

# S I G N I N G

## up a **STORM**: Bringing ASL to Miller

by Mazikeen "Maze" Larson

Clubs and extracurriculars are often a fun and memorable part of the high school experience. In fact, since returning from distance learning many old clubs are being revived and new clubs are being formed. One such club is the American Sign Language club (ASL Club), which meets on Thursdays afterschool. This club, spearheaded by two counselors—who act as advisors—and a cabinet ran largely by seniors, is welcoming of all levels and thrives on creating a supportive and respectful learning environment.

Many members arrive at their first meeting knowing little to no sign, but quickly begin picking up signs from other members. Club meetings often build off of each other, beginning with a quick icebreaker to review from the previous meetings. Currently, the club meetings tend to focus on expanding the vocabulary of its members, but in the future the hope is to have members reach a conversational status.

Senior Jasmine Montes serves as vice-president of the club. Upon joining the club, she was near fluent due to being raised by two deaf parents. "I had heard about the club from an



email that was sent out by Maze, the current president of our club. I decided to attend the meetings because I was excited that we finally had this club on campus," Montes explains.

Watching "everyone get excited to learn something new and put it to use" can be captivating to more advanced members, like Montes. Witnessing the growth of the members is a really rewarding thing, as well. In fact, Montes regards this as one of her favorite parts, stating, "My favorite part of this club is when people come back week after week remembering what we talked about in the last meeting and are ready to learn a new topic."

Club member and senior, Cloey Caprio, first encountered the club while, "working a football game for yearbook"; after "[running] into a few of the members, they seemed nice and I always had an interest in learning ASL so I asked and they welcomed me with open arms," remarks Caprio. The club environment is often described as "calm and welcom-



ing" and "extremely sociable." In fact, Caprio appreciates the "non-judgmental atmosphere" (in the words of Ms. Lavoie), along with "the funny and kind people who make learning ASL fun."

Treasured advisor and counselor, Mrs. Lavoie, had not anticipated that she would be the advisor to a sign language club, but when the idea was brought to her and no one else seemed interested in advising, she embraced the role. While having limited knowledge in the language, she explains that her background in the language comes from childhood. "When I was in fifth grade, I lived in Bitburg, Germany on an Air Force base. We were given a class once a week of ASL. Since then, I have always been interested in the language," recalls Lavoie. She fondly simplifies her role in the club, stating, "I open the door to our room and they take over. Lucky me."

The genuine interest in learning that active members demonstrate through attending meetings consistently is a motivating thing to see, especially because "learning a second or third language is something that looks good on your resume." ASL Club—like many clubs at A. B. Miller—prides itself on being largely student-run. A recent club fundraiser, gave Lavoie the opportunity to watch "the club members take initiative" which she "thoroughly enjoyed."

While the idea of walking into an unfamiliar environment might intimidate some, those that choose to stop by BC-1 on Thursdays get to experience firsthand the welcoming and supportive environment that members of the club have cultivated.



*Not So Xmas* continued.

goes on a journey of self-discovery and becomes the cause for the yearly snowfall in the small suburban town, ultimately marking down this Tim Burton classic as a heartfelt Christmas movie.

**Harry Potter and The Sorcerer's Stone:** Harry Potter is an orphaned wizard who is distinguished in the Wizarding World for surviving Voldemort's attack. In Harry's first year at Hogwarts he meets his closest friends, Ron and Hermione, and goes on to experience one of the most magical seasons at Hogwarts: Christmas! The first film in the Harry Potter franchise is iconic for the Christmas sweaters made by Mrs. Weasley for Ron and Harry; kindling the magic of gift-giving and singling this movie a festive film filled with friendship and magic.



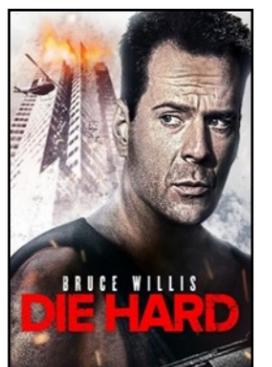
**Let It Snow:** In a small midwestern town, a snowstorm hits on Christmas Eve, causing a group of teenagers to be forced to bond with one another, allowing for meaningful and romantic relationships to be formed. *Let It Snow* is driven by teen love and encompassed by the towns surrounding Christmas spirit which makes this romance movie a warm holiday must-watch.



**Love Hard:** Natalie Bauer eagerly travels from LA to the East Coast to surprise and see in person the guy she met on a dating app for the holidays, but she is immediately disappointed when she realizes she was catfished. What follows is

a witty romantic comedy where Natalie battles between having fallen in love with the online pictures of Tag, but Josh's personality. *Love Hard* is set during the holiday season and perfectly encompasses finding true love with the spin of modern-day online dating struggles.

**Die Hard:** The main protagonist John McClane is an NYPD officer that has to save the lives of his wife and two daughters from German terrorist that take over Los Angeles while he's visiting for Christmas. *Die Hard* is a thrilling film with explosive scenes if you are in the mood for action these holidays.



**Gremlins:** When Billy Peltzer receives a new pet from his dad on Christmas, he breaks the three main rules and unleashes a clan of clever, mischievous, and possibly dangerous little monsters in his town called Gremlins.

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