

The Oracle

Volume 47 Issue 1

Student Newspaper Of Shaler Area High School

December 2020

IT team working OT to accommodate virtual learning

by Aidan Brophy

It's fair to say that the last few months have been hectic. The switch from an all-remote model to a hybrid learning system has been a bumpy road for everyone. But, it's also fair to say that the last few months could've been a lot worse.

A large part of making sure the schools have remained mostly functional has been Shaler Area's IT Department. They remain the unsung heroes of the district and according to Mitch Stivason, the Coordinator of Technology, there is a reason for that.

"If your IT department is doing their job correctly, you don't know about your IT department," he said.

The department has certainly had its fair share of problems to fix throughout lockdown and the eventual switch to hybrid. When lockdown initially began last spring, a number of problems popped up that had to be fixed.

Providing tech support to students at home proved to be a challenge.

"It's one thing to support kids and staff in school, but we have to have some kind of online form where we can remotely assist them or contact parents for the younger kids," Stivason said.

According to Eric Stocklas, the high school's resident tech support, one of the other problems was WiFi, especially at individual homes.

"With people online, you can't be watching Netflix, and your parents are working in the same house, and two kids are also online working, it can be a big pain," Stocklas said.

In order to circumvent these problems, the district made an effort to provide WiFi hotspots to students who needed them the most to make sure they could stay connected to classes, and a tech support remote-control app was pushed out to student iPads,



alongside a ticket/troubleshooting guide website.

But providing students with iPads was another challenge entirely.

One of the largest problems that the department faced over the summer was acquiring the necessary equipment for the students and teachers. When lockdown began, the district didn't have enough iPads for every student k-12, and the ones that had to be ordered from Apple in June didn't arrive until September.

"Demand is so high right now that it was very difficult to get the devices in a timely manner," Stivason said.

Teachers also suffered from a lack of tech. Laptops for mobile carts still hadn't arrived, and in one case, a shipment of iMacs was canceled by Apple due to lack of supply.

Things began to change, for better and for worse, with the gradual transition to a hybrid schedule. Teachers returning to teach in the schools had to learn how to operate new hardware and software, as well as how to teach to two separate groups of students simultaneously.

Just one example of the various changes made within the district during the prep for hybrid was the rolling-out of 35 additional laptop carts, some of which, as mentioned earlier, arrived later than

expected. Another was the movement of login-hyperlinks to student-resource websites to one location, minimizing the amount of potential login information students had to remember and streamlining the process. These changes increased the tech department's workload drastically.

"We went pretty big pretty quick, so we had to scale up a little bit, and it added a lot more management on the back-end. But it also added more hardware that our techs had to cover," Stivason said. "Every year, the demand seems to increase on the technology department, so it's been pretty stressful."

Students, teachers, and staff alike face technology problems daily. The IT department, therefore, has had its hands full. That may have been best illustrated by another member of the IT department, Jon Dolny, who was so busy with different projects and issues that he couldn't find time to be interviewed for this story.

No matter how the school moves forward, the IT department will always have work to do and things to fix. Even as we have shifted back to all-remote learning, the challenges continue. Without kids in buildings the IT team will be available at the Central Office conference room daily from 9-12 and 1-4 to help with any tech issues that can't be handled online.

Often their praises remain unsung, and they remain a force that works solely in the background, but their efforts are not unnoticed.

"Our tech team has been vital," Superintendent Mr. Sean Aiken said. "We would not be where we are without them."

So every time your iPad is fixed, or the WiFi comes back on, or the teacher's whiteboard software is explained to them enough times for them to use it correctly, remember to thank those "behind the scenes" techs. They are the ones trying to get everything right when stuff is going wrong.

Virtual learning may have put an end to "snow" days

by Addison Kania

Are snow days going away for good? Shaler Area School District Superintendent, Mr. Sean Aiken, thinks so.

"We will probably never have a traditional snow day again unless there is some unforeseen circumstance," Mr. Aiken said.

The positives? No more days will be taken off spring break! Virtual learning will occur in place of the typical day off that comes with a snow day.

"Now it's going to be a pretty clear-cut decision. If it's unsafe, we will just go virtual that day," Mr. Aiken said.

This makes it easier on the school district personnel as well who, on a typical snow day, are up every hour checking what the weather is looking like and on phone calls with other districts as well as bus companies.

Some students like junior Rebecca Schiavone think that having a virtual learning day in place of a snow day is a good idea. Like a lot of students, she does not like how snow days have to be made up either during spring break or at the end of the school year.

"Especially now that we have done the whole remote learning thing, teachers know how to teach virtually better than they would have if we had not gone



through all of this so I feel we would get a lot more out of it," Schiavone said.

On the other hand, some students are going to miss the idea of having a traditional snow day.

"They were always so much fun just to be a kid again and go out and have fun. There's too much technology today where you don't always get to enjoy that," senior Michaela Scott said.

Snow days are a reminder of many people's childhoods. Waking up to the news reporting the schools that have been closed for the day may not be the reality anymore. In-

stead, students will have to wake up and get ready for a day of virtual learning. Students will just have to be prepared with their iPads and any other school supplies that they need.

"I seriously doubt that we call a school cancellation now. It will just be a virtual learning day," Mr. Aiken said.

With no more snow days called, the way two hour delays will still be utilized as they have in past.

"We will still do the two-hour delays when it is necessary, but at the same time if we have to call a cancellation it will make it a little bit easier to call because we know that we are equipped to do virtual learning," Mr. Aiken said.

OPINIONS

Too many questions about a COVID-19 vaccine

by Addison Kania

Americans are desperate for a vaccine to prevent the continued spread of the COVID-19 virus. If you are one of those people, you won't have to worry about fighting me for a spot in line for the vaccine. I will not be one of those waiting in line to receive it.

Over the last few months, multiple companies have been working on producing a vaccine. Recent comments by President Trump indicate that the vaccine could be available to the general public by mid-October. However, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says that it does not expect a vaccine to be available until into next year.

