



# 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, with the generous assistance of the sponsors whose names appear below.

## Bollin points lens at mental health

BY NIKEYA TANKARD

Senior Kayleigh Bollin's photos already adorn the walls of the high school, and are often printed in the yearbook, but now her current photography project, titled "Making the Invisible Visible," is on display at the Featherstone Center for the Arts. (See the *MV Times* review of the show, starting on C1.) Her exhibit, which addresses and aims to normalize mental health disorders, explores depression, anxiety, self-harm, and trauma through a series of 18 photos she crafted this past semester.

"Kayleigh's exhibit has some heavy themes, so kudos to her for doing something important, doing something hard, doing something that has a message," said pho-

tography teacher Chris Baer said. "It brings up some really important questions. The exhibit wasn't pretty pictures of the beach, it was some heavy work. I was impressed by that."

"I know lots of kids and adults here on the Vineyard who struggle with mental health issues," said Kayleigh. "I personally struggle with anxiety, so making it known that it's super-common and it's OK to struggle with it is important."

Kayleigh was introduced to photography when she was still in middle school. "I started photography when I was 12," she said. "Then I got more into it when I came to high school."

She credits Mr. Baer for sparking her passion for photography, and capstone teachers Christine Ferrone and

Kevin McGrath for pushing her to exhibit her work.

"[The exhibit] is a combination of her photography class and her senior capstone," Mr. Baer said. "Kayleigh's been working on these themes for a couple of years. It's not just recent. She won a mental health photo contest for NAMI [National Alliance on Mental Illness], and she continued mining some of those mental health themes."

"We thought it would be a good idea to exhibit [the show] so the community gets to experience it," Kayleigh said.

The Old Gallery at Featherstone has not held a student exhibition for three years; Kayleigh's show is the first solo show in about 10 years.

Kayleigh hopes viewers will be able to understand mental illnesses further through her

art, and to bring awareness of their effects. She also provides resources and literature to help educate viewers.

"Kayleigh has some long quotes and statistics and a lot of information, that accompanies each piece," Mr. Baer said. "She also has lots of flyers and resources for those who want to learn more or need help, or want to get help for somebody."

"I want people to know that there's people out there who want to help," said Kayleigh, "and that it's not uncommon to be struggling with mental health. It's not embarrassing, and there are a lot of ways to overcome it."

Kayleigh's show closes on Thursday, Jan. 27. Her work can also be viewed @bollin. photography on Instagram, or on her website: bollinphotography.com. **HSV**



COURTESY KALEIGH BOLLIN

## SAD spreads in the wintertime

BY LILY SEBASTIAN AND LILA MIKOS

It can be hard to adapt to the change in seasons on Martha's Vineyard. Following a bustling summer, adjusting to colder days and having fewer people around, gray skies, and a drop in temperature can lead to seasonal affective disorder (SAD). For many Martha's Vineyard Regional High School (MVRHS) students, coping with SAD is not easy.

SAD is a type of depression associated with the change in seasons. Symptoms typically begin in the winter months, and once spring and summer come around, symptoms begin to subside.

"Depression in general can manifest itself in a lot of different ways. Some people can have somatic symptoms like body complaints, tired-

ness, lethargy, lose interest in everyday things, and stop taking care of themselves," said school nurse Mike Savoy. "As the seasons change, and it becomes darker and colder, people are less able to get outside and interact and get in the sunlight."

**"The worst parts about winter are the loneliness and the quiet."**

Another factor in the spike of SAD is a lack of vitamin D, often attributed to shorter winter days and limited sunlight. Not getting enough vitamin D can result in a higher chance of developing seasonal depression.

Junior Andrea Morse said, "The worst parts about winter

are the loneliness and the quiet." On-Island, this is especially true because of the contrast with the busy summer.

"Going from the intensity of the summer to the quietness of the winter is a big change," senior B.J. Mullen said. "The changes of energy levels can be felt everywhere. Everything is so much more tired and depressed."

"In some ways, it's inevitable to feel some sort of depressed feelings during the winter," B.J. said.

English department chair Christine Ferrone teaches the "Happiness 101" course at MVRHS, an elective course on the psychology of happiness and the cultivation of joy.

"The shorter days, the fact that it gets darker out earlier, and the cold weather are also contributing factors," she said.

Junior Maggie Best said,

"Seasonal depression just feels like a lack of motivation. I'm super-tired, and my anxiety is elevated."

This lack of motivation seems to be a trend. Ms. Ferrone agreed with Maggie. She said, "[SAD] is usually a feeling of lethargy and lack of motivation, and a perspective change that can make things seem worse than they are."

Maggie said, "School is super-stressful right now because of midterms and winter sports, and the days are so short and it all just kind of comes together."

SAD can also contribute to more severe issues.

"There's a lot of anecdotal evidence out there that levels of alcohol abuse and drug abuse on the Island are higher, and it probably has something to do with both the long winter or the isolation," said Mr. Savoy.

Despite the struggles that this time of year brings, both students and staff are finding ways to bring positivity and

light into their winters.

Maggie finds happiness in creating a balance between spending time with her friends and time alone. She said, "My friends definitely help me a lot, but also having alone time to recharge my social battery is super-important for me too. Sometimes just having that alone time to do things for yourself is so helpful."

B.J. feels the same way, that the most important thing for him is spending time with friends. He said, "They help me get out of the slump that seasonal depression puts me in."

Another popular coping mechanism is exercise. Ms. Ferrone knows that moving her body will put her in a better head space. "I absolutely need exercise in the winter for the dopamine rush that allows me to feel better," she said. "I am an avid exerciser. I integrate exercise into almost every day. I go to a 6 am CrossFit

class every Monday through Friday, and try to walk my dog in the afternoons."

Ms. Ferrone said, "We talk about how to savor moments that you enjoy in a way that allows you to retain that feeling."

She thinks it's a great idea to incorporate a unit on seasonal depression next year, since her course focuses on psychological well-being.

Despite the negativity that this time of year can bring for many people, Ms. Ferrone sees the value in looking at the positive side of things. "We don't have to see this as a bad time of year," she said. "We can make it an opportunity to get happy and comfortable with each other."

For those struggling with SAD, some strategies that may help include getting daily exercise, seeking out social activities with friends and family, focusing on good nutrition, and spending time outside on sunny days. **HSV**

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