

Lamoille Meme Page Under Investigation

By Adelle MacDowell

What does it mean to hold someone accountable?

This is the question at the center of discussions around a Lamoille meme page on Instagram that has been posting content that names individual Lamoille students. To some students, the page is a forum for "calling out" inappropriate or harmful behavior. School administrators, though, believe the content on the page causes additional harm and conflict.

The Instagram account has been around at least since June of 2019, but the old owner of the account stopped posting that month. The current owner of the meme page began posting on the account in early December 2021, putting the meme account back on the radar of many Lamoille Union students. As of January 3, 2022, the page had 208 followers, and most recent posts have received between 40 and 90 "likes."

"I'm friends with the old owner," the student who currently runs the account wrote in response to a direct message on Instagram. "They passed [the account] down to me because I'm still in school."

The owner said they keep their identity secret from nearly everyone, and declined an in-person interview to maintain the secrecy around their identity. "The old owner of course [knows], but that's about it," they said. "I have a VPN and I'm not logged into the account on my phone, only on my laptop at home." They say they are never active on the account at school, since they say it's "too risky." Sometimes, they admitted, it's tempting to tell their friends that they run the account, "but I know that'll do no good for me so I keep it to myself," they said.

The majority of memes posted on the account are submitted by LUHS students who DM them to the owner. On occasion, though, "some people have [messaged] me, told me some info and asked me to make it into a meme," said the owner. They emphasized that they are careful not to reveal the identity of students who submit memes, keeping the DMs confidential and making sure not to "leak their names."

The memes on the page range from rape accusations to attacks on the physical appear-



ance of some students. Some memes call students out for predatory or racist behavior.

The owner of the meme account doesn't think the school administration should worry so much about the memes them-

selves, and said "maybe they should care more about the people that are in the memes, like the rapists or the racists." They added that "all the 'harmful memes' include harmful people."

It's unclear exactly where

the owner draws a line between a meme that is "harmful" and one that isn't, and it raises the questions: Who gets to decide who the "harmful people" are? When does "calling out" cause more harm?

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From The Halls: 2021 Recap

By Alden MacDowell, Anna Leigh Kayhart, Ava Lambert, Mikayla Crane, Quinn Cayton, Shannon Walsh

Blue & Gold reporters conducted brief, spontaneous interviews with Lamoille students. Here are the one-line answers they collected on questions about the memories from 2021 and hopes for 2022.

What was the best or most memorable moment from 2021?

"I made a lot of new friends through school" -Zib Miller

"Probably the fair being open. I thought it was going to be shut down because of COVID." -Nikia Draper

"Coming back to school, being able to participate in activities that I love and see people that I love." -Julia-Rose Daley

"I got a Nintendo Switch that I've been waiting for for like two years." -Silas Bouffard

"Coming back to school." -Lea Locke
"When my friend fell off a bridge into the water. It was pretty funny. He was confident he wasn't going to fall off and he fell off." -Seamus Hernandez

What song or album represents 2021?

"Inferno by Bella Poarch, because I feel like I'm being burned alive." -Ellie Neckers

"Fire Away Chris Stapleton, because 2021 was so long and boring and it felt like that song." -Lea Locke

"Hall of Fame by The Script." -Nikia Draper

"Selfish by Will Wood" -Silas Bouffard

"Red, Taylor's version" -Julia-Rose Daley

Describe 2021 in a sentence:

"Chaotic, very chaotic." -Nikia Draper

"What the heck" -Julia-Rose Daley

"There's been a lot of ups and downs but overall enjoyable" -Zib Miller

What are you excited for in 2022?

"Christmas next year, and the fair, and my birthday." -Seamus Hernandez

"Probably graduating and getting my license." -Zib Miller

"Maybe trying to figure myself out more. Because I've been enjoying figuring myself out more than I ever have." -Julia-Rose Daley

What are your New Year's Resolutions?

"To not feel like I'm being burned alive." -Ellie Neckers

"I'm gonna try to keep my pescitarian thing up." -Silas Bouffard

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Continued: Meme Page

Bethany Turnbaugh, the dean of students, said that the meme page content has left some students distraught. “Really private information is being shared,” she said.

Interim principal Bethann Pirie said she’s been working to get to the bottom of the issue. “When someone is feeling as though their environment is not safe or comfortable at school, like it’s a hostile environment,” she said, “that’s when we’re like, ‘we need to look into this,’ and so we could open an investigation.” Pirie says that both the owner of the account and the students who submitted memes will be held accountable if the identity of the owner is discovered.

Pirie is concerned that some memes on the page may violate the school’s Bullying, Harassment, and Hazing policy. The LUHS student handbook states that “bullying” is something “repeated over time,” and “harassment” targets a “student’s or their family’s actual or perceived race or color, creed, national origin, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, or disability.”

Many posts on the meme page don’t fit these criteria, but Pirie said “they could still violate our code of conduct...it’s causing harm to students, whether it is

about a protected category or not.”

Students who either follow the account or are aware of its existence have a range of views in relation to the content posted on the page. For some, it is “all fun and games,” or a way to hold people accountable for misbehavior. Some students, though, raised concerns about how targeted and public the page is.

