in

most of her classes. "With AP Chemistry and AP Music Theory, [I'm taking them] because I'm really interested in the subjects. Same with AP BC Calculus," she said.

Emily doesn't feel that way about all her classes, though. "I'm taking AP World because we don't have an honors version of history at our school, and I really didn't want to do humanities or a C1 class," she said.

Director of Guidance John Fiorito shared how historically, the history classes have had no honors options. He said, "In all the time I've been here, the history department has believed in heterogeneously grouped classes." This means that students who are at Honors and C1 levels are all grouped together. This often makes students like Emily jump up to an AP class when it isn't something they are truly interested in, purely because

they want a higher level.

But what is the hesitation with taking lower-level classes? According to Mr. Fiorito, much of it has to do with the college process. "Students are so much more aware than they were even 10 years ago. We can try to push that grades aren't all that matter to colleges, but of course schools don't ever say 'We're only looking for 8 APs', so there's only so much we can push without having that ammunition of schools actually saying how many APs they're looking for," he said.

While many schools are taking a more holistic approach to applications, students, especially those looking to apply to very competitive colleges, know that to even get their foot in the door, their transcript has to show AP classes.

Although AP classes are often encouraged if students want to go to competitive colleges later,



History teacher Ena Thulin teaches her AP "African American Studies" class.

there are potential downsides, the most major being the toll on student mental health. Emily said, "When I'm stressed about classes or work, it's usually because I actually care about them. There are some classes

that cause me unnecessary stress, though."

Mr. Fiorito knows that students often stress about work and grades, and wanted to emphasize that while some colleges look for 10 or more AP classes on a tran-

script, there are more important things. "I just want some kids to consider that maybe it isn't a worthwhile endeavor making yourself sick for four years of high school in order to try to get into some crazy [college] that we've put some unfair value on," he emphasized.

Both Emily and Mr. Fiorito shared that AP classes aren't all bad. "In my BC Calc class, we've all been in the same small group for two years now," Emily said, "so there is a certain amount of competition, but also a 'how can we figure this out together' kind of attitude."

"I love when kids are choosing rigor because they're gonna get something out of it, because they want to have thoughtful discussions, or because it's gonna make them a better student and human being by digging really deep into college-level material," Mr. Fiorito said. "That's when I think AP classes are worth it." **HSV**