

The Link

Staff: Leah Krason, Meara McClusky, Fletcher Maggs, Alejandra Morales, Francisco Jaimes

In this installment of The Link Magazine, we invite you to reflect. The past year has been exceptionally unordinary, even by today’s standards. Here at the Link, we want to contrast all the change, all the “unprecedented”, with the good & the beautiful. We are not interested in forgetting how everything feels different and unreal right now (you will be reminded throughout the issue), but it would be a waste to overlook the silver linings in front of us. There is so much good to be found, if we spend a little time digging for it. Thank you and enjoy this issue of the Link: Silver Bells and Silver Linings.

Photo Essay: A Glimpse into Student Life During Covid

Fletcher Maggs



Perspective on Fall Sports

By Fletcher Maggs

It’s no surprise that this fall, sports at the high school level were not the same as previous years. Due to the deadly Covid-19 virus, schools across the globe are taking action to prevent spread, while attempting to make circumstances the best they can for students. In September, the Conval school board released their Covid fall sports plan. This plan separated sports into categories by to which extent students were allowed to practice their fall sport. Due to Conval’s cohort plan, athletes were only allowed to attend practices every other week. Furthermore and controversially, none of the many fall sports were in any way permitted to participate in interscholastic competitions,

making Conval one of the only schools in the state to do so. It’s important to know that every sport worked differently during the season, some with stricter guidelines than others. It’s no surprise that students of Conval had mixed feelings with how their sport worked. Volleyball this fall began its season outside, where they brought and set up volleyball nets in the outfield of the softball field. After two weeks they were permitted to make their way inside where they could do drills, and scrimmages of their choice while keeping masks at all times. Molly Tyle, a Junior at Conval, described the season as, “just not the same,” and that “it was really stressful, being there one week and off the next.”

The Volleyball team in no way were able to compete this fall with other schools, despite there being an on going volleyball season for other schools throughout the state. The girls field hockey team, like the Volleyball team and many other sports teams were not able to compete in interscholastic competitions this fall, unlike the majority of other schools in the state and area. In the early stages of their season they were limited to just drills. As the season progressed they eventually were able to take part in small forms of scrimmages with the numbers of athletes they had. Field Hockey athletes wore masks during all water breaks, instructions from coaches, or



Photo by Joe Gutwein

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End Sexual Violence on Campus

By Leah Krason

End Sexual Violence on Campus is a student-led organization aimed at uprooting and preventing sexual violence on personal, cultural, and legislative levels in the Monadnock Region. We are committed to bringing change to our communities, and wider society, as fully as possible. What are our goals?

1. Start the conversation
Everybody has heard about the MeToo movement, Title IX, the Clery Act, and national organizations against sexual violence on college campuses. What people don't talk about is the fact that sexual violence is a cultural issue that is grown and nurtured far earlier than it flourishes in college. It exists in the high schools and middle schools in our country too. Let's start talking about consent, sex, relationships, and rape in a way that is effective and lasting.

2. Implement legislation for age-appropriate and comprehensive consent education for all NH public schools

The lack of age-appropriate consent education is responsible for generations of people who don't understand the idea of consent and the importance of it, therefore upholding an environment where sexual assault can exist. With input from community collaborators, educators, health professionals, and state legislators in the Health and Education committees, our goal is to write and develop a comprehensive consent curriculum for implementation in all public high schools in New Hampshire.

3. Bring trauma-informed and survivor-centric counseling to the ConVal district

Because of the state's emphasis on mandatory reporting, many survivors are hesitant to report, share, or get help for their trauma. We want to reverse the priorities for reporting and make reporting a safe, comfortable, and survivor-centric process. Our goal is to implement a



trauma-informed confidentiality counselor in the ConVal district.

4. Bring Restorative Justice initiatives to Hillsborough County and encourage the use of juvenile diversion programs as a means to effectively address offenders of sexual violence

E.S.V.O.C. is a subscribed mem-

ber of the Citizens for Criminal Justice Reform in New Hampshire. The mission of this group, taken directly from their website is: "Citizens for Criminal Justice Reform works for a just, humane, and restorative judicial and correctional system by means of research, public education, legislative advocacy, coalition build-

ing, community organizing, and litigation. We support rational, cost-effective programs and policies that reduce crime, lower recidivism, and make our society safer."

