

The poetry page

Harley Emery, Staff Poet, explores the distance between wishes and reality.

He Hated Quotes

He hated quotes,
but found his mind swarming with phrases,
the kinds of things you see
on TV or in a book or from a stranger,
and you just can't seem to forget them

He hated flowers,
but when the cute girl he met said she loves
daises,
a whole bouquet arrived at her door;
he said nothing but found joy in her excitement

He hated poems,
but when he found a new form of therapy,
what he thought was cheesy
helped him express:
the words flowed like they were meant to be

He hated a lot of things,
but there's no good in seeing no positives



Possibility Sweep

Possibilities seem like a
lonely thing,
a wish with no drive, no certainty
like a dream without a plan
or a
star shooting in the sky
but not glowing

Possibilities, however, keep
our spirits high and our eyes bright
like the possibility of
your name on a book cover
or the idea
of traveling out of your little town

These possibilities seem silly
and some don't dream of it
but your own possibilities
are yours only,
like these silly ones are to me

Unseen Meaning

what's empty
in my heart is something
Intangible, unattainable,
something so far out of my reach
there's no words to describe it

perhaps an emotion,
maybe a true object,
but anytime I guess
nothing feels right,
as though reaching out into
thin air

I leave my
arms wide open but
this thing declines,
as though whatever I had to
begin with
was never truly mine

JOIN US IN THE FALL!

Mrs. Giancola will serve as the advisor for *The Phoenix* once again for the '26-'27 school year. Please consider joining our staff. We are always looking for new people with new ideas. In September, check Schoology for our first fall meeting.

THE PHOENIX

THE GOWANDA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT NEWSPAPER

Students bid a fond farewell to Mr. Smith

BY ISABELLA DEGOLIER, STAFF WRITER,
and the STUDENTS OF GOWANDA HIGH SCHOOL

As we head toward the end of the 2026 school year, we will unfortunately have to say goodbye to a Gowanda legend. Mr. David Smith has been a pillar of the Gowanda community, especially within the Gowanda Central School District. His support of students, involvement in GMS musicals, and awesome personality have influenced so many lives, and we hope that he enjoys his retirement to the fullest.

Now, let's take a look at real GHS stories from students in grades 9-12 of how Mr. Smith has impacted them.

Senior Corrina John said, "Before I hit my 1k in basketball, he was hyping me up and supporting me the day of during school."

Senior Zach Barsky shared, "Honestly, there have been many times Mr. Smith has helped me. One time in particular was when he helped me stop being a hot head. At the beginning of last year, I got mad on the bus, and ever since then, he's been mentoring me. I find myself not being as mad as I used to be."

Senior Sara Lillie recalled, "Mr. Smith is one of the people I can go to and talk to. I get here early, and he talks to me and can always figure out if something is going on. I am going to miss him, and he is going to 'graduate' with the class of 2026."

Would you trust the man on the right? Gowanda High School students say a resounding "YES!" On the right, Mr. Smith, administrator, poses for Mrs. Giancola's *Home Alone*-themed door back in 2021. Accompanied by Officer Shields, Mr. Smith is always ready to jump in and have fun with students and staff.



Senior Carter Capozzi said, "He's always been so kind and respectful toward me. Whenever I get in trouble, he's always there to just talk and not yell."

Senior Corrine Burch added, "When I committed to St. Bonaventure University, I went to tell Mr. Smith, and he was so excited and supportive of me, so he called his wife to tell her I was the one he would always mention to her about my accomplishments. He also wrote my letter of recommendation that made me cry."

Senior Hayleigh Hooper remembered, "Mr. Smith is always in the band and chorus room listening to us during rehearsals; it feels good knowing that there is someone who truly appreciates the hard work that we put into our music making."

Senior Patricia Griffith said, "Mr. D. Smith always shows up to the band

and chorus concerts as well as Cabaret Night and sits in band as well as visiting chorus often in school."

Freshman Tessa Bylbie shared, "Every day when I walk into school, he always gives me a high five and tells me to have a great day. Even when I'm in a bad mood, he makes me think positively."

Freshman Dylan Estes said, "One of the best parts of knowing Mr. Smith is that he always understands and fixes problems. He understands empathy and knows what other people deal with in a day."

See MR. SMITH, page 2



MR. SMITH, continued

“He encourages everyone to ask for help. A few words that describe Mr. D. Smith are trustworthy, friend, kind, and understanding.