Regardless of when it is available, I will not be clamoring to get vaccinated. First, the lack of significant testing of the vaccine is worrisome to me. This vaccine may have serious side effects that aren't known about yet. The identification of side effects is limited because of the small sample size and small window of time available to test the vaccine. The vaccine could eradicate the virus, but ten

years from now I could have significant nerve damage, cancer, heart problems, or any number of health issues.

Another concern of mine is that the vaccine is being produced at a very fast rate. President Trump said that he would like to make the vaccine available to the public almost immediately. The vaccine is being produced so quickly that there is no long term supporting data as to its effectiveness.

It would break the record for the shortest time for development for a vaccine. Normally it takes several years for a vaccine to be created and made available to the public. Presently, the vaccine would be available in less than a year's time from its initial development. That is disconcerting.

Lastly, with multiple companies working on vaccines, I wonder which one is the best for me. The companies obviously will not be producing exact copies of the vaccine because they are all doing their own research. I am not going to put my confidence into one specific vaccine at this time.

The negatives seem to outweigh the positives and the risks are far too great.

The Pirates are proof that you get what you (don't) pay for

by Anthony Cugini

Watching the baseball playoffs, there was one question that I couldn't get out of my mind. Why are the Pirates so bad?

That's been a common question among Pittsburgh baseball fans for years now. Why are the Pirates so bad? This question is asked on a very consistent basis by baseball fans in Pittsburgh and I know the answer: Bob Nutting.

Nutting owns the Pirates and thus has a great deal of power in the organization. Nutting is the one who has the final word on big decisions such as how much money the team is going to get to spend in the offseason.

One of the biggest issues when it comes to the Pirates is money. Nutting, being the penny pincher he is, never gives the Pirates much to work with. This is why whenever the Pirates are lucky enough to come across a good player they can't keep him because they aren't willing to pay for good players.

Tyler Glasnow was the Rays starter in game one and game 5 of the World

Series. The Pirates drafted and developed Glasnow just to trade him away and watch him become a superstar.

It's frustrating that Glasnow was never good in Pittsburgh, but the problem is even if he did become a great pitcher here he wouldn't have stayed long. Whenever a player plays really well he gets paid. That's just how baseball works. Whenever the Pirates have a player like Gerrit Cole, fans know they won't be here for too long because Nutting isn't going to spend any money.

After Andrew McCutchen became an MVP and one of the league's top players we knew he wouldn't be in Pittsburgh for much longer. He deservedly wanted big money and the Pirates weren't going to give it to him. Eventually the Pirates traded McCutchen.

Another player traded for financial reasons was Gerrit Cole. Pittsburgh knew it wasn't going to pay him when his rookie contract ran out so they decided to ship him off to Houston.

Another issue is the coaching and player development throughout the organization. Players like Charlie Morton and Tyler Glasnow never reached

their full potential in Pittsburgh due to issues when it came to development. With the right coaching they could've been stars for the Bucs.

Imagine a rotation with former Pirates like Gerrit Cole, Charlie Morton, and Tyler Glasnow.

No team in baseball could ever compete on a regular basis with this plan and mentality. The bottom line is the Pirates aren't going to be good until they begin spending money. Nutting either needs to start spending or he needs to sell the team.

In order for a team to win they need to have a good mix of young guys who come up through the system and older players who have either been signed or traded for. You can't just win with a bunch of youngsters that have been in the minor leagues for the majority of

their career.

For example, the Rays, who just won the AL pennant, have younger guys like Randy Arozarena who have stepped up and become a star out of nowhere, while at the same time they also have veterans like Morton and Hunter Renfroe who the Rays signed and traded for in the offseason.

Tampa Bay isn't a big market just like Pittsburgh. Nutting should be taking notes. The Rays and Pirates are very similar in the fact that they don't have a lot of money. The only difference is the Rays spent their money on players while Nutting most likely used it on a new pool.

Pirates fans will continue to suffer until changes are made at the top of the organization.

We want to hear from you!

Have something to say?

Have a story idea you want us to cover?

Email us -- oracle@sasd.k12.pa.us

Tweet us -- @ShalerOracle

AXIOS TUTORING

BEST TUTORS + BEST STRATEGIES = BEST RESULTS

www.axios tutoring.com

10 YEARS STRONG
2010 - 2020

The Oracle

Staff: Rebecca Beckas, Tia Bozzo, Aidan Brophy, Anthony Cugini, Dominic DiTommaso, Cate Gordon, Kiera Harger, Alyssa Hillwig, Addison Kania, Ella Katona, Cassidy Laffey, Maggie Rea, Mia Schubert, Savannah Schultis, Corey Sigmund, Natalie Spears, Hannah Stelitano, Andrew Wolkiewicz

Faculty Advisor: Mr. Eric Schott

The Oracle is the official student newspaper of Shaler Area High School. Although it is published by the journalism classes, one does not have to be enrolled in a class to contribute. Opinions expressed in **The Oracle** are those of the individual writers. Letters to the Editor are encouraged and welcome. Any letter intended for publication must be signed, but names will be withheld upon request. Articles and letters may be mailed to the high school (ATTN: The Oracle) or emailed to oracle@sasd.k12.pa.us.

The Oracle reserves the right to condense or omit any letters or articles unfit for publication.



IN-PERSON CAMPUS VISITS

Offered Daily!

TO REGISTER: laroche.edu/visit

844-838-4578 | 412-536-1272

admissions@laroche.edu | laroche.edu



**LA ROCHE
UNIVERSITY**

Angel Tree donations lag without students in building

by Hannah Stelitano

Shaler Area High School has been participating in its annual Angel Tree donation drive since the 1990s. The Angel Tree is one of the district's ways to give back to the community by providing children in need with an extra special Christmas.

Students and families in the district are able to participate by donating gifts for boys and girls ages 1-18. Mrs. Mindy Thiel, the activities director, is in charge of putting together the Angel Tree program at the high school and she puts a lot of effort and time into organizing it.

She wants to make sure that this year, more than any other, is extra special for every child receiving these gifts.

