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Northtown Academy Newspaper

MARCH 2026

SPRING PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES AT CICS NORTHTOWN

Isabella Kuchma, Student Writer

March 5, 2026



Image of Northtown Academy

As we conclude the third quarter and transition into the fourth quarter, hopefully maintaining our high grades and GPA, we are preparing for another significant event: Parent-Teacher Conferences, scheduled for Monday, March 16, 2026 from 2:00 to 7:00 P.M.

These conferences provide a platform for teachers to update parents on their child's academic progress and achievements. They also offer parents the chance to ask questions and gain insight into their child's performance in each subject. For students, these discussions can help establish new goals to strive for by the end of the school year. Additionally, parents and teachers can collaborate to create plans that ensure students stay on track and are ready for future opportunities, including college and career paths.

Since the conferences are held during the afternoon and evening, students do not have regular classes that day but are given a day off, allowing the school to focus on fostering parental involvement in education.

In summary, the spring parent-teacher conferences are a vital opportunity for the CICS Northtown Academy community to unite in supporting student success. By addressing progress, challenges, and setting goals, we aim to help students finish the year confidently and stay on the path to graduation.

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEWS WITH



MR. VELAZQUEZ

&



MS. HAYNES

STUDENT LIFE

SPRING IS CALLING

Vanessa Le, Section Editor

March 9, 2026



A photo capturing the essence of spring

Students at CICS Northtown Academy are preparing for spring break, as warmer weather, the arrival of spring, and the start of daylight savings time bring longer days.

As the third quarter comes to an end, students and teachers at CICS Northtown Academy are preparing for spring break and the final stretch of the school year. Spring break, starting on March 23, also marks the halfway point of the second semester, meaning the end of the school year is quickly approaching.

Along with the upcoming break, spring is on its way. Warmer temperatures and sunny days have started appearing, although chilly days still return from time to time as winter slowly fades. Many students have noticed the unpredictable shifts throughout the week in Chicago.

Daylight saving time has also made a difference in daily routines. Clocks have moved forward, and the sun now sets later in the evening, making the days feel longer. The extra daylight has given students more time to spend outside after school and enjoy the improving weather.

“I feel more motivated having the sun out for longer,” said one student. “Whenever it warms up after the 3rd quarter is when school really starts to seem fun.”

With spring officially arriving, longer days, and the third quarter wrapping up, many students are looking ahead to warmer weather, upcoming school events, and the countdown to the end of the school year.

STUDENT LIFE

INTERVIEW WITH COACH VELAZQUEZ & COACH MACIAS

Muhammad-Ali Bachcha & William Mack, Sports Writers

March 6, 2026

What are your goals for the [soccer] team this season? Our team's goals this year are to have a strong locker room culture so we can demonstrate our skills on the field and develop each player gradually.

What do you expect from players when it comes to effort and attitude? That players maintain a good attitude when making a mistake, keep trying, and show their effort during every practice to learn something new every day.

How do you decide who starts and how much playing time everyone gets? The student comes first before the athlete, and we (Ms. Macias & I) decide by looking at who's passing all their classes, then we look at which player demonstrates the most effort at practice.

What skills should we focus on improving before the first game? The skills we look for before the first game are that players learn all the fundamental skills, communication, and to represent our school the best we can.

How competitive will practices be, and what will a typical practice look like? The practices will be competitive, last between one and a half and two hours, and include an extensive warm-up to try to prevent injuries, followed by a session of technical exercises to improve ball control, one-on-one drills to improve decision-making, tactics to improve goal-scoring opportunities, and finally a match that incorporates everything learned during that practice.

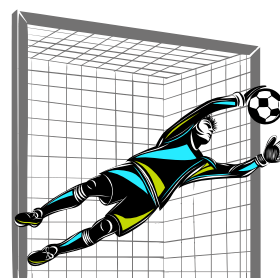
What can a player do outside of practice to prepare for the season? If you have a soccer ball at home, you can practice by doing agility drills. and even use a wall to bounce the ball to practice first touch, and learn how to stop and pass the ball. Also, you can watch videos on how to play your position or even play with friends at the park.

How do you handle team conflicts or problems between players? We have a conversation with the students one by one to understand the conflict, and then spoke with both individuals to try to rebuild trust and conduct team-bonding activities to maintain it.

