

## SHU's Declassified Finals Survival Guide



Shannon Tuttle, Staff Photographer

Sophomores Shannon Willard and Abby Grohns study in preparation for their finals at the library.

BY HELENA MEDICI  
Staff Writer

That infamous time of year is quickly approaching. Finals Week. For all college students, finals week can be a time of last-minute work, studying, and catching up.

To stay on top of schoolwork and avoid excess stress, it is important to be aware of the resources Sacred Heart University (SHU) provides its students, setting them up for success during this time of year.

Located on West Campus, the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) offers a multitude of tutoring and writing support, free for all SHU students. Through the Pioneer Academic Support Services Portal (PASS Portal), students

can set up appointments for tutoring and writing support.

“I recommended using peer tutors, especially freshmen. These tutors have taken the classes before and not only do they help you understand topics, but give good advice on how to go about the exams,” said sophomore Sophia Gatto.

The CTL employs over 100 peer tutors and 22 professional tutors. If SHU tutors are not available, SHU provides 24/7 online tutoring through TutorMe, a third-party service. This website is accessible on MySHU.

“We want students to feel comfortable coming to us for assistance and understand that there is no shame in asking for help. When students come to the CTL, we will work closely with them to provide the specific support they

need,” said Lisa Henderson, Tutoring and Academic Support manager.

In addition to tutoring, SHU's Online Writing Lab provides students with the opportunity to have their papers reviewed by professional tutors returning them with advice on argumentation, content development, grammar, punctuation, citation styles, and more.

The CTL is hosting an event on Dec. 11 from 12-3 p.m. encouraging students to come relax, destress, and enjoy hot chocolate and cookies.

The hot spot on campus during finals week is the library. With three floors and numerous study rooms, the library is filled with students preparing for their finals.

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## Fighting Resumes in Israel

BY MOLLY BRUTON  
Assistant News Editor and Copy Editor

After a seven-day cease-fire between Israel and Hamas, fighting resumed on the morning of Friday, Dec. 1.

A cease-fire is an agreement, usually between two armies, to stop fighting in order to allow discussions about peace, according to the Cambridge Dictionary. The temporary pause took place to facilitate the

release of dozens of people taken hostage during Hamas' raid on Israel in exchange for humanitarian aid and Palestinian prisoners in Israel.

Prior to the ending of the pause, Prof. Brian Stilter of Philosophy, Theology and Religious Studies discussed the temporary agreement.

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## TAP's "A Christmas Carol"

BY MARIA KELLY  
Staff Writer

Sacred Heart University's Theatre Arts Program (TAP) is presenting its second annual production of "A Christmas Carol," directed by the Executive Director of Performing Arts, Jerry Goehring. The show will take place at the Edgerton Center for Performing Arts from Dec. 15-17.

This production was adapted by a SHU alumna, Grace Curley. The aim of this adaptation is to draw attention to specific components that dive into the character's

backstories and show what it is to be human.

In a previous interview with The Spectrum, Curley said, "I wanted this version to show that human beings are capable of change, that they can find the thing within themselves that was once lost. I believe this is what captures the true Christmas spirit."

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# News

## SHU's Declassified Finals Survival Guide

BY HELENA MEDICI  
Staff Writer

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Starting Dec. 3, the library is open every day until 3 a.m.

According to Emily Komornik, Discovery and Metadata Services Librarian, most librarians increase their consultation hours during this time to try and support students as best as they can.

“Being around your peers and seeing them studying motivates everyone that we are all in this together,” said Komornik. “Also, now that the library cafe is open, students don’t even have to leave the library for a snack or quick pick-me-up which is great.”

Partnering with the counseling center, the library is hosting Art in the Library Dec. 4 through Dec. 8, 1-2 p.m., and Dec. 11 through Dec. 14, 11 a.m.-2 p.m. to help students have a mindful break from studying.

Juggling extracurriculars and final exams can be difficult for students. Senior Victoria Vaglica is actively involved in numerous activities on campus and is a Student Library Assistant.

“Despite the preparation and time investment required for such activities and their events, they serve as essential breaks for my mental well-being and allow me to socialize with friends,” said Vaglica.

Adopting a structured approach to finals, Vaglica creates study guides and utilizes Quizlets to grasp a deeper understanding of the material, rather than just memorizing it. She also prefers to study on the quiet second floor of the library, to help maintain her focus.

“Learning to distribute my workload throughout the week has been a pivotal adjustment, affording me the luxury of time for socializing, exercising, relaxing, and reducing the stress in my life,” said Vaglica.

Final exam week at SHU begins Tuesday, Dec. 12 through Saturday, Dec. 16. Be sure to check when your class meets for their final exam through Sacred Heart’s website or with your professor.

