Lean on Me to offer anonymous venue for student support

HACKMIT project launches at MIT, is expected to reduce ‘activation energy’ for those seeking support

By Divya Gopinath

Andy Trattner ‘17 and a team of students launched a mental health platform, Lean on Me, on Tuesday. Students will be able to use the platform by texting a hotline to receive support from peers. The team included student-entrepreneur Josh Weaver ’00, CTO Amin Manna ’17, and Board Member and MIT alumnus Nihal Buduma ’15.

The Lean on Me algorithm matches users with volunteer peer supporters who can relate to students’ challenges, according to the service’s website. Once matched, the student volunteers chat privately with students who text the service at 646-798-4231.

There are currently 16 active peer supporters with 30 more students currently going through the application process and peer supporters are vetted by a three-part application, which includes an online survey, a supporter development workshop that teaches supporters how to act in various situations, and a supporter outreach. The onboarding process was created by Lean On Me in collaboration with many MIT offices, such as Violence Prevention and Response, Community Development and Substance Abuse, Conflict Management, and the Counseling and Psychological Services office, the Undergraduate Association Wellness Chairs, Peer to Peer, and Peer Ears.

Because Peer Supporters are students, they are not mandatory reporters, and all conversations are completely anonymous. Peer supporters are not allowed to see phone number, so they cannot report back incidents to authorities or provide other assistance. Lean On Me asks users, if emergency help is needed, to “find it elsewhere.”

Lean On Me began as a HackMIT project in 2015. Buduma, who grew up in the Bay Area, had competed in previous hackathons, and wanted to create something with more personal meaning for the last hackathon before he graduated from MIT. He had experience with close friends struggling from depression, and partnered with Jing. Trattner, also interested in starting a mental health initiative at MIT that encouraged conversation, soon reached out to Buduma and Jing. Trattner sent out a survey to the MIT community about mental health, and of the 170 responders, 88 said that if faced with stress, they would “just deal with it” themselves.

“The major misleading piece of the puzzle is, more often than not, people aren’t going to label them- selves as ‘needing help,’” Buduma said. “If someone’s feeling stressed, the activation energy for getting help should be zero. And what’s more convenient than texting a hotline?”

After winning a top-10 prize at HackMIT last fall, the Lean On Me team met Josh Weaver ’00, an MIT alumnus and former GRT who now works at Google. Weaver was a HackMIT judge and wanted to support Lean On Me after seeing it at the hackathon. He advocated them as they moved from their prototype to a more finalized platform. Over IAP, the team brought in Mannu to take over the software Buduma had developed, and they together added new functionality that enabled users to flag inappropriate conversations and switch Peer Supporters if necessary.

Lean On Me is among other student-led mental health initiative on campus. Another is student-entrepreneur Isabel Lloyd’s “Tell Me About Your Day” (TMAYD) campaign.

“You’re Me” is another way to easily find counsel and support. TMAYD serves to show everyone would be made by Chancellor Barchart.

After speaking with students, Essigmann found that “Head of House” was a popular choice, often due to “affection for Harry Potter and Hogwarts.” “House Dean” seems to be less palatable,” he said.

Essigmann said that a significant number of students did prefer to keep “housemaster.” In an MIT Discussion post, past students gave etymological reasons as to why the name shouldn’t be considered offensive and, in some cases, criticized attempts to be “PC” (politically correct).

East Campus Housemaster Rob Miller ’95 sent a survey to residents polling them on possible titles. The survey included “House Parent” (which some students considered infantilizing) and “House Maven” (which some students considered silly and subtly feminine). “Pundlemoon” stood out as a popular write-in among responses that ranged from serious to absurd, and included “Dorm Pope,” “Big Cheese,” and “Mudafosa.”

Senior House Housemaster Jay Scheib considers “housemaster” a “funny title in that it’s kind of out dated.” He said that while he never thought about it seriously, since it is “something that people are obviously sensitive to,” he considers a change important and plans to advocate for whatever Senior House’s residents want.