“I hope he enjoyed his time here at GCS. I hope he will visit sometime to see some old friends. This is proof that a good friendship doesn’t take forever; it takes trust and understanding. Happy Retirement, Mr. D. Smith.”

Freshman Elayna Ashley remembered, “A year or two ago, I saw Mr. Smith at a Sabres game with Mrs. Jill, and I stopped him to say hi, and now he always says ‘Go Sabres’ to me. This year, I was in biology, and was sitting next to my friend, when he walked in. I thought it’d be funny to call him over and ask him if his wife could make us snickerdoodles (My friend had shared with me that she would make them sometimes).

“He pulled out his phone, called her in front of me, and set it down on my desk. I was so shocked and nervous when she picked up. I stated my name and then asked, and she said she would. I thought we wouldn’t get them for like a week, or she would forget, but a couple of periods later, I got called down, and he handed my friend and me a bag of snickerdoodles.”

Freshman Pyxi Zyburt shared, “Every time my mom posts something on Facebook about me or my sports, he always comments on something like ‘good job’ or ‘that’s awesome.’”

Freshman Yatniella Rodriguez-Acevedo added, “He made me feel welcomed when I first came to this school.”

Awesome threesome: Mrs. Dempsey, Spanish teacher; Mr. Smith, administrator; and Mrs. Draegert, administrative assistant in the Counseling Center will retire at the end of the school year. We will miss their smiles and support, and we want to thank them for making the high school a better place.



Freshman Lindsay Robertson recalled, “It’s hard to choose just one story about Mr. D. Smith, because he’s been a constant in my life for as long as I can remember. He’s the kind of person who always has a smile ready and one of his goofy jokes that somehow still makes you laugh, no matter how many times you’ve heard it.

“But there’s one moment in his office that I’ll always remember, when everything felt like too much. I had been having a really rough day, and by the time I ended up in his office, I was already overwhelmed and angry.

“Something had just happened that pushed me over the edge. But by the time I left his office, I wasn’t angry anymore. I didn’t go back out to fight. Instead, I walked away from the situation entirely. As he retires, I realize how lucky I’ve been to have someone like him in my life – not just as a teacher, but as a role model and family friend who truly cares.”

Sophomore Theodore Kwasnik stated, “He’s helped me throughout the school year by making sure I’m okay and on task, and he helps me better myself by being straightforward and working with me through everything that’s happened.”

Mr. Smith has always made my day brighter with his morning greetings. Oftentimes, it is a simple “DeGolier!” followed by a high five and “Have a great day!” Sometimes, when I’ve performed at Cabaret the previous night or my family posts my high jump achievements, he’ll pull me to the side and congratulate me. His attitude brings never-ending positivity to my life, and I’ll be sad to see him leave at the conclusion of this school year.

Whether it’s a high five as you enter the school, a shout of your name, an appearance in a class, or a funny loudspeaker announcement, Mr. Smith has left an impression on Gowanda that will last beyond his retirement.

Letter from a departing senior

By Helena Wallschlaeger, Staff Writer and member of the class of 2026

I feel like I’ve been counting down the days until I graduate for the past four years. I probably feel like that because I actually HAVE been counting them. At the beginning of each year, I started a countdown for the last day of school.

This didn’t mean I despised school; I liked it for the most part, but I just couldn’t wait for graduation. I didn’t even know what I was going to do with my life, and I still wanted to graduate.

But I am grateful for everything Gowanda has taught me, and I am even willing to share some advice with you. I suggest you listen because I am a veteran and usually know what I’m talking about, but you do you.

Let’s start with freshman year. For me, it was a blur. I can barely remember anything that happened. But I do remember that it was like a slap in the face.

The classes were harder, my grades were worse, and I felt out of place. I eventually warmed up, but not without the help of sports and clubs. Without them, I would’ve been bored out of my mind and wouldn’t have gotten to really know people other than the ones in my grade.

So my advice is to take every opportunity you get to do something new. Sure, you’re probably going to be scared. I was terrified when I first joined Modern Band because I was absolutely trash at guitar.

But you’ll make valuable connections and have a greater sense of belonging. Don’t overfill your schedule, though; you still

want to save time for doomscrolling in your bed when you are supposed to be writing newspaper articles, which I’m definitely not doing right now.

Also, I didn’t have many of the 9th-grade teachers, but I did have Mrs. Haim, and all I can say about that is: make sure you get on her good side because she is notorious for writing people up in GREAT detail.

Next is sophomore year. Tenth grade is full of ups and downs. One moment you’re having a waffle party in Mrs. Styles’ class, the next you’re trying to prove a rectangle is a rectangle by writing a whole paragraph when you could just look at it with your eyes.