## SHU Presents “Police Use of Deadly Force: Justified?” Colloquium

BY BRIAN LUPO  
Staff Writer

Is the use of deadly force by police justified? On Wednesday, Nov. 29, Sacred Heart University (SHU) hosted a talk as part of its Human Journey Colloquia series. The event took place in the Dr. Michelle Loris Forum at the Martire Center for Liberal Arts.

The featured speaker of this talk was Judge Robert J. Devlin, Jr., who is currently Deputy Chief State’s Attorney and Connecticut’s first Inspector General.

“He was chosen to speak on this topic because this is his area of expertise,” said Prof. Anthony Papa, head of the Pre-Law Program at SHU.

Before Devlin was picked for the role of Inspector General, he was a federal prosecutor from 1988-1992, then a judge on the state superior court from 1993 to 2019. He also served as a judge of the state Appellate Court from May 2019 to June 2020.

The job of the Inspector General in the state of Conn was established after the George Floyd case and protests in 2020. This role has a term of four years.

The Inspector General’s job is to conduct investigations of police officers’ use of force. Their role is also to prosecute cases where the police officers’ use of force is not justified or in certain cases where the police officer fails to intervene.

This position also investigates deaths in police custody and makes recommendations to the Police

Officer Standards and Training Council on what happens to the officer in question. Another part of the job is subpoena of production of documents and testimony.

Other states and the federal government have similar Inspector General roles, but it varies depending on the department in which it covers.

“An Inspector General works within organizations to make sure there is no fraud or misconduct,” said Todd Matthews, Associate Professor of Criminal Justice here at SHU. “They have oversight of entire organizations in state governments.”

At the Colloquium, the audience was shown slides of four cases where deadly force was used and ruled justified.

The first case was the shooting of Juan Villa, which occurred on Sept. 16, 2020. This involved the shooting of the person who was subjected to a welfare check, but ended up escalating after the subject lunged at his roommate with a knife and the officer shot at him. It was later ruled as justified use of force due to the circumstances.

The Colloquium was meant to be informative on when police use of deadly force is justified. The cases were presented in order to give examples to the audience of justified force.

## Fighting Resumes in Israel

BY MOLLY BRUTON  
Assistant News Editor and Copy Editor

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“I believe the temporary ceasefire has been beneficial to both sides and the innocent people are being helped. The pause has allowed many hostages to be released,” he said.

Under the agreement’s terms, Israel and Hamas originally agreed to a four-day halt in hostilities, according to AP News.

Israel and Hamas then agreed to extend their temporary truce for additional days.

“The deal for two additional days of cease-fire, announced by Qatar, raised hopes for further extensions, which also allow more aid into Gaza,” according to AP News.

On Thursday, Nov. 30, Stiltner explained how the numbers of those released were 104 as of Thursday, while 143 remained captive. Israel had released 210 captive Palestinians from a list of 300 it approved for release.

One hour before the pause was due to end on Dec. 1, at 7 a.m. local time, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) reported that sirens were sounding for communities close to the Gaza Strip. The IDF then reported it had intercepted a rocket fired from the enclave, according to BBC.

Areas targeted by Israeli air strikes included northwestern Gaza and Khan Younis in the south - where hundreds of thousands of people fled earlier in the war to escape fighting in the north, according to BBC.

According to AP News, weeks of Israeli bombardment and a ground campaign have left more than three-quarters of Gaza’s 2.3 million residents homeless, causing a humanitarian crisis as they face widespread shortages of food, water and other supplies.

“Palestinians have suffered from human rights violations for years, yet people don’t talk about it. They have been oppressed by Israel for decades, and the attacks on Gaza are an act of inhumanity. I stand with



Smoke rises following an Israeli bombardment on Dec. 4 in the Gaza Strip. Ohad Zwigenberg, AP News

peace,” said junior Ana Sofia Angeles-Sanchez.

Israeli strikes on houses and buildings have killed at least 178 people throughout the Gaza Strip within the first hours of fighting after the truce collapsed on Dec. 1, according to AP News.

The Israeli attacks were in response to an attack by Hamas on Oct. 7 that killed 1,200 people in Israel.

“Although Hamas’s initial attack was an outrageous assault on human life and the laws of war, Israel’s campaign is also violating the laws of war and is killing innocent civilians,” said Stiltner.

As of press time, cease-fire mediator Qatar said efforts are ongoing to renew the truce, during which Israel paused most military activity in Gaza and released 300 Palestinian prisoners in exchange for militants freeing over 100 hostages held in Gaza, according to AP News.

“History is like day and night, it changes depending on who is telling it and whose eyes are seeing it. Violence is in no way justified in any of the cases, but I think it is important to remember the history behind the events that occurred,” said Angeles-Sanchez.

# Features

## SHU's Inclusive Excellence Cohort

BY SHANNON DOVE  
Staff Writer

In Aug. 2023, Sacred Heart University (SHU) launched its first ever Inclusive Excellence Fellows Cohort, an initiative designed to bring together faculty and staff members to lead efforts that support the university's goal of inclusive excellence.

