

The Oracle

Volume 50 Issue 3

Student Newspaper Of Shaler Area High School

April 2024

Sustainability students working with new park

by Will Emmons

About three miles away from Pittsburgh lies the borough of Millvale. This small, historic town has been the focus of sustainable efforts for the past two decades after the disastrous flooding from the remnants of Hurricane Ivan in 2004.

Millvale, boxed into a tight space right outside of city limits, never had many parks or outside activities for young families with children. For many people, being trapped in an urban area with few green spaces and lots of cars makes it hard to express themselves.

Although there is a basketball court and a small playground near the heart of Millvale, for many kids there still isn't much to do outside.

To address that, a new sustainable park is being created, not only to push for sustainable efforts but to do more for the people that live there.

This new park takes into account a lot of the current and past issues of Millvale and provides some innovative solutions. Families and children across Millvale who have a distinct lack of outdoors space available will directly benefit from the new sustainable park being developed.

"The community wanted a safe place for children to enjoy. Currently, there are a couple of very small parks, somewhat restricted to certain ages of children. This park will be much larger and will accommodate children of all ages, and will be a park which will attract people to Millvale, as it is visible from route 28," Mrs. Abbey Nilson, Shaler Area High School's Sustainability teacher and the sponsor of the Sustainability Club, said.

This park will work in innovative ways to improve functionality, including installments such as rain gardens and a special type of pavement that is specially porous. These will allow the park to soak up rain water instead of letting it flow into the creek like regular parks.

Members of the Sustainability Club came together to plant the rain gardens in the fall of 2023.

The park will have a woodland theme that shows regional creatures of Pennsylvania. One notable visual feature of the playground is a large raccoon shaped centerpiece. The park will also feature an assortment



of things to do and see that are outside of just a playground, but the project is far from complete.

"The sign and name will be determined this spring. The mural will be completed this spring, as well as the basketball court, the pump track, and maybe the walking trail. The playground equipment will likely be put in sometime next year," Nilson said.

Several of those tasks like developing the park name, entrance sign, mural featured inside of the park, and the rain garden design will be planned and/or completed by Sustainability students.

"I love being able to give students the opportunity to work on real world projects. They get to be a part of something important, learn and use skills to help make the community a better place, and work with community leaders," Nilson said.

This park is part of a larger initiative.

About 12 years ago Millvale borough worked towards being declared an EcoDistrict, a special term coined by the company Just Communities that makes it easy for towns to become environmentally friendly and community oriented through a specific set of criteria.

The first EcoDistrict in the country was the

neighboring town of Etna, and soon after, Millvale followed suit. Towns that want this EcoDistrict certification have to fit eight criteria: green buildings, living infrastructure, resource efficiency and regeneration, mobility options and connectivity, habitat creation and preservation, health and well-being, equitable development and prosperity, and public spaces and community identity.

The concept of an EcoDistrict is not only important for the environment, but it has a lot of focus on the community trying to promote a healthier population socially and economically. Public amenities like parks and community gardens make Millvale more walkable, which provides that healthy environment within the town.

Nilson has a lot of experience with Millvale. She has been a part of many environmental movements and is a part of the Millvale Community Development Corporation (MCDC), a non-profit organization which promotes active and sustainable growth in the community.

"The movement to earn EcoDistrict certification was brought about by the devastating floods of 2004.

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Ruckus displays Shaler art students work in exhibit

by Eddie Schmidt

After their grand opening in 2021, the Ruckus Coffee Gallery & Café has become a center for food and culture alike. It hosts weekly live performances, various family and community events, and most famously a month-long artist feature.

