

# THE LEDGER PICK-AXE

SMSA'S STUDENT NEWS SOURCE

MARCH 2026

## The Bleach Boys

Audrey Bonen

The boys hockey team playoffs have come to an end. Many players on the team were interviewed about their thoughts before



*Knox Cleland, Barron Bolka, and Austin Carlson (L-R), bleached their hair for the hockey playoffs*

the playoffs, challenges, how their final playoff game went, and the obvious change on the team.

The team consistently worked hard in practice to prepare for the upcoming games, including efforts to overcome many challenges, especially due to all the new players. Freshman Barron Bolka reported, "Everyone's got a different playing style, so it was mostly just about learning how each other plays and getting used to it." Another player, Will Stellmacher, reinforced this saying, "Meeting the new players is always a challenge, but after a while, everyone comes together to become a team." The team's chemistry improved throughout the course of the season, both on and off the ice.

Another challenge the players mentioned was the commitments to the team, particularly in the start of the season. Senior Tate Baker stated,

"Some challenges were that not everyone was buying into the team. Going into the playoffs, everyone showed up at practice, and we trusted each other a lot more." Barron Bolka also supported this, sharing, "Discipline was definitely a struggle in the beginning, but we keep each other in check." The seniors on the team (Will Stellmacher, Presten Flood, Teigue Wagner, Tate Baker, Porter Golla, and Memphis Young) informed the team before playoffs about a tradition that had many students turning heads: bleaching their hair for the start of the playoffs. Some players were caught by surprise, and others already knew about the tradition. Many of the boys decided to continue this tradition and went from brunette to bleach blonde.

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## Top Senior Scholars Announced

Valedictorian



Sophia Loehr

Salutatorian



Jackson Pelz

**Read about the valedictorian and salutatorian on page four!**

## Olympic Athletes Stun in Milan

Gwyneth Haubenschild and Lauren Pelz

The 2026 Winter Olympic Games wrapped up on Sunday, February 22, with the Olympic flag passed onto France, the future host of the 2030 Winter Olympics. The U.S. finished this year's thrilling competitions with 12 gold, 12 silver, and 9 bronze

For the first time since 1980, U.S. men's ice hockey captured the gold. They won in the finals against Canada 2-1 in a thrilling sudden-death overtime. U.S. women's ice hockey also earned the gold against Canada, with an astounding 5-0 victory. Six of the



*Alyssa Liu took gold in women's figure skating*

players on Team USA are current and former members of Wisconsin Badger Women's Hockey! Hockey has been a beloved sport around Saint Mary's

medals. Over the 19 days of the Winter Olympics, 116 events took place.

Breezy Johnson was the first to win a medal for Team USA in this year's games. She won gold in women's downhill skiing, securing her first ever medal in the Winter Olympics after she was injured in the 2022 games.

asked about the success of the USA hockey team, Brady responded, "I think it is great that hockey is getting really popular in the Olympics." Wisconsin's own Jordan Stolz (hometown of Kewaskum) took home silver in 1,500 meter men's speed skating and gold in both the 500 and 1,000 meter races.

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# Students Danced the Night Away at Sadie's

Sophia Loehr

This year's Sadie Hawkins Dance was a success, despite coming with some changes from the past several years. The dance was held in Hutter Gym, thanks to the new air conditioning installed during renovations and completed in November. Amelia Everson, junior, shared, "I didn't know what to expect with the dance being in Hutter and with a different DJ, but it turned out great. Everyone there looked like they were having a good time." Due to another school's dance being held on the same date, the DJ service differed from the last few dances, but general feedback has been positive. Freshman

Emma Koebl said, "I loved all the music that was played; it was all super good! It was a very good first Sadie's dance for me." There were around 150 dance tickets sold this year.

