



NYOKA WALTERS

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.

Elective courses spark creativity and growth

BY PICKLE EVILLE, ISABELLE ANTHONY, GRAZINA BISKIS, AND TASMAN STROM

As a new semester begins at the Martha's Vineyard Regional High School (MVRHS), students are looking to fill their schedules with exciting classes. Through the wide variety of electives offered at MVRHS, students are encouraged to step out of traditional subjects in order to express themselves and dive deeper into personal interests and hobbies. From creating pottery in "Crafts and Sculpture" to exploring a new language and culture in the Russian elective, to studying feminist theory in "Introduction to Women's Studies," these courses provide students opportunities for discovery and growth.

The "Crafts and Sculpture" class, referred to as "Crafts" by most students, is one of the most popular electives at the school, and is taught by Brendan Coogan. While the main focus of the class is pottery, students can also experiment in various forms of art such as metalworking, painting, and jewelry design.

Junior Milo Sullivan en-

rolled in "Crafts" during his sophomore year with few expectations other than fulfilling the arts-credit graduation requirement. He was captivated by the technique of throwing pottery and the atmosphere of the class, and this year he became co-vice president of the Pottery Club. "We've been working on some group projects. There has been talk of having a pottery sale to fundraise for the club, and to maybe buy more glazes and wheels," said Milo.

Mr. Coogan has been teaching "Crafts" at MVRHS for the past 13 years, and encourages students to develop their own creative process, and to make mistakes without getting discouraged. "It gives students the outlet to be creative during the school day in a way that they are not in other classes, as it's a little more tailored to their individual interests," he said.

Aside from numerous art electives, MVRHS also offers classes for students to learn more about specific



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Junior Paul Steyer expresses creativity in his "Crafts and Sculpture" class.

topics in history, science, languages, and culture. One new addition is the Russian elective offered by Samuel Hart, who is MVRHS' co-

ordinator of pathways and special projects.

Before working at MVRHS, Mr. Hart worked in international affairs, and

fell in love with Russian culture when living and working in Moscow and St. Petersburg. He was interested in creating this elective based upon his experience in Russia. "What [my time in Russia] did for me was it forced me to expand and take into account my own biases and my own preconceived notions of what history means," said Mr. Hart.

In the Russian elective, students study Russian history and learn about Russian customs, culture, government, politics, and literature. This year, Mr. Hart has also introduced students to the Cyrillic alphabet as a primer for reading Russian.

Other electives focus on history and society, including Corinne Kurtz's "Introduction to Women's Studies" course, which she has taught for more than a decade. The course is designed as an introductory class, offering students a semesterlong glimpse into topics like feminism, social movements, and women's contributions throughout history. More than just an

elective, "Intro to Women's Studies" asks students to think critically about representation and identity in the school community.

"If you are not represented in the [school] curriculum, if you're not represented in society or the world, that sends a message that can feel deeply personal to some. This class focuses on discussing those feelings," said Ms. Kurtz.

Ms. Kurtz said that some students who have taken her class in the past have been inspired to pursue careers in it.

"Someone might go on to major or minor in women's studies in college, or explore related fields, like goddess studies. My job is to create experiences for students that might light fires or start sparks," she said.

An important element of these electives is that the focus is on being curious rather than getting an A. In this way they often have a more lasting impact on students, sparking passion and creativity that burn long after the semester ends. **HW**

Ms. Dixon reflects on her Island roots

BY ANINA GARVIN

When asking anyone at Martha's Vineyard Regional High School (MVRHS) about physical education (P.E.) and health teacher Liane Dixon, the response almost always consists of her positive impact on the school.

Having grown up on Martha's Vineyard before departing for Northeastern University to study African American studies and play Division I field hockey, Ms. Dixon's journey through life inspires students and teachers alike to lead with positivity and motivation.

In reflecting on her childhood on Martha's Vineyard, Ms. Dixon said, "You could play outside till it got dark. You know, you hear it a lot, but it's true ... it was a different time," she said. "Things were obviously much slower in that we weren't inundated with technology."

Her move up to Boston after graduating from Martha's Vineyard Regional

High School was both overwhelming and exciting. "Once you detach yourself from 'the rock' [Martha's Vineyard], there's so much to take in," she said.

At Northeastern, Ms. Dixon majored in African American studies, but it was her background as a competitive athlete and leader on the field that led her to her career path. Speaking about her college major, she said, "I quickly came to find out after graduating that education or research are kind of the only two avenues for that field."

Ms. Dixon went back to school and entered a diploma program for personal training, which aligned with her background as an athlete. Growing up on-Island, she played a variety of sports, from minor-league baseball to ice hockey.

Ms. Dixon's decision to move back to the Island stemmed from her appreciation for the community and her desire to raise her family



Ms. Dixon believes that looking at a person as a whole is key to being kind and understanding.

ANINA GARVIN

here. "I never thought I'd necessarily come back, but it was never far away from my mind that this is where I [would] choose to start a family. I had a really positive upbringing and experience growing up, so I wanted that for my child," she said.

With her personal training background, Ms. Dixon focuses on helping others celebrate the small wins that pave the way toward success. "Even on days that are challenging or a struggle, [I try] to find the little nuggets, the golden little pieces within those days," she said.

Junior Isla Solon has bonded with Ms. Dixon over their shared love of field hockey. "She watches our games a lot, and she will give me really, really helpful feedback on my playing and what I could work on, and what I have down, that none of my other coaches do," Isla said.

Currently, Ms. Dixon is also the only female P.E. and

health teacher at MVRHS, which leads to some isolation due to the separation of locker rooms and the location of teacher offices. "As welcoming and obviously open as my department has been toward me, it's a little lonely," she said. Yet Ms. Dixon sees the bright side of being the sole female P.E. and health teacher because of the connections she has made with many of her students.

"Being around Ms. Dixon, you know you're gonna be laughing. She can be so serious, but so silly at the same time ... Every moment with her she has me laughing about something," Isla said.

Throughout her journey, Ms. Dixon finds herself constantly drawn back to the Island that nurtured her in her youth. "One of my proudest accomplishments is coming back to the community which served me really, really well, and trying to make an impact here," she said. **HW**