

THE EAGLE EYE



New England High School Journalism Collaborative



Fans watch the Argentina vs Austria game at the FIFA Fan Festival in Boston.

GABRIEL FREEMAN/NEHSJC

Cultures unite on World Cup stage

BY AUDREY OWUSU-AIKINS

The celebration of the World Cup at the FIFA Fan Festival brought high energy and excitement to Boston, creating an environment where different cultures and backgrounds could unite.

Since the World Cup is being hosted at Boston Stadium, the city has sponsored exciting events like the FIFA Fan Festival. The festival

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No Food Gets Left Behind

BY DARBY MEIRAN YANG

Hunger is on the rise nationally — and in Boston, the need is great.

That's what drives Virginie Forget, site director for Food Rescue US-Boston, a branch of a national program that aims to bridge the food-insecurity gap.

On a recent day in June, Forget, in a Food Rescue T-shirt, hauled bags swelling with Tatte Bakery's flaky croissants and sticky chocolate roses into her SUV. She delivered them to two local organi-



DARBY MEIRAN YANG/NEHSJC

Volunteers repurposing pastries to make fresh meals.

Long World Cup Lines Tests Rail Limits

BY GABRIEL FREEMAN

The World Cup attracts 10 million visitors from across the globe every four years. With Boston playing host this year, the city faced an important question: How will thousands of fans get to Boston Stadium in Foxborough to see the matches?

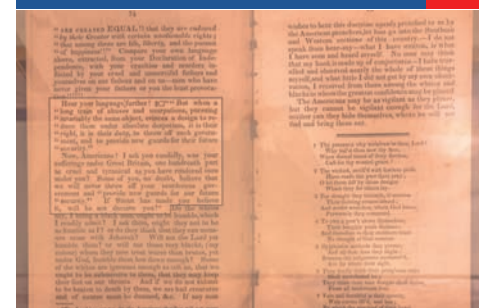
Boston 26, the host committee, partnered with state, city, and local transportation agencies and developed a transportation route to the stadium, according to FIFA World Cup Boston 2026.

They provided 14 trains with express service to Boston Stadium from South Station. The lines were divided into five alphabetized time slots to break up the large crowds.

Even with these measures,

WORLD CUP LINES
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250 Anniversary



MARY BOSCH/NEHSJC

A section of David Walker's self-published book.

How a Breakup 'Letter' Changed American History

BY TOBIAS KENNEDY

With July 4 around the corner, many Americans will celebrate the day they believe the United States gained independence. But is it really Independence Day?

According to Garrett Dash Nelson, president and head curator of the Norman B. Leventhal Map & Education Center at the Boston Public Library, the final version of the Declaration of Independence was not completed until the end of 1776, about five months after the nation became independent from England.

Parts of early versions of the document were sent to newspapers for public viewing as early as July 8, not reaching Boston until July 18 because of slow spread of the mail. It was only by the end of August 1776 that all 13 colonies were aware of the Declaration's existence.

Across the country, there are printings of the

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FOOD RESCUE

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the national Food Rescue US initiative, which has 51 sites in 25 states, including Massachusetts and Washington D.C.

She said Massachusetts businesses donate food since state law forbids them from disposing of more than half a ton of food per week.

Yet, Massachusetts disposes of an estimated 930,000 tons of food waste annually, according to the state's Department of Environmental Protection. Nationally, around one third of the country's 240 million tons of food supply ends up in landfills.

Inna Khitrik, executive chef at Women's Lunch Place in Back Bay, said Food Rescue's contributions can help mitigate costs, which is particularly important because of rising grocery prices and increased demand after federal cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

She also noted that the donations help restore a sense of humanity.

The food may "not [be] good enough to sell, but it's good enough to use," Khitrik said. "You can turn this stuff into something wonderful." Holding up an apple with one browned side, she observed the other could still be good pie filling.

Groceries from stores such as Trader Joe's can be used to make balanced meals, like the food pantry's baked omelet with pepper, spinach, and cheese or banana zucchini cake with chocolate, Khitrik said.

Since many of the women who visit the food pantry mostly travel with suitcases, a "restaurant-style" sit-down meal with

proper dinnerware also helps to create a sense of normalcy.

"Just look at how important the dignity is as well, especially for people who [are] denied that, especially on the street," Khitrik said.

Susan Siegler, a three-year volunteer who has completed 579 rescues, said these trips provide a respite from her corporate job as a finance manager.

Because she experienced food challenges in her youth, Siegler said she feels empathy for those she helps.

"What I love to see when I pull up [is] that there's a line for people to pick up the food at these distribution centers," she said. "That just instills in me that this is really a great benefit. It means a lot to people. So, I'm doing something important."



PHOTO CREDIT: ZERO HOUR

Kayla Balsam, a volunteer, cuts donated bread.



DARBY MEIRAN YANG/NEHSJC

Virginie Forget, site director Food Rescue US-Boston, packs her car full of rescued bread.

250 Anniversary



DARBY MEIRAN YANG/NEHSJC

A diagram explained by Garrett Dash Nelson demonstrating how long it took for the Declaration of Independence to be spread around the 13 colonies.

AMERICAN HISTORY

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original Declaration of Independence on display, in museums and libraries. In the Boston Public Library, there are eight on display until Sept. 13.

The exhibition seeks to inform all ages of the importance of the document, while clearing up misconceptions about its original printing.

"The declaration itself was a statement by a political body that was not elected," said Nelson. "They didn't technically have any power to do something like break away from Great Britain."