The cohort consists of eight fellows who were selected from a competitive list of faculty and staff applicants, who have been engaging with this fellowship throughout this past semester.

"It was important for me that the fellows we selected were already coming in with some experience and actually leading or participating in diversity and inclusive initiatives," said Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer, Maurice Nelson. "Having an interest and being organically connected to the concept is important, but in addition having the first-hand experience was really important to us."

Nelson introduced this fellowship this Aug. as he began his second year at the university. He was previously an Inclusive Excellence Fellow at Georgia Southern University, which is where his inspiration came from.

"This was always something I knew that if I occupied a Chief Diversity and Inclusive Officer position, I would be implementing this program," Nelson said. "It was impactful to me, but I also saw in real time how it positively raised awareness for diversity and inclusive excellence."

Each candidate had to submit a two-page personal statement on their background and inclusive excellence-related work, their current resume, and a letter of support from their supervisor.

Ololade Afolabi, Rebekah Byrd, Mark Congdon, Jr., Raheem Davis, Susan Goncalves, Katie Kroeper, Deirdra Preis, and Callie Tabor were each specifically selected to serve as a fellow for a two-year term.

Each fellow is responsible for working with the Office for Inclusive Excellence (OIE) on research engagement and projects which are consistent with the OIE mission and the Pioneer Plan for Inclusive Excellence.



Tracy Deer-Mirek, Sacred Heart University  
Sacred Heart's new Inclusive Excellence Fellows Cohort consists of eight experienced members.

Congdon, Assistant Professor of Communication, is excited to continue his own learning and growing through the different professional development opportunities he will be doing, as well as learning from and with the fellows.

"One thing I think is exciting about this program is that it directly aligns with the university's social justice mission, where we are focusing on educating the whole student body," Congdon said. "I think the work we are all doing reinforces to live out and embody the mission of the university."

Throughout their two-year term, the fellows will engage in inclusive leadership professional development, complete two cohort projects, complete individual projects, and overall enhance the inclusive excellence initiatives.

"We are able to work really well and collaborate together which is really important," Congdon said. "The projects we are working on individually or in pairs as well as a cohort are more enjoyable and effective because we are really a team."

Ololade Afolabi, a lecturer in the School of Communication, Media, and the Arts, specializes in gender and media studies, international communication, and critical cultural studies.

According to a statement from the university, Afolabi said, "The fellowship opens up a new dialogue on the seriousness of diversity and inclusion discourse on campus. Beyond just talking about this, I see the fellowship bringing actionable outcomes that can create a more inclusive campus community here at SHU."

Afolabi brings scholarship experience in researching issues related to recognition among women of color.

Junior Julia Leak, who serves as Tradition Chair on SHU's Student Government Council, is looking forward to what this cohort will bring to the university.

"It's comforting to know that our university is always looking for ways to better themselves, especially in the field of diversity, equity, and inclusion," said Leak. "As a member of Student Government, it's inspiring to see that not only students, but faculty and staff can come together and lead our school."

**SHIKI HANA**  
— JAPANESE BISTRO —

**Dine-in Opens at  
3pm Sunday  
December 10th**

**222 Post Rd  
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## Connecting Hearts: A Look Inside the Multicultural Center

BY CAYLA NISTA  
Staff Writer

The Multicultural Center, located in the main academic building on Sacred Heart University's campus, is a place where all students are welcome. First established in Sept. 2020, the Multicultural Center was created for students who feel underrepresented. The goal, then and now, is to promote both cultural exchange and enrichment among SHU students who come from different backgrounds.

Robert Johnson, the Executive Director of Multicultural Affairs, and SHU alumnus, created the center from scratch.

"As the Inaugural Director of the Multicultural Center, I've had the opportunity to create from scratch what cultural programming can look like at Sacred Heart University," said Johnson. "As an underrepresented student myself who attended Sacred Heart University, I had first-hand experience of knowing what we lacked as an institution and started from there with developing necessary programming for current students and receiving their input in regards to what they like to see here at SHU."

The center's vision, according to SHU's website, is simple, to exemplify diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging with the best practices at a Catholic institution. Through open dialogue in meetings and collaboration with communities on campus, they are able to enhance cultural exchange, immersion, and engagement throughout campus. With the many events they host on campus including, kickbacks, Culture Cookouts, Wisdom Wednesdays, and many more, their goal is always the same, to reach as many students as they can and have them feel welcomed.

Felecia Jeter, Assistant Director of Multicultural Affairs, focuses on programming for the center as well as overseeing the MACC (Mentors Advocating for Cultural Connection) Pioneers Program. Jeter helps make the center a safe and welcoming space.