"Families in our district have been impacted by layoffs, reduction in work hours, and business closures due to the COVID-19 virus. They are struggling to pay bills, rent, and keeping food on the table for their families. They should not have the additional worry about providing Christmas gifts for their kids," Thiel said.

During a typical year, a Christmas tree with paper cut outs of angels are tied on the branches and students are able to take an angel off of the tree. Due



to the coronavirus, this is obviously not possible to implement, so a Google form has been created where you can sign up to purchase a gift based on gender and age of the kids.

Most students do better when they have a physical reminder like the cutout angel rather than a virtual angel. Due to all-remote school, there have only been 80 angels taken whereas this time last year, approximately 150 students would have been signed up.

"Being virtual is a challenge since students are not hearing the reminders every day on the announce-

ments and having teachers encourage their classes to donate," Thiel said.

Getting to school may be more of a challenge to drop off your gift donation, but high school staff and students are encouraged to do what they can.

"I am confident that SAHS students, staff, and families will come through to make the holidays brighter for those in need," Thiel said.

Students are reminded to bring their unwrapped gifts into the Activities Office by this Friday, December 11. It is not too late to select an angel either.

If you haven't bought a gift yet, Thiel encourages you to buy gifts for the older age groups.

"People usually prefer the younger children, but the children in the 15-18 age range are usually the last to go since they are perceived as 'harder' to shop for. But, if our students think about what they would like for Christmas, then someone out there would like that gift as well," Thiel said.

You can bring your unwrapped gift to the High School between 6:30 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. any weekday. All donations will be given to the Network of Hope and North Hills Community Outreach who will then pass out the gifts to families in need.

Food Drive nets more than 700 items

by Corey Sigmund & Natalie Spears

Shaler Area High School participated in the annual food drive competition to help the The Bread of Life Food Pantry. A tight competition within the school caused the students and staff to donate a grand total of 730 items. This food donation will help those who are relying on the pantry, giving them food for the upcoming holidays.

"I do not know when this tradition started," Activities Director Mrs. Mindy Thiel said. "It was happening when I was a student here at the high school in the mid 90s, and it is a tradition that I continued when I became Activities Director."

Thiel is a firm believer in helping out the community and the food drive was a great way of doing so.

"Our goal was to collect 1,258 items -- 1 item for every student enrolled at Shaler Area High School," Thiel said. "We were able to collect 730 items this year. The winning classes were Mr. Taylor and Mr. Mason."

The winning classes will receive a treat when students return to the building.

Obviously, 2020 has not treated anyone nicely. The country has been struck with economic deficits, and an extremely large amount of unemployment. So a simple food drive such as this helped hundred of families in need.

"It is so important to give back to our community who supports our school. This year especially with so many people unemployed or have had their hours reduced, if we can help a little, it will go a long way" Thiel said.

Every item that was donated will be given to someone in need, helping them to have one less thing to worry about this holiday season.

"The Bread of Life Food Pantry was so thankful when I called to tell them we had a food drive," Thiel said. "With the holidays fast approaching they are seeing a greater need than ever in our community."

Alexis Weber, the manager of the Bread of Life Food Pantry, is very grateful for all the donations and how they help all the families in need.

"We have been very busy down here The support of the community has been absolutely amazing. It is the support of the community that allows us to provide all this stuff to these families. We are very grateful," Weber said.

PA's Largest Family Owned Prom & Bridal Store

Our remodel is complete.
More fitting rooms! New alterations area!



All your favorite designers and then some.

MB PROM[®]
& SPECIAL OCCASION

123 S. Urania Ave. Greensburg 724.836.6626

Download dress catalogs and view our dresses at mbprom.com

Thiel living her dream as teacher, Activities Director

by Maggie Rea

If you're a student at Shaler Area HS, chances are you know Mrs. Mindy Thiel, the Activities Director and AP European History teacher who seemingly coordinates a million different events and keeps "the other half of education" running smoothly.

Maybe you know her because you performed in the musical, or joined an honors society, or went to a school dance, or helped build floats before Homecoming, or were on student council, or were a student in her AP European History class. The list goes on and on. It's hard to avoid knowing Mrs. Thiel.

Whatever you're doing at Shaler Area, Mrs. Thiel is probably directly or indirectly involved. She works tirelessly to give Shaler Area High School students a full high school experience and the opportunity to participate in many awesome activities.

Before becoming the activities director, she was a social studies teacher at Shaler, and before that, she was a SAHS student when she already had an idea what she wanted to do. From a young age, she loved to teach, and she would make worksheets and lessons for her younger cousins.

"I always knew I wanted to be a teacher," Mrs. Thiel said.

When she got to Shaler Area HS, she had amazing teachers and was inspired by their excitement about teaching.

"They were just so passionate about what they did," she said. "I was like, 'I want to be like them!'"

Knowing that she wanted to follow in the footsteps of her teachers, Mrs. Thiel went to Penn State to pursue education. After her first education class, which she really disliked, she actually considered going into hotel and restaurant management. Luckily for us, her mom talked her into sticking with teaching.

After college, she came back to Shaler and got a teaching job, working alongside the teachers that had inspired her so much.

"My teachers were my idols when I was a student and then to be working with them was surreal. They were all so kind when I returned. They took me under their wings and showed me the ropes as a new teacher," she said. "I thought they were great people as a student and then I learned they were even better colleagues. They are my heroes."

Right off the bat, Mrs. Thiel taught AP European History and Honors Economics. Teaching Econ was a learning experience, she said, since she had only taken two economics classes- one in high school and one in college. Despite this, her former students say that she was a great teacher from the start.

"During my senior year, I had Mrs. Thiel for AP European History," social studies teacher Mr. Jim McDermott, who had her during her first year of teaching, said. "She had to be around twenty-three years old, teaching AP to kids who were 17 or 18, but she didn't show any weakness. I remember my mom went to Curriculum Night and told me that some man was challenging Mrs. Thiel by saying this class was too hard for his sweet daughter, and he was trying to intimidate her, but Mrs. Thiel didn't back down. She was a fun and effective teacher, although I'll never forgive her for taking off points on my Martin Luther 95 theses presentation!"