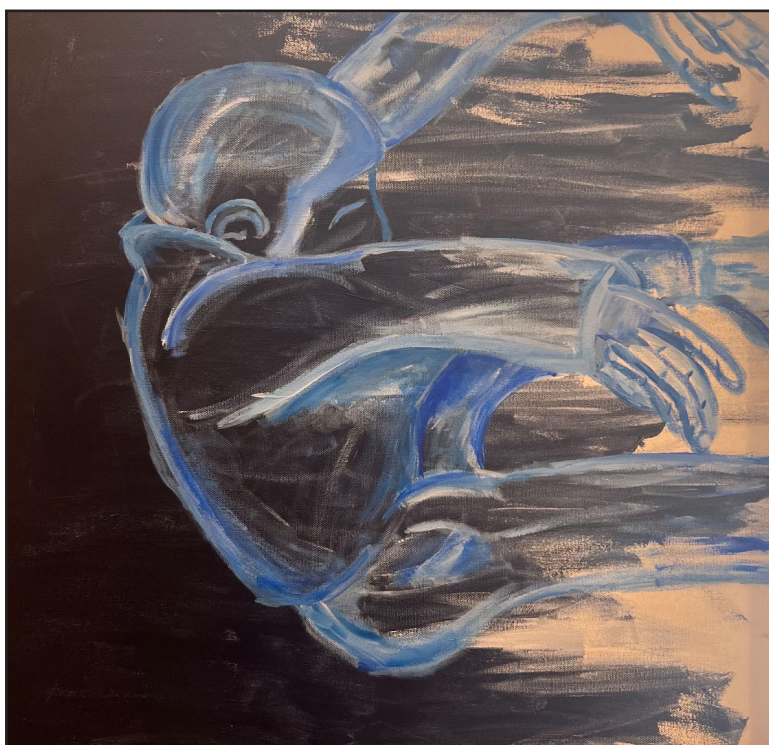
Throughout the month of February, the featured artists are the Shaler Area AP art students from the Drawing and 2D Design courses. These students have the opportunity to showcase and sell their art directly through Ruckus, and for many of them it is an unforgettable first taste of their hard work paying off.

"I think the opportunity is extremely unique and allows artists to show off their ability. I did this last year as an AP studio design student, and after returning as a senior for the second art show at Ruckus, I would say my experience was amazing.

The fact that I was able to see my art hanging up and hear people talk about it made me feel incredible; I felt like I was able to connect with the group," senior Isabelle Dutkovic said.

This event was made possible by art teacher Mr. Jeffrey Frank. After he visited the coffee shop a few years ago and noticed the featured artist changing each month, he got into contact with the owner and successfully established his classes as Ruckus regulars. This year in particular has been extremely successful, especially in regards to sold artwork.

"The students get to sell their work at whatever price they want. There's no restriction on what they can ask for, and we had one student who sold their painting for \$140.00 on opening night. Five pieces were already sold at the opening—the most artwork ever purchased that soon—so that was exciting," Mr. Frank said.



Artwork by Isabelle Dutkovic

OPINIONS

Spring parking rules create unnecessary problems

by Jack Salego

Shaler Area High School has its problems, many of which are out of their own control. What baffles me and many other students is the school's inability to recognize that parking is a solvable issue. Every single day, tons of students are late to their first period class because they had to resort to parking at the parking lot of Matulevic field.

If you are unaware, parking at the high school is limited. That is the normal part. Every high school that I know of has a parking pass that you pay for, and every school recognizes that parking is a privilege and not a necessity. Shaler is unique in how we park.

Some schools have parking passes with assigned spots, so it pays off to be one of the first people to get a pass. Due to not having assigned parking spots, it does not matter if you are the 1st or 150th person to buy a parking pass. This is not a problem for most of the school year, but the softball season changes that.

Here at the high school it is a free for all. Until softball season, the overflow parking is at Hilltop, where the softball team plays. The nice part of this is that if the tennis court lot fills up, you have a lot that is just as close to the school.

This is even better once you realize that many students choose to park up there without checking if the tennis court lot is full or not. This means that parking for most of the school year is a win-win situation, where you decide between walking uphill on the way in from the tennis courts, or walking uphill on the way out to Hilltop. Both walks are nothing compared to Matulevic.