The new title should represent “what we actually do in our work.” He said he has been at the interface between MIT academic and student life” Essigmann said. Scheib agreed, saying that a change has the potential to make the title “more accurate or maybe more welcoming.”

Essigmann, along with Miller, the Warehouse Housemaster John Ochsendorf, recommended the change to housemasters on Jan. 20 after a discussion on Jan. 19.

Museum of Math aims to show off magic of math with ‘Beaver Run’

The exhibit grew out of thinking on rotationally asymmetric tiles

By Kenneth Chang

NEW YORK — The latest exhibit at the National Museum of Mathematics in Manhattan was supposed to have been put on display last fall, except it wasn’t quite working. It’s called “Beaver Run,” but the way things were going, “Beaver De-railment” would have been more accurate.

“We could have opened it, and it would have been unstable,” said Cindy Lawrence, the executive director of the museum, popularly known as MoMath.

So the museum decided to grow Museum of Math's aim to show off magic of math with ‘Beaver Run’

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Letter from the Editor

From ongoing research and new publications, to awards, and innovations, there is no shortage of news at MIT’s campus these days. We are excited to be part of these conversations, but first, please forgive us for taking a detour from our current competition, how we judge what we report on, and to what extent.

It’s one thing to deliver the news impartially, “without fear or favor,” but it’s an altogether different effort to figure out what stories are most worth telling at all. How do you distinguish between the melody and the noise, and have we been successful at navigating this?

On occasion, the Tech is accused of not telling the right stories — missing the important ones, highlighting the trivial ones, telling the right stories — missing the important unknown unknowns. Yet making this judgment is fraught with a lot of unknowns.

The solution, of course, is to bring together a group of people with different perspectives, passions, and priorities. By forcing us to work together, we will make every effort to reach out to people who we don’t have newsworthy perspectives to share with, but we are limited by what we don’t know, and more particularly, by what we don’t know we don’t know — the selection-sampling paradox.

The other challenge is a consistent tension between that which is urgent and that which is important. Often, this tradeoff means that focusing on depth and on important stories leads us to miss out on urgent stories which cry out for action or demand attention, or the other way around.

In that vein, here’s a selection of this week’s unreported stories — the unimportant ones, the stories that go unreported because of a lack of capacity, of manpower, or of time. — What has been the effect of the recent historic weather on track systems in the northeast? — How do living arrangements, or anything else — than Delphi Tech have in the past? — Do students feel more, or less, in control of their environment — be that classes, living arrangements, or anything else — than they have in the past? Those are some of the questions we’ll be working on answering. The challenges of shifting between the immediate and minute to the broad and long-term exhilarate us. If you are interested in answering these questions, or posting your own, join us.

Katherine Staunton
Editor in Chief

Following a math theorem, beavers in exhibit never meet

Exhibit was delayed to fine-tune speed-controls for the busy beavers

Pat’s fix was to add brakes to the beavers’ small computer chips to ensure that they would not run into each other. The exhibit sends instructions to the beavers to speed up and slow down, almost imperceptibly, to stay synchronized, and they don’t fail.

On Saturday, the exhibit was featured for all museum visitors to play with.

Compiled from news reports

It’s Dangerous to Go Alone!

Starting tonight, snow ending in the afternoon. High 35°F (2°C).

Tonight: Snow ending in the afternoon. High 35°F (2°C).

Extended Forecast

By Colin Thackray

Situation for Noon Eastern Time, Friday, February 5, 2016

Low Pressure

Warm Front

Cold Front

Other Symbols

Meteorology Staff

A sampling of people you’ll meet during a typical dinner at The Tech:

Lenny, Course 2
Michelle, Course 5
Nathan, Course 6
Patricia, Course 8
Vince, Course 9
Amy, Course 10
Vince, Course 12
Flora, Course 14

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Lean on Me, from Page 1

that there are people all around the campus who you can help.