Our work intersects with theirs; wishing for a future with less focus on punishment, and more on restoring communities affected by the lack

of consent education and sexual violence

With these goals in mind, we hope to make our community a safer, and more comfortable environment, for all of us, and especially for survivors. We urge you to also involve yourself in making change in the community, for the better.



What's it like for a new student at ConVal during remote learning?

By Alejandra Morales

Alejandra Morales talked to several first-year ConVal students to find out what it's like to start at a new school during a pandemic, when remote learning and classes split into cohorts reduce the opportunities to meet other students face-to-face.

Freshman Francisco Jaimes, 14, said he was not looking forward to the school going to full remote learning, as he doesn't get many opportunities to see his friends outside of school. He has been enjoying his time with the yearbook club, in which he is able to take pictures.

Freshman CJ Tillman, 14, said it's tough to be productive during remote learning, but the biggest challenge is the lack of social interaction.

Freshman Aida Davis, 14, said she was happy to have had the chance to practice on the volleyball team this fall, but there was more she'd hoped to get out of her freshman year.

"Sure, I did enjoy it, but I'm not doing as much as I wanted to," Davis said. "It's hard with a lot of the activities canceled."

Freshman Hunter Contois, 14, said remote learning is harder than in-person learning, "You can't get the same help," Contois said. "There isn't that one-on-one help."

Freshman Christian Hall, 14, agreed that not having an in-person instructor to give one-on-one help is a big obstacle for remote learning. Hall hopes that the full remote learning period of ConVal's schedule will go well.

"I guess it's going to be the new normal," Hall said.