"They say driving to school is a 'privilege not a requirement,' but it is frustrating to have to change your entire sleep schedule on a random morning in the middle of the school year. I live 15 minutes away from the school so in order for me to get a spot

I have to leave my house at like 6:20. meaning I have to wake up an hour earlier. Some kids live right by the school so they have an advantage because they don't have to drive as far to ensure they get a spot," senior Josie Wilkins said.

It's not just a small group of students who have this issue. Personally speaking, I have gotten to school 30 minutes early and still not gotten a spot. I do not live too far from the school, and it still means waking up 40-50 minutes earlier than I used to.

I could only imagine how miserable it is to wake up an hour earlier or even longer to people who live far from the school. Now imagine doing all that and still missing a spot. That's not an exaggeration either. It happens all the time.

You pull into a spot, it is still dark out, and all it takes is one look around you to see the effect this has on students. Everyone is tired in the morning. People are asleep in their cars. People are doing makeup in their cars. People are sitting there blasting music in their cars.

Every morning is a question of "do I risk taking a nap in my car and waking up sluggish or do I sit in my car for the next 30-40 minutes with nothing to do." That is not healthy. Not only is the walk from Matulevic to the front doors a lengthy one, it is also a messy and potentially dangerous one.

"I wouldn't have an issue with it if the path was actually paved and lit up, it's just the fact that the path is dark at 7 in the morning and when raining or snowing it becomes very slippery," Wilkins added.

Students already have enough on their plates at the end of the year, especially seniors. Making them get less sleep just to potentially secure a parking spot is wrong. To add fuel to the fire, peek outside a window that overlooks the tennis court parking lot any time after the work release students go home. What feels like half of the parking lot just disappears after 12:06. This makes the solution even easier to see.

All the school needs to do is throw all those kids that leave midday for "work" (half of them go home and nap) up at Hilltop. The school's concern and reasoning for closing Hilltop is that school buses for softball teams struggle to get up and around the field safely when it is crowded and that the maintenance workers go up and maintain the field every day. The softball team is not playing at 12:06, so throwing those work release kids up there is an easy solution.

Sure, it is not perfect, but it is easily doable. The main concern for this solution is that there is no system in place right now with a way to confirm if Hilltop drivers would be work release students or not.

All that needs to be done is some way to confirm this. Waving a different parking pass to one of the security guards before they let you up would be a feasible solution. Printing some different parking passes for a fraction of drivers, which is already a fraction of students, is not too far fetched.

The school has expressed concerns that if this system was implemented and someone broke through the system, a tow truck would potentially not be able to make it in time before a softball match.

I truly believe that the threat of a tow truck towing your car is not a risk anyone would take. As long as the punishment was actually enforced, no one would make the mistake after the first person does. Calling the tow truck once to defer students from doing it is a risk that the school might just have to take.

Parking at Hilltop does not have to close, and the solution is not a task too big for the school to tackle. The school needs to make a change soon for the betterment of student wellness.

It is an ancient issue that has always garnered attention, but never seems to change. The school should take the gamble on fixing this issue because the odds are much more in their favor compared to the odds of getting a tennis court parking spot in the spring.

Sustainability students working with new park — from page 1

As a result of the EcoDistrict efforts, Millvale is a leader in renewable energy, stormwater infrastructure, and hosts a "free fridge" for its residents, just to name a few things. Millvale has received both state and national recognition for its efforts," Nilson said.

In the past, a tremendous amount of environmental work was done to protect Girty's Woods, a 155-acre plot of forest. Nilson and her Sustainability students worked on raising money to preserve this plot of wooded land that would have been cut down and developed if people all around Pittsburgh did not band together to raise money and awareness.