"I chose to work for Sacred Heart Multicultural Affairs because of their growing programming and the center. It is a very welcoming and safe space for students, which allows me to make connections and help students who need support from someone who looks like them. Representation and mentorship are always going to be

important, and I get to be that for someone," said Jeter.

MACC is a peer-to-peer mentoring program run through the center. In the Momentum part of the program, first-year students are paired with upperclassmen who help guide those students through their first year at SHU, according to Jeter.

"We also provide personal development for students through programming and different opportunities for them to participate in to further develop their own skills," said Jeter.

The center also houses various clubs, such as the Black Student Union, La Hispanidad and the Asian American Pacific Islanders Club (AAIPC). These clubs have similar goals that align with those of the center, but are more focused on specific communities within the larger university.

Senior Sydni Carroll, treasurer of the AAIPC, feels a sense of community within her club and can connect more with her heritage while being a member.

"I was driven to join as I wanted to find a place where I could connect more to my heritage," said Carroll. "It is a sense of community, and we are always welcome to new members, and anyone is free to join. At every meeting, we always start with the highs and lows of the day, and we try to make every meeting a safe place for people."

Both the Multicultural Center and the clubs within it host events for SHU students to partake in and learn more about the resources they offer on campus. Look out for upcoming events on campus to get involved in learning more about the center and clubs on campus.

"You can expect more fantastic programming next semester. Please save the date for Jan. 17 as that is our Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day Celebration. It will be at 1 p.m. in the Edgerton Center for Performing Arts. We will also be having our annual Black Love Gala in Feb. and our Multicultural Student Celebration in April. Everyone is welcome at these events," said Jeter.



Mark F. Conrad, Sacred Heart University  
Robert Johnson, Executive Director of Multicultural Affairs, regularly hosts events at the Multicultural Center.

# Happy Holidays from

## The Spectrum Newspaper Wrapped: Fall 2023

**2023**

FALL 2023  
The Spectrum Newspaper Wrapped

FALL 2023 RECAP

**2023**

This semester's highlights  
@shuspectrum

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**141**  
New Articles

**27**  
Editorial Board Members

**24**  
Staff Writers

**Most used apps:**

1. Adobe InDesign
2. Outlook
3. GroupMe
4. Canva
5. TikTok

**11**

Weekly Print/Online Issues

11 Sunday Editor meetings  
11 Mondays spent in the Spectrum office

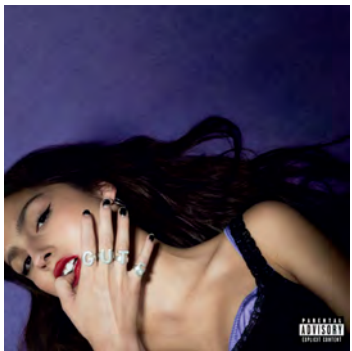
# om The Spectrum!

## The Editorial Board's Spotify Wrapped

### Top Artists:



1. Taylor Swift



2. Olivia Rodrigo



3. Harry Styles



4. Noah Kahan



5. Morgan Wallen

Photos by AP Newsroom

### Top Genres:



Pop



Rock



Rap



Tech House

To hear our top songs, scan the QR code:



Total Listening Time:  
382,060 minutes

# Arts & Entertainment

## TAP Presents “A Christmas Carol” with Alum John Ratzenberger

BY MARIA KELLY  
Staff Writer

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This production is tailored to the Sacred Heart community as it features performances from faculty, staff, students and alumni.

“Because it was written by a former student, we really got to tailor the piece to our community here at SHU, making a very unique adaptation of the show,” said sophomore David Irizarry.

One particular alumni in the production is John Ratzenberger, who plays Ebenezer Scrooge. Ratzenberger is a well known actor recognized for his roles in “Cheers,” “Toy Story” and “Cars.”

The program’s sense of unity and belonging touched Ratzenberger. “I’ve gotten a lot of help here. I’ve never seen such professionalism within a young group. I’m very impressed by their dedication and enthusiasm,” said Ratzenberger in a previous Spectrum article.

Because “A Christmas Carol” has become a tradition, it has allowed for the program to learn and grow from its past production. One aspect of the show they are improving is the technical aspect.

The production’s stage manager, senior Grace Posillico, noted the technical work they have been incorporating into the production.

“We’re trying to find new ways to add video editing and ways to layer things on top of it. So, it’s all about taking where we left off and just growing and making it fun,” said Posillico.



Kim Tyler, Sacred Heart University  
John Ratzenberger as Scrooge in the 2022 Sacred Heart University production of “A Christmas Carol.”

Junior Grace Peknic, a member of the production, also discussed these adaptations.

“We are adapting with the times of theater. Theater is really changing right now into a tech world, and we are producing such a high level of quality with our tech that it is like you’re seeing a Broadway production in Fairfield, Connecticut,” said Peknic.