Upon entry to the exhibit, guests are greeted by a large poster that represents the document that most imagine when they think of the Declaration of Independence. For Arista Neave, gallery and visitor services coordinator of the Leventhal Center, the fact that the historical documents survived at all makes them rare.

"Part of the reason that we see the replication in the stone copy in the front [of the building] is because the ceremonial copy that everybody thinks of as the original Declaration in the National Archives was so destroyed over time," said Neave.

The exhibit features a photocopied ver-

sion of the Declaration that was reproduced using signatures cut from letters, diaries, and documents in the form of a 19th-century newsletter. This version is currently displayed in the Leventhal Center.

Also on display is a copy of the 1829 self-published book "Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World," by David Walker, a free-born African American, that was banned. It was one of the first public arguments for the abolishment of slavery. Walker ended his book with direct quotes from the Declaration, using the document he criticized to prove his own point.

"I think the most valuable thing you can learn is who wrote this? What were they thinking? What were their lives like?" Neave said.

American citizens are the ones who have made these politicians and leaders heroic characters of the past, Nelson said. Nobody who signed the documents in 1776 knew that this declaration of freedom would become such a prominent part of history, he added.

"What we're trying to emphasize in this exhibition is that political news is always uncertain," said Nelson. "We're hearing political news today about the events of 2026, and similarly, the people who lived in North America in 1776 heard the Declaration as an uncertain, unclear call into the future."

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ILLUSTRATION BY BÉLA BUKATY AND MEGAN ESPELIN/NEHSJC

Looking Back to Move Forward

As we approach the 250th anniversary of the country's founding, we should enjoy the fireworks, the parades, and the barbecues, but we must also recognize the holes in the fabric of our nation—one that was built on contradictions.

This anniversary of America is portrayed as a celebration of independence for all. That is not necessarily the case. For example, some corporations continue to exploit migrant labor for financial gain, long after the days of the Transcontinental Railroad, the rise of professional unions, and the passing of child labor laws. Only by recognizing and remembering the failures and tri-

umphs of the past, can we look ahead to complete the unfinished experiment of America.

Our publication's name, The Eagle Eye, reflects this mission. The eagle is lauded for its ability to see what others may overlook. We, as student journalists, view history as it unfolds. The Eagle Eye represents our commitment to paying attention to the forces shaping our nation, ensuring that stories are not ignored or forgotten.

By reporting and uncovering issues, we can hold truth to power. Now, with mass deportations, attacks on the First Amendment, and the erasure of certain histories, we must face these challenges—and many others—instead of dismissing them.

In a 2025 Pew Research Center survey, only 15% of young adults (ages 18-29) follow news all or most of the time, a statistic that has consistently decreased over the years. Many attribute this to how news makes them scared or confused. However, as student journalists, we must engage our peers and create awareness of the importance of the media, even if those stories reveal humanity's flaws.

In this edition, we tell stories about creating accessible housing, reducing overconsumption, and shining the light on dark histories. Much like how an eagle uses its vision to focus on all that is before it, our curiosity pushes us to do the same.

BY DARBY YANG, ABBY CHACHUS



Boxes of completed cloth tiles on the floor of Rendon's Boston office

JIA JING ZHENG/NEHSJ

A Patriotic Mosaic of Youth Voices Across the Nation

BY JIA JING ZHENG

In honor of America's 250th anniversary, students nationwide are bringing a large-scale mosaic American flag to life.

The project, titled My America Youth Flag Mosaic, was initiated in January of this year by Rick Rendon, founder of Empower Peace, a non-profit dedicated to youth civic engagement.

The goal of the project is to have students, kindergarten through Grade 12, from all around the country, create designs and write messages on red, white, and blue cloth tiles to eventually be combined into a massive America flag. The campaign is meant to empower young people to reflect on what being part of America means.

Rendon plans to unveil the completed flag in Boston in December and hopes to display it in Washington, D.C., on July 4 next year, both exact locations to be determined. In 2027, the flag will be going on a nationwide tour.

The finished product is expected to be 150 feet long by 80 feet wide,

made up of 6-inch-by-6-inch drawings, poems, and messages.

The campaign allows the students to "find a way to bring our country together to appreciate all the things that America is and stands for," Rendon said.

Educators request on the project's website a number of cloth tile kits to be shipped to their school for students. The tiles must be returned to Rendon by Oct. 1.

The kits include prompts for the students. For example, kindergartners are asked to create a birthday message for America. Students in grades 3 through 5, are prompted to display one thing they're most proud of American or their community. Older students are encouraged to envision America's future.

The project has received more than 100,000 total requests for the kits from the 50 states as well as Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico, Guam, the US Virgin Islands, Northern Mariana Islands, and American Samoa. Students are prompted to include their state abbreviations on their tiles.

"When we glue it, we'll have a



Rick Rendon

sample of what young people are thinking and appreciate about our country," Rendon said.

My America is not the first American flag mosaic project that he initiated.

The first was displayed at Boston Common in September 2021 by the nonprofit, United We Stand for America, which was launched following 9/11 in commemoration of the event. The mosaic project gave youths the opportunity to express their grief through art.

The flag projects were similar in various ways, but there was one key difference. The first project was for Massachusetts students and the second has been expanded nationwide. The broadening of the project's scope is by virtue of Rendon's mindset: "Go big or go home."

When asked about his aspirations for the future of My America, Rendon said, "I like to dream big. We want to set the Guinness World Record for the largest American flag mosaic nationally created by kids from every state."

"I think young people can lead the way as young people have often done and set an example," he added.

