

Grand Ledge High School's

The Comets' Tale



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Conflict In The Middle East

Read about the ongoing war in the Middle East, as well as GLHS opinions on the matter



Carson Lemon
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

On Oct. 7th, 2023, Hamas, a militant Palestinian terrorist organization launched a surprise attack from the Gaza Strip into Israeli territory. This attack stems from a 16 year blockade on Palestinian occupied territories in the Gaza Strip and West Bank.

Hamas first came to power in 2006 when they won Palestinian Legislative Council elections that same year against Fatah, the former party in power of the region (Barron, 1, 2023). Conflict broke out when the parties failed to reach an agreement on how to rule in conjunction, which ended with Hamas in control of the Gaza Strip, and Fatah in control of the West Bank, a landlocked territory almost 14 times the size of the Gaza Strip, with over 3 million Palestinians residing there. In response, Israel has since barred the movement of goods and people from in or out of the Gaza Strip, in an effort to stop hostile Hamas forces from entering Israel. With over 2.2 million people living in the Gaza Strip, and no way to leave, Israel has been criticized by various members of the international community for upholding the blockade over the years.

The morning of the attack, members of Hamas gunned through blockades put in place by the Israeli Defense Force (IDF), and launched around 3,000 rockets into Israel (Al Jazeera, 5, 2023). Hamas forces also took Israeli civilians as hostages during their attack. Later in the day, the IDF retaliated with air strikes continuing throughout the days until a seven day ceasefire was agreed upon to exchange hostages from both sides on Nov. 24th, 2023.

The Israeli Ministry of Health reported 700 deaths on their side (Al Jazeera, 14, 2023), while the Palestinian Ministry of Health has estimated 18,000 deaths as of Dec. 9th, 2023 (Maher, 1, 2023).

Hamas attributes their initial attack as a push against colonizing Israelites pushing into historically Palestinian territory. In July of 2023, Israel approved over 5,700 new housing units to be built in the West Bank, in some instances even pushing Palestinian families out of homes they have lived in for decades (Josef Federmen, 2023, 3).

The UN has called for the ending of these settlement plans in Israel, even finding Israel guilty of violating international law with their encroachment on the West Bank.

“Sitting on our hands while the situation unravels is short-sighted and dangerous,” the Brazilian UN representative, Sérgio França Danese said.

Other international voices have also bashed Israel for the extreme measures taken against the Palestinian people, even those unaffiliated with Hamas. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has launched massive retaliation attacks, including dropping bombs, cutting off food, water, and electricity to the entire region.

People all over the United States have chosen sides of the conflict, over whom to support and where to spend their money. Andy Pertler, a GLHS student, talked about how they chose to show their support for Palestine.

“I make sure that I stay properly educated so I can responsibly inform others about these issues,” Pertler said when asked about the issue. “Certain businesses like Target or Starbucks are criticized for their support for Israel, however Marvel donates millions yearly to Israel. Making sure you are putting your money towards businesses that support Palestine, or



An American and Israel flag hangs up in Shaltry's room. The teacher has been vocal in his support for Israel over the past few months.

Photo by Carson Lemon/The Comets' Tale

at the very least are neutral on the subject is something everyone can do to help.”

Others voice their support for Israel, Kelly Shaltry, a History teacher at GLHS spoke about why he chooses to support the country.

“We stand with Israel. They were attacked by a terrorist group, and so the United States has taken the stance to support the State of Israel,” Shaltry said. When asked about the ethics of the blockade in Gaza, Shaltry voiced support for the Israeli tactics.

“There's no other way that they can do it. You have to shut off the electricity, food, and water supply from the enemies, which is the group Hamas, not the Palestinian people.”

Shaltry referenced safe areas which Israel has designated for civilians, however, other sources have reported that civilian hostages taken by Hamas would not be able to get to such safe zones.

Quotes from the Student Demonstration

Pertler also sits on the board for the Students Making A Change club, formed in early 2023. The club organized a school demonstration on Dec. 14th, 2023, during third and fourth hours in an attempt to raise awareness about mass genocide around the globe, as well as show their support for victims and call for an end to the bloodshed.