“We’ve already gotten inter-

We count as "newsworthy" that which is timely, meaningful, and of general interest. The solution, of course, is to bring together a group of people with different perspectives, passions, and priorities. By forcing us to work together, we will make every effort to reach out to people who we don’t have newsworthy perspectives to share with, but we are limited by what we don’t know, and more particularly, by what we don’t know we don’t know — the selection-sampling paradox.

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Lean on Me, from Page 1

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“We’ve already gotten inter-
Appeasing Iran

Problematic Western attitudes toward a dangerous regime

By Suri Bandler

In a recent visit to Italy, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani told a group of Italian business leaders that Iran is the "safest and most stable country of the entire region." Why, then, are leading global players tip-toeing around the regime? In the past month, four major world players — Italy, the U.S., France, and the U.K. — displayed conciliatory attitudes to Iran in different events.

Italy — On January 26, Rouhani visited Rome, a key capital of the western world, and signed business deals with Italian firms worth a total of $7 billion euros. Afterward, he and Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi spoke at one of Rome's most prominent museums, the Capitoline. In order to avoid offending Mr. Rouhani, several nude statues of the Capitoline are vanished with prominent Western leaders. United States — In that same meeting with Italian business leaders, Rouhani emphasized that economic growth is the most important countermeasure against extremism, declaring that "unemployment creates soldiers for terrorists." This statement entirely ignores the well-known fact that the Iranian state sponsors terrorism. In fact, in a CNBC interview released on January 22, Secretary of State John Kerry said that it is expected that some of the money wired up by the Iran deal will end up in the hands of terrorist groups.

Even now, Iran continues to grow its ballistic missile program, entirely disregarding U.S. threats of financial sanctions that are legal under the guidelines of the nuclear deal. In fact, last December Rouhani expressed on Twitter that because of the threatened sanctions, and not in spite of them, he instructed Iran's Ministry of Defense to accelerate the development of missile launching technologies. The day after Rouhani visited the Capitoline was January 22, International Holocaust Memorial Day. Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei marked the day by releasing a video in which he spoke about the Holocaust and stated that "[i]t is not clear whether the core of this matter is a reality or not. Even if it is a reality, it is not clear how it happened ... This is the ignorance that exists in today's world." The Iranian leader denied the genocide that killed over 11 million Jews, homosexuals, Romani, and mentally disabled people on previous occasions as well, and the banner used to promote the video on the Ayatollah's website went so far as to include a photo of Adolf Hitler. Also in recent news, Ayatollah Khamenei even praised the commanders in charge of seizing the U.N. navy boats last month, saying that Iran should remain wary of its "arch-enemy," the U.S., even after the nuclear deal. France — Also on January 27, France hosted Rouhani in the hope of securing a deal to sell military equipment to Iran. During a Holocaust memorial service in France, the former Israeli ambassador to the U.S. and current Israeli politician Michael Oren criticized the negotiations with Rouhani on International Holocaust Memorial Day, stating, "How can Europe honor the memory of the Holocaust, and on the exact same day host the leader of the Iranian regime, which denies that the Holocaust actually happened?" United Kingdom — Rather than criticize denial of the Holocaust, the U.K.’s representative to the European Council, Alex Salmond, ironically criticized Israel, stating that there is a "time and place for international politics" and that even not have criticized Rouhani "during a solemn commemoration service." As these events unfolded, many citizens across Italy and France protested Rouhani’s visit to their countries. In Italy, protesters objecting to Rouhani’s visit gathered in Rome’s Pantheon Square. Many Italian citizens took to Twitter using the hashtag #statu- nate, meaning naked statues, and they included photos of Roman nudes and unclothed figures in Iranian artifacts to protest the decision to cover their historic artifacts. In France, in protest to Iran’s appealing human rights records, a woman from the Feminist group Femmes Politique prend- se to hang herself from a bridge, topless, with the Iranian flag painted on her chest.