"Shaler Area students had a huge role in the Save Girty's Woods campaign. Students raised over \$10,000 to help the Allegheny Land Trust purchase and protect Girty's Woods in 2021. Most of that money was through a fundraiser involving trees we grew in our classroom," Nilson recalled.

With massive plots of developed land like Ross Park Mall, water ends up in sewer drains that feed creeks like Girty's Run. Girty's Woods is important to Millvale because it helps prevent creeks overflowing by soaking up rain water into the ground, instead of it rolling into drains that feed the creek.

When water is not soaked up naturally and is instead dumped into creeks that feed the river, heavy rainfall causes flooding that impacts communities that do not even contribute to the excess of water being dumped into the creek.

In the past, floods in Millvale have devastated homes and small businesses alike, which is a main cause for all of these sustainable efforts.

"I woke up to sirens and was rushed out of my house when the creek flooded in 2018. It was really scary, and we had to end up moving because of how destroyed my house was," Shaler Area senior Thomas Emanuele said.

Anyone interested in contributing to the park and

working within the Millvale community, there will be a volunteer workday on April 6. If you can't support the movement in person, there is a donation link on the Neighborhood Allies website that allows you to contribute towards the cause and the Shaler Area Sustainability Club will be holding a succulent sale whose proceeds go towards the park.



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Steven Clark: the man behind the Flight 93 Memorial

by Eddie Schmidt

Even from over 2,000 miles away, it took less than 30 minutes for the news about 9/11 to reach Stephen Clark. Both of the twin towers in New York had already been hit, but he and his co-workers were watching live as the reports about the Pentagon and a plane that crashed came through.

As the chief ranger of the Virgin Islands National Park, Clark set the park on high alert until it was confirmed that Al Qaeda was finished with their attack.

He, like many others across the nation, can recall exactly where he was and what he was doing once he heard about the crashes. While every part of the event is an influential aspect of recent American history, Clark would learn later on in his life just how important this final plane would become to him.

Whenever people think about 9/11, the twin towers instantly come to mind. There are over a thousand memorials spread across 15 countries to honor those lost, but it is rare to see more than a brief mention of Flight 93.

Four terrorists boarded that plane on the morning of September 11, 2001 and took control of the aircraft roughly 46 minutes after takeoff. With its speculated destination being Washington, D.C., this plane almost became the fourth to strike an iconic American building. The 33 passengers and 7 staff members on board, however, had other plans.

After hearing about the other attacks from their families, the remaining passengers realized that they were not only also on a hijacked plane, but that they were likely going to meet the same fate as the victims on the other three planes.

They banded together and fought their way up to the cockpit, fully breaking in at 10:01 a.m.. Just two minutes later, in a field 20 miles out from Johnstown, Pennsylvania, Flight 93 collided with the ground.

An unofficial memorial was set up at the crash site the next year to honor the 40 innocent lives taken away by the crash, but the families and government alike planned for something bigger.

On September 10th, 2011, the Flight 93 National Memorial was dedicated and opened to the public and has since expanded several times. It currently encompasses about 2,200 acres of land and was designed by Paul Murdoch Architects. Standing at the helm of it all is Stephen Clark, the Superintendent of the National Parks of Western Pennsylvania.

Growing up in Drexel Hill, Pennsylvania, just outside of Philadelphia, Clark spent much of his youth isolated from nature. This changed when he was 15 years old during a baseball tournament, when the players were sent to the western side of the state to temporarily live with the residents.

"We went up to a town near Bradford and stayed with host families. I had a great opportunity to spend a lot of time with one particular family who took us spotting deer and shooting rifles and all these types of things. That kind of spurred my interest in the outdoors," Clark said.

This interest stayed consistent throughout high school and college, leading to a bachelor's degree from Slippery Rock University and a certification in National Park Service law enforcement.

After getting his degree, Clark wasted no time applying for his first position: Virginia's Shenandoah National Park. He stayed there for a few years, but the lull of adventure kept him constantly searching for new opportunities and parks to experience. Clark has served as a ranger all across the country, ranging everywhere from Acadia National Park in Maine to Lake Roosevelt National Park in Washington.