One year after she started teaching, the AP Economics teacher left halfway through the year, and she ended up taking over the job of teaching that class.

"That was a disaster. I try to block that year out," Mrs. Thiel said, laughing.

"She was still a fairly new teacher," English

teacher Mrs. Kristen Aluise, who was a student in that Econ class, said. "She really tried her best as Econ was not her expertise, and she was thrust into the role pretty much overnight. I remember that she would prepare so very thoroughly for the lesson, but then, we would ask her a question. She would just sigh and tell us she would figure it out and let us know. As promised, by the next day, she always did. I always appreciated that about the class. We knew she was trying so hard for us, and we really loved that about her."

Many staff members are former students, so it isn't uncommon for teachers to teach alongside former pupils, something Mrs. Thiel enjoys.

"I love working with former students. I first met them as young adults and then I see how they matured while in college. They are now these young professionals who come back with this energy and new ideas," she said.

Because of her duties as Activities Director, Mrs. Thiel only teaches AP European History now. The class is memorable for anyone who has taken it from putting on the French Revolution puppet show to going to the Henry VIII tea party.

"I had so much fun in AP Euro with Mrs. Thiel," junior Caty Clark said. "We got to do tons of fun activities and she prepared us so well for the AP test."

As soon as she became a Shaler Area teacher, Mrs. Thiel got involved with school activities. She was the sophomore class sponsor, Majorettes sponsor, and helped with the National Honors Society. When the Activities Director position opened up, Mrs. Thiel decided to apply.

"I want you guys as students to have the same experience that I had when I was here," she said.

She met her best friends by getting involved with high school activities, and those people are still her friends today.

As Activities Director, Mrs. Thiel coordinates all the high school clubs and school functions, like the dances, Homecoming, and Performing Arts events.

"Mrs. Thiel is very dedicated to Shaler Area students and works countless hours to make your world a better place. We would not be the same high school without her," High School Principal Dr. Timothy Royall said.

Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, Mrs. Thiel has been working hard to give students the opportunity to participate in activities safely. This is a challenge, because the activities department has to think outside the box and come up with new ways of having events. The school play, "Little Women", was able to happen this year thanks to Mrs. Thiel and the department's work to live stream it since the in-person audience was limited.

"I want everything to happen for you guys as students. So it's literally sitting down and going, 'alright, how are we going to do this,' and just working



Mrs. Mindy Thiel (The Oracle)

around the constraints that we have to work around," she said.

Mrs. Thiel has had to make a lot of tough decisions, especially during this pandemic, about what can and cannot happen. Because of that she is no stranger to receiving criticism. Back in the spring, when prom had to be cancelled due to safety concerns, she dealt with many complaints some of which became personal attacks against her.

"I just try to be a turtle and let it roll off my back, but I'm not always successful with that," she said. "When people make it a personal attack against you, that's really hard."

When she isn't keeping high school activities running, Mrs. Thiel spends time with her husband and two kids.

Mrs. Thiel encourages her kids to get involved in school activities because she wants them to have an amazing school experience.

"They are involved in activities because I make them, but also because they are both very social. When they get to high school, I hope they continue to be involved in something that they are passionate about without me pushing them, but I have no problem pushing them either," she said.

One thing she couldn't push back on was the choice of family pets. She admitted to always being a dog person, but she wasn't allowed to have pets other than fish growing up. When she moved out of her parent's house, she seized her chance and got a dog.

"There was a sign up one day at the deli counter while I was getting meat: 'free puppies'. Who doesn't want free puppies?" she said. "So, I got a free puppy from a deli counter."

Unfortunately, her husband and kids love cats. They started feeding one of their neighbor's seven outdoor cats and soon the cat wouldn't leave their house.

"We stole the neighbor's cat," Mrs. Thiel joked.

Mrs. Thiel had an amazing experience as a Shaler Area High School student, and those experiences inspired her to want to give every Shaler Area student the chance to have those same experiences. She has worked through criticism, constraints, and a global pandemic to make sure every SAHS student has the opportunity to experience the "other half of education".

Visit our website
ShalerOracle.com



Follow us on Twitter
and Instagram

@ ShalerOracle

Winter sport teams trying to prepare despite uncertainty

by Cate Gordon

With Covid-19 cases on the rise in Allegheny county, winter sports for Shaler Area High School have had to make provisions and changes in order to compete in a positive and safe way this winter season. Along with these new rules and regulations many challenges and confusion have come into play.

As of right now winter sports will be starting up as their season approaches. The transfer from hybrid to all virtual for the school district will not have an affect on the start of winter sports.

According to, "The school becoming virtual really does not affect athletics, since our teams are generally much smaller than a school population it is easier to maintain protocols and tracing under the rules of the PIAA," Mr. Clint Rauscher, Shaler Area's athletic director, said.

In order to compete safely, a lot of new rules have been placed on the teams. They have to follow guidelines they have never seen before and needed to change the way they play and practice.

"In order to keep the swimmers separated as much as possible, we have them split up with some in the deep end and some in the shallow end. Also, all

"There has been no normalcy. The one thing I've learned is that we need to keep pushing forward because you never know what tomorrow will bring."

-- Rob Niederberger

swimmers have to have their masks on until they get into the water. We have plastic bags for them to put their masks in to keep at the end of their lanes," Ms. Abigale May, varsity swim coach, said.

Similarly, the basketball team needed to make changes to their daily routine in order to follow the demands by the PIAA.

"When the guys show up, we have to take their temperature outside of the school before they even get in. If they are higher than 100, they get sent home. We need to wear masks the entire time we practice, even when running. I don't think that is a favorite thing for the players," boys basketball coach Mr. Rob Niederberger said.

One of the hardest challenges for the winter sports teams is not being able to practice the entire team all at one time. Many groups have limits on

how many people are allowed in the gym at one time.

"The biggest challenge we faced as a team due to COVID is the fact that we haven't practiced as a whole team in weeks. We would have put in more things offensively and defensively, but I hesitated because I want everyone to be there to learn them together," Niederberger said.