What are your expectations for communication if someone is injured or can't make practice? First and foremost, the student must be honest with us to maintain trust and notify us immediately when they are injured. Afterward, they must keep us updated on their recovery progress and how long they expect to be able to return to practice. If someone cannot attend practice, they must also notify us in advance, because failure to do so affects our planning for the next game, and the consequence for each absence is a reduction in their playing time.

What does leadership look like to you on this team? Players should show initiative and exemplify how to be part of a team by arriving on time for practice, teaching other players how to do drills, and show respect.

What do you think will be our biggest challenge this season? Our biggest challenge this season would be starting from scratch because we have a very young team, but we are confident that we can achieve that goal because the team shows passion and interest in learning new things.



STUDENT LIFE

RAMADAN: A TIME FOR FAITH, FAMILY AND GIVING

Sofia Ghogha, Staff Writer

March 3, 2026

During the holy month of Ramadan, Muslims around the world fast from sunrise to sunset to strengthen their faith and to practice self-discipline. This special event takes place on the ninth month of the Islamic calendar and is observed by millions of people who spend their time giving to charity, praying, and reflecting on their actions.

Ramadan is not only about fasting but also about becoming a better Muslim. During this month, Muslims pray more often, read the Quran, and focus on being more patient and kind. Muslims prepare for the fast by waking up for Suhoor which means before sunrise and helps them through their hunger the whole day. At sunset, they gather with family and friends to end their fast, often with dates and water which is called Iftar. In addition, mosques hold special nightly prayers called Taraweeh where communities get together to worship.



Where city lights meet the spirit of Ramadan

Through fasting and prayer, Muslims grow closer to God and become better Muslims. In the end, Ramadan is more than just fasting. It's a time of gratitude, faith, and a community that reminds people of the importance of self-discipline and kindness.

CELEBRATING EASTER AND FAMILY GATHERINGS

Monica Cing, Staff Writer

March 5, 2026



As spring enters and the warm weather starts to approach, many families around the world get ready to celebrate Easter. For Christians, Easter is a holiday that lands on a Sunday and is very important. Easter celebrates the resurrection of Jesus Christ, which means Jesus rose from the dead three days after being crucified.

Churches hold a special service on Easter Sunday and many attend with their families. Some churches start as early as 6 a.m. to recognize Jesus's sacrifice for us and His rising three days later. These services include prayer, food, and a sermon focused on hope and renewal.

Easter is a religious holiday but for some who aren't religious, Easter is a day of fun pastel colors, the Easter Bunny, and many more exciting activities. Easter includes fun traditions that families look forward to every year. The activities consist of painting eggs, egg hunting to win prizes, and spending time with family in general. The prizes consist of candy, treats, and happiness.

Easter Sunday is a time to gather together and reflect on the goodness of Jesus. Many households pray together and eat after. Dishes such as ham, vegetables, and dessert are prepared for Easter and eaten together as a family. For some families, Easter is a reason why they all come together and spend time with each other.

Overall, Easter is a holiday that blends religious meanings and family traditions. Whether people celebrate Easter by attending church, participating in egg hunts, or sharing a meal with loved ones, the day is seen as a symbol of hope, renewal, peace, and giving thanks to Jesus for being crucified for us.

STUDENT LIFE

INTERVIEW WITH MS. HAYNES

Mila Avramovic and Lauryn Whitley, Staff Writers

March 3, 2026



We're with Ms. Haynes, and we're interviewing her about her time here at Northtown.

Our first question is how long have you worked here? Five unfortunate years.

Have you always wanted to be a security guard at a high school? What? No. Absolutely not.

If you could teach a high school subject, what would you choose? Life skills, because you guys lack life skills. Is that a subject? Hey, we're going to make it a subject.

Why did you want to moderate Black Student Union? Um, there aren't many of us here, so I felt obligated to run the club. And continuing the tradition.

What's your favorite part of Black Student Union? Um, I would say planning for the Black History Month assembly.

When you were in high school, were you in any clubs or anything, like the Black Student Union, or is this new to you? Oh no, this is very new to me.

How long have you been coaching girls' basketball? This is my first season coaching. **Really?** Yes. **I thought you had been coaching for a while.** No, I've been helping out, but this is my first year coaching.

What made you want to coach girls' basketball? Did you always want to coach? Yeah, I've been playing basketball since first grade, so I just felt like it was nice to give back.

Are you proud of the girls' basketball team? Oh, you guys are making me lie. Absolutely proud. Absolutely.