The above events tell us that their organization is the pattern for Iran’s commerce and endeavor. The question remains: why are major world powers treadling so carefully around a regime that denies the Holocaust, an appalling human rights record, continues to grow its offensive capabilities despite legality and openness, and ignores its own role in global terrorism? Could it be purely economic reasons? Naiveté? Fear of the deal collapsing? Perhaps it is a fear of the reality: Iran is currently a dangerous force. Many of the world’s citizens already know that, and it’s time for its leaders to behave accordingly. Historically, appeasement hasn’t worked, and we shouldn’t expect it to now.

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A LITTLE SOMETHING
by Fred Piscop

ACROSS
1 Performs like Kanye
2 Keglers’ org.
3 Lengthy tale
4 Word of mouth
5 Carbonated drink flavor
6 Source of ancient fables
7 Harp on an issue
8 Word of mouth
9 Former
10 Married couples
11 Beast of burden
12 Mexican folded food
13 Under the weather
14 Curtains (for short)
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16 Metallic factory worker
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18 Wood strip
19 Sponge holes
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25 Previous owner
26 Celebratory
27 Tail end of a sneeze
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30 Container for recyclables
31 Moccasin or sandal
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34 Compose, as prose
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36 Clementine
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38 Celebratory
39 Tusk material
40 Office passageway
41 Support for eyeglasses
42 Unlocked
43 "I should say ___!"
44 Favourite
45 Slow tempo
46 Previously owned
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48 From ___ Z
49 "Darn it!"
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51 Emergency phone link
52 Isolated region
53 Was punctual
54 Garden entrance
55 Camper’s heater
56 Run leisurely
57 Many mox
58 Tinkers (with)
59 I should say ___!"
60 Immersed, as a tea bag
61 Exited
62 Rower’s blade
63 Best-selling cookie
64 Ensnare
65 Paving material
66 Cup border
67 Tenants’ payments
68 Exited
69 Tenants’ dwellings: Abbrev.
At xFair, students checked out the projects of their peers, as well as the many company booths.

*Photos by Nina Lutz*
CONCERT REVIEW

IAP Orchestra performs Dvorak and Wagner
One month, two movements, and a passion for music

By Nina Lutz

When you apply to MIT, you talk about five activities that meant the most to you in high school, and a number of people here put a musical or arts activity. But MIT demands a lot from us — I really don’t have to tell you that. And while the theater groups and musical ensembles are alive and well around campus, not everyone can participate over the semester.

That’s why there’s IAP Orchestras. The orchestra is student-directed and student-led and runs only during IAP, concluding with an hour-long concert at the end of the month.

This year’s concert featured two pieces, directed by two different students. The concert opened with Larghetto Idyll by Richard Wagner, directed by Gabriel Lesnick ’16. An surprisingly large ensemble created a warm, melodic performance. The thirteen measures of trumpet in Idyll were clear, full-bodied, and well performed by Patrick Shin ’18. Delicate flute parts added hints of whisical flavor and brought a playful twist to the piece. As a saxophonist in high school, I personally enjoyed the depth and body from the horns’ and woodwinds’ counter melodies.

But I will say the strings stole the show. Despite only one month of practice, the violinists nailed many of the intricate, fast melodies in Idyll and kept the swaying, youthful melody of the song throughout the whole performance. I enjoyed the different violin sections playing off one another and the violas’ and cellos’ counter melodies. Coming from a marching band background where a large percussion section holds the ensemble together, I was impressed with bass player Tina Kambill ’16 and her ability to keep a pulse going through the strings section during the movement.

The second piece was the five movements of Antonín Dvorak’s Serenade for Strings, conducted by Dominique Hoskin G. Hoskin’s directing had a lighter, more whimsical feel. I enjoyed watching him direct it as it was a new style to me. His hands and arms moved more freely, in gestures that reminded me of dance. But, even more so, I enjoyed the piece itself. I had never heard Dvorak’s Serenade for Strings. Before this weekend, I had only been familiar with Tchaikovsky’s piece of the same title.