There has been a lot of confusion on how it is possible to play and compete in times like these. The PIAA is changing the standards constantly and it is hard to plan ahead for games and meets. A lot is still undecided.

"The most confusing part has been how a meet can be run. Practices haven't been too bad, but at the meet we haven't gotten clear guidance from the PIAA on whether or not the lane assignments for each team need to be done in a different format," May said.

This pre-season for sports here at Shaler Area has been something no one has ever experienced before. Teams are trying their best to make their season as fun and normal as it has been in years past.

"There has been no normalcy. The one thing I've learned is that we need to keep pushing forward because you never know what tomorrow will bring," Niederberger said.

Titans look for positives to take from tough season



Shaler Area QB Dominic Rossi

by Anthony Cugini

Another year, another football season in the books. Despite COVID-19 restrictions the team was able to play a shortened season.

With all of the cancellations in the spring and through the summer, it was difficult to prepare for the season.

"Missing the rest of winter in the weight room and missing spring practices really put us behind," head coach Mr. Jim Ryan said. "Typically we have 7 on 7 passing camps in the spring and summer. That provides the players with an opportunity to compete against other schools before the season starts."

Not only were they not able to get in normal preparation when it came to actually playing, but they also had issues with keeping the players in shape throughout the off-season.

"We were posting workouts, having chalk-talk sessions, and even asking players to record themselves performing specific drills at home from March to July, but it's not the same," Ryan said.

Then the Titans had to play games during this pandemic which brought a whole new set of restrictions and issues for coaches and players to deal with.

"Once we were allowed to get started, I spent more time on COVID protocol than actual football. It was

quite a challenge to say the least," Ryan said.

Throughout the season restrictions were constantly being changed. Preparing for each game was difficult as nobody was sure if the game was even going to occur or not. There was always a chance that someone on the team or the opposing team could get the virus and force everyone involved into quarantine.

Unfortunately, the results on the field were not any more uplifting. The Titans finished the season 0-7, but showed some improvement. After three games the team averaged less than 5 points per game, but in the final four games they averaged 19.5 points per game.

There is always time to evaluate at the end of a season no matter the record at the end of the year.

"I have an idea of what to expect moving forward in a world with COVID and will reconfigure how we prepare this off-season assuming we will have the same challenges ahead," Ryan said.

I also have a greater appreciation for the real thing. I have already begun to evaluate my performance in regards to what I can do better. My expectation is that our football players do the same for themselves so that winning becomes a real thing."

Slow pitch softball team's surge gets team in playoffs

by Natalie Spears

The Shaler Area Slow Pitch Softball Team had a very strong team this year. The girls varsity team finished the season with a strong 8-6 record, which qualified them for the playoffs. They headed into the playoffs this season as the 6th seed out of 14 teams.

During the regular season games, the Lady Titans had a six-game winning streak before their first playoff game. These wins were crucial for their placement as the 6th seed. The girls knew they needed these wins to get into the playoffs, and stepped up their game to achieve this goal.

"I felt exhilarated," junior Abby Guiste said. "At that point we really turned our season around and I knew we had a shot at playoffs... we really came together as a team."

The players all had a boost of confidence due to their winning streak. The Lady Titans were beginning to realize they were a force to be reckoned with, and that other teams had to be on their toes when stepping up to the plate against these girls.

During their winning streak, the girls pulled out a win against Plum, which Guiste considered to be her most unforgettable game.

"The most memorable game would be the game against Plum, when my sister and I hit back to back home runs in the first inning and we both ended up having two home runs that game," Guiste said.

After the girls regular season games ended, the team and coaches put on their game faces and prepared to battle in the playoffs.

In round one of the playoffs, the girls shut out Baldwin in a 17-0 win. With such a solid defense and offense, the Lady Titans secured a big win to allow them to continue onto round two. The girls were feeling confident and prepared for the quarterfinals.

After their big win against Baldwin, the Lady Titans were ready for an intense game against Bethel Park. Shaler Area was up 4-2 in the 6th inning, but Bethel Park then scored six runs to lead 8-4. In the 7th inning Shaler Area scored 2 runs to make the score 8-6, but unfortunately the Lady Titans could not complete the comeback.

These girls started off with a 2-6 record, but ended the season 9-7. The players battled through a rough start and had their hard work pay off.

"I was very proud because my team did very well after a rough start to the season," Guiste said.

The future for the Lady Titans is looking very bright. The junior varsity team had an overall record of 13 wins and only 1 loss.

"We will be a very successful team next year because our JV team is very good, and all of the girls will be able to play up on varsity," Guiste said. "I think we have a better shot at making it further into the playoffs with a fresh start to the season next year because this year was very hectic due to COVID."



Abby Guiste

Titans end season as WPIAL runner-up

by Cate Gordon



Mia Schubert spikes the ball against Moon. (Tom Rekowski)

This year the Shaler Girls Volleyball team has had an excellent season with numerous wins and accomplishments. They ended the regular season with a 10-2 record and found themselves heading into their first class 4A WPIAL championship. The girls fell short to North Allegheny in the championship match, but were crowned the runner-up for the first time in the team's history.

The hard work the girls put in this season certainly paid off. The team annihilated many of their opponents during the season including 3-0 wins against playoff teams like Seneca Valley and Pine Richland.

An important match for the Titans was their match against then-undefeated Moon. The Titans made a statement by taking Moon down 3-0.

That led up to two matches with undefeated section rival North Allegheny, which had won the past three PIAA championships. In the first, Shaler won the first two sets of the first match, but eventually fell 3-2. A few days later, Titans hosted the rematch, but North Allegheny was able to rally after losing the first game and take the match 3-1.

This outstanding record put the girls in a great

spot, ranked number 2 their playoff bracket. The girls playoff journey started with a second-round home match against Canon McMillan where the Titans dominated in a 3-0 win. The Titans were able to shut down the Big Macs in three short games with scores of 25-14, 25-10, and 25-12.

"Our team came out with lots of intensity and confidence. We jumped in front early on them and never wavered," head coach Paul Stadelman said.