Seniors enjoyed their last Sadie's dance as well. Ryan Holder said, "I kind of liked the dance being in Hutter gym over Baker. I liked the hallway with decorations and it was more of a vibe." The hallway to the gym was lined with lights and decorations put up by the sophomore class. There were also snacks and an area for photos. Maggy Dalzell shared, "I thought it went well; it was different being

in Hutter, but the sophomores did a good job decorating the space. It was fun to be with my friends and just have a good time." Another senior stated, "The dance ended thirty minutes earlier than usual." This happened for unknown reasons. While disappointing for some, others left at ten o'clock and were not affected by the slight change in schedule.

Junior Matej Neupauer, from Slovakia, compared the dance to those in his home country, sharing, "I enjoyed Sadie's and had a fun time with my friends. It's always interesting to see how different our dances look. One thing I really like is that

you guys do pictures and dinner before the dance and usually something after, instead of just going to the dance and doing nothing else like we do in Slovakia." Sadie's at SMSA is certainly an event with various popular opportunities for socializing. Some favorite dance destinations for pictures and dinner included Hotel Retlaw, Ala Roma, Cellar District, or Schmitty's.

Overall, Sadie's was run efficiently and smoothly, and the majority of students enjoyed their time and had fun.

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## Winter Olympics (Continued from page one)

In women's bobsledding, Elana Meyers Taylor made it her personal goal to win a gold medal this year. She has been to four prior Olympics and is the most decorated Olympic women's bobsledder and black athlete across all sports. She took gold in the women's monobob by 0.04 seconds, beating Germany's Laura Nolte. Her teammate, Kallie Humphries, also made history with a gold and bronze medal in the bobsledding events. Both women are mothers who shared their victories on camera with their small children.

Team skate, a competition that includes all four disciplines,



*The U.S. Women's Hockey Team won gold against rival Canada*

took place between 10 nations. Teams score points based on how well they place in each short program event. Skaters for the U.S. included Madison Chock, Evan Bates, Ellie Kam, Danny

O'Shea, Alysia Liu, and Ilia Malinin. The U.S. pulled out a narrow win in the team skate, snatching gold by one point over Japan.

During team skating, Ilia Malinin placed second in the men's skate portion, helping his team to win gold. Although Ilia was favored to win the individual men's free skate, he succumbed to pressure and fell twice during his performance, putting him in 8th place.

Alysia Liu has returned to skating since retiring after the 2022 games. She came back stronger than ever, winning gold in women's single skating with a stunning performance, placing second in the women's skate portion of team skate.

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## Hockey Team (Continued from page one)

On February 24th, the boys had their last playoff game against McFarland. The players lost 5-4 in overtime, but played

very hard the entire game. Alex Smyzeck said, "I thought as a team we played well, and our goalie played out of his mind. I

could feel the momentum shifting back and forth throughout the game." Overall, the hockey team is satisfied with the close of the

season, and the bleached hair is a reminder of their hard work in order to get to the playoffs.

# State of the Union

Student Council President, Carson Kaufman

Over the first semester of the 2025-26 academic year, SMSA's Student Council has worked tirelessly to provide a fun and inviting environment for its students. The council serves as a bridge between SMSA's students and administration, working to find common ground regarding concerns and events. Not only do the members help solve problems that students believe should be discussed, but they also plan events such as Homecoming, Catholic Schools Week, and even dress-down days, which help to raise funds for important projects and events.

After being elected to their various roles last April, the student council officers began planning the 2025-2026 academic year, even before the summer began. All dress-down days, like Love Thy Neighbor, Valentine's,

and Halloween, needed to be scheduled in advance to obtain administrative approval. Going into the year, however, there was still a significant amount of work that needed to be done.

Homecoming is always the busiest time of the year for the student council, not only due to the packed schedule, but also due to the tight duty roster at the time. In addition, this was the first year that student council incorporated Field Day into the schedule; so overall, it added up to an experience that required significant attention and focus. Even with such a challenging task, the student council prevailed and set the foundation for the type of work necessary to prepare and organize all the required tasks and event details.