Government Shutdown

The government not coming to an agreement on a plan for their funds



Patrick Waterman
STAFF WRITER

On November 17th, 2023 the United States Government was supposed to shut down, meaning that all government employees would not be paid until further notice but would still have to work. Approaching November 17th, last minute the United States Senate received a stopgap spending bill which provided enough funding to keep the government open until January 2024. At the time when January is approached, Congress will vote on whether to pass

a budget bill or choose again to further delay.

A budget bill is a set plan of how the funds are assigned in three different ways. The first is mandatory spending, spending that has been permitted by laws and must be paid each year. The second discretionary spending, is money formally approved by the congress and the president during the appropriations project each year. Third is interest on debt, the amount of money the government has to borrow to cover the outstanding balances and expenses from previous years.

Before this happened, it was said that the government was supposed to shut down October 1st but again a stopgap gave enough funding to push the

shutdown to November 17th.

The U.S. Government has shut down 10 times in their history, with a combined total of 86 days. When the government shuts down many employees are put in a tight financial situation.

“As the main provider for my family, the shutdown in 2019 caused me much stress and anxiety. The uncertainty of its length made me worried if I had saved enough money to provide for my family without being paid for however long it would last. A second job was near impossible as I was still expected to work my full-time job, but without the pay,” Kelly Waterman said, investigator for Homeland Security.

KNOCK YOUR HUNGER OUT OF THE PARK

TACO BELL

All participating locations. While supplies last. ©2023 Taco Bell IP Holder, LLC. LP 1523-23

IDK the title lol



Braelyn Jackson-Pointer
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Grand Ledge High School has been struggling with the inappropriate use restrooms since the beginning of this school year. Although there have been issues with bathrooms in the past, there has been an increase of shutdowns recently throughout the school due to plumbing issues and vandalism.

"Whenever I have to use the bathroom, I have to walk across the school to find an open one," Senior, Vincent Kirrmiann said.

The increase in shutdowns has caused students to have to roam around the school to use the bathroom. This conflicts with the hall pass policy launched in late 2022, where each color pass correlates with a certain hallway and set of bathrooms. Students have been getting stopped by administration for being in the wrong hallway while they are just trying to find a useable bathroom.

"I lose valuable class time trying to rush and find the closest bathroom that is open," Senior, Rachel Carlson said.

There are only so many bathrooms open at a time because of the constant shutdowns. This leads to overcrowding in bathrooms which catches the attention of the faculty.

"The hall monitors will start yelling at you to get out because there is too many people trying to use the same bathroom," Senior, Gabi VanWalsum said. Another concern is students using illegal substances such as vapes in the bathrooms and getting in trouble. This has led to school faculty lingering outside of the bathrooms to try and catch these students. This issue does not only concern students for their integrity, but teachers worry as well.

"Kids don't go to the bathroom during passing time for fear of getting in trouble for vaping even though they weren't taking part in it," history teacher, Mr. Shaltry said.

When asked to comment Administration did not comment.

Students have to wander the halls to find an open bathroom. This bathroom in particular has been closed for over a month.

Photo by Braelyn Jackson-Pointer/The Comets' Tale



A sprinkle of success



Zoe Yaney
STAFF WRITER

With black mold, leaking ceilings, puddles of water, and more, the Grand Ledge High School art hallway has been falling apart the last few years. The art hallway is part of the original footprint of the building, with its beginnings stretching back to 1957. This section was the first hallway built in that year's renovations, featuring trade workshops and humanities classes, as well as the former auditorium.

Currently, the art hallway hosts the Yearbook and News staff, the archery range, community blood drives, the school's visual arts programs, as well as some english classes.

Gradually, the art hallway has fallen into a state of disrepair, with cracks in the walls, outdated bathrooms, leaks from the ceiling, and even black mold growing in classrooms. Many teachers and students have been outraged about the deteriorated state of this specific part of the building.

"My classroom has been plagued by a consistent bad odor, leaks from the ceiling after heavy rain and snow, and the development of black mold...