The win against Canon-McMillan helped the Titans prepare for the challenging match against Oakland Catholic that was ahead of them. The Titans fought through five competitive games against the Eagles before prevailing 3-2.

"This match was a battle between two very good teams," Stadelman said. "I was pleased with their effort and battle level. They truly worked hard and deserved the win."

After fighting their way through the playoffs, the Titans found themselves in the class 4A WPIAL championship where they would face North Allegheny. During the match the Titans were able to take one set off of the Tigers but fell in the other 3 sets.

Although the Titans were not titled the WPIAL champions, they accomplished many goals and made history for the Shaler Area Girls Volleyball program.

Hard work gets CC runners past COVID-19 challenges

by Tia Bozzo

Like so many other Shaler Area sports teams, the Shaler Area Cross Country team handled their season with grace. With so much uncertainty floating around regarding the Covid-19 pandemic, the cross country team remained focused.

Having the luxury to hold practices and meets outside, the team was free to stay focused on competing. Unique to cross-country, teams train all season for one or two meets, so the time to compete always means more. This proved true as various individuals had success throughout the season including Ryan Paris, Tyler Paszkowski, Samantha Hennen and Danielle Eshelman, who all regularly placed at invitationals.

Preparing for the season was no easy feat, but Coach Justin Eskra acknowledged his team's time and dedication to training. Having the spring season of track and field canceled due to the coronavirus, the team had to adapt to its schedule of preparation with some members running up to 50 miles per week. With members training all summer, the team saw its goals achieved by the first meet of the season.

"The team really took control of practices this year and constantly pushed themselves every day to see what their limits were," Eskra said.

In addition to COVID-related changes, the team competes in a tough section and comparatively has a smaller roster. Nonetheless, junior Samantha Hennen said her team handled the challenges well.

"Our team competed very well against other teams this season. Every runner on the team had a competitive season and pushed hard at every meet," Hennen said.

The team faced several challenges including the fact that the PIAA cut down the number of teams and individuals that would run at Hershey this year. The top three teams that would have qualified got cut to only one team, and the number of individuals got cut from 15 to 10.

The team did not have any runners move to the PIAA championships this year. The restrictions regarding COVID-19 prevented juniors Tyler Paszkowski, Samantha Hennen, and Ryan Paris from likely qualifying.



Tyler Paszkowski

Soccer team bounces back from slow start



by Kiera Harger

This year, fall sports were approached in a completely different way in order to balance safety and physical activity and the boys soccer team was no exception.

Despite starting the season 0-4, they finished the season with a record of 6-9, proving the determination the team had to succeed despite obstacles. When prompted to describe his team's season in one word, junior Dominic DiTommaso replied, "progress."

The boys began their season with preseason conditioning practices in the summer. They were required to wear a mask before and after training, but permitted to take them off during activity. COVID guidelines required that teams begin practicing in smaller groups for a certain amount of time and gradually combine into larger groups until they could practice as a full team. This process was definitely odd for the players, but they adjusted well.

"The main goal this year for most people was to make playoffs, but as a team it was definitely working together and not as individuals. We definitely worked more as a team than by ourselves," junior Jacob Ciganik said.

Through working together as a team, they were able to get in six quality wins for their season.

"We were more unified as one this year and it resulted in a lot more success throughout the season," Ciganik said.

The highlight of the season was the team's home victory against Pine Richland.

"Our home game against Pine Richland was our best game this year. After losing to them the first time we played them earlier this year, we upset them 2-1," junior Jack Keenan said.

Although the 2020 season was not what the players hoped for since they did not qualify for WPIAL playoffs, the team was not unsuccessful as their final seven games show. The team will lose seven seniors, but the boys have confidence in the underclassmen to make bigger strides for next year.

Tennis team overcomes challenges



Senior Olivia Wilkins

by Mia Schubert

As COVID-19 caused some pessimistic outlooks on the seasons for several sports teams, it didn't deter the girl's tennis team. After being temporarily shut down for two weeks because of a player contracting the virus, the team returned to playing some competitive matches to end the season. Many coaches would have viewed the two-week quarantine as crippling, but head coach Mr. Brian Duermeyer took a different approach.

"The COVID-19 shutdown cost us some momentum, but it was not a fatal blow to our season. In fact, it gave me a chance to alter the lineup and to provide opportunities to some players who deserved a look," he said. "After the shutdown, I used some newer combinations and learned a lot about just how talented and deep our program is."

Junior Kiera Harger noted when the team returned from quarantine that "everyone was a little rusty the first practice back."

However, the two-week delay did have a downfall. Two matches were totally canceled and three matches had to be rescheduled.

Senior Olivia Wilkins was disappointed that her final season was shortened.

"We did end up having fewer matches this season than we did in the past," she said.

The team finished with a record of 5-6.

The cancellation of two matches wasn't the only element of the season impacted by COVID-19. State and local restrictions prevented spectators from attending the matches.

"My parents had to watch me play from the car," Wilkins said.

Eventually, fans were allowed to view the matches from a better vantage point than their vehicles while following social distancing and mask-wearing.

Even with the many challenges and restrictions related to the pandemic, the tennis players still found en-

joyment in their season.

"My experience this year was great! Even though it was my first year I felt like I had been playing for years because all of the girls and coaches were so nice and welcoming," junior Corey Sigmund said.

Even those who have been around the program noted how much team chemistry made the season an enjoyable one.

"The coaches are great and the team gets along very well. A lot of the kids I had never talked to before, so getting to know everyone and becoming friends with them made tennis very enjoyable," Wilkins added.

It also was a very competitive year for the Titans. Their biggest competition each year typically includes teams from schools such as Pine Richland and Seneca Valley. This year, their fiercest competitors were the Hampton Talbots, who the Titans were able to defeat 5-0 in a match.

"We hadn't beaten Hampton for years, and they always have a good team, so it was a big deal to get that victory," Duermeyer said.

Harger enjoyed the victory against Hampton, but also felt proud of Shaler's performance against other teams as well.

"Teams like Pine and Moon are always tough," she said, "but I was impressed with how we handled the competition."