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Photo by Fletcher Maggs

Two Haikus, Plus a Real Short Poem

Avery Pope

Everywhere is bleak
save the sky –
Empty tendrils
stretching up to blue

Hot water,
Love

The trees are of wheat
grass touched by the dew of morn
Here in November

Claire de Lune

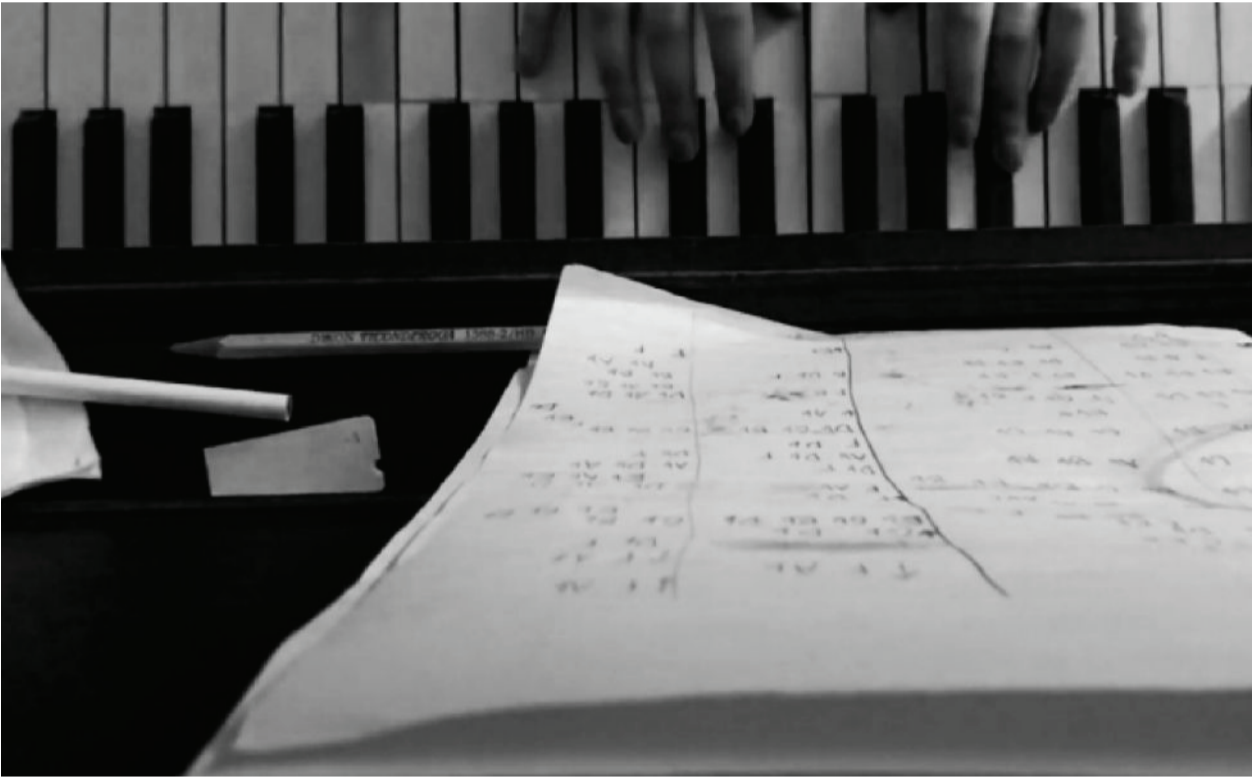
By Sage Kingsbury-Evans

For 20(ish) hours, I taught myself how to play Clair de Lune by Debussy. It’s my favorite classical song, and it will be until I hear a better one. It’s so peaceful and emotionally charged, almost to the point of being overwhelming. The composition also requires a measure of technical talent, but not in a way that it overrides its emotional appeal. The song itself is like the perfect balance of thinking and feeling. It instills a deep ache of melancholy; a rising flurry of hopefulness followed by soft downfalls, notes building and layering to mimic that rush one feels when riding a bicycle downhill, so fast it feels like you’re flying. I’m drawn to this song especially when my days feel hopeless and dull, because although it’s never a promise of anything great to come, it’s a small voice of encouragement: Keep pedaling, keep going, make it up this hill. There is a great surge as you fly from top that makes the struggle all worth it. Yes, there will be another hill after this but just keep pedaling, keep going, ride on— and you will feel higher than you ever thought possible. Clair de Lune makes me feel so free when I hear it, and I wanted to make other people feel that good too.

The thing is, I don’t know how to read music. I’ve spent many years of my childhood playing instru-

ments, and read music for many years because of that, but at some point the knowledge has just escaped my mind. That’s fine, I thought, I’ll just play it by ear. So, I found a YouTube video of someone playing it, and copied their movements, every now and then writing down the names of the notes I couldn’t quite remember for long enough. I found myself enjoying it too, like a puzzle of exactly the right difficulty; it’s not so hard that you give up, but not easy enough to breeze through. Memorizing the music was relatively easy, so was playing each note (once I realized I could actually stretch my hand to a full scale if I tried).

The most challenging part of this project was playing it with emotion. In the very early stages, I was playing what I had memorized, and feeling proud. Then my mom said “You’re playing the right notes but it doesn’t sound full enough”. When I asked her what she meant by “full” she explained that— the way I played it sounded like an exercise, there was no passion. Hearing this bothered me a lot. I wanted to get mad at her, to yell, to say “You have no clue what emotion I feel when I play this, just because you don’t hear the passion, doesn’t mean it’s not there!” I decided to stay silent instead. In my hours of reflection I realized there is only one reason why I might feel so hurt by her words, and that’s because she was



hitting on something that was vulnerable to me. I wanted so badly to convey a deep hopefulness through this song, and I wanted other people to hear it too. I hadn’t achieved it yet, and that bothered me to no end. The only logical thing to do was try harder, so I did.

As soon as I had a part memorized completely, I would play it with my eyes closed; again, again, again, until the notes didn’t sound like music to my ears anymore. I paid more

attention to tempo and volume. This song has very intense crescendos which add to the falling feeling. It still didn’t sound good enough. I discovered that by taking a video of myself practicing, and later re- playing it, I can more easily listen to how it sounds instead of which notes I need to play next. I spent more and more hours of reflection trying to find my own emotional connection to the song. I tried to imagine something raw and real, I

imagined riding a bike down a hill while I played with my eyes closed. It still feels incomplete, it still sounds like an exercise, but I know that this is more than a 20-hour project. This project might not have even been about a song. Maybe, it was about finding a way to express this thing that I can’t show with words yet, that flying feeling— that hope.