“I don’t think I was bullying anybody,” said an anonymous student who submitted memes to the Lamoille meme page. “I don’t have anything against the person I made memes about.” The student said that she submitted memes as a joke, and that she thinks the person they’re about found them funny.

“I think it’s terrible,” said senior Kaylee White, who added that she thinks the page puts some students on edge. “There’s...[a] threat that you don’t have control over what gets said about you and who sees it.”

White agreed that students need to be held accountable for their actions, but said, “no matter what someone does, it says a lot about you on how you respond to [it].” She added that “no one should be targeting people like that online, or in any way.”

“There’s been lots of claims of students in school being rapists, or like, sex offenders,” said

senior Hayden Cheever. “I’m torn, because I feel like it’s important to like, make stuff known...but you know, at the same time, this is cyberbullying.”

Cheever follows the page, but said he doesn’t interact with the content. “I just really have to agree with something to ‘like’ it in this context,” he said. “I don’t want to give whoever’s running it what they’re looking for.” What they’re looking for, in Cheever’s opinion, is a reaction. “The only important stuff is holding people accountable,” he said.

Mai Lyon, a sophomore, said she thinks “it’s like an all fun and games thing.” According to Lyon, the older posts on the account, from 2019, were “kind of mean, but this has kind of just all been jokes.”

With difficult topics like sexual assault, Lyon believes that the meme page can be a good way to share information. “It’s a situation where it’s [hard] to speak out,” she said. “It’s tricky, but if somebody is going to make a meme about it, the fact that it’s funny is going to spread it around, and it’s going to get people to see it, and it’s going to get people to acknowledge it.”

Pirie pushed back on this sentiment of vigilante justice. “This is not a way forward,” she said. “I just don’t believe

that. I don’t believe that publicly shaming someone is a way.”

Pirie said that conflicts and allegations will be dealt with through the proper avenues. “If there was an issue, that issue will be addressed,” she said. “But now you’re creating another issue that is, in fact, a violation of a school district policy.”

Pirie and Turnbaugh say that they’d like to see the meme page shut down.

“The hard thing for me is that...I can’t figure out who’s doing it,” said Pirie. She explained that she has repeatedly reported the page and contacted Instagram to get it taken down.

Samuel Prevost, the new Lamoille Student Resource Officer (see article below), said the meme page has been on his radar since “day one.”

“It’s narrowed it down,” Prevost said. “[I’m] 99% certain I know exactly who it is.” Despite the precautions the account owner takes, Prevost is confident that he’s figured out their identity, but would not go into detail since it’s an active investigation. “We have ways of [finding out],” he said. “I’m not able to say at the moment how that is.”

While Pirie and Turnbaugh have been focused on the school discipline aspect of the situation, Prevost has been

dealing with the legal side. He emphasized that it’s a serious situation. “If you have several people all getting together, harassing and bullying each other, that’s a big deal,” he said. “It is under investigation currently.”

Prevost has contacted Instagram and said that when it comes to social media, “something’s always linked to something else...they have information that goes for miles.”

Prevost said that if there are legal consequences, they will fall on the student who runs the account. “They’re the one who’ll take the hit for everything because they allow it,” he said. In terms of any legal repercussions the student will face, he said “it depends on what the state’s attorney wants to do.”

As Prevost sees it, the account owner has “two really good options” and “one really bad option” going forward.

“One is to shut it down,” said Prevost. Another is to “block whatever hate speech goes on there,” and the third, unadvisable option is to “keep doing what they’re doing.”

Pirie said she hopes that the account owner will shut down the account. “As we try to create a culture that feels safe and inclusive in our school,” she said, “things like this are harmful.”

Do you have a perspective you want to share? Is there something going on in our school you think people should know about? Do you like to write, edit, take photos, or draw? Come join us during Explore Time on Thursdays in room B210

Lamoille Union’s New School Resource Officer

By Adelle MacDowell

Lamoille Union’s new School Resource Officer (SRO) knows the school well. “I’m used to the building and used to the people so it’s just nice to be back,” said Samuel Prevost.

Prevost grew up in Johnson, where he attended Johnson Elementary and then Lamoille Union for middle and high school. He went to college at WyoTech in Pennsylvania, and worked at Lamoille Valley Ford before he became a dispatcher and later an officer.

Outside of his job, Prevost said he likes to go off-roading with his family. “I own a Hummer, and we go around the country off roading different trails,” he said.

Prevost said he sought out the SRO position at Lamoille. “It’s just a position I know I’d fit in well,” he said. Prevost said he has kids who attend

Hyde Park Elementary and other “strong ties” to the community, so the position is a “good fit.”

Prevost works as the SRO for the entire school district, and spends time at the different elementary schools, but mostly on the Lamoille Union campus. He said one of his favorite parts of the job is talking to people in the morning. “Staff, students, everybody’s really great to talk to,” he said.

“There’s some teachers I went to high school with [here],” said Prevost. He said he enjoys being back at Lamoille and interacting with familiar people.

Prevost said he’s glad to be working with the Lamoille Union community and connecting with students, staff, and families.

“I want students and families to know I’m here for them,” he said.

Happy New Year from the staff of the Blue & Gold!



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If you have any questions or comments about this issue of the Blue & Gold, please email 22amacdowell@luhs18.org. We'd love to hear your feedback!