Do you wish to change something at Northtown? Yeah, I would like to change the trajectory of our program altogether and make it more of a sports school, you know?

What goes on in your mind when you have to break up a fight? They better not hit me. That's about it. They better not hit me.

Do you think fighting is an issue here in Northtown? If so, how could the school fix it? Um... Whoa. Be honest to you, please. Uh... No comment. I have to leave that where it's at.

What are your thoughts after a fight? Are you shocked? worried? More so worried about the kids. Are they okay? Are they hurt or injured? But other than that, you know, ready to go home after that.

Well, that's it. Thank you for letting us interview you. You better read the newspaper, now that you're in it!

CURRENT EVENTS

KRISTI NOEM FIRED AS HOMELAND SECURITY SECRETARY

Alissa Malagon, Political Reporter

March 7, 2026



President Donald Trump fired Kristi Noem on March 5th, ending her 13 month-long tenure as the leader of the United States Department of Security, one of the most powerful agencies responsible for border control, disaster response, and immigration enforcement. Before serving as DHS Secretary, Noem served as the 33rd Governor of South Dakota from 2019 to 2025. She was the state's first female Governor. Previously, she had served as South Dakota's sole member of the U.S. House of Representatives from the years 2011 to 2019.

Noem came under fire for her handling of ICE's crackdowns on immigrants in Minnesota after falsely saying that two American citizens, Renee Nicole Good and Alex Pretti, killed by federal agents, had been engaging in acts of "domestic terrorism."

Noem had faced growing criticism from lawmakers and officials over how she managed the department. Several controversies surrounded her leadership, including aggressive immigration enforcement operations and internal disagreements within the agency. Some critics argued that her leadership created tension within the department and contributed to operational problems.

President Trump has since announced that Oklahoma Senator Markwayne Mullin would replace Noem as the next DHS Secretary, with the transition expected to take place later in March. Mullin is currently serving his first term as a U.S. Senator from Oklahoma. As a tribal member of the Cherokee Nation, he is the first Native American senator in two decades. Before then, he served as a U.S. Congressman for Oklahoma's second congressional district from 2013 to 2023. Markwayne stated his plans centers on bolstering border security, enforcing existing immigration laws, and curbing illegal drug trafficking.

Kristi Noem has since then been appointed as the Special Envoy for the "Shield of the Americas" by President Donald Trump. This new role involves leading a security coalition focused on combating cartels and strengthening regional partnerships.

CURRENT EVENTS

THE ESCALATING BOMBING CONFLICT OF THE U.S. AND IRAN

Sherlyn Ruiz, Senior Writer

March 6, 2026



CONFLICT ESCALATES WITH PRESIDENT TRUMP'S DECISION TO STRIKE IRAN ON FEBRUARY 28, 2026.

The United States and its ally Israel launched airstrikes on Iran's military in late February 2026 to weaken Iran's military power and to address the nuclear program, which caused tension in the Middle East.

Iran then responded by launching missiles and drones toward several locations in the Middle East, including the areas where U.S. forces are present. An Iranian official claimed that they would keep responding to attacks on their country: "Iran will defend itself and the people."

Tensions between Iran and the United States have quickly escalated in recent days after military strikes have been launched across parts of the Middle East. Many current global leaders are hoping for calmness in the situation so that other countries do not get dragged into a violent war.

The death of Iran's top leader had raised madness in Iran, chanting "Death to America," after the major conflict between major powers, which caused a global and economic impact for both Iran and the United States, and the U.S. military had the largest deployments in years.

After the airstrikes went off in Iran by the United States, Iran took it as a threat and an act of aggression, and indeed gave a response back. Iranian officials argued that their country has the right to defend itself after this act of aggression. However, U.S. leaders claimed the strikes were only meant to prevent Iran from expanding its military, to reduce threats in the region, and to protect American allies. The United Nations urged both parties not to escalate to further violence. A spokesperson for the United Nations stated that they are "deeply concerned about rising tensions and the risk to civilian lives." Currently, leaders are calling for diplomacy and negotiations to prevent the conflict from escalating to a larger war.

The conflict is also affecting nearby countries and raise concerns for safety in the region, causing flights to be cancelled and global oil prices to rise as markets have reacted to the conflict.

For now, as the world observes the tensions closely, leaders hope that diplomacy can prevent a global crisis.