One key factor that led to the Titan's success this season was Wilkins. She competed as Shaler's No. 1 player in a AAA Division, one of the most challenging positions to play in high school sports. Wilkins ended the season with a record of 5-4.

"Because of her play, Olivia gave us a chance in every match. She won five times and led us to every team victory," Duermeyer said.

COVID-19 could have negatively impacted the tennis team in really big ways, but the coach and his players found a way to overcome and turned their challenges into opportunities.

Girls golfers enjoyed their season

by Corey Sigmund

The Shaler Area Girls Golf Team wrapped up its season at the end of September. The girls won a total of 3 matches this season out of 6, and had one individual, Emilee Miller, advance to the WPIAL Class AAA championships.

Sydney Lang, a junior and a newcomer to the golf team this year, said that she had an amazing experience with the team this season.

"I felt like part of the team right away, it really felt like a second family to me, even though I just started the sport," Lang said.

This was Miller's fourth and final year on the golf team. She is a very experienced player and was the only one to make it to the playoffs.

"My favorite memory from this season was shooting the team's lowest round overall of a 200, but my favorite part of being on the team was playing on all the different courses for matches competitively," Miller said.

Both Lang and Miller thought that COVID only had an effect on practices mostly, since golf is already a social distancing sport, but it did affect the social aspects of being on a team such as the team bonding and team dinner.

Girls soccer showing signs of progress

by Addison Kania

The Shaler Area Girls Soccer team finished up its season showing significant progress over last year. The girls ended their season with an overall record of 4-8-1, a noticeable improvement from last season's 1-17-2 record.

To prepare for the season, the girls worked hard during the summer. Optional conditioning sessions and practices were held weekly. This training included fitness tests such as a two-mile run under 16 minutes and reaching level 10 on a pacer test. To obtain an opportunity to play on varsity, three out of four tests had to be passed.

"As a result of that hard work, we had a record 18 players pass our mandatory fitness tests prior to our first section game," Coach Craig Wilkins said.

Their hard work paid off and helped the girls face the challenges they experienced during their season. One of these challenges is playing in a section with large schools such as North Allegheny and Seneca Valley.

"It's always tough going against these big schools that have over double the amount of players than (we do) because they have a lot more options. Our soccer team sometimes barely has enough players to have a separate JV and varsity team," junior midfielder Anna Sheets said.

The team's goals for the season were to improve their attacking ability, create more chances to score goals, and also qualify for the playoffs.

"We certainly drove more offense, scoring 22 goals in just 13 games. That is three times the number we scored over an 18-game season last year," Wilkins said.

This achievement was attributed to the effort given by the girls in every practice throughout the season. The girls continued to advance their skills making this season their most successful in a while.

"This season, I feel we had the most skill we've had in a long time," senior defender Selena Slavicek said. "Everyone brought something great to the team."

The skills on the team were not the only reason the girls accomplished so much this fall. Much of their success came from the close bond that the girls formed throughout the season.

"From the first car pool to the last bus ride, I never stopped having fun with these girls," Slavicek said.

This season also gave the team many memorable moments to look back on. One of them being a 5-3 win against North Hills, a significant section game for the Titans.

"This was especially big for me because it's my senior year and the game was on our home field," Emily Moorey, a senior defender, said.

This season was one of growth for the team, and it's also a sign that the girls will continue to have success in the future.

"While making playoffs will remain a goal for next season, we are taking the right steps to achieve that goal over the longer term as well," Wilkins said.

Thiel College's
innovative programs
get you to your
goal faster

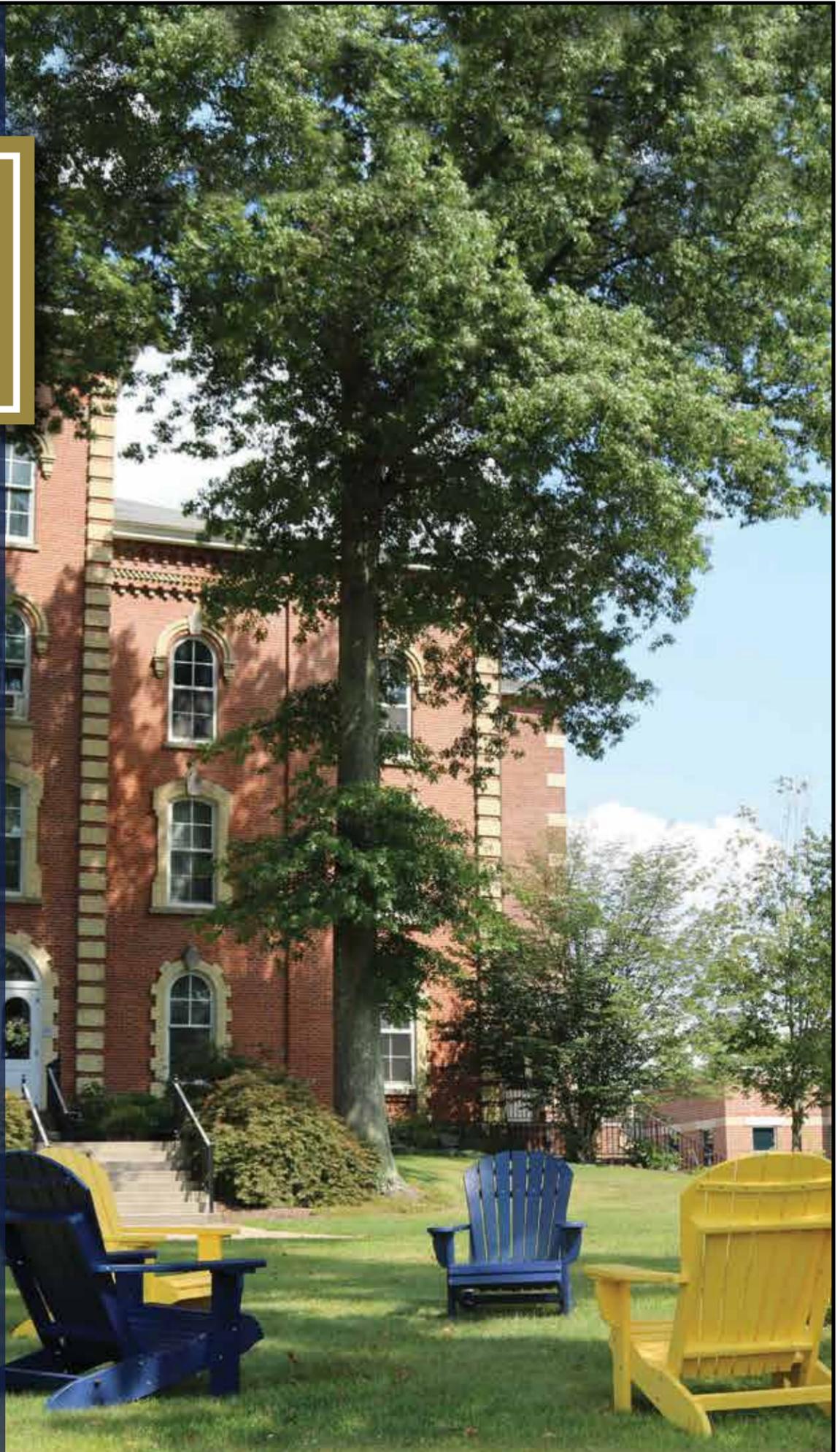
Leadership
M.B.A.