However, I actually liked Dvorak’s style and melodies better — the movements had greater contrast with one another while still keeping a united performance. "Moderato," the first movement, had a wonderful theme passed between the first violins, second violins, and cellos, with the violas providing a pulse that I found enjoyable. The first movement ends in a dance-like fashion and closes with chords that open to the second, "Allegro con moto," which was a beautiful Waltz-like movement. The third movement is the lively "Vivace" and contrasts greatly with the fourth, slower "Larghetto." While "Larghetto" wasn’t my favorite movement and wasn’t as rhythmically interesting as its predecessors, I found the choruses lovely. Kresge has beautiful acoustics highlighting the size and harmony of the orchestra. During that fourth movement, I found myself astounded that they had put this together in only a month.

The finale was grand and lively. The rhythms and melodies were bursting with excitement and musical detail. I loved the intricate little flourishes that the violins accomplished. I, and everyone else in the audience, was left satisfied with a solid conclusion.

A good number of the musicians were too. My friend, Theresa Marchemer ’16, saw IAP Orchestra as a way to stay connected with music when she wasn’t worried about classes.

Theresa told me that, “Playing music with people who enjoy playing music for a month... it was good... usually you have longer than a month to put two pieces together, so it was definitely rewarding to see it go from start to finish so quickly and to have something complete by the end of the month.” Much like the dancing melodies in the songs the orchestra played, IAP gives as the freedom to move and soar and give time to the intricate melodies that seem so drowned out during the regular semester.
Caterina Colón

Editor's Note: Portraits of Resilience is a photography and narrative series by Prof. Daniel Jackson. Each installment consists of a portrait and a story, told in the subject's own words, of how they found resilience and meaning in their life.

I'm from San Juan, Puerto Rico. My life was pretty stable, and I had always lived in the same house. I'm an only child. I didn't have a dad. I was raised by my mom and we were very close. We would sing in the car and that was my favorite thing. We sang Italian songs and listened to Pavlof. My high school experience was very much like other people's here. I was very involved in extra-curriculars and different clubs.

MIT was my top choice for college. I got in early, so I didn't even finish my other applications. I was like, that's the only place I want to go. So I'm about to come here, I had committed a week before, and then my mom had a heart attack right in front of me and she died. I had to move out of my house that same day. I couldn't stay there on my own. I was 17.

I stayed with my great uncle or sometimes with my great aunt. They're brother and sister, but they don't live in the same house. I went back and forth. They were my family.

I thought I was very tough, so I went through with my plans. I told myself, "This is what I'm doing in the fall. I'm going to college. Everyone has to deal with their parents' death, so this is something I can deal with." I think that was a mistake. The first semester here was okay. I'd cry all the time. I went to a therapist that summer and I started having serious problems. I decided to take 5.12, 8.02, 18.03, and 18.06. I didn't even try. I would go to lecture and I'd fall asleep, and then I'd go home and tell myself, "I'm not going to turn this problem set in because this is wrong." I would go to test and try maybe a little bit, and then I'd say to myself, "I'm just going to leave it blank, because it's going to be wrong." I felt so completely out of control of my life. There was no place where I was spiraling down to. I was so helpless. I thought nobody could help me at all.

On top of everything, I started having flashbacks. I felt so guilty because I was such a rude child. I was sure my attitude had caused it. I was just like, well, my mom died. What is the point? We're all at that time I had no idea. I was just like: well, maybe my attitude had caused it. I was so helpless. I thought nobody could help me. I was not sad for them. Why am I only sad for my mom?

I wanted to be a therapist that summer and she told me I had major depressive disorder and generalized anxiety. They gave me some medication, and I hated it. It made me jittery all the time.

At the beginning of my sophomore year I joined an a cappella group because I thought that might help me. I've always loved singing. I didn't expect everything to go so completely wrong.

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All current MIT students, staff and faculty are invited to apply for funding to support art related projects.