Throughout all of this, the student council also managed

essential behind-the-scenes details like raising the flag daily, putting up decorations around the school, and demonstrating school spirit through the afternoon announcements. During the next few months, after electing new freshman officers, they tackled warming shelter lunches. Each week, homeroom students help put together lunches that are donated to the local warming shelter, and officers help supervise and deliver these lunches, making sure everything goes off without a hitch.

To finish out 2025, planning committees for Sadie's and Prom began, highlighting just how much effort is required for organizing events. J-term posed an interesting dilemma as well. Its unique schedule presented a logistical challenge by splitting the club's availability during the

school day. Due to Catholic Schools' Week during the first week of the second semester, senior officers had to meet outside of normal school hours to plan the schedule.

And their work is not over yet. With the spring semester already in progress, new problems arise that need to be solved and new challenges await. With the help of not only the members of the student council but also the incredible support of Mrs. Bartel, the council supervisor, these challenges can and will be overcome. The members look forward to another successful semester and are extremely proud of their work and success thus far, promising to make these last few months count and keep the energy going up to the end of this school year.

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## Lent: 40 Days of Contemplation

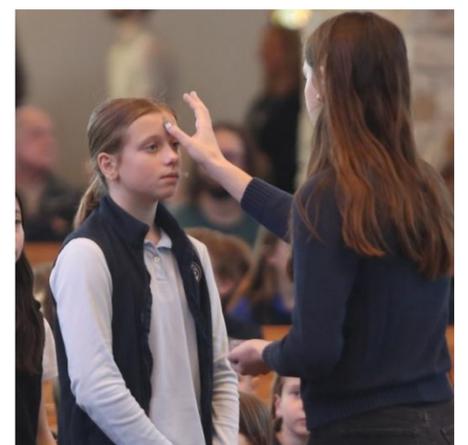
Bellana Weaver

Lent is a 40-day season in the Christian liturgical calendar for solemnity in fasting, almsgiving, and prayer. The number 40 is symbolic of preparation and testing, as can be found in both the Old and New Testaments. Jesus traversed the desert for 40 days and nights in preparation for His passion, and the Israelites wandered in the desert for 40 years as punishment for their disobedience and to prepare themselves for the Promised Land. Lent is an especially important time for preparing us for the passion, death, and resurrection of Christ, our redeeming Savior. It is a time

of detachment from the distracting and sometimes harmful pleasures of this world, repentance from bad habits that lead to sin, and renewal of our baptismal commitment.

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday, 46 days before Easter. On Ash Wednesday, we receive ashes on our forehead for two main reasons: to mark our sins in a call for repentance and remind us of our mortality. As it is written in Genesis 3:19, "for dust you are, and to dust you will return." When we remember how short our time is on earth, or rather, that we don't know how much time we have at all, we tend to feel motivated to get our lives together

and remember Who should be at its center. Ashes are important to think about during Lent; despite their representation of our failings, they mark the great gift of Salvation through Jesus Christ delivering us to eternal life. The season of Lent gives us the opportunity to connect and walk with God in the midst of suffering, which is why it is a tradition to give something up. Giving up and offering to God the addictive things of this world is what helps us the most. It strengthens our discipline and detachment from the harmful and worldly things that hurt our relationships with others and with



God, and can teach us how much consistency really matters. By exercising our self-control, we discover the impact of the little things we can do to prevent disconnection and promote selfless and positive behavior.

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## 2026 Valedictorian and Salutatorian

Isabella Theel

Do you know what it takes to be the valedictorian and salutatorian of your class? It takes years of commitment, hard work, studying, and sacrifices, as demonstrated by the class of 2026 Valedictorian Sophia Loehr and Salutatorian Jack Pelz, who earned a 4.335 and 4.332 GPA, respectively. In an interview, Sophia and Jack shared some insight into their high school experiences.