Management
M.B.A.

Physician
Assistant
M.S.

Speech-
Language
Pathology
M.S.

Nursing



*You don't have to go far for an
incredible college experience.*



THIELTM
COLLEGE

Schedule a visit today at thiel.edu/admissions

Call **800-24-THIEL** or email admissions@thiel.edu

75 College Avenue • Greenville, Pa. 16125

Hall of Fame member hired as swimming coach

by Dominic DiTommaso

The Shaler Area School District has hired Ms. Abigale May, a middle school teacher and a member of the Shaler Area Athletic Hall of Fame, as the new head coach of the varsity swim team.

May, who earned 12 varsity letters as a Shaler Area athlete, replaces long-time coach Keith Simmons.

“Ms. May brings a tremendous background to the job,” Mr. Clint Rauscher, Shaler Area athletic director, said. “She has held head coaching positions before, once at Hampton and most recently the girls head track coach at Shaler Area. She also has great networking within the different school district communities as a teacher and Kiwanis pool manager.”

May was Hampton High School’s head varsity swimming coach for both the boys and girls team from 2010-2012. After resigning from the position to take a teaching job in Tennessee, she was able to coach the Fox Chapel Golf Club’s summer swim team from 2012-2019.

May was a four-year swimmer for Shaler Area’s high school team, where she became a four-time WPIAL qualifier in the 100-yard butterfly, 100-yard freestyle, 200-yard medley relay, 200-yard freestyle relay and 400-yard freestyle relay. She additionally was a three-time WPIAL medalist and a three-time PIAA qualifier in the 100-yard butterfly, where she placed in the top 20. She was named the MVP of the swim team in 2005 and 2006.

May then swam in college at St. Francis University after initially competing there on a Division I cross country and track and field scholarship. May went back to swimming during her junior year of college and was placed on scholarship after proving her ability in the first half of the season.

She was inducted into the Shaler Area Athletic Hall of Fame in 2019 and hopes to incorporate things she learned as an athlete and as a coach into her new role.

“I plan to continue to work on forming a team relationship both in and out of the pool,” Ms. May said. “I believe in working on technique and yardage to ensure that our team is as successful as it can be. I plan to continue with the training regimen that was



Ms. Abigale May

implemented as far back as when I was a high school swimmer, but also to implement some new practice and coaching strategies.”

May also emphasized on how important it is to start recruiting new members to join the team, as well as continue to build the elementary school and middle school teams.

“I plan to try and recruit more swimmers and divers to build up our team — I feel that numbers help any team in winning, and I also feel that there are some swimmers out there who have second guessed joining the team before,” May said. “I hope to be able to recruit new and former swimmers so that they have the ability to compete for the team. Having a strong middle school and elementary school club team is also beneficial as that is the feeder program to the varsity team.”

She takes over for Simmons, who coached May from the time she was in elementary school to when she swam in high school. Simmons started as an assistant coach on the varsity team when she was in her freshman year and became the head coach when she

was a junior.

“He was a great coach and it’s nice to follow in his footsteps after he’s built a program from the club level through high school,” May said.

As is the case with so many things right now with the ongoing pandemic, it is unclear how the season will unfold and if WPIAL Championships will still be able to happen, but May will deal with whatever unfolds.

“My hope is that the WPIAL Championships can still take place,” May said. “There is a possibility of meets being cancelled or postponed, but I am ready to deal with any situation that is thrown our way.”

No matter what happens, May is excited about the opportunity she has been given.

“Getting back into coaching high school swimming has always been a desire of mine,” May said. “I believe in the talent that this team has and hope to build upon it...My ultimate goal is to help all the swimmers and divers reach their own personal goals.”



Huntington HELPED ME WITH...



Reading



Math



Science



Writing



Study Skills



ACT & SAT



NO MATTER WHAT SUBJECT YOU STRUGGLE WITH, HUNTINGTON CAN HELP.

If you are having trouble keeping up in a subject or with schoolwork in general, [here's how Huntington can help](#):

- Academic evaluation identifies problem areas
- Programs tailored to address your specific needs
- Highly trained tutors work individually with you
- Huntington helps improve your skills, confidence, and grades

To find out more about Huntington Tutoring Programs, CALL NOW!

North Hills

4721 McKnight Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15237
412-367-7787

TUTORING

Reading - Writing - Math - Study Skills - Spelling
Vocabulary - Phonics - Algebra - Geometry
Trigonometry - Pre-Calculus - Calculus
Earth Science - Biology - Chemistry - Physics

TEST PREP

SAT - PSAT/NMSQT - ACT - Advanced Placement (AP)
State Tests - HSPT - ISEE - SSAT - GED - ASVAB

1-800-CAN-LEARN

HuntingtonHelps.com



Huntington
LEARNING CENTER