

The High School View

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Bathroom upgrades address period poverty

BY SARA CREATO

The women's bathrooms of the Martha's Vineyard Regional High School (MVRHS) feature a new installation: menstrual product dispensers. These dispensers have been placed throughout the school in an effort to increase accessibility to menstrual products and reduce the impact of period poverty within the school community.

Period poverty is defined as a lack of accessibility to feminine hygiene products, sanitation facilities, and information about menstrual health. Globally, approximately 500 million women lack access to feminine hygiene products.

At the beginning of the school year, special projects and pathways coordinator Sam Hart was approached



SARA CREATO

by members of the school community about the idea of tampon dispensers. Over the holiday break, six dispensers were placed in bathrooms around the school. "Essentially, we didn't want to see students who are in class in the 300 wing have to walk all the way down [to the nurse's

office] to get a tampon when they could just go across the hall and get one," he said. "We wanted to make accessibility a priority."

However, keeping up with the demand proved to be challenging. "At first, I did my best to stock them, but [the dispensers] go empty

around every two to three weeks," Mr. Hart said.

Fortunately, history teacher Corinne Kurtz and her students were passionate about taking on the responsibility of keeping the dispensers stocked. Senior Millie Hege is in Ms. Kurtz's "Intro to Women's Studies" class, and she wanted to ensure that the school was addressing women's health needs. "At my old school, we had tampon dispensers, but they were never full. There aren't a lot of schools that are constantly refilling [dispensers], and actually thinking about women's reproductive systems and how to help," she said.

Ms. Kurtz' students have also learned about the Increasing Access to Menstrual Products Bill. The bill, which is currently pending

approval from the Massachusetts State House of Representatives, would provide all public schools, homeless shelters, and prisons with free hygiene products on a monthly basis. "[Women] shouldn't have to pay money for something that they can't control," said Millie.

Providing feminine hygiene products free of charge may seem like a small change, but it is connected to a wider movement around supporting women's health on-Island. Friends of Family Planning, a nonprofit organization whose mission is to provide affordable sexual and reproductive health care to all members of the Vineyard Community, has been involved with educating students about sexual and reproductive health for years via intermit-

tent tabling events. They also provide free tampons in their Family Planning Clinic as part of a partnership with Cronig's Market.

Friends of Family Planning executive board president Terre Young once collaborated with a business class to create advertisements for the clinic: "There was one young woman and the rest [of the students] were all young men. I said something about how in some states, [feminine hygiene products] are taxed as a luxury. And she sat up and said, 'It is not a luxury.'"

Ms. Kurtz is supportive of the high school's initiative. "I know what it's like to not be able to get tampons. I remember being young and having to go home and miss school," she said. "Any girl will tell you. [Feminine hygiene products] aren't cheap, and they're never around when you need one." **HSV**

Sam Feters maps the future

BY THEO FAIRCHILD-COPPOLETTI AND HARDY EVILLE

Inside a spiral notebook with a dragon on the cover lies a complex and passionate collage of geopolitics, futurism, and storytelling. Its working title is "Rising Dragon," and it's senior Sam Feters' magnum opus, and the culmination of months of hard work that focuses on exploring what the world will look like in 2050, 2100, and beyond. Using a combination of statistics and his own knowledge of geopolitical and historical precedent, Sam's notebook is an informed description of an interconnected future.

For Sam, history is an 'instruction manual' for the workings of the world. "It's similar to how you need to learn different formulas for math. History helps us understand why things happen

in the present, what informs them, and I think, more importantly, how we can make a difference," he said.

In "Rising Dragon," the U.S. is under the control of the Unionists, a centrist party which came to power by subduing extreme civil unrest. According to Sam, "Rising Dragon" is a "cynical" take on the role of the U.S. in future geopolitics.

"At first [the U.S.] are heroes, but then they slowly want to cling on to power more. They're afraid of losing power, because they feel like one of these extremists will come in and take over," Sam said. "So they become extremely focused on taking down extremists, and in a way they become extremists themselves."

The scope of "Rising Dragon" goes beyond the U.S. One page uses current population

trends to predict the population of Nigeria in 2100, and describes how that growth will influence geopolitics. Another shows the history of oil and war in the Middle East from 1914 to 2060, describing the various power plays, invasions, assassinations, rebellions, and other events that occur due to water and oil shortages, rising neocolonialism, ethnic conflict, and greed. "Rising Dragon" sees the European Union splitting into smaller partnerships, and a Mexican state controlled by drug cartels.

Sam describes his project by tracing out a parabola with his finger: the downward path to disorder followed by a slow rebound to unity. "It's pretty bleak, but there are a lot of silver linings," he said.

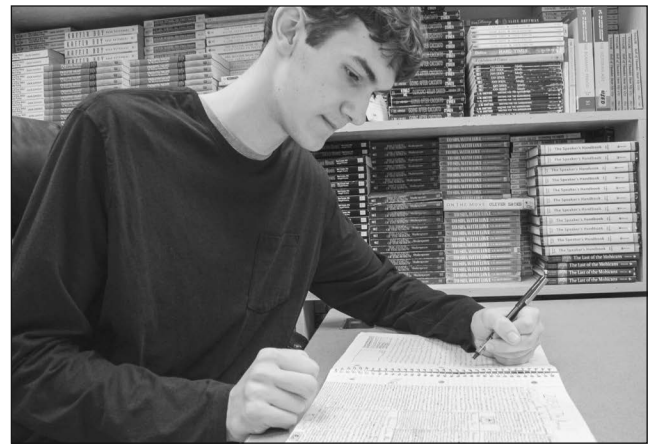
Sam traces his interest in history back to when he was a child. "I did really well at

the dentist when I was like 4, and as a reward, my mom took me to this dollar store and told me I could get something. What stood out to me was this bright yellow book, which was "The History of the World," said Sam.

"We took it out, bought it, and then I started reading it, and all the events were completely captivating to me. I still keep that book on my closet shelf," he said.

This fall, when Sam approached history teacher Leigh Fairchild-Coppoletti for an independent study, they decided they could use "Rising Dragon" as the basis for a student-led unit on globalization in the senior civics course. The unit was dubbed "The 2050 Project," and involved students being assigned to study various countries and making evidence-based predictions about the future of those nations.

Last Wednesday was Alliance Day, where students were tasked with strategically forming the biggest alliance



PARKER BRADLEE

Combining storytelling, history, statistics, and more, senior Sam Feters has diligently filled every inch of his notebook with his ideas of what the world will look like in the future.

they could based on shared ideals between countries. Students also started working on their "artifacts" — projects encapsulating their vision for some aspect of the future, such as food or music.

"I want people to have fun," Sam said. "We're seniors, we have three to four months left until we're out the doors, and we should be able to have an experience that we can really enjoy, and also learn a little bit

about history in the process." Sam is focused on finishing and digitizing "Rising Dragon" by the end of the school year.

"There's obviously the quote, 'Those who don't learn from the past are doomed to repeat it,' but I think in the end, that's not exactly true," he said. Alluding to another quote, he added, "I don't think history repeats. I think it rhymes." **HSV**

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Island Proofreading
Irene E. Ziebarth
3 Tennis Lane Chilmark, MA 02535 202-680-8076
ireneziebarth@gmail.com

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