FEATURE STORY

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

Isabella Alegria, Staff Writer

March 6, 2026



Image from National Geographic

March is Women's History Month, where we take time to appreciate and acknowledge everything that the women in our lives do for us. What a lot of people don't know is that women didn't get a full month until 1987, which sounds so far in the past, but it was only 39 years ago. It started off as a small celebration in California in 1978, until President Carter made it a national week in 1980. Throughout history, it's obvious that women have been overlooked and underappreciated, which is why it's important to acknowledge that even though it's a full month, very few women get shown gratitude or acknowledgement, especially

from the men in their lives. Even in schools we often learn about how men shaped history but hardly learn how impactful women were in history. There are so many women that helped to create a path for other women to be respected. For example, Susan B. Anthony fought so that women could get an education; Frida Kahlo, who made a space where women could be respected as artists; Dolores Huerta, a Latina American activist; and Malala Yousafzai, who is the youngest-ever Nobel Peace Prize winner – and they're only some of the most popular names brought up in this conversation. So many women are overlooked in favor of their male counterparts, to the point that there is a name for it: the “Matilda Effect.” A prime example of this is Abigail Adams, who fought for women's rights and the rights of slaves. She was constantly reminding her husband to “Remember the ladies,” but nobody remembers all the effort she put into caring for women in the past and future; because when you think of Adams, you think of the second U.S. president. Another example is Rosalind Franklin. Franklin studied DNA at King's College and provided evidence to prove that our DNA has a helix structure. Maurice Wilkins, who worked with Franklin at the college, gave away her work, a high-quality X-ray diffraction image of DNA to two scientists who used the image and went on to win a Nobel Prize without ever crediting Franklin. The final example is Shirley Graham Du Bois. Before she got married, Du Bois was recognized for her own work. She was a playwright, composer, and activist for black women. She composed her own opera, “Tom-Tom,” which was about a girl who had been designated as a sacrifice. After Du Bois got married, her own career was forgotten, and she became a background character in her husband's career. Again, these are only a few examples of women being overshadowed, so just imagine all the women whose names aren't in any history book, all the wives, mothers, grandmothers, and daughters whose stories will never be told.

THE SEASON OF MARCH MADNESS

Carina Baez, Sports Editor

March 3, 2026



March is finally here which means it's the season of March Madness! Sixty-eight collegiate NCAA basketball teams will be competing for the same goal: winning a national championship.

March Madness is a single elimination tournament that includes 68 teams with divisions for men and women while each team battles others outside of their conference to win the national championship title for Division I basketball.

The history of March Madness dates back to the first men's tournament in 1939 and the first women's tournament in 1982. March Madness has evolved in many ways over the years. The NCAA has grown from 16 teams in 1951 and has doubled to 32 teams. Now, the current size is 68 teams competing for the championship.

The brackets for March Madness follow a specific order. The standings are determined by the NCAA basketball selection committee. Teams are ranked when further divided into seeds; a seed is what determines the team match ups within each of the four regions to create bracket pairs. The NCAA evaluates the teams by ranking and schedule. The first round matchups have the highest seed facing the lowest seed in each region (1 vs. 16, 2 vs. 15, and so on). The second round sees a reduction in half to 16 teams, known as the Sweet 16. Once that round completes, there are eight teams left, which is known as the Elite 8. These teams advance to the Final Four: a four team tournament that determines the national champion.

This year, the selection starts on Sunday, March 15 and games officially start on March 17.

Watching March Madness is so exciting. Having the ability to create your own bracket and watch the exhilarating games in real time is fun. Seeing teams give it their all in a fast-paced way leads to the excitement and the heart of collegiate basketball.

WHAT IS ST. PATRICK'S DAY REALLY ABOUT?

David Tolan, Staff Writer
March 8, 2026



St. Patrick's Day Celebrations

St. Patrick's Day is a holiday that many people celebrate on March 17 every year. For a lot of people, the day is known for green attire, parades, and shamrocks and leprechauns decorations. While it's often treated as a fun and festive day, the holiday actually has a long history connected to Irish culture and tradition.

The holiday is named after Saint Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland. He lived during the 5th century and is known for helping spread Christianity across Ireland. According to tradition, he used the shamrock to explain the idea of the Holy Trinity, which is one reason the plant became a symbol closely associated with the holiday.

Over time, St. Patrick's Day grew into a larger celebration of Irish heritage and culture. In Ireland, the day began as a religious feast day, but today it includes festivals, music, food, and large parades. Cities around the world also hold celebrations, and many famous landmarks are even lit up in green to mark the occasion.