I have yet to find what I’m searching for.

Portrait A Day

By Leah Krason

There are countless ways in which to catalogue change. To set up an experiment and attempt to analyze the subconscious. I thought I may be able to accomplish this by drawing a portrait a day, something I do very often anyway. Looking at the images, I see many different expressions, though to be honest, I don’t remember the days well enough to draw a connection. Perhaps there is something in my subconscious that pushed me to draw a teary-eyed figure on one day, a tired one on another. The best we can do is guess.



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Those Twenty Minutes

By Aria Frehner

It was one of those winter days where the sun is out making the snow glisten like diamonds. It was barely above 45 degrees, a rare commodity in NH winters. I know that because you can only enter bee hives when it is at least that warm, and my hive was where I was headed.

Dressed in my winter gear and bee gear, I trudged through the snow carrying the lemongrass fondant they eat in the winter.

Throughout late summer and fall, bees amp up their honey-making so they can store enough food for the long winter months. Most beekeepers harvest honey during this time to get the best crop, but I like to wait. I believe the bees need it more than I do, especially with how long and cold NH winters can be, and I have no problem waiting until the spring to take the left-overs. Lemon-grass fondant is a supplement food I like to give them to help them survive.

I approached the hive, its puffy, black, trash-bag-like cover providing the bees their own winter coat, and undid the straps so I could open the top. As I set down the cover, I could hear my little buddies buzzing away inside, a few of them venturing out through the entrance and coverless top. On warm days, they like to stretch their wings.

After placing the fondant slab carefully on top of the wax frames, where they will easily find it, I closed everything up. Just about to

leave, I noticed some bees laying still on the snow. The unlucky ones who got too cold or decided to touch down without knowing the consequences. I knelt down to get a closer look.

I took off my protective gloves and hat to gather up every last bee in my hands. Instinctively, I closed them up and started to heat them with my breath. After five breaths, I checked my hands.

A few bees were starting to stir. Only three more breaths, and they were crawling around on my hands, perfectly peaceful and no doubt confused about where they were. Pleased with myself, I brought them around to the front of the hive and guided them so they would crawl inside. They were safe. I am not one to let a bee die willy nilly.

A few moments passed, and I noticed a new bee coming out of the hive pushing another as she went. I plopped down into the snow to sit and watch what she would do next. It took her all of 30 seconds to push, shove, and roll this bee to the edge of the hive where it fell off and landed in the snow. It was dead, and unlike the others, it would not be coming back to life. Once the dead bee was out of her sight, she promptly turned around and headed back into the hive.

I looked down where the fallen bee lay on the snow, and noticed she was not alone. There were twenty something dead bees laying together in their own little graveyard. It was easy to tell which were new and which were old from how



Photo by Jackson Burnham

shriveled up they were. As I was gazing down at these creatures, another bee hit the snow. The warm day not only meant feeding time on my part, but cleaning out on theirs.

I learned later that these bees

emptying the hive of its dead are called mortuary bees. It took me twenty minutes to stop observing them at their job and go research it myself.

Bee behavior and hive roles aside, I want to do this forever. I

have started truly contemplating how to help all pollinators survive our environmental crisis. I learned a lot more in those twenty minutes than the internet can tell me in a day. Those twenty minutes made it all click for me.

Perspectives on history

By Meara McClusky

When I was little, I used to go over to my grandma’s house when my mom needed a babysitter. At that age, I of course liked playing with toys, but what really interested me was the bookshelf in her sewing room. She had a collection of old books and I loved to sit down and try to read them, even before I could fully understand everything. My favorite book of hers was an anthology of Greek myths, which I read over and over again. Perhaps that was where my obsession started, though who can really say? I loved that book of myths because some part of me recognised that it went beyond just a made-up story, that these words meant something to people long ago and were a part of human history. But why would these books, and countless others during trips to the library, interest me? Why does history interest me?