An Overlooked Chapter in U.S. History

BY SHIANNE CHARETTE

On March 17, 1776, General George Washington secured the first victory in the American Revolution. By bringing 59 cannons up a South Boston hill and pointing them towards British troops, he began a 12-day standoff, ending with a retreat.

A monument, standing 115-feet-tall in Thomas Park, commemorates that moment, known as Evacuation Day, which also falls on St. Patrick's Day.

"The older I get, you begin to respect the events that went on up here," said Tom McGrath, a lifelong South Boston resident and president of the South Boston Citizen's Association.

The 250th anniversary of U.S. independence highlights historical events and monuments across the country, but the story of Dorchester Heights has been often overlooked, some Bostonians say.

The original monument was a simple stone until the 1890s when the South Boston Citizen's Association pushed for a more substantial monument. The upgrade was completed in 1902.

The neighborhood has experienced a significant transformation culturally and structurally, as home to many generations of Irish Americans who celebrate St. Patrick's Day which also overshadows Evacuation Day.

While close to 1 million people attended St. Patrick's Day festivities this year, 4,000 people attended the first ever cannon firing in Thomas Park history in March, to mark the bloodless battle, according to McGrath.

Revolutionary War reenactors wore costumes to mark the moment.

The event only featured two cannons, but the message remains the same: Highlighting Bostonians' willpower and strength to stand up for their freedom.

Recently, there have been more attempts to tell the monument's story.

McGrath said he recently invited a class of elementary school students to visit the monument as part of his effort to highlight its historic significance. He also works with the National Park Service, which maintains and operates the monument.

Three years ago, the Great American Outdoors Act, a federally funded grant, invested more than \$30 million into the restoration of the monument and the infrastructure, according to the National Park Service.

That project featured structural upgrades to the tower, steps, and drainage system at Thomas Park. The construction was completed last year, just in time for the 250th celebration.

For McGrath, Evacuation Day is an important chapter in American Revolution history and should continue to be acknowledged.

"Without the victory of Evacuation Day at Dorchester Heights, there's no Fourth of July," McGrath said.

Old North Church

Beyond the lantern signal

BY ABBY CHACHUS

Approaching the nation's 250th anniversary, Old North Church is working to ensure visitors look beyond the single moment of hanging lantern signals in April 1775.

Nikki Stewart is the executive director of Old North Church Illuminated, an independent nonprofit that manages and funds the church. She explained that while the historic signaling that showed the British Redcoats were coming was a brief act, the site boasts almost three centuries of deep interconnected history.

"Old North Church is known for literally one minute of our almost 300-year history; it is to many people a symbol of liberty," said Stewart. She added the historic site also "reflects the complexity and the depth of our nation's history."

Although the institution stands in a neighborhood where many generations of immigrants have lived together over the centuries, it carries a complicated past.

"It's built in part with the proceeds from enslaved labor," Stewart said. Balancing its dual legacy, she explained: "It also is still an active church."

During the church's 13-month closure because of the pandemic, the organization re-evaluated its educational mission. "We don't want to talk about Paul Revere in one place and enslavement in another," Stewart said. "Our priority when we reopened was to invest in research."

The nonprofit hired a full-time research fellow to spend a year examining the church's archives to uncover its comprehensive history. As a result, the organization created a new tour and public programming, and updated its pews to incorporate a fuller history.

The pews help visitors see each layer of the church's history up close. They show how the

site connects Revolutionary-era events, enslaved labor, and the recovered stories of Black and Indigenous congregants into one shared narrative. Beginning in 2023, educators began using this research in public programming, creating a more comprehensive experience for visitors, including a newly launched audio guide for elementary school children entitled: "Prince's Revolutionary Tale."

"The response to this has been incredibly positive," Stewart said. "Our visitors have an appetite for more. People are able to hold two truths at the same time."

Stewart noted that the public's

willingness to process complicated and sometimes contradictory narratives is in contrast to recent attempts to censor certain aspects of U.S. history that she said "really is offensive to the American people."

This inclusive storytelling will be on display for the Fourth of July, which is typically the church's busiest day of the year. It will feature musicians performing Revolutionary-era music, special bell ringing, and crypt tours. The day will also include three readings of the Declaration of Independence.

As the anniversary approaches, Stewart hopes the historic site inspires both national pride, and forward-looking reflection on the country's unfinished promises. "We still have a lot further to go," she said.



ABBY CHACHUS / NEHSJC

Inside Old North Church sanctuary.

Hot Dogs and Heroes

Art's new twist on history

BY BÉLA BUKATY

Passersby stop to snap a photo of a Midnight Ride mural over Dewey Square in downtown Boston. Others view famous historical paintings in the Museum of Fine Art — but there's something unusual about these artworks.

A heroic winged woman wearing a Lady Liberty-esque crown is standing alongside a blue horse in the 76-foot tall mural, called "The Midnight Ride." The paintings, in the MFA cafeteria, show George Washington clutching a hot dog.

Throughout Boston, art is being used to celebrate the nation's 250th anniversary and reimagine the community's view of history.

"The Midnight Ride," the centerpiece of Dewey Square Park, was inspired by the lesser-known midnight ride of Sybil Ludington, a 16-year old girl who rode 40 miles in 1777 to warn militia members of the British.

The mural was created by Roxbury artist Rixy Hernandez, who goes by Rixy, and her team of two female painters. Their art emphasizes underrepresented female and BIPOC perspectives.