Today, St. Patrick's Day is recognized globally and celebrated by millions of people, whether they have Irish ancestry or not. The traditions may vary from place to place, but the holiday remains a way to recognize Irish history, culture, and community while bringing people together in a festive way.

SPRING FLINGS INTO DUNKIN’

Zharlin Pallchizaca, Staff Writer

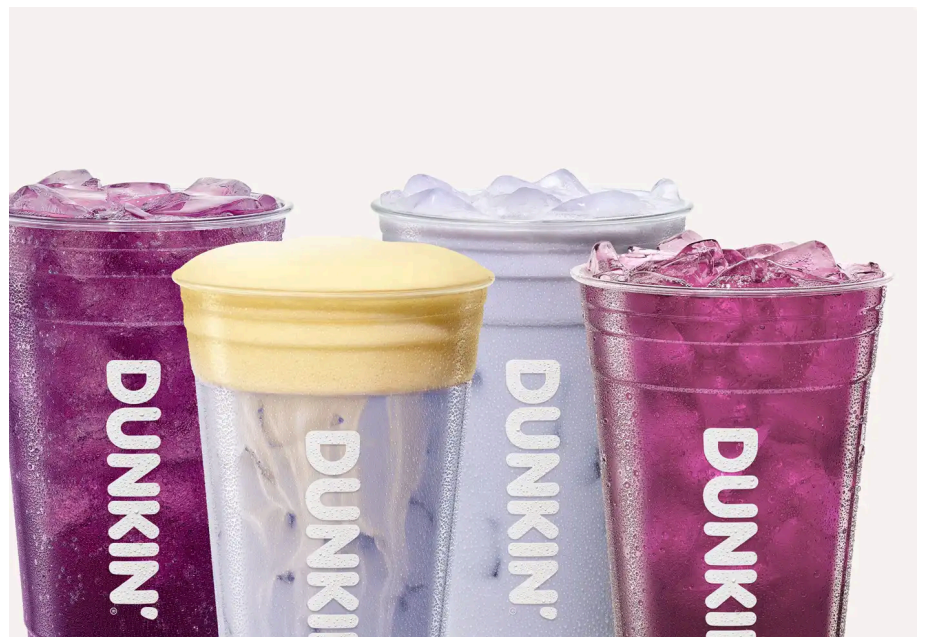
March 4, 2026

As March begins to bloom, Dunkin’ Donuts officially kicks off the season with its 2026 spring menu offering a “banana takeover.”



The lineup’s main features include Banana Puddin’ Cloud latte, Monkey Business Cloud latte (with butter pecan), Nutty Banana Cloud Dunkalatte (with hazelnut) with other specialties being the Banana Shakin’ Espresso, Bananarama Matcha and Banana Protein latte. As the month of March started, Dunkin’ celebrated with its new lineup of beverages. A few of them include the Banana Daydream Refresher that blends well with the

Strawberry Dragonfruit, Mango Pineapple, and Berry Acai Refresher. The lineup also introduces the new Dunkin’ Zero, a line of lightly zero-sugar energy drinks that comes in six fruit-forward flavors: Blackberry Tangerine, Tropical Mango, Juicy Peach, Glamberry (Blackberry Tangerine plus Juicy Peach), Sunzest (Tropical Mango plus Juicy Peach) and Blushpop (Blackberry Tangerine plus Tropical Mango).



Dunkin’ new refresher lineup



Dunkin’ Zero Sugar energy drinks

Additionally, and for a limited time, Dunkin’ has also brought back its famous \$6 dollar meal which includes a Bacon, Egg, and Cheese breakfast sandwich, hash browns and a medium hot or iced coffee with a new Wedding Cake Munchkin that features blueberry doughnut holes covered with wedding cake flavored sprinkles.



Dunkin’ \$6 dollar meal



Dunkin’ Wedding Cake munchki

With a lineup like this, it's clear that spring has officially arrived at Dunkin, so go grab a sip and let your day bloom.

SCREAM 7 REVIEW

Jovanna Aguilera, Media Editor

March 2, 2026

In its review of *Scream 7*, *The New York Times* presents the film as a sequel that tries hard to revive the spirit of the original franchise but struggles to find a strong reason to exist. The movie brings back many familiar faces and ideas, yet it does not fully capture the major humor and clever twists that once made the series stand out.