"(My career) encompasses about 38 years before this post from when I graduated college," Clark shared. "So it's been a very unique experience; I've been to so many different parts of the world, experienced a lot of cultures, and made a lot of wonderful memories."



Superintendent Steven Clark poses in front of the Wall of Names at the Flight 93 National Memorial. (B. Torrey - NPS)

When the previous Superintendent of the National Parks of Western Pennsylvania retired from his position in 2015, Clark's resumé made him a prime candidate.

His job requires him to oversee five parks: The Allegheny Portage Railroad National Historic Site, the Johnstown Flood National Memorial, the Fort Necessity National Battlefield, the Friendship Hill National Historic Site, and the aforementioned Flight 93 National Memorial. After eight years of service as the superintendent, Clark has had many unforgettable experiences that shed light on just how important Flight 93 really is.

"When I was sent here in March of 2015, the regional director at the time had asked me for three things when I was directed to go to these five parks. One of them was to bury the wreckage of Flight 93," Clark said.

"In October of 2001, the FBI had concluded their investigation. They filled five 40-foot shipping containers and transported those containers up to Connecticut. Those containers sat there until 2018, when the families, the FBI, the Park Service, United Airlines, and the military came together and devised a plan that we were going to skim through the wreckage of Flight 93 because more than 90% of that aircraft was recovered and placed in these containers."

The plan was set into motion, and the group began to search the remnants to see if anything was missed during the initial inspection. Many objects of interest were found, including one of the pitchers used by flight attendant Sandy Bradshaw to disorient the hijackers with boiling water, which Clark was especially excited to find.

Any personal belongings found were offered to the family of the owner, and if they declined to take the items, they were added to the memorial along with any miscellaneous items.

In addition to personal items, there were some remains of the victims that were discovered.

"We uncovered eight bones. A forensic anthropologist from Connecticut determined that three of those bones were animal bones that just happened to be in the crash site area when they were picked up, but five of those bones were human," Clark said. "So I worked with the families and ultimately we determined that we would bury the bones in this beautiful marble urn that the people of Connecticut had purchased, and they had asked me to facilitate the burial of those bones."

When the day of the burial came, the story of one family member in particular left a lasting impression on Clark. Ben Wainio was already familiar with the superintendent, as he had been a frequent visitor to the memorial and was known for his unique tradition to remember his daughter, Honor Elizabeth Wainio.

It is common to see flowers, postcards, and other memorabilia placed in front of the Wall of Names at the Memorial, but the stone of Honor at the Wall of Names can often be found with seashells in front of it. She was one of the younger passengers aboard Flight 93 at only 27.

During the burial, attendees were given an opportunity to pay their respects before the hole was covered. Once it was Mr. Wainio's turn to step forward, he and Clark shared an understanding nod.

"He leaned over the hole and he reached into his pocket and pulled out a handful of seashells. As he leaned over and dropped those shells into the hole he said, 'I miss you, baby.' You could just feel the love that he had for his daughter," Clark recalled.

Clark does not have a relationship with all of the families of the victims, but he always considers them when making decisions.

"I've never met some families who have never been to the memorial. Everybody grieves differently.

Other families are here on a consistent basis, so there are a group of family members that I rely on to help me make the right decisions. Usually when something happens, I have to view my decision through the eyes of the families. One of the most unique elements of my job and in all of my career is to forge a relationship not just with partners, but with the families of those who died on September 11th," Clark said. "They're just wonderful people and they're very grateful, I might add, to the American people and to this nation for remembering their loved ones and keeping it so beautiful and meaningful."

A major aspect of the memorial is the service given each year in memory of those lost. In past years, the 9/11 observance has been relatively standard. Clark steps up to the podium and gives introductions to the families. They pray together and spend the rest of the ceremony listening to various speakers and music.