Students are hard at work in Mrs. Vandyke's class. Last year Vandyke's class was moved to Mrs. Zeko's old room due to mold infestation.

Photo by Zoe Yaney/The Comets' Tale

Although there have been efforts to fix these issues, the school needs to divert more attention to cleaning

up the classrooms in this area to benefit everyone," AP Language teacher and Yearbook Advisor, Jason Westra-Hall said.

Many students have also criticized the upkeep of the wing. Distracting smells, mold stains and more have created an environment that makes it difficult for students to focus on their work..

"The nasty odor, falling ceiling tiles, and general filth in [AP Language] detracts from my ability to focus on my learning," a student, who wishes to remain anonymous said.

As well as classroom space, the bathrooms in this hallway are the source of many complaints from the student body. The art hallway bathrooms are specifically known for constant flooding, with pools of water accumulating frequently. Many bathroom stalls in both the men's and women's restrooms do not lock, creating uncomfortable situations for all. Many students claim they try to refrain from using the bathroom while at school.

Excessive humidity, growing mold, and wet floors can all create dangerous conditions where students are put at risk on a daily basis. Students unfortunately have to endure these conditions everyday in their learning environment. With no choice but to ignore the numerous problems of the hall.

Ken Clarks Coat Closet

Providing for families across Grand Ledge



Kaysen Strohaber
SECTION EDITOR

Ken Clark's Coat Closet (KC3) has been providing necessities for the community for the last nine years. When KC3 was created two goals were in mind: provide necessities to the community of Grand Ledge and, aim to provide a work based learning environment for special education students.

KC3 is a clothing bank located in Grand Ledge. Inside is clothing available for anyone in need. The store is sectioned off by womens, mens, girls, boys and babies. They also have the occasional food donation. They are open to everyone who needs some type of clothing the bank offers. When entering the building, shoppers sign a paper and then are allowed to start browsing and taking the necessities they need.

KC3 takes donations of all clothing related items and personal care items. During the holiday season, they have an increase in need for donations. Even though the amount of donated materials grows, there is also an even bigger need for clothes and personal care items. Cold winter months create an increase in the need for winter coats, blankets, and warm clothes in general as well as more personal care items like shampoo, body wash and deodorant. During the holiday season, KC3 also accepts donations such as toys for children and holiday decorations.

KC3 takes part in the Grand Ledge Shopping Tour which serves around 100 low-income families in the Grand Ledge school district. This year KC3 distrib-

uted over 750 items for the Shopping Tour including winter coats, boots, hats, and personal care kits.

"We put on our website and our Facebook letting people know we need warm weather stuff. We probably have an increase of twenty families to sixty families with more needs. We collect personal care items so that everybody can have shampoo, soap and deodorant. We tend to get an increase in kid stuff which is great like snow pants which is great," Mida said.

Special education students around the area are a part of a program called Giving Eaton County Kids Opportunities (GECKO). These GECKO students are able to work at the bank and learn life skills that they will need when they graduate. The skills involve sorting items, counting inventory and the ability to interact with people. GECKO provides hands-on learning for these children that they don't usually get.

"We have students from five different schools, such as Grand Ledge High School and Secondary Program where special education kids can be involved until they're 26," the GECKO job coach, Sarah Mida said.

Certain special education students come from the schools to the coat closet in order to work. "We used to be out of Sawdon and we were a part of the special education program then they didn't have space for us anymore and now our special education kids get to get out of school and come here," Sarah Mida said.

Kens Coat Closet is currently located 501 S. Clinton Street, Grand Ledge, and is open Monday through Thursday from 10:30am to 2:30pm.

Braelyn Jackson-Pointer
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



Ways to donate to KC3

Facebook: Ken Clark's Coat Closet, <https://www.facebook.com/kens.coatcloset>,

Cash App: [https://cash.app/\\$KenClarksCoatCloset](https://cash.app/$KenClarksCoatCloset)

Email: kenscoatcloset@gmail.com.

Donations can even be dropped off at **501 S. Clinton, Grand Ledge**, during its open hours of the day.