Last year, TAP held three showings. It was a draw to many, and they sold out all of their shows. Due to the excitement for the production, another show was added for this year. “A Christmas Carol” now has four showings, including a two-show day.

“I think it will really give us a chance to build upon previous years’ work and continue to spread the message of this show for multiple generations of people,” said Irizarry about the tradition of the show.

The TAP program has worked hard to make this production of the classic “A Christmas Carol” by Charles Dickens unique.

“It really raises the bar of what you’d expect from an average Christmas play. Not only is this adaptation very unique, but it also features a variety of great performances and top-notch production value,” said Irizarry.

*Steph Patella contributed to this article.*

## “Rockin’ Around the Christmas Tree” with New Holiday Hits

BY ANGELISE ROY  
Staff Writer

This holiday season, a number of artists including Cher, Sabrina Carpenter and Pentatonix have released new Christmas albums.

“Every Christmas season, I look to see who comes out with new Christmas music because it’s always so fun to see how they change up the classics or to get new refreshing Christmas music,” said freshman Iliana Delgado. “One of my favorite new Christmas albums this year is Cher’s.”

According to ABC News, Cher’s first holiday album entitled “Christmas,” was released on Oct. 20. It consists of 13 tracks that include nine classic Christmas songs and four original songs. Featured singers that appear on the album are Darlene Love, Stevie Wonder, Cyndi Lauper, Michael Bublé, and Tyga.

“I love the songs that she did with other artists,” said Delgado. “My favorite is ‘Christmas (Baby, Please Come Home)’ featuring Darlene Love because I grew up listening to that song with my family.”

At 17 years old, Cher sang background vocals on Love’s original version of “Christmas (Baby Please Come Home)” and now Love sang on Cher’s version, according to ABC News.

“I had no intentions of doing a Christmas album,” said Cher in an interview with Billboard. “But [Warner Records] said, ‘Why don’t you do a Christmas album, Cher?’ and I said if I can do my version I’ll do it, and they were very pleasant.”

Sabrina Carpenter also released original Christmas songs this holiday season. She released her six track EP entitled “Fruitcake” on Nov. 17. According to Rolling Stone, the first track, “A Nonsense Christmas,” is a holiday play on her song called “Nonsense” from her album, “Emails I can’t send.”

Senior Luisa Fischioni, a fan of Carpenter, said, “Ever since she released ‘A Nonsense Christmas’ as a single, I was so excited for her Christmas EP.”

“I am a picky Christmas music listener,” said junior Jenna Wolfe, a new Carpenter listener. “Sabrina Carpenter’s Christmas EP is understated and beautiful so I can put it on casually without needing a specific Christmas activity. It’s just good music. I should listen to her stuff more often.”

Carpenter will perform songs from her EP at the iHeartRadio’s Jingle Ball, according to Rolling Stone.

“I can’t wait to hear Sabrina’s Christmas songs live and all other Christmas songs from other artists,” said Fischioni, who plans on attending the event. “It’s going to be a fun night filled with both new and old Christmas music.”

In the creation and development of new modern holiday songs, some people prefer the traditional Christmas tunes.

“I tend to gravitate towards older Christmas music because they foster a sense of tradition and nostalgia that makes them timeless,” said Wolfe.

Some Christmas albums from artists like Pentatonix have modern songs that fans think still give a traditional feel to them.

According to Billboard, Pentatonix had 92 recordings in the top 10,000 holiday tracks from Nov. 4 to Dec. 22, 2022.

“Every year, I look forward to listening to Pentatonix’s new Christmas album,” said Wolfe. “I like Pentatonix because they sing classic Christmas songs, but reimaged.”

Pentatonix’s album called, “The Greatest Christmas Hits,” dropped on Oct. 20. There are 31 songs, 23 Pentatonix holiday classics and eight brand new songs.

“It’s hard to beat the old classics,” said Wolfe. “There hasn’t been a new Christmas song made that stands the test of time like they do, but getting new Christmas music is something I still look forward to.”

## Christmas in Connecticut

BY JULIA SCIORRA  
Staff Writer

Christmas is taking over Connecticut with many different holiday activities available throughout Fairfield County. With Fairfield County spreading 837 miles in distance, there is something available for everyone.

Sacred Heart University’s (SHU’s) Community Theatre takes on the holiday season by playing a series of different movies each year.

Matt Oestreicher, director of the SHU Community Theatre said, “Holidays are really exciting at the theatre, and we have the theatre all decorated for the holidays and I think we have about 13 holiday shows this year.”

Every week the theatre will be showing their holiday spirit, whether it’s by playing holiday film classics, or hosting live holiday performances.

“We have found that there are a few movies that everyone loves to see every year,” said Oestreicher. “We just showed ‘Elf’ to a large enthusiastic crowd, we will be showing ‘It’s a Wonderful Life’ later this month, and ‘Polar Express’ has become a tradition that’s coming up on Dec. 17.”