"In my time here, we've had President Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris, we've had President Trump, Vice President Pence, a lot of people at the highest levels of our government. Don't get me wrong, it's not about elected officials. It's about remembering the 40, remembering what they did for this great country," Clark said.

This year's observance, however, was a very unique and emotional experience for the staff and families alike.

"This year, we didn't have any speakers at all and we didn't have any music in order to really focus on those lost. I stepped to the podium at 9:50 a.m. with some introductory remarks and then we got right into the reading of the names by 10:03, the moment when the plane crashed. After the reading of the names, we had Rabbi Jeffrey Myers (from the) the Tree of Life synagogue take the podium, and he gave the non-denominational invocation. At that point, the families proceeded to the boulder. It was really special and the families loved it," Clark said.

Flight 93's impact is not limited to September 11. While walking towards the Wall of Names during The Oracle staff's tour of the memorial, we stopped at a spot where visitors often leave gifts to the memorial or for those lost.

One of the items there that day was a handwritten letter by an individual with a terminal illness who wrote a thank you note to the victims of Flight 93. Armed with the knowledge that their passing was inevitable, they made the long trip out to the Flight 93 memorial, a place they had always wanted to visit.

"If you think about the five national parks that I oversee, three of them are directly related to where people died. The Johnstown flood killed 2,209 people, roughly 40 soldiers were killed at Fort Necessity, and of course the 40 on Flight 93. It takes its toll, but thankfully, when you have great staff and you have our volunteers, you have both good days and bad days. Sometimes you just take a step back, wipe a tear from your eye, and get an unbelievable sensation of how special this place is."

Q&A -- learning more about the SAHS faculty

Several staff member talked with The Oracle – here is a small sampling of their answers

Mr. Jeff Ward

Q: What is your favorite concert that you've been to?

A: I saw Bruce Springsteen in 2009, right before the Mellon Arena shut down. That place was rocking. Fans would hold up signs of different songs and Bruce would ask his bandmates if they wanted to play the song. Sometimes it was a Beatles song or a classic Bruce song, it was just cool.

Q: Craziest place you've visited?

A: Las Vegas is crazy; I'm not a gambler in terms of sitting there at a table with cards or something like that, but there is so much activity just walking up and down the strip. You're like a bobblehead, just looking around like that. So that's definitely a contender. Another place for the opposite effect was Anchorage, Alaska. It was August in Anchorage and the weather was in the 50's and there was a light drizzle. During the race, all you could see was nature. The course was just one straight path with no one there. So those were two extremes.

Q: Favorite and least favorite place you've run a marathon?

A: Best - it was cool to be in Alaska, and the marathon was run on this straight bike path. We're running up the path and we look and see this mother moose and baby calf and that was awesome. Back then I had a flip phone so I tried to take a picture and it came out terrible, all you could see was a brown blob. I had never seen a moose. It was awesome.

Worst - this may be surprising but my least favorite was Hawaii. The sheer amount of work it took to get

there, the travel, the layovers, and the race itself was bad. It started at 5 a.m. but there was no shade and it was already insanely humid and hot, and then it only got worse as the sun came up. The weather was so hot you could've dropped me off in Florida and told me it was Hawaii and I would believe you. It wasn't scenic at all since we ran on a major highway the whole time so there were no ocean views to enjoy while running. So yeah, it was a dud.

Mrs. Anne Loudon

Q: What is your favorite student slang and could you use it in a sentence?

A: . I like when students say that I have 'good drip'. I think that means nice fashion choices. I also think it's interesting how the word 'slay' can be used as a noun, verb, and adjective.

Q: What is the first car you bought?

A: I was 23 years old and I waited until I had my job here, so I walked everywhere until I bought my car. It was an emerald green 1997 Plymouth Neon, and we drove it until it literally died on Route 8.

Q: If you have a free night to yourself with no responsibility, what

are you doing?