Ken Clarks Coat Closets GECKO students restock the closet and organize the clothes for where they belong. The closet gets restocked every day or as donations come in.

Photo by Braelyn Jackson-Pointer/The Comets' Tale

(blank name) is explaining how the closet works and where everything is. Ken Clarks Coat Closet used to be located inside of Sawdon.

Photo by Braelyn Jackson-Pointer/The Comets' Tale

GL Gets A New Basketball Coach



Abbie Perri
STAFF WRITER

Grand Ledge kicked off their 2023-2024 Boys Varsity Basketball season on November 28th, with a new head coach, Luke Charter. After former head coach Travis Schellhammer, was terminated by the district after being convicted of Operating While Intoxicated and fleeing an accident on December 4th, 2022. Schellhammer was entering his fourth year as head coach for the boy's basketball team, and had been working with the Grand Ledge basketball program for 15 years. When asked about this termination, the Grand Ledge Athletic Department had no comment.

Following Schellhammer's termination, Luke Charter was named the interim head coach for Grand Ledge's Boys Varsity Basketball team. Prior to being named head coach of the varsity team, Charter was the Grand Ledge boys freshman basketball coach and graduated from Grand Ledge in 2004. Charter confirmed that he is looking forward to working with the team and the upcoming season.

Following Schellhammer's termination, Luke Charter was named the interim head coach for Grand Ledge's Boys Varsity Basketball team. Prior to being named head coach of the varsity team, Charter was the Grand Ledge boys freshman basketball coach and graduated from Grand Ledge in 2004. Charter confirmed that he is looking forward to working with the team and the upcoming season.

"I feel like I have a good group of returning seniors that are great teammates and would say that we have a solid bond from my time as the interim. I am lucky to have a great group to start off my career," Coach Charter said.

Transitioning to a new coach for the season could also affect the players of the program, but coach Charter is working well with the players to ensure their success and keep the energy up.

"Coach Charter is an excellent coach for this team. I've known him through my time with Grand Ledge and he just brings the right kind of energy," Landon Birchmeier, a Senior, said.

Although some members of the Grand Ledge community may have been skeptical, the players seem to have taken a liking to their new coach.

Olivia Campbell
STAFF WRITER



"My coach is having a very positive impact on us. He does his best to keep everyone happy and efficient," Senior, Andrew Burger said.

The Comets started the season off strong on November 28th, with a win against Lansing Eastern, 62-43. The basketball team currently has a record of 2-1, and will continue their season with upcoming games against Dewitt High School, Caledonia and Holt.

Decline of Women Sports



Erin McGinnis
STAFF WRITER

All over the world, sports for women have started to decline.

Resources from the web have stated some factors causing a decrease is due to high cost, social stigma, transportation, safety issues, lack of opportunities and peer pressure.

Peer pressure shines on the physical and mental health aspect of young girls and women. This factor mainly comes from the media, coaches, and peers. Many have resigned due to the pressure on one's mental or physical health.

Olivia Navin, a Senior at Grand Ledge High School, was asked if it was a challenge to juggle her academic and athletic performance while playing girl's basketball for the school.

"I think the first two years of high school it was hard to juggle both academic and athletic performance," Navin said.

Mental health is a high priority here at Grand Ledge. Students at GLHS have begun a Mental Health Matters Club to spread awareness. The mental aspect of a sport leads to a student dropping out of the sport they once loved.

Coverage of a women's sport is another major role in this decline. Men's sports are more seen due to

frequent conflicts, higher broadcasting which causes a lack of viewership on women's sports. Lexi Raska, a sophomore here at Grand Ledge, who played basketball said, "I think that the more competitive our team gets then the more that we will get recognized which will lead to more people wanting to come watch our games."

This lack of participation is no different when it comes to Grand Ledge. "I would say yes, we are definitely feeling that this year, as we did not have enough girls come out to have a freshmen team. The girls who do play at Grand Ledge are very dedicat-

ed and work hard," Grand Ledges' girl's basketball coach, Beth Perez said about the decline in participation.