You just have to embrace the chaos. Try new things.

I remember when I decided I was too cool for the musical and didn’t do it. I regret that to this day.

I believe sophomore year is for putting yourself out there, even if it makes you look like an idiot.

I did this in junior year, and I think it was too late. You’ll feel like you need to keep up with everyone, but you really just need to keep up with yourself.

Now, the one that was almost the death of me was junior year. I decided to load up my schedule with difficult classes, most of which I didn’t even need. But I think everyone should try their hand at JCC English at least once for the experience.

I think junior year is for challenging yourself. Go ahead and take physics or pre-calculus. What’s the worst that could happen? Ok, sure, you could fail, but you tried.

Doing something challenging and then failing builds character. So try out for the varsity team or take a tough class. You’ll get something out of it whether you succeed or not.

Finally, the one where you graduate, senior year. I thought “senioritis” was a myth until I experienced it firsthand.

Right now, I have the I’m-already-accepted-to-college-it-doesn’t-matter mentality. While this is basically true, you still have to try in your classes because Señora Dempsey will lock you in her room if you don’t.

You may be thinking, “Oh, but Señora is retiring next year, so I can slack off.” Next year, you are going to have Mr. Bohn doing Señora’s job. I believe that is significantly scarier.

So even when it feels like there is no point in trying anymore, just the tiniest bit of effort will bring your grades up. Most of your classes aren’t that hard. (Unless you take JCC English again. If so, I’m sorry, I feel for you.)

You should also participate in all the senior activities. Sure, you may not like most of the people in your class, or half of them won’t even participate in anything, but it’s the memories that count. You just have to keep on chugging until you can walk that stage (or in our case, field). Frankly, I’ve had a crazy time at this school, and I hope you did too. Whether you like school or not, you just have to make the most of it. Take chances, embarrass yourself, learn something new.

And one more thing before I go! No more kanoodling in the elevators, as Mr. Smith said, and the next time you see Mrs. Haim, tell her Pearl Jam is better than Billy Joel.

It’s hard to turn the page when you know someone won’t be in the next chapter, but the story must go on. – Thomas Wilder

After a long day, nothing hits like the perfect snack

By Isabella DeGolier, Staff Writer

Whether it's after a chorus and band concert, a baseball game, a track meet, or a lacrosse match, students have favorite go-to snacks and beverages to refuel after a long day.

I typically get the usual McDonald's meal of chicken nuggets, French fries, and a blue raspberry frozen Fanta after my meets, but choices differ depending on the available fast food place. While this might not necessarily be my favorite, it is a quick and easy source of food.

Students responded to a survey about the drinks and snacks they reach for after an evening event. I got a very wide variety of answers for this question, so let's take a look at some of them.

Out of 31 responses, the most agreed-upon after-school event snack/beverage was water. Water is very important for hydration, so it's no surprise that this is a common go-to.

Pairings students gave with water were a bag of chips, a healthy snack, a cookie, and candy. Emma Golden, senior, even responded, "After a school event, I'll usually have some Townhouse crackers, with cream cheese spread on top with water."

Another drink that was highly agreed upon was Gatorade. Some pairings students listed with Gatorade were tacos and goldfish. Electrolyte drinks are very important for energy before and after sports, and help boost hydration.



The most agreed-upon food after an event was McDonald's. Being an easy-to-come-by source of food in most areas (including Gowanda), this is easily a popular choice.

Each student has a different order, though. While most didn't specify their picks from the menu, senior Carter Capozzi wrote, "McDonald's, 5 dollar fan meal, with an extra 6 piece nuggets."

Some students enjoy a frosty treat. One mentioned a McFlurry or Dairy Queen as their choice.

Three students agreed that they enjoy Chipotle after a school event.



Many different variations of chips were also given in these students' responses. Doritos were mentioned twice, chips in general also twice, Cheddar Sun Chips once, and Hot Chester Fries were also mentioned once.

Many answers had some kind of candy or a sweet. Wild Berry Skittle Gummies, Sour Patch Kids, candy in general, and Nerds Gummy Clusters were all mentioned in responses. Cookies were also popular, being mentioned three times.

Some students gave fewer snack-type answers and went for meals instead. One mentioned tacos and Gatorade in their response.

Two seniors also provided their meal of choice, one saying, "Turkey bacon sub with provolone, pickles, vinegar, and mayo" (Hayleigh Hooper). The second mentioned, "The chicken caesar salad from Wicked Glen," (Helena Wallschlaeger).