History, first and foremost, is an understanding. Of culture, of people, of religion, of war, of life itself. History serves to explain the whats, whos, and whens of human existence: what hap-

pened, who was there, when did it occur. But the whys are more difficult because each answer only leads to another question. One can keep asking why? Why? Why? But never find all the answers. We can never fully understand human history for the sole reason that humans are irrational; not all of our actions are defined by the laws of nature, leading to confusion and evil and compassion. Such irrationality has led humanity to develop the most nonsensical concept that is religion and belief. Religion has never been something that made sense to me. I do not understand how one person can be so utterly convinced of one version of reality that they cast aside all other possibilities. I would argue that religion is perhaps the most human thing of all, because what else has defined history in such a way? It both connects and divides cultures in a way that material things cannot. By studying and hoping to understand religions, maybe we can more fully understand each other.

But can we ever fully understand each other? No, but we should try. Learning for the sake of understanding is a noble cause; otherwise it is selfish. Hopefully, through

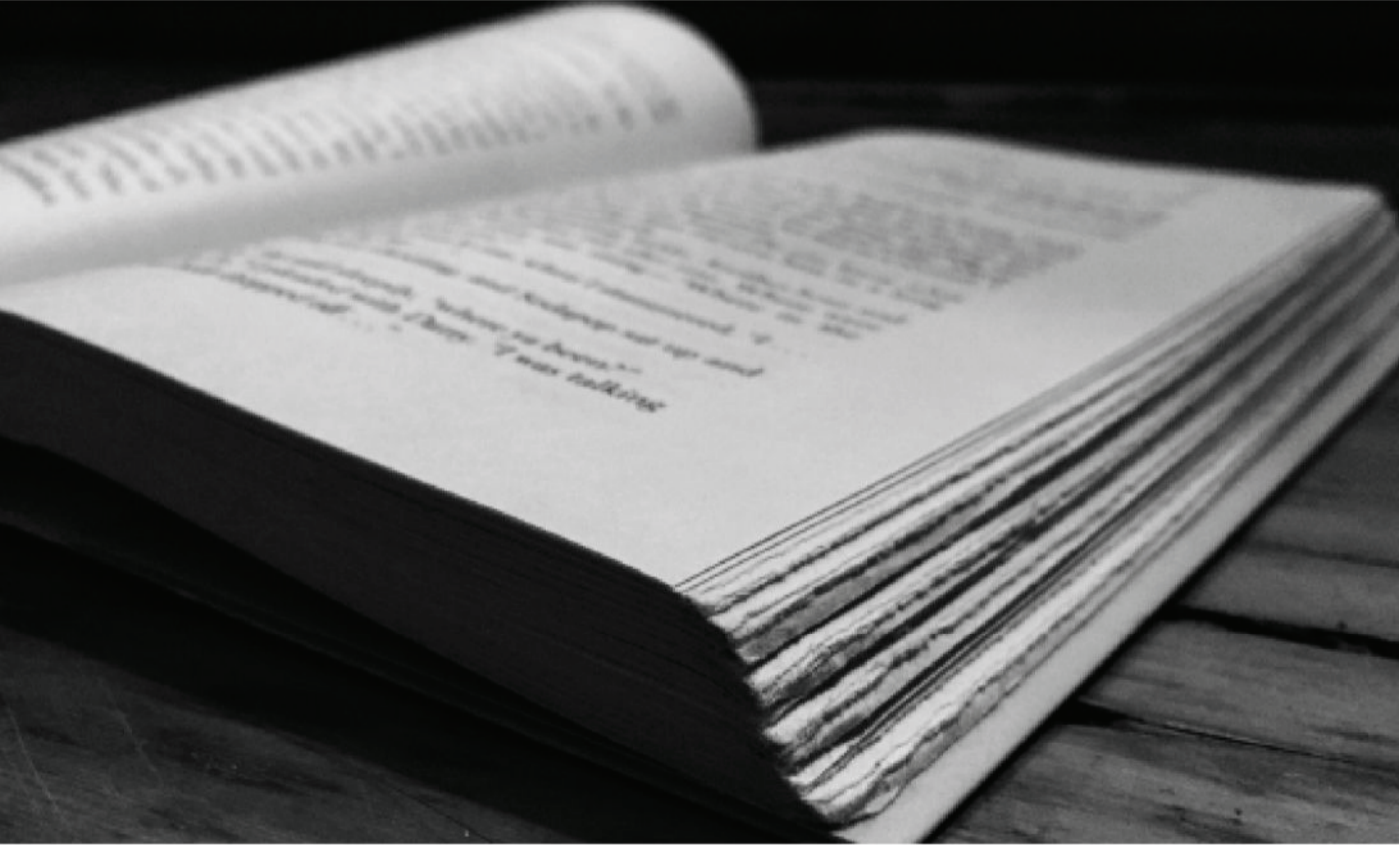


Photo by Alanna Batty

learning history, we can learn to be better—better to each other, better to the environment, better to ourselves. These sentiments apply to everybody, so why is history important to me?