Sophia noted that while high school can be challenging at times, it's best to make good use of your time and resources. The most challenging class Sophia took was Anatomy and Physiology, taught by Dr. Biessman, which required a lot of memorization and studying. In order to be successful, she took advantage of the resources made available to her by Dr. Biessman. Sophia advises underclassmen to always try their best, not cheat, and get involved in extracurriculars. To combat the

challenge of balancing schoolwork with friends and activities, she suggests it's best to plan ahead, use a calendar or planner, and use class time and study halls efficiently.

Sophia shared that being a student at Springs has helped her realize that, "There are good people everywhere, and you can spend time with them and help each other grow as a person, whether that's through faith, academics, or athletics." She expressed her gratitude to her family and friends, as well as others who have supported her throughout her high school career. "I would like to thank my teachers and the Springs community for being so supportive and kind," she noted. Sophia plans to major in Elementary Education.

The hardest challenge Jack faced during his high school career was balancing demanding classes with football and Vocal Jazz. To stay on top of his schoolwork, Jack allocated his

time to ensure he had one day to do school work and one day to unwind. He suggested that underclassmen pay attention to their teachers' instructions, noting that, "It's a lot easier to learn from your teacher than try to teach yourself later." He also admits that if he had the chance to redo high school, he would pay closer attention to his classes freshman year and become involved in more extracurriculars to get a feel for what he enjoys before it's too late.

Along with being the salutatorian for the class of 2026, Jack is a finalist for the National Merit Scholarship Competition, which is based on students' PSAT scores from around the country. In the first round, the top one percent of each state, around 16,000 people, move on to become semi-finalists. From there, around 15,000 students nationally move on to become finalists. Of these finalists, 2,500 are chosen for the National Merit Scholarship of

\$2,500, and some receive specific corporate-sponsored or school-sponsored scholarships. This year, scholarships have not yet been awarded, although Jack is in line to be considered for a scholarship through his outstanding grades, test scores, extracurriculars, essays, and recommendations.

Jack expressed that being a student at SMSA has given him an opportunity to be well-rounded, saying, "Most other schools don't give you the chance to be involved in sports, music, and clubs, while still having a social life." He would like to thank his parents, revealing that they have given him, "a ton of support in both school and extracurriculars." Jack plans to major in Electrical Engineering.

Congratulations to Class of 2026 Valedictorian Sophia Loehr and Salutatorian Jackson Pelz, models of hard work and dedication to academics!

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### Lent (Continued from page three)

During Lent, as we offer up our own suffering, it is also very important to remember His suffering. Praying the Stations of the Cross is a tradition from the early Church, when Christians would make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and retrace the steps of Jesus Christ. We continue the tradition now through prayer because we are called to meditate

on the passion of Christ, just as much as His resurrection.

For mourning the death of our Lord, violet is associated with Lent to symbolize our sorrow and the Lord's holy royalty. Now, we use violet to represent our grief for the passion and death of Jesus Christ on the cross. In earlier times, however, violet dye for fabric was hard to come across; therefore, it was meant

exclusively for the wealthy. It connects to the Kingdom of Heaven and Jesus' place as the Most High. Additionally, Jesus was clothed in purple before His crucifixion when the soldiers mocked Him as the King of the Jews; in reality, He is the King of Kings, the Salvation for all.

In memory of the great works Jesus has done to teach us the righteous way to live and

deliver us from evil and injustice, we participate with both great sorrow and great joy. In this season of Lent, God encourages a steadfast spirit for what He asks of us, as well as a strong heart and steady mind to stand firm against temptations, so as to follow through with our Lenten promises.

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### Thank you to our Pick-Axe Staff!

Students: Audrey Bonen, Gwyneth Haubenschild, Carson Kaufman, Sophia Loehr, Lauren Pelz, Isabella Theel, Annabelle Seel, Bellana Weaver  
Teachers: Mrs. Sales and Mrs. Besson