It's important to be well-fed after a tiring event.

No matter what event it is, it's important to feed your body to replenish nutrients after a long day. It doesn't always have to be the healthiest meal, but even a pack of Cheez-Its will suffice.

As any good Panther would say, "Keep your friends close, and your snacks closer."

Greece offers students a glimpse of the past

By Zander Hammond, Student Editor and Staff Writer

The Educational Travel Club completed its ten-day tour over spring break. The students and chaperones were guided across Greece by EF Tours and gained a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

The Travel Club typically journeys to Europe by plane every two years, giving students two opportunities to travel during their time in high school. Payments are made to EF Tours and money is raised through fundraising events

A fundamental aspect of the travel club is encouraging students to explore new activities and learn valuable independence skills. In their free time, students were encouraged to explore in small groups and experience local culture.

In particular, getting gelato at every stop was a hit activity with some students. Appreciating the time for leisure and independence, members discussed incorporating some of the routines from Greece into their lives here in Gowanda.

The agenda was arranged so that we were accompanied by a guide specific to our group, Julian, while we had a temporary second guide who had local expertise at each location.



Marvelous monastery: This beautiful building is one of many sights students visited during the Travel Club's trip to Greece.



The Parthenon: This site features a former temple dedicated to the goddess, Athena, the Greek goddess of wisdom, warfare, and crafts.

Athens, Delphi, and Zion all had opportunities to walk through the ancient ruins and see glimpses of the past. Delphi, a personal favorite, had memorials from various victories in Greece. Students were shown how to read an inscription, "ΜΑΡΑΘΩΝ", or Marathon.

The differences in food came as a stark adjustment for some students, as salads had a tomato base, not lettuce, or how a burger comes with no buns or toppings.

A group of travelers even tried octopus, which resulted in mixed reactions. One student claimed, "I would marry Tzatziki."

Our final day ended with a Greek evening featuring a buffet of delicious foods and a traditional dance, as well as plate smashing. (Plate smashing is a tradition for celebrating special occasions, and it is exactly what it sounds like.)

An important part of the trip is being with an amazing and hilarious group of peers. From "Hey Siri, where are all of the animals in Greece?" to "It's not aesthetic," the conversations were a highlight of the travels.

Traveling abroad is a life-changing experience and develops moments and lessons you will carry with you for the rest of your life. There's so much to enjoy out there! To any students who are interested in making their own journey, the 2028 trip will be to Scotland and Ireland. Send a message Mrs. Rydzik, art teacher, if you are interested.



Opinion

A sensational senior athlete has a few words to say

By Carter Capozzi, Guest Contributor

High school sports has its downsides: loud and complaining parents, kids who don't listen, and kids who don't put forth any effort and expect to have good outcomes.

It is very frustrating to have lazy teammates when you are a competitive player who wants to win; they are just holding you back.

Loud parents who complain and lazy teammates who don't listen to coaches or captains are the biggest downfall in a team sport because all they care about is themselves.

Back when I was a freshman on varsity baseball, I remember always taking in what the seniors and upperclassmen told me, and it made me better and showed me the ropes of varsity baseball.

Now that I'm a senior, I try to do the same thing for the younger guys.

In football and baseball, I've experienced kids who think they know it all and don't want to listen.

I like to think I know the ropes. In football, I was the starting QB for 3 years, breaking every single school record by a lot.

For baseball, I went to four sectional championships, winning two, winning a far west regional, and then playing on the biggest stage, the state final four.

I was also getting coached by some of the best. In football, I worked with a QB coach who played for Syracuse. In baseball, I played for Coach T. Smith, who has played at the collegiate level, so I like to think I know what I'm saying to these younger classmates.

I think that others who are underclassmen should always take in whatever the older people say, even if it's not what they want to hear, because at the end of the day, the older players know what they are talking about because they have had the experience.

Further, you should give it everything as a young kid because you'll be remembered by giving it your all, but you won't be if you were someone who just didn't care about anything.

Senior standout: Carter Capozzi, senior and varsity football quarterback, urges younger athletes to listen to and learn from older athletes. Capozzi's athletic career is a testament of his willingness to take and act on the coaching and advice he received.



Summer reading recommendations

By Zander Hammond, Student Editor and Staff Writer

With Summer Break around the corner, there's plenty of long days to pass with a good book. The library staff has prepared a range of quick and enjoyable stories to take you across the world and into an adventure!