A: Watching a documentary – preferably about cults – eating ice cream, and snuggling with my cats.

Q: What's an album that changed your life after you listened to it for the first time?

A: Well, I really like Folklore by Taylor Swift. She was always popular with my kids and I thought she was ok. Nothing special. But then I heard Folklore and I really dug its poetic lyrics. It's my kind of music, so it definitely turned me into a Swiftie.

Q: Most irresponsible purchase that you've ever made?

A: I don't make irresponsible purchases

Q: What would your last meal be?

A: If I knew it was going to be my last meal, then I'd be too nervous to eat anything.

Q: Cat Talk: What's it like being a cat mom?

A: I love it. I love being with my cats. It's very expensive sometimes because they're not covered under my health insurance, but my kids are older and cats fill that void that I have in my heart to nurture and to hold something and to feed it and to have it love me back. I already am a crazy cat lady and there's no shame in that.

Mr. Bill Mitchell

Q: What's the most irresponsible purchase you've made?

A: The most irresponsible purchase I made is a katana for my fear of the zombie apocalypse. I spent an unreasonable amount of money on a legit, real sword that has been sharpened with the idea that if we ever hit a zombie apocalypse, I'll be able to become Michonne from The Walking Dead and go out and handle some business.

Q: What is the first car you bought?


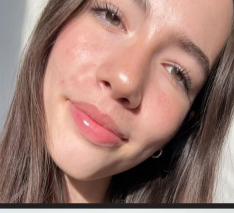
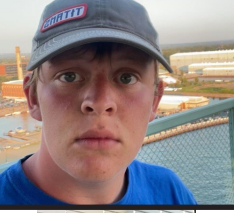
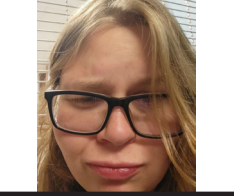

A: I saved all my money and I bought a 1997 Chevy Cavalier for \$3,200. It was a sweet two door car. Burnt orange was the color. There was nothing like it, it was fantastic. I still love that car to this day. If I ever won the Powerball, I would go out and try to find a 1997 two door Chevy Cavalier and have it reconditioned so I could drive that car all out. I put 177,000 miles on that car until it was done.

Q: What would your last meal be?

A: It's going to start off with a New York strip steak from Hoss's Steak and Sea house, followed up with a loaf of their delicious garlic bread. After that, I'm moving on to a half pound roast beef sandwich from Arby's. After, I'm going to get some Pizza Hut breadsticks. Then I'm moving on to a Long John Silvers family meal: all chicken, extra fries, and extra hush puppies. The next thing is a large cheese pizza from Sir Pizza. I'm going to wash that down with two liters of diet Mountain Dew and two gallons of Gallagher's lemon iced tea, a specific type of iced tea that's up in the Johnstown area.

To see the full interviews -- scan the QR code or visit ShalerOracle.com



THE GRID		A good song you recently discovered?	What is your hidden talent?	What is your dream job?	Something you wouldn't wish on your worst enemy?	Grossest food you've ever eaten?
Freshman Brayden Mitchell		All of the Lights- Kanye West	Crack Knuckles a lot	Pro athlete	Family to suffer	Slushie Cup (Fantasy Football Punishment)
Sophomore Ana Emmons		Linger: The Cranberries	i'm really good at soccer for some reason	psychologist	Loneliness	any seafood is disgusting
Junior Jack Clark		Teeroit: Tee Grizzley	I'm a good country music singer	Professional Snowboarder	watching a friend die	starfish
Senior Quinne Vulakovich		Glad to be Here: Friday pilots club	I'm super duper flexible	demolition for a construction company	eating celery	I once ate dry cat food at a birthday party
Faculty Mrs. Howell		You Say: Lauren Daigle	I can wiggle my ears	Ice cream taste tester	Being a Browns fan	blood pudding