Lori Lobenstine, co-founder and program director of Design Studio for Social Intervention, planned to be part of the mural's grand opening. She said the park is a powerful place for people to reflect on history.

"One of the things that public art grapples with is who's welcome and who belongs in a space," Lobenstine said. She said many people have been excluded from history and public spaces.

The grand opening was scheduled for late June. It will be a celebration with food trucks, music, and art activities, such as a pop-up hosted by the studio.

The studio is encouraging people to submit written or recorded "breakup letters" to the United States for a participatory art project in response to the 250th anniversary. Lobenstine's colleague, Karen Young, said it "is an opportunity to



KAYEM FOODS

Illustration based on The Passage of the Delaware by Thomas Sully.

reflect on what our history really was."

"We want to take on the 250th in a way that's different from just a flat-out celebration," Lobenstine said.

While the mural is meant to be provocative, another display across town reimaged history in a more lighthearted way.

Kayem Foods, a local company, used AI to add hot dogs to 12 historical paintings for the 250th anniversary. The edited paintings are travelling to different locations throughout June and July while the originals stay in the Museum of Fine Art's exhibit Art of the Americas gallery.

Museum visitors had mixed feelings about the hot dog paintings.

Cynthia Korhonen, 72, of Brighton, said, "[The hot dog art] doesn't appeal to me, but if it appeals to the younger generation and it gets them to come to see other art, I'm all for it."

Eileen Hughes of Roslindale smiled at the paintings in the cafeteria. Having worked in the Isabella Stewart Gardner museum's marketing department, she believes that it's important for art to be accessible.

"If there's no representation, then how are you, as an individual or group, going to feel like you matter?" Hughes said. "It is absolutely crucial for people to see themselves represented in art, but also be introduced to things that they would not have known about."

Meet the Staff of The Eagle Eye



Tobias Kennedy

Tobias, 17, is an upcoming senior at Bangor (Maine) High School. He has always aspired to be a professional journalist because he loves writing. The most influential person in his life is his dad, who introduced him to '90s rock artists like Billie Joe Armstrong from Green Day. He is most proud of winning state championships in speech and debate, and can also do a back handspring. If someone writes his biography 20 years from now, he hopes the title would be "Famous Journalist Goes Undercover."

BY RAYAN KALINDA



Rayan Kalinda

Rayan, 19, is a recent graduate of Leominster (Mass.) High School. In the fall, he will attend Fitchburg State University with a major in political science. He is passionate about soccer, golf, and journalism. He has the highest Snapchat score in all of New England, with over 10 million Snaps sent and received. Rayan became interested in journalism after COVID-19 kept him sheltered at home for weeks. He would watch the news every day for updates and later found an interest in news reporting after keeping up with CNN for more than a year.

BY GABRIEL FREEMAN



Megan Espelin

Megan, 17, is a rising senior at Belmont (Mass.) High School. She runs the sustainability club, which meets monthly to go on nature walks and repurpose items that would traditionally be thrown away. Megan became interested in journalism because she enjoys connecting with people. Her interest in writing developed recently through her love of history when she did a deep dive into the classic film noir "Double Indemnity." Outside of journalism, Megan enjoys collecting music records, specifically seeking out her favorite artist, Foreigner.

BY SHIANNE CHARETTE



Lynsey Lavery

Lynsey, 18, is a recent graduate of Danville (Vermont) High School. She plans to attend the University of Vermont Honors College next year, majoring in business. In high school, Lynsey founded a biweekly athletic newsletter highlighting local athletes and worked directly with her school's athletic director. In her free time, she plays basketball and roots for her favorite baseball team, the Boston Red Sox. During NEHSJC, Lynsey is excited to visit The Boston Globe and connect with students who share the same interests as she.

BY KATERINE LACOURCIERE



Béla Bukaty

Béla, 17, is a rising senior at Freeport (Maine) High School. She is an editor for her school's art and writing magazine, The Clarion, and often writes pieces for it as well. She enjoys journaling and scrapbooking in her free time to remember experiences with friends and family. Béla runs on Freeport's cross country team, skis on her school's and state's nordic ski team, and has competed in a biathlon. She enjoys creating many forms of art, including ceramics, drawing, painting, and sewing. Throughout the program, Béla hopes to improve her interviewing skills while out on assignments.

BY JIA JING ZHENG



Lillian Paige

Lillian, 18, is a recent graduate of Thornton Academy in Saco, Maine, and will attend the University of Maryland in the fall. She was an active member in her school community, participating in field hockey, indoor and outdoor track, and the National Honor Society. Even though Lillian's school didn't have an official newspaper, she still found ways to get involved in journalism by writing about her school's boys' basketball team for the local newspaper and now participating in NEHSJC. Lillian is determined to be invested in journalism and hopes to combine her love of writing and motorsports as a journalist.

BY AUDREY OWUSU-AIKINS



Katherine Lacourciere

Kat, 17, is a rising senior at Essex (Vermont) High School. An aspiring journalist, she is a staff writer at her school's newspaper, The Hive, and her work has been featured in her town's newspaper, The Essex Reporter. Her favorite story she reported was about a friend's inspirational journey from being absent in school due to mental health issues to achieving a student government position while recovering remotely. In addition to writing, she loves to go hiking and dance ballet. After high school, Kat plans to obtain dual citizenship from Canada and potentially attend university there.