The Sacred Heart Community Theatre offers free movie tickets to all SHU students. With just a 15 minute shuttle ride from the university to downtown Fairfield, every student is eligible to gain free access into a showing with the presence of their SHU ID.

Oestreicher said, “We would love to see more SHU students down at the theatre. We offer free movie tickets to every SHU student, so we are always welcoming SHU students, and we just want all SHU students to know they are welcome.”

The Community Theatre will also be hosting two live events performed by SHU students. “The Performing Arts department will be at the theatre with their instrumental chamber ensemble on Dec. 8 and the SHU symphony orchestra on Dec. 10,” said Oestreicher.

The town of Fairfield also has many other events taking place.

Oestreicher said, “On Dec. 6 they’re doing a shopping stroll where all the businesses have food and drinks.”

The annual Shop & Stroll is an evening of local holiday shopping where shoppers can enjoy special discounts at participating stores and also enjoy other festivities around town.

Many other towns in Fairfield County will also be spreading holiday spirit. Greenwich will be hosting its 15th annual Reindeer Festival every day until Dec. 23. The festival allows visitors to have their photo taken with Santa, meet his three live reindeer and also enjoy Santa’s workshop where participants can write letters to Santa, partake in a reindeer coloring station and even enter their names into raffles and contests.

Junior Amanda Cosentino said, “When I was younger, my favorite family tradition was when my parents used to take my brother, sister and I to the festival to see Santa. They had so many different activities for us to do and it really made the holiday season special.”

Santa will also be at the Danbury Fair Mall, located in Danbury, Conn. up until Dec. 24. Children, adults and even pets will be able to take their photos with Santa.

Junior Brianna Taylor said, “I’m from Danbury, so my mom would always take me to sit on Santa’s lap and take photos with him. It became sort of a holiday tradition and sometimes she would even bring my dog.”

The New England Academy of Dance will also be performing The Nutcracker Ballet, featuring the Norwalk Symphony Orchestra, in the auditorium of New Canaan High School. The show will be performed on Dec. 8, Dec. 9 and Dec. 10. Tickets are available for purchase online or at the door.

“There are so many different holiday activities to do in Connecticut,” said Taylor. “I’ve lived here almost my whole life and feel that Fairfield County really makes the holiday season magical.”

# Sports

## A Check In on the Reigning NEC Women's Basketball Champs

BY DILLON KNEUCKER  
Staff Writer

To start off this season, the Sacred Heart women's basketball team is 4-4. Through their first eight games last year, they were 1-7.

Despite that slow start last year, the Pioneers went on to win the Northeast Conference (NEC) Championship and make their way into the NCAA tournament. This season, they were picked to finish first in the NEC again.

"We're building on a lot of returning strengths from last year," said Head Coach Jessica Mannetti. "Our fight was our biggest strength and I think it still is. We're very, very, very relentless in our pursuit of team success."

Mannetti, who holds a career record of 107-71 in the NEC, has seen a few different teams in her tenure at Sacred Heart. She spoke on how this year's team is different from last year's historic team; who was the first team in SHU women's basketball history to make and win a game in the NCAA tournament.

"I think that the biggest difference is even though the outside wants to put a lot of pressure on you, the perspective has changed," said Mannetti. "I think we have a maturity on our team that allows us to stay very grounded like we haven't done anything yet."

In addition to Mannetti's presence, a large part of the reason the Pioneers were favored to win the NEC again has to do with the return of many of their key players; one being Ny'Ceara Pryor, a sophomore guard from Baltimore, Md.

Pryor, on top of being the first player in league history to win Defensive Player of the Year, Player of the Year, and Rookie of the Year all in one season, has just claimed her first Player of the Week award this season. However, these accolades are not the ones Pryor worries about.

"I just care about the team side," said Pryor. "Like I told my family and friends, accolades are going to come, but I just want to win. Accolades don't matter if we don't win, if we don't get that NEC championship."

Another key returner to this year's lineup is Amelia Wood. The sophomore from Wynantskill, N.Y. was a member of the NEC All-Rookie Team last year, as well as leading the Pioneers in three-point percentage.

"Coming in this year, everyone's going to give us their biggest game," said Wood. "We just have to come in ready. We love the competition; we love the pressure on us for this year."

The Pioneers will be back in action December 6 at 7 p.m. to take on NJIT in the William H. Pitt Center.

*Sacred Heart Athletics contributed to this article.*



Instagram, @sacredheartwbb  
Coach Mannetti speaks to the team during a huddle.

## Fifth Time's the Charm? Cheerleading Pursues Another UCA Title

BY ANASTASIA NIKOPOULOS  
Staff Writer

Sacred Heart University's cheerleading team has had four consecutive wins at the Universal Cheerleaders Association (UCA).