Avianna Skinner passes the ball to Genna Ketola. At this practice the girls were going through plays.

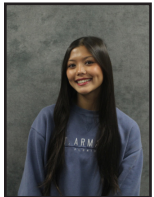
Photo by Erin McGinnis/The Comets' Tale

They are now setting up the next play. The girls had just completed a game play scenario.

Photo by Garrison Briggs/The Comets' Tale



Seasonal Depression



Ada Wilcox
STAFF WRITER

Feeling the blues when seasons change is more than just a mood-swing. It is a real struggle that affects both academic and social aspects of life.

“It affects my motivation mostly, the feeling of not having the energy to get up and do things is a struggle.” Olivia Dodge, a Senior at GLHS, said.

Lack of motivation can make it difficult for many people to accomplish goals and enjoy daily activities.

“Just wanting to be home and in my room sucks because everyone around me wants to go, go, go. In academics, it’s pretty much the same struggle. With homework assignments, I just push them off until it gets too much for me to handle” Dodge said.

In a world that often seems overwhelming, individuals are turning to effective coping mechanisms to navigate the challenges of life. Dodge shared her insights on the impact of breathing techniques.

“I’ve found a lot of breathing techniques actually. Growing up and listening to people tell me to breathe, I was always just like ‘well, I already am.’ But when you stop and actually breathe and listen to what is happening around you; listen to your heartbeat, they are all things that I am aware my living being is doing on its own.”

Dodge also emphasized the importance of embracing the rhythmic functions of the body.

“They are things that your being does naturally. I take time to focus on that and remind myself that I will be okay. I am okay. And I will remain okay.”

CIRCADIAN RHYTHM

Decreases in sunlight can disrupt the body’s internal clock which can lead to seasonal depression.

LIGHT THERAPY

Exposing a bright light to those with winter-pattern depression makes up for the diminished natural sunlight.

SEASONAL DEPRESSION

A mood disorder characterized by depression that occurs at the same time every year. Seasonal depression occurs in climates where there is less sunlight at certain times of the year.

SEROTONIN LEVELS

Shorter daylight hours causes serotonin molecules to not function properly in the brain, affecting your overall mood.

PSYCHO THERAPY

Psychotherapy can teach those with depression new ways of thinking and change habits that contribute to the depressive mood.

REDUCED MELATONIN

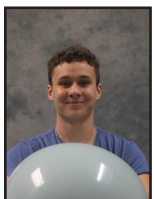
Those with summer pattern depression may experience long, hot days worsening sleep quality.

MEDICATION

Antidepressants, work by changing how the brain processes and uses different chemicals involved in mood/stress.

CAUSES

TREATMENTS



Benjamin Young
STAFF WRITER

Seasonal Depression not only occurs from too little sunlight, but from too much sunlight as well. Too much sunlight turns off melatonin production, the hormone that drives your sleep-wake cycle. Longer days mean less

melatonin is produced, which can play a part in developing unhealthy sleep patterns and even insomnia.

In addition to the sun disrupting your circadian rhythm, the summer heat has been found to make those living with seasonal depression anxious and angry (Healthline, 2023).

“I experience it every single day. It’s like an ongoing thing. Personally, for me when I had seasonal depres-

sion, I experienced it during the summer... for me, I know in the winter, I’m really happy. I like the winter, very happy in the winter, then in the summer, like, I get upset.” Senior Londen Smith said.

Those who suffer from seasonal depression find that their social drive to communicate starts to dwindle, and they zone out more frequently, adding distance to people. It’s important to pay attention to those around you and see if someone is struggling. Support from friends and family when someone is battling seasonal depression can dramatically alter the way they cope and heal.

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Spreading Joy with 12 Days of Cookies



Jayda Stocker
SECTION-EDITOR

Every holiday season, Anna Montgomery, an English teacher at Grand Ledge High School, explores the gift of giving in the form of cookies. For several years she has been handing out cookies to teachers during the last 12 days of school before winter break, she calls it 12 Days of Cookies.

"I bring my offering of sugary joy on my rounds and get to know those in the building with me," Montgomery said.