BY SAVANNAH KING



Jia Jing Zheng

Jia Jing, 17, is a rising senior at Freeport (Maine) High School, but she also calls New York City home. As a contributor to her school magazine, *The Clarion*, she hopes to build upon her writing skills and grow as a journalist through NEHSJC. Besides being a budding journalist, Jia Jing is also an artist, a poet, and an avid reader of historical fiction and fantasy. In her spare time, Jia Jing experiments with baking—especially cakes, although her favorite baked good is a brownie. Whatever the task, she is driven by her creativity, curiosity, and sense of adventure.

BY DARBY YANG



Darby Meiran Yang

Darby, 17, who hails from Shenzhen, China, is a rising senior at Milton (Mass.) Academy. As the incoming editor-in-chief of her school's newspaper, *The Milton Measure*, she shows her dedication and motivation toward her future. She is also active in her community as a journalist, specifically as an intern at *Sampan*, Boston's Chinese-American newspaper, where she has published a piece on planned updates to Reggie Wong Park in Chinatown. Darby is excited for the chance to learn more about journalism and how it is advancing, to connect with professionals in the field, and to make new friends.

BY LILLIAN PAIGE



Gabriella Muhonen

Gabriella, 18, is a recent graduate of Mascenic Regional High School in New Ipswich, New Hampshire. Gabriella has a lifelong interest in writing and journalism. She hopes to take her experiences and new skills from NEHSJC and translate them to her long-term goal of becoming a middle school English teacher. Her goal is to teach her future students the true principles of writing. Her biggest dream is to become an author and write her own novel. She will be attending Mount Wachusett Community College to study secondary education for two years before she transfers to a university.

BY LYNSEY LAVELY



Shianne Charette

Shianne, 17, is a rising senior at Cabot (Vermont) High School. Her most valued accomplishment throughout high school was becoming the chief editor of the yearbook as a freshman. Shianne is on the prom committee and is vice president of the student body. She currently serves as co-editor of her school's newsletter. Shianne has four published pieces in her town newspaper, *The Cabot Chronicle*. She hopes to study journalism and political science in the future.

BY ABBY CHACHUS



Gabriel Freeman

Gabriel 16, is a rising junior at Westford (Mass.) Academy. His interest in journalism was sparked in eighth grade when he received a recruitment letter from his school's newspaper, *The Ghostwriter*. He is currently the managing editor and photographer. Gabriel has a particular interest in photojournalism, specializing in sports photography and editing. He runs track and field for his school, with his favorite event being the 4x100 relay. Outside of school, he enjoys music, movies, and would like to explore a career in journalism or photography in the future.

BY MEGAN ESPELIN



Abby Chachus

Abby, 16, is a rising senior at Andover (Mass.) High School. As president of her school's newspaper club, *The Andover View*, she writes and helps new members improve their skills. Opinion articles, such as editorials she's written on AI and mental health in her community, are her favorites to write. A long-time lover of English classes, she plans to major in journalism or psychology. Abby is also active in her school's theater and show choir programs. She's president of her show choir group, *Nothing But Treble*, that performs in competitions across Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

BY BÉLA BUKATY



Audrey Owusu-Aikins

Audrey, 15, is a rising junior at East Haven (Conn.) High School. She is a writer for *The Comet*, her school's student newspaper. Audrey can cover any subject, but her favorite is fashion. She hosts a podcast titled "Fashion 4 Dummies" and has written a feature story on her school's interim superintendent. Although journalism hasn't been her passion forever, she has grown to love writing and is excited for the NEHSJC program. Audrey is looking forward to learning more from experienced writers and how they deal with real-world problems.

BY GABRIELLA MUHONEN



Homes With a New Purpose in South Boston

BY KATERINE LACOURCIERE

After a 15-year remodeling project, the Boston Housing Authority recently celebrated the completion of the Anne M. Lynch Homes at Old Colony in South Boston.

The BHA, in collaboration with Beacon Communities and MassHousing, renovated 887 units built 86 years ago into accessible homes.

Since its establishment in 1935, BHA's main mission has been a driving factor throughout its projects: To serve low- and moderate-income Bostonians by establishing safe and affordable housing, without discrimination based on race or economic status. Nearly 20,000 Boston families receive vouchers to pay housing subsidies from the BHA, which are both federal and state funded.

Kenzie Bok, CEO and admin-

istrator of the authority, worked closely on the Old Colony remodeling project. Bok formerly served as a councilor in Boston's District 8 before being appointed to her current role by Mayor Michelle Wu in 2023.

"I think a really important kind of echo is that when we build these new units, we build them to a really high standard that matches the current market standard," Bok said. "We're not asking low-income people to settle for substandard apartments."

When the original units at Old Colony were built in 1940, many apartments had no access to hot water and were called cold water flats. Units now offer a wide range of upgraded and accessible amenities tailored to serve senior citizens, those with disabilities, and families. Additionally, the units maintain a sustainable approach, incorporating features that meet LEED, Green



KATERINE LACOURCIERE/NEHSJC

Kenzie Bok, CEO of Boston Housing Authority, inside her office at BHA.

Enterprise, and Passive House standards.

"What's really different is that South Boston at the time, was a really low-income community," Bok said. "These days it's become a very high-income community, but in both cases, there's been really strong community pressure not to

see displacement, and so that's really what has helped fuel the funding for us to redevelop Old Colony."

The new development sits close to the Tierney Learning Center, which offers community programs for youth residents. The development is named for U.S. Rep. Stephen Lynch's mother, who grew

up in Old Colony. This motivated the BHA to provide resources for the next generation.

"Outcomes for young people are really in many ways one of the core purposes of doing housing redevelopment," Bok said.