Senior Ciara Doyle, one of the captains of the Sacred Heart cheerleading program, said one of the ways the team has maintained their consistency and success over the years is by "keeping the program together as a family."

"I think one of the biggest things when you run out on the mat is that you don't want to feel like an individual, you want to be able to turn and look at all of your friends and be like, that's my sister, and thinking 'she has my back,' and you can say it out loud 'you got this' and know they actually mean it," said Doyle.

The team has been preparing since Aug. 1 for the next nationals competition from Jan. 12-14, 2024.

"Everything we're doing, like UCA Camp, all of our practices, is in preparation for nationals," said Head Coach CJ Sereno.

As the team has been perfecting their skills, they have also set their routine for nationals.

"I would say now is when it starts to get into the full routine-mode," said Sereno. "Starting Aug. 1, we're more-so preparing our skills and deciding what it is that we're gonna put in the routine. Now, the routine is set, so they're working their skills over and over again in the routine with their music, doing the routine entirely from beginning to end."

The program has two different style routine teams: traditional and game day. The team generally practices five times a week.

Senior Nina Campos, one of the captains of the team, said, "We like to use pressure as a privilege, because it gives us an opportunity to work even harder to stay on top and maintain the national title and the success that we have made. It's important that we use that pressure to get even better."

Campos said her experience being one of the captains has been great, and "Having this position is amazing because I'm able to support my teammates and be able to give the coaches feedback of any of their input in an understanding way."

"Just being there for everyone is definitely one of my priorities," said Campos. "I have a lot of respect for all my teammates, and I do my best to make practice very positive."

Doyle highlighted her experience being one of the captains as well, and said, "I like to make the team bond, even just make them laugh at practice, so it makes it feel like something to look forward to rather than stressing about. I really like being that person, as a captain, because I know exactly what it feels like to be stressed out during finals week or school in general."

When looking back on the program's four consecutive championships, SHU cheerleading received their first ever national title in 2020.

"It's the best feeling in the world. So, in 2020, I think about it and talk about it all the time, it was the best day of my life. It was so unexpected, especially in the traditional division; placing first in the traditional division was unheard of," Sereno said. "That feeling was incredible and just absolutely insane, because no one had won that division except the two top tier teams that had been fighting for first and second. So we were the first team to beat both of them."

As the SHU cheerleading team's season continues, Sereno said "Our goals have always remained the same; that's just to hit our routine and do the absolute best that we can. I always tell them I never want them to walk off the mat with any regrets."



Instagram, @sacredheartcheer  
Sacred Heart University cheerleading team at the UCA Nationals in Jan. of this year.

## SHU Men's Hockey Sorts Out Growing Pains

BY JOHN HEINZE  
Staff Writer and Circulation Manager

Prior to the start of the 2023 men's hockey season, Sacred Heart University (SHU) was picked to finish second in their conference. Despite the favorable prediction and this being the first full season at the Martire Family Arena, the team has had an underwhelming start, losing four of its first five games.

After a slow start to the season, the team found a rhythm, winning five of their last six games, now sitting at an 8-6 record.

"I think our guys are starting to come together as a group," said Head Coach CJ Marottolo. "We are starting to understand each other a little bit better, we are starting to understand our system play a little bit better, and when that happens you start to play faster you don't think."

The team's recent success coincides with graduate student Kevin Lombardi's recent performance on the ice.

This season, Lombardi is tied for the team lead in goals scored and has scored goals in each of the last four games.

"I think just playing with confidence is the biggest thing," said Lombardi. "I'm playing with two really good players, and we are starting to click more so I think just obviously playing with two good players has been big for me."

Along with the high level of play from Lombardi, graduate student TJ Walsh has also been a key factor in the team's success. Walsh leads the team in points and is tied with

Lombardi for the team lead in goals scored.

"I wish I could take all the credit, but I don't think I can," said Walsh. "I play with a lot of good players, and I have been put in positions where I can be successful and luckily I'm finding the back of the net a little bit and so are my teammates, so a lot of props goes to them."

This season is important since it's the first full season that SHU is playing at their own on-campus arena. The new Martire Family arena has provided an added spark for the team in the early portion of this season.

"Our guys are able to hang out and eat after practice, play ping pong after practice, and they study down there," said Marottolo. "I think those types of things helps create team bonding."

With a lot of time still left in the season, the team is looking to maintain and build off their momentum as they look toward their next stretch of games.

"I think we just have to keep building off of our past couple weekends here," said Lombardi. "Obviously winning games is the main goal, and we won't be satisfied until we reach our end goal."

SHU plays their next game at Martire Family Arena on Dec. 8 against Princeton.