Perhaps understanding is what has driven my life. To become more knowledgeable is to become more complete, and with that perhaps brings true happiness. Just like this subject, my relationship with

history can be traced back through a series of whats, whos, whens, and whys. It is clear to see the people who helped me, the books I read, the hours I’ve spent, but again, I am stuck on that one

question: why? And that may never be answered, and maybe it isn’t supposed to be. This parallel between history and one human’s existence is at the root of everything.

A look at ConVal’s fall sports season

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any other time where they were not actively practicing the sport. Like all sports, the field hockey team was split between the cohorts. Coaches assigned drills and self practices to athletes during their off weeks to maintain structure and progression throughout the team. Natalie Tremblay, junior on the Conval field hockey team explained that, “It was extremely inconvenient having such small numbers, and having practice every 2 weeks.”

The Golf team was one of the two sports split into the lowest risk category, therefore athletes going into the season had high hopes of being able to compete, and have a rather regular season. This

unfortunately for golf athletes was not entirely the case. In normal seasons, the Conval golf team travels to the Crotched Mountain Golf Course, in Franconia, New Hampshire, for their daily practices. Due to the Covid plan, all teams were restricted from practicing off school campus. The Golf team were given the about 100-yard stretch where there is a path and field of grass from the parking lot, to the lower field hockey fields. Senior, and four-year Conval golf participant, Brady Proctor explained, “We had like an 80-yard hill where we could only use two of our clubs because the area was so small. After an entire season of being disallowed being able to compete, we had to fight the administration so I could partic-

ipate in states.” Not without controversy, however, members of the golf team were eventually permitted to participate in the interscholastic states meet, with the requirement that athletes, and all athletes family members attending schools in the Conval district, quarantine from in school learning for two weeks.

The boys and girls soccer team, being a category level two risk sport were restricted in a few different ways. Frustratingly, neither team were able to compete in interscholastic competitions taking place throughout the state, even against neighboring schools like Conant, Keene, and many more. This applied for all sports except for the football team. The soccer teams were originally per-

mitted to just socially distant drills but were eventually permitted to small forms of scrimmages with the numbers available. Owen Kotula, Junior and boys soccer participant said that “it was kind of weird to come to practice, and show up with masks on. When it would start to feel normal and we’d get into the swing of things, we would have the week break and the cycle reset” Unlike the majority of the other sports teams, the boys soccer team between the two cohorts had good numbers. In the blue cohort there were 15 players, and in the gold cohort there were 18, which for reference, each cohort had about the amount of players on a team every year. The girls team had about 8 players per cohort and were limited to the

same restrictions as the boys team, just with the difficulty of smaller numbers.

The Cross Country Team, like the gold team had high hopes going into their season as they were in the lowest risk category. However, the cross country team was unable to compete until states at the end of the season. Senior Captain, August Kotula said “practices were generally the same, it just was inconvenient without everyone at once.”

The Conval football team was the only sport in risk category level 3, giving their team the most restrictions out of any other sport. No form of any kind of scrimmaging was permitted or took place throughout the entire season. Acknowledging the rules of football itself, with

them being restricted to any drills involving physicality, they were very limited. Conval Junior, and Football participant, Gareth Armstrong described this year’s season as, “a chance as a team to build.” The football team had very small numbers and were very limited however it’s good to hear positivity coming out of this difficult time.

Despite some frustration from athletes, every interviewed participant was clear that they were very thankful for the opportunity to get with their team, no matter in what fashion. It is truly a very difficult time and beyond the extents which athletes were able to play their fall sport, all Athletes were given the opportunity to socialize, and build relationships this school year outside the classroom.