The biggest draw is the return of Neve Campbell as Sidney Prescott. Her comeback feels important. The review suggests that her presence gives the movie emotional weight and reminds viewers why they cared about the story in the first place. Sidney is older now, more cautious and protective, but still strong. Watching her step back into danger adds a layer of seriousness that some of the newer films lacked.

However, the review argues that nostalgia can only carry a movie so far. While *Scream 7* includes tense chase scenes and extreme scenes with Ghostface, the mystery behind the killer is not as surprising or meaningful as past reveals. The film follows many familiar patterns: suspicious side characters, self-aware jokes about horror movie rules, and sudden violent

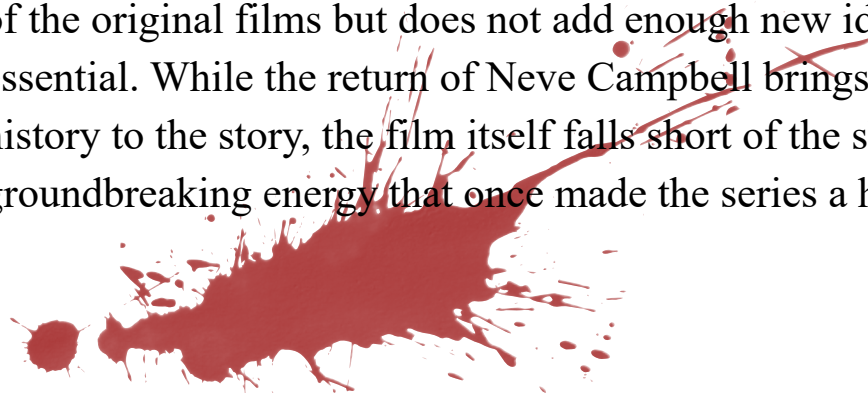


attacks. Instead of feeling fresh, these elements sometimes feel recycled.

The tone of the movie also receives mixed reactions. The review notes that earlier films balanced horror and humor in a smart way, making fun of scary movie clichés while still delivering real suspense. In this installment, that balance feels uneven. Some jokes land well, but others feel forced. The scary moments can be intense, yet they lack the clever build-up that once defined the series. Another issue raised is the development of new characters.

While the film introduces younger faces meant to carry the story forward, many of them are not given enough depth. As a result, it becomes harder for the audience to feel connected to them. When danger strikes, the emotional impact is weaker because viewers do not know these characters well enough to truly worry about them. Even so, the review does not dismiss the movie entirely. It recognizes that fans of the franchise may still enjoy seeing Sidney back in action and experiencing the familiar thrills of a Ghostface mystery. The direction is competent, and some scenes deliver real excitement. For longtime followers, there is comfort in returning to this world.

Overall, the review paints *Scream 7* as a sequel caught between honoring its past and trying to move forward. It respects the legacy of the original films but does not add enough new ideas to feel essential. While the return of Neve Campbell brings heart and history to the story, the film itself falls short of the sharp, groundbreaking energy that once made the series a horror classic.



LOVE STORY: JOHN F. KENNEDY JR AND CAROLYN BESSETTE

Carina Baez, Section Editor

March 3, 2026



The new Hulu show “Love Story” has old and new generations obsessed with one of the iconic couples of the 20th century. “Love Story” is a limited series that dives deep into John F. Kennedy Jr. and Carolyn Besette’s high-profile romance. The show

tells real life events with great accuracy and attention to detail.

The series explores the intense relationship, marriage, and media scrutiny surrounding JFK Jr. and Carolyn Besette. Many fans were skeptical of the casting when photos were first released with Paul Anthony Kelly playing John F. Kennedy and Sarah Pidgeon as



Comparison side by side.

Carolyn Besette. Some criticized the casting of Pidgeon due to her lack of resemblance to Carolyn Besette. Pidgeon tells *People* magazine that the backlash “reinforced and reminded me of just how beloved these people are, and people are protective of their story.” Connor Hines, the casting director, said finding the perfect JFK Jr. was difficult, saying in an interview for *People* magazine he started to ask people on the streets and at the gym, desperate to find the one. Once they saw Paul Anthony Kelly, they knew he would be the perfect JFK Jr. Executive Producer Brad Simpson said, “It was just clear that he was JFK.” Later on and after the show was released, fans stated they loved the casting and realized that the actors were a perfect match. There are a total of nine episodes being released every Thursday with the final episode released on March 26. The show has a rating 7.7-8.1 out of ten in its first season on Hulu.

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