Orchards – Holly Thompson

In this novel in verse, Kana Goldberg heads to Japan for the summer to connect with her ethnic roots. The novel features themes of grief and identity.

Sea Change – Frank Viva

This graphic novel details the experience of Eliot as he travels to a fishing village in Nova Scotia, which grows on him with time. It's a warming coming-of-age story.

Carpe Diem – Autumn Cornwell

Vassar, a 16-year-old who strives for an idealized life as an overachiever, ends up unexpectedly backpacking across Southeast Asia.

The Summer of Broken Rules – K. L. Walther

An uplifting romance takes place as the main character travels to her cousin's wedding. This book is notably similar to *To All the Boys I've Loved Before* by Jenny Han.

We Were Liars – E. Lockhart

A suspenseful thriller that explores the corruption of a wealthy family, which could have consequential effects on their reputation. It is a part of an engaging universe connected to other books.

Summer movies from the past, present and future

By Helena Wallschlaeger, Staff Writer

For the past five years or so, movies have not been as impactful or even enjoyable as they used to be. I personally believe the best movies were made in the '80s and early '90s, but 2026 has had some captivating movies, and I think there are still more bangers to be released. And that is high praise coming from me because I am an avid movie watcher and a movie snob.

A certain trio of movies has caught my attention for the summer, and should catch yours, too. Because let's be real, I'm going to say I'm going to prepare for college and such, but I'm actually going to try to watch every film on my watchlist (there are currently 176 movies on that list, by the way).

And you are going to say that you'll work out vigorously every day, but don't we all. So you might as well keep on reading to see my summer movie recommendations! These will consist of: A newly-released movie that I've just seen, one that has yet to be released, and an older one that is my absolute favorite summer movie.

The Devil Wears Prada 2

Recently, I watched *The Devil Wears Prada 2* (released May 1st, 2026, directed by David Frankel), and dare I say it was better than the first one. I'm not going to give spoilers, but I was genuinely moved by this film. It was heartfelt, funny, and kind of deep.

It shows the growth of Anne Hathaway's character, Andy Sachs, as a journalist after she left *Runway* magazine, and her later return to

Runway to work under the still cold-hearted Miranda Priestly (Meryl Streep).

The movie shows the rekindling of their odd friendship, with their shared love for true journalism and fashion. It also dabbles with the struggle journalists face today because the popularity of printed media is declining drastically.

Overall, this is the perfect film to watch on a rainy summer's day, when you don't feel like doing anything at all. It'll leave you with a warm, fuzzy feeling, and maybe even a few tears. But I cry during almost every movie, so maybe that's just me.

Backrooms

This next film doesn't necessarily give summer vibes, but I already know it's going to break the box office when it's released. If you enjoy creepy thrillers that make you feel like something is watching you, I suggest you make a trip to the theater to see *Backrooms*, directed by Kane Parsons, premiering on May 29th, 2026.

Obviously, I don't know how this movie will exactly make you feel, but it's a well-educated guess. If you don't know about the Backroom lore, you are probably over the age of 25 or chronically offline.

This movie is based on the web series made by Parsons, called the *Backrooms*. Essentially, the backrooms are a never-ending expanse of rooms and hallways with fluorescent lights and pale yellow walls.

There are also creatures called "entities" that live within these

fictional rooms. The movie follows a therapist (played by Renate Reinsve) and her venture into the backrooms in search of her patient (played by Chiwetel Ejiofor).

There has not been a lot of information released on this film, and I think that's a good sign. It makes it extra eerie because no one knows what to expect. I would suggest watching this one in the complete dark with a huge bowl of popcorn and a crisp Diet Coke.

Ferris Bueller's Day Off

Last but not least, the best summer movie of all time, *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, directed by John Hughes and released on June 11th, 1986. This movie beautifully captures the feeling of living life to the fullest.

It literally has the iconic line, "Life moves pretty fast. If you don't stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it."

The story revolves around Ferris Bueller (Matthew Broderick), who is oddly good at skipping school and getting away with it, his best friend Cameron Frye (Alan Ruck), and his girlfriend Sloane Peterson (Mia Sara).

Together, they skip school one last time before graduation and spend an eventful day in downtown Chicago. But not without a never-been-used Ferrari that Ferris "borrows" from Cameron's dad.

I could've recommended so many more movies, but then you'd be reading this for months, and you'd never be able to watch them anyway. This summer, split your time between enjoying the fresh air and enjoying the comfort of your couch. Or join the two and get cozy with a movie outside.