*Sacred Heart Athletics contributed to this article.*

# Holiday Crossword

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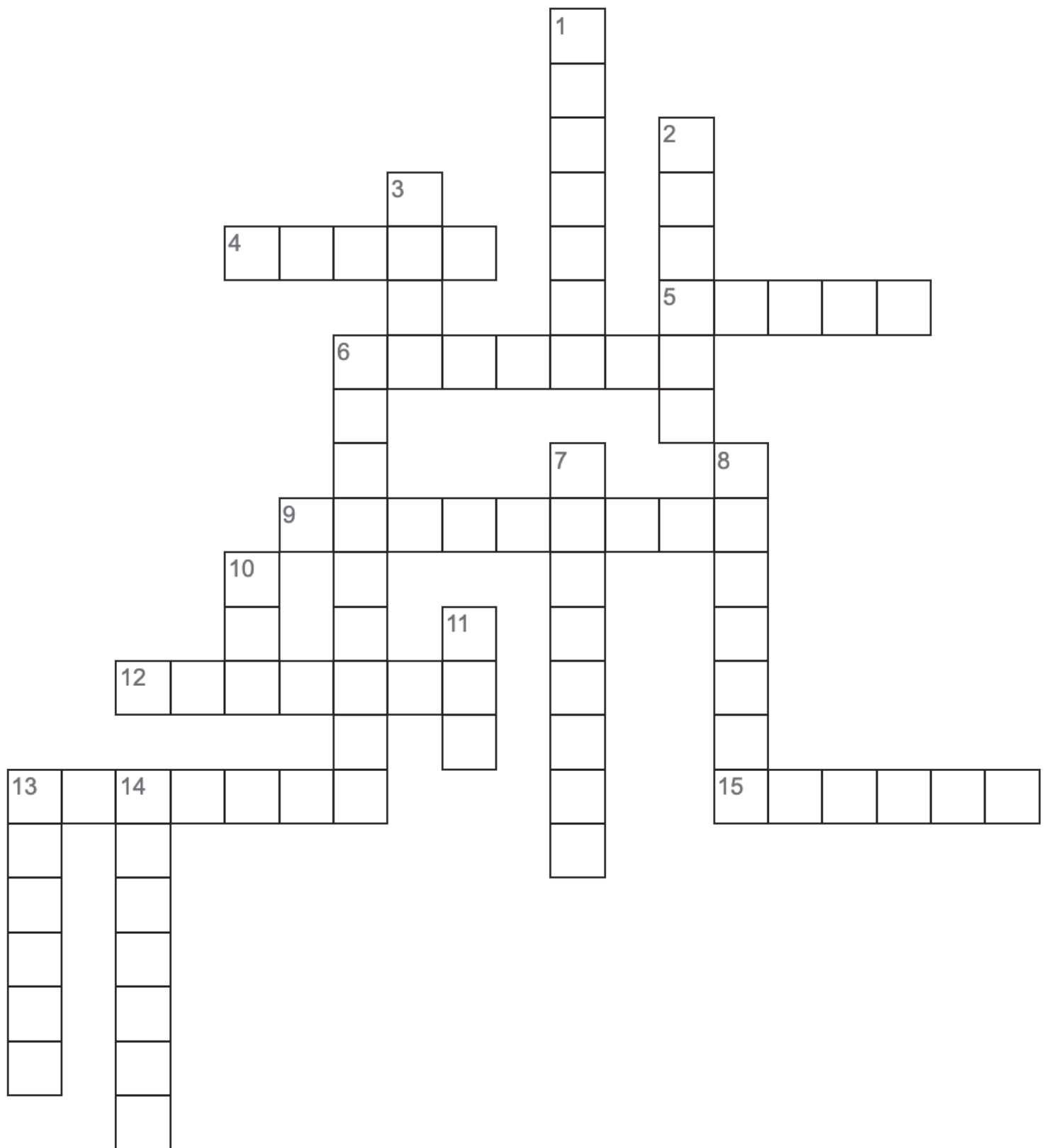
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## ACROSS

- 4. Queen of Christmas music, Mariah \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. Hanukkah lasts \_\_\_\_\_ nights
- 6. What country eggnog came from \_\_\_\_\_
- 9. One of Justin Bieber’s most popular Christmas songs \_\_\_\_\_
- 12. A four-sided spinning top played during Hanukkah \_\_\_\_\_
- 13. The country that started the tradition of putting up the Christmas tree \_\_\_\_\_
- 15. Scrooge’s catchphrase, “Bah \_\_\_\_\_!”

## DOWN

- 1. An annual celebration of African-American culture from Dec. 26 to Jan. 1
- 2. The first season of the Christian church year
- 3. Partridge’s preferred tree
- 6. A British tradition that’s celebrated on Dec. 26
- 7. The writers of “Seinfeld” created this winter holiday
- 8. Holds the candles during Hanukkah
- 10. Follows both Christmas and New Year’s
- 11. Will Ferrell is one of Santa’s helpers
- 13. Five \_\_\_\_\_ Rings
- 14. The red-nosed reindeer