During Montgomery's first year of teaching, she baked cookies for her whole department.

The next year, it grew into giving cookies to more teachers the day before break. Montgomery said all of the baking and preparation became too much for her in one night, she even began to pull all-nighters in order to get all her baking done. All of the hassle and dedication brought attention to Montgomery's husband.

"My husband staged an 'intervention' and asked that I find a way to make the tradition more sustainable," Montgomery said.

This was when her yearly tradition, 12 days of Cookies started. Now, she can pre-make the cookie doughs and freeze them until the day comes for them to be baked. Her planning allows her to maintain making just one cookie a night even if she is not able to pre-make a certain dough.

The standard amount of cookies she goes through per day is around 150 cookies per batch to share with all of her colleagues throughout the building. They're considered "bite-size" but are still able to maintain their flavors and textures.

Preparation for each day takes lots of time, money and dedication.

"I have to make my spreadsheet of ingredient amounts to tally up what to buy, then shop around for where it's most affordable between Costco, Meijer, Kroger, and Aldi, then gather up what I need," Montgomery said.

When she first started baking for her co-workers, the supplies were more affordable. Last year a key ingredient in most of her recipes, butter, had a steep incline in the price. For this year's 12 days of Cookies, Montgomery spent around \$230 on her baking supplies.

When asked about her personal favorite cookie, Montgomery said "Shortbread, even though it isn't my family's favorite."

All of Montgomery's cookies along with recipes from this year and the past years, are available to view on her personal website dedicated to her 12 Days of Cookies tradition: <https://sites.ggoogle.com/view/12-days-of-cookies/home>

This year, Montgomery handed out 12 different types of cookies, some even taking her up to three hours to finish.

- 12-DAYS-OF-COOKIES:**

 - 1.) Grinch Cookies
 - 2.) Shortbread
 - 3.) Lemon-Glazed Cream Cheese Cookies
 - 4.) Hot Cocoa Cookie Cups
 - 5.) Cornflake "wreaths"
 - 6.) Oatmeal Cranberry White Chocolate Cookies
 - 7.) Lemon Cornmeal Wafers
 - 8.) Triple-Layer Cracker Toffee Bar
 - 9.) Chocolate Rumchata Cheesecake Bar
 - 10.) Lemon-Lime Bar
 - 11.) Orange-Cranberry Shortbread
 - 12.) Eggnog Bar

BONUS COOKIES:

 - 1.) Cheesecake Cookies
 - 2.) Cranberry-Orange Crunch Cookies
 - 3.) Snickerdoodle



Anna Montgomery is sharing her day 3 cookies with Mr. McDonnell. Anna went along and shared with the rest of her co-workers. Photo by Jayda Stocker

Montgomery's Favorite - Shortbread Cookies

NEEDED INGREDIENTS:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| -3 cups softened butter | -4.5 cups flour |
| -1.5 cup powdered sugar | -1.5 cup cornstarch |
| -1 teaspoon vanilla extract | -Sprinkles, Candied Fruit, etc. (if desired) |

INFORMATION:

- 350° oven
- 20 to 22 minutes
- yields 100 cookies *recipe may be halved



Photo by Anna Montgomery

DIRECTIONS:

1. Preheat oven.
2. In a large mixing bowl, whip butter, powdered sugar, and vanilla with electric mixer until light and fluffy. In a separate bowl, combine flour and corn starch.
3. Gradually add flour mixture to butter mixture, beating after each addition until smooth, scraping sides and bottom of bowl regularly. Depending on the size of the mixer and bowl, the last bit of flour mixture may need to be stirred in by hand with a sturdy-handled spoon.
4. Roll into 1" balls and place on an ungreased, parchment-lined cookie sheet approximately 1" apart (if dough sticks to your fingers, coat them in corn starch prior to rolling).
5. Flatten cookie balls slightly with fork or fingers. Dust with sprinkles.
6. Bake until bottoms are lightly browned (~10-12 minutes, but may vary by oven). Cool on cookie sheet for 5 minutes before removing to wire racks to cool completely.