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All current MIT students, staff and faculty are invited to apply for funding to support art related projects.
Teach It Yourself! Contest
How do you stay healthy and happy?
What do you wish you knew when starting MIT?
How do you help a friend in need?
Register by Feb 10 at lifelearning.mit.edu

James R. Killian, Jr.,
Faculty Achievement Award Lecture

Unlocking the SECRETS of CANCER

Tyler Jacks
David H. Koch Professor and Director, David H. Koch Institute for Integrative Cancer Research

Thursday, February 11, 2016
4:00 pm
Room 10-250
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DO YOU?

67% of MIT students feel confident in their ability to judge if someone is too intoxicated to give consent.

Perfect season for MIT
Swimming and diving team caps off season with victory over Amherst

By Max Berkowitz
Senior Staff

The MIT men’s swimming and diving team defeated Amherst College by a 368-point margin. The victory ends the Engineers’ dual meet season with a perfect 7–0 record, the first time the Engineers have gone undefeated since the 2012–13 season.

The morning session saw the Engineers take five of the six events they competed in. The tone was set from the beginning as the Engineers led off the meet in the 200 freestyle relay with a one-two finish. Jeremy Bogle ’18, Joshua Tomazin ’18, Dane Erickson ’18, and Daryl Neubieser ’16 won the meet’s opening event in 1:24.73.

The next contested event, the 200 butterfly, saw the Engineers’ lone loss of the morning with Amherst’s Jeff Anderson placing first in 1:52.74. Gavin Brown ’19 and John Matthews ’17 finished second and third, respectively, for MIT, with times of 1:52.89 and 1:53.63, both of which met the NCAA “B” cut standard.

Over the next five events, MIT claimed the top two finishes in each race. With a time of 1:43.31, Daniel Smith ’19 won the 200 freestyle for the fourth meet in a row. Aaron Huang ’19 took home the 100 breaststroke in 57.85. Alex Lednev ’16 earned the victory in the 100 backstroke with a 51.25, while Tomazin dashed to victory in the 50 free in 21.20.

MIT placed first and third in the final morning event, the 400 medley relay. The Engineers “A,” “B,” and “C” teams all finished within 0.30 seconds of one another. The “B” relay, comprising Mattix ’16, Justin Chiu ’18, Michael Hill ’19, and Bogle, earned the touch-out at the end with a time of 3:26.60.

The afternoon session began very much the way the morning session ended, with MIT ending the second session with a perfect eight for eight on event wins. The “B” 200 medley relay of Mattix ’16, Brandon McKen zie ’19, Hill, and Tomazin started off the night with a 1:33.76 win for the Engineers. A pair of freshmen took home the next two events with Josh Graves ’19 earning a victory in the 500 freestyle (4:38.83) and Hill winning the 100 butterfly in 50.55.

MIT registered 1-2-3 finishes over the next five events. Douglas Kogut ’18 led the way in the 200 backstroke, going 1:53.82, before Huang picked up his second victory of the day in the 100 breaststroke. Hansen’s time of 52.15, while Tomazin dashed to victory in the 50 free in 21.20.

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MIT registered 1-2-3 finishes over the next three events. Douglas Kogut ’18 led the way in the 200 backstroke, going 1:53.82, before Huang picked up his second victory of the day in the 200 breaststroke. Hansen’s time of 2:05.12 was fast enough for an NCAA “B” cut. Tomazin earned his second victory of the day in the 100 freestyle in 47.38, narrowly touching out Neu bieser who finished in 47.32.

Brown then posted a first-place finish in the 200 IM, going 1:55.45, before the Engineers grabbed the top four positions in the men’s 400 freestyle relay to close the meet. The quad of Smith, Tomazin, Erickson, and Neubieser took home the race with a time of 3:07.89.

MIT will return to action on February 18 to 21 when the Engineers host the New England Women’s and Men’s Athletic Conference (NEW MAC) Championships inside the Zeigler Sports and Fitness Center. The first session will begin at 6 p.m. that Thursday evening.