

The Oracle

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December 2014

Spiker hopes to forge positive relationship

by Bri Schwartz

A school resource officer (SRO) has recently been welcomed to the district. Shaler Township police officer of seventeen years, Frank Spiker, was chosen in November to be Shaler Area's first SRO.

For the past two years, the district has been looking into a grant to fund the assignment. The district and the township worked together to supply a Safe Schools Grant that will pay towards Officer Spiker's salary for this year. The district and the Shaler Township Police have dedicated two years to this project.

The position was seen as a way to strengthen the already close relationship between the schools and the police department.

"This is the first classification of the SRO at the Shaler School District but the Shaler Police and neighboring departments have had officers working closely with the schools for the past several decades," Spiker said.

According to Superintendent Dr. Wesley Shipley, the purpose of an SRO is to not only have a police presence in the school, but also to create an atmosphere where uniformed police officers are viewed as a support system to the students, schools, and community.

"Over the last several years, the

school administration has asked the police to come into the schools as frequently as possible so that the students can get to know them on a different level. I feel very lucky to have the cooperation of our local police because it provides much needed resources to our students," Shipley said.

With an SRO, the hope is that students can become familiar with their local police and see that they are someone to go to for help and protection. A uniformed police officer also adds another level of security to the district where he can connect the school and police resources when necessary.

Although based in the middle school, Officer Spiker will be available to all schools in the district for assistance with anything from safety and security to engaging and supporting students. He described the vast duties of the position.

"The SRO adds an active law enforcement figure on campus to deal with any