"If we don't get this right, we don't get the American dream right," Lynch said at the ribbon-cutting ceremony June 8. "Whether you're paying rent and have an affordable apartment, or whether you're trying to get your first starter home and actually buy your first home, all that is wrapped up in the idea of the American dream."

Following its success with the Old Colony homes, the BHA has begun remodeling another housing development across the street called Mary Ellen McCormick. Different from the Old Colony project, the Mary Ellen McCormick plan entails tripling the number of units from 1,000 to 3,300.

"It's really important for society to invest in low-income families and the success of their children, and also making sure that our seniors who have lived their whole life in the city get to stay," Bok said.

Historic Commission Preserves the Past, Embraces Future

BY LYNSEY LAVELY

For the last 50 years, the Boston Landmark Commission has worked to preserve the historic architectural culture of Boston. Now, it's creating a sustainable future for the city.

The commission has spent the past several years approving upgrades to historic buildings, such as modernized solar panels, water systems, and energy-efficient windows that don't take away from buildings' original structure.

"We understand our city will change. We want it to, but we also want to make sure that we preserve the best of the past," said Kathy Kottaridis, the commission's manager and director of the Office of Historic Preservation. "We do so in a way that makes the occupants

of those buildings and neighborhoods ... as proud of those places as possible."

The commission was created in 1976 in response to the uproar over urban renewal and proposed demolition of historical sites. It has since recognized around 130 historic landmarks, such as the Old South Meeting House, Boston Public Library, and Trinity Church. Plaques with a brief description of the historical background are posted outside of those buildings.

Byron Rushing a Boston historian and former Massachusetts state representative, advocates for the preservation of Black history. Despite the work the commission is doing, Rushing said the commission could do more to tell the stories of the historic buildings that



LYNSEY LAVELY/NEHSJC

An example of a plaque outside of designated landmark Faneuil Hall.

have been lost through the years, including those destroyed during

urban renewal.

"It's important for them to start doing more work on the places that have been destroyed — important buildings that were torn down by urban renewal or torn down by building highways through Boston, especially buildings in Black communities that fall under those categories," Rushing said.

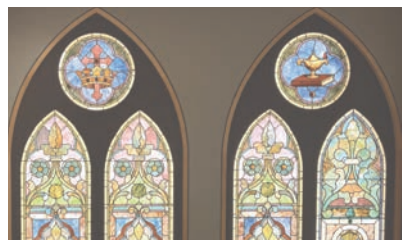
To be approved for upgrades, a property owner or resident must show that a building is more than 50 years old and has historical significance. That includes proving that a building is in the National Register of Historic Places, has made outstanding contributions to society, or is associated with a person of significance. Other requirements include that a property is a notable work of an architect,

landscape architect, designer, or builder.

Before a project becomes a designated landmark, it must be nominated by 10 members of the public, pass a review from the commission, and undergo a study report from the staff. Applications also can be reviewed by Mayor Michelle Wu. Statistically, most applications are approved, Kottaridis said.

She stressed that the commission offers an opportunity for all residents to have a larger say in what is preserved in their neighborhoods and to embrace the architectural history in a constantly changing Boston.

"We want Bostonians, new or old, to know the city's history, appreciate it, and see themselves in it," Kottaridis said.



Stained glass from All Saints Lutheran Church.

GABRIELLA MUHONEN/NEHSC

La CASA Brings Latino Community Together

BY GABRIELLA MUHONEN

The region's largest Latino cultural center has recently emerged where the All Saints Lutheran Church once stood in Boston's South End.

La CASA, the Center for the Arts, Self-determination and Activism, opened in May, providing a range of programs and services under one roof. The four-story center features educational space, an art gallery, and areas where residents can connect.

"We want it to be a unifying space," said Christian Triunfo, communications and executive manager of La CASA. "We want it to be kind of like the hub for all things Latino arts-related in New England."

La CASA is run by Inquilinos Boricuas en Accion, a community development organization that operates the Villa Victoria affordable housing development in the neighborhood.

Villa Victoria has long provided fun activities, such as dance fiestas, and critical services, such as workshops on finances to its residents. As time went on, IBA proposed consolidating these services in one place, bringing the community even closer.

"When I have a problem, I go there and they help me," said Billy DeJesus, a resident who highlighted how housing is more affordable at Villa Victoria than elsewhere in Boston.

La CASA brings the community together through a series of events. Its annual celebration, "Festival Betances," held every July, takes place on the center's plaza and includes music and food. The all-day event attracts thousands of people. Triunfo said it's his favorite event at the cultural center. "It reminds me of my childhood," Triunfo said.

People who use the center also have access to the nearby O'Day Playground.

Among the center's multiple floors are a classroom, art gallery, and space for the youth development program.

The inaugural gallery is filled with fabric pieces by Antonio Martorell, a Puerto Rican artist, and will be replaced with a new gallery in just a matter of weeks.

Another artwork, titled "Reparada," was donated by Thomas and Axia Melendez. This piece was chosen because it represents Puerto Rican laborers. It hangs on the fourth floor wall, adding to the cultural aspect of this center.

A Vintage Legacy

BY RAYAN KALINDA

Stepping into Helen's Leather Shop on Beacon Hill is like taking a step back in time to the Wild West.

The strong aroma of leather boots hits you as you walk inside, while vintage cowboy hats hook your gaze, and Beyonce's country music plays in the background.

It's the "Rolls Royce" of the cowboy shopping world, co-manager Emina Becirovic said.

The business, at 110 Charles St., was founded almost 50 years ago by Helen and Ed Bourgeois next door to the family's second store, Walter Dyer Leather. At the time, their daughter, Lise Bourgeois, worked there.

In 1984, when the business was about to go under, the two stores merged and continued operating out of the Helen's location. After the elder Bourgeois died, their daughter took over the store, and later her daughter, Caitlyn Weller, continued the family legacy.

Over three generations, Helen's Leather Shop has been known for its lavish leather pieces, unique cowboy hats, and other vintage items. In June,

"You adapt to whatever the circumstances are, and you try your best."

— Emina Becirovic

the small business was among 30 that received Boston's Legacy Business Award. This recognition is given to establishments that have operated for at least 10 years, and have added to the cultural, historic, and positive atmosphere of Boston.

"It was such an honor that we were able to celebrate together as a family, have several generations in attendance, and be able to honor the memory of our grandmother," Weller said.

Helen's items are made from the skins of pythons, cobras, goats, deer, sharks, ostriches and, of course, cattle. The business sources the majority of its items from Texas, while getting more



RAYAN KALINDA/NEHSC

A lineup of boots in Helen's Leather Shop.



RAYAN KALINDA/NEHSC

Left: Outside view of Helen's Leather Shop.

Right: Co-manager Emina Becirovic holding the recent award.

from other U.S. states. It also receives items from countries such as Mexico and Germany, where the store imports Birkenstocks.

Customers come from all over the world. Scottish fans in Boston for the World Cup games recently visited Helen's and bought cowboy boots to go with their kilts. Local line dancing groups also have sourced pieces, such as boots and belts.

Despite the shop's longevity, there have been challenges. Becirovic said the business was able to survive COVID-19 and other difficult economic times while continuing to import items from overseas.

"You adapt to whatever the circum-

stances are, and you try your best," Becirovic said.

Weller said that the business seeks to strike a balance between keeping its roots and traditions alive while embracing new trends.

"It's being aware of being flexible, making some pivots, but always staying true to values and what the shop stands for," Weller said.

And that has paid off.

In Boston for the World Cup, Tiffany Robinson of Texas said she was intrigued by the shop's large cowboy boot sign that hangs over the door. And she was pleasantly surprised when she walked in.

"It feels like I am at home," she said.

Hidden Gem in the South End

How one organization has made an impact

BY LILLIAN PAIGE

The League of Women for Community Service has always put people first.

Throughout its service and dedication to the community, the league has strived to provide a space for culture, education, and the furthering of support for an underserved neighborhood.

The story of the league started in the South End of Boston in the 1890s under the name of The Women's Era Club. The original goal was to provide a cultural place for Black women to come together, since that wasn't common at that time. The group held plays and speeches to engage a typically under-educated group in the arts.

That mission still rings true today, as the league seeks to cement itself as an organization that can be relied on in the coming years. "We like to call it a living monument, and it's a bridge to the past," said Kalimah Redd Knight, current president of the league's board and a member since 2004. "But it's also a bridge to the future."

The group's building on Massachusetts Avenue is currently being restored with the goal of once again providing a space

for cultural events and representation for groups that don't have the place to represent themselves.

However, it has also seen a decline in interest. "There are not many women's clubs that exist anymore for philanthropic or non-profit reasons, and there's just not an interest," said Jacquelyne Arrington, the current clerk and former league president.

Despite the decline in interest in women's clubs, the league hopes to open up the space for community events, "Any cause that is important that needs a space or a platform or another voice to help network in any way," Redd Knight said. "The league brings so many different people together."

Among some of its offerings, the league has a mentorship program, called the Virginia Glennon Graduate Students Leadership Scholars Program, for young female students in college and beyond. The board also awards scholarships to help students attending higher education. This year they recently gave four \$1,000 prizes.

"We can teach the children and the general public the history of the contributions that many have made in this Boston com-



KATERINE LACOURCIERE/NEHSJC

Kalimah Redd Knight describing the ballroom at the League building

munity that no one knows about," Arrington said.

In the 1940s and '50s, the league offered housing to Black female college students who weren't allowed to stay in segregated dorms. Acting as a safe space, it allowed them to stay in school even when women were being encouraged to be at home and marry instead of pursuing an education.

As the United States nears 250 years of independence, Everyone 250, a movement to tell the stories of the often-overlooked areas of Boston, honored the league in April with a plaque and a spot in its version of history.

"I think the story of the league just adds to the quilt that is American history," Redd Knight said.

The Road to Safety Starts at the Park

BY MEGAN ESPELIN

In several Boston neighborhood parks children are preparing themselves for a taste of newfound freedom.

"Bike towns" within the city have gained popularity through Mayor Michelle Wu's recent "Connect, Learn, Explore/Boston Bikes" initiative. It promotes bike safety, confidence and independence for kids of all ages, and attempts to remove parental concerns over traffic and injuries.

The initiative regularly organizes free biking classes for ages four to 12, located at underutilized park spaces such as tennis and basketball courts throughout the city.

One location, Moakley Park, features a painted mock bike path mimicking the ones that line city streets. Bikes and helmets are provided.

Proper skills such as interpreting traffic signs, navigating roads, and understanding the importance of wearing a helmet, are considered a necessity by the US National Highway Safety Administration.

Children lack experience anticipating dangerous situations, making these skills paramount for gaining independence, the organization says.

On a sunny Wednesday afternoon in June, several bicycles lined the basketball court at Smith Playground in

Allston, awaiting eager young riders. As the crowd gathered, kids in colorful helmets zipped by, the sun beating down on their faces.

Vivian Ortiz, a "bike town" event coordinator and self-proclaimed "bike mayor," is no stranger to the challenges of learning how to ride a bike.

Ortiz, 63, recently learned how to ride as an adult, and is now committed to educating the next generation on bike safety skills.

"What are the safe things that you do? What are the things you need to be aware of [like] the car that's near you? How do you communicate?," Ortiz said.

Ortiz said she believes when children are unable to

learn how to ride a bike, it limits opportunities for them to connect with peers. Riding to and from a friend's house might not be an option, for example.

Sarah Cupper, the mother of a participant, eight-year-old Finn, talked about how impactful her own experience learning how to bike was growing up.

"I remember feeling it was the first time I felt really independent as a kid," Cupper said. "I've been really excited for [Finn] to learn how to ride a two-wheeler because I know he's going to love that feeling of independence."

The program has proven to be a step in keeping biking—a cherished skill—alive.



MEGAN ESPELIN/NEHSJC

Romi Berinhout takes part in the bikes initiative.

The percentage of children who bike nationally has fallen by 50% over the last 30 years, according to the National Sporting Goods Association.

"It's definitely less common to have just the kids biking around the neighborhood. I feel like [it's] just a general shift," Cupper said.

"Boston Bikes" hopes to

expand the demographic of bikers, complementing the city's step toward increasing bike accessibility through the growth of "Blue Bikes" and new bike lanes which were a major initiative during Wu's first year as mayor.

"I'm constantly thinking of what we [can] do to get more people on bikes," Ortiz said.

Festival unites soccer fans

FIFA FAN FESTIVAL

continued from page 1

exceeded expectations as there were people from different backgrounds coming together to sing, dance, and cheer over their shared passion for soccer.

“The energy that is just here today, I think it’s electric,” said Sammy Boateng, a Ghanaian who lives in Michigan and works as a soccer coach.

The World Cup is more than just a soccer tournament; many fans described it as a celebration of countries, cultures, and the people within.

Boateng grew up in Ghana and its soccer community, but after emigrating to America and watching soccer, he said he is able to understand both soccer environments. It’s a way for him to feel connected to other communities, he said.

“Now as an adult, I think it’s a privilege that I got to have that and be able to look at situations through different lenses,” said Boateng. “To be able to now be a fan of your own country, it’s really hard to put

into words.”

New federal immigration restrictions over the past months caused concern among legal advocates. A group of law firms, including the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition, put out an advisory ahead of the World Cup warning all visitors that they could face problems from immigration officers.

Even with these concerns, attendees say that the festival unified soccer fans.

“I think it restores a sense of hope and the ability to communicate and celebrate different cultures,” said Julia Scarton, a tourist who attends Florida State University.

The festival became a place where people could connect regardless of nationality.

“I feel like there’s been a lot of different divisions, but appreciation of everyone’s culture is coming together and learning new things from other people, new traditions, and really embracing them,” said Scarton. “It celebrates what the human experience is all about.”



GABRIEL FREEMAN/NEHSJC

Fans attend the FIFA Fan Festival in Downtown Boston.

In addition to the increased sense of connection, the festival is a way to foster a love of soccer in the United States and beyond, said Andrew Richardson, a NCAA Division 1 Women’s Soccer head coach for

South Carolina State University.

“I’m getting to watch it from an outside perspective as someone who grew up [in America] and just wants to see the game grow,” Richardson said.

Long lines at South Station

WORLD CUP LINES

continued from page 1

spectators complained the long lines and wait times. However, the main concern was about the steep pricetag of the tickets.

“The prices are high,” said Kwame Anoky, a Ghana fan. “But it’s the World Cup. It’s the greatest sport in the world.”

The MBTA set the round-trip ticket price at \$80, an increase of 400% from a usual trip to the stadium on the commuter rail.

While the wait times sparked concern, the MBTA attempted to lessen this worry with scattered train times to the stadium.

Jayson Kyereme, a soccer enthusiast from London, said it’s working.

“I haven’t been here before, but it seems quite organized,” Kyereme said. “The directions to get [in the lines] and the people



Left: Dex Miles (left) poses in his knight outfit with his friend before heading to Boston Stadium. Right: Fans navigate through the congested queues at South Station to board the World Cup train.

are quite helpful. I’ve not really had any issues.”

MBTA officials said they were prepared for an unprecedented amount of service during the World Cup. They mobilized up to 20,000 riders to and from each of the seven matches, which far exceeds the 2,000 riders for a

typical New England Patriots game.

Even with the high ticket prices, sales were brisk. At the end of June, the MBTA had sold more than 66,000 train tickets to the four games in Foxborough.

Despite the transportation issues, fans said they were able

to overcome the challenges and have a good time.

“One of my buddies lives in Foxboro, so we’re going to go park at his house and just walk and avoid [all of the train stuff] because I heard they hiked up the prices of everything,” said Sammy Boateng, a Ghana fan

from Michigan who traveled to watch the England vs. Ghana game on June 23.

“As a kid you watch [the World Cup] on TV and then to be able to have an opportunity to see it live is hard to put into words,” Boateng said. “I coach soccer so this is what we live for.”



GABRIEL FREEMAN/NEHSJC



The Class of 2026 went through a journalism bootcamp, talked to strangers, and criss-crossed the city during this year's summer workshop. They interviewed artists, World Cup soccer fans, toured the Boston Globe and learned the fundamentals of newsgathering and reporting from some of the best journalists in the area. Thanks to everyone for a memorable week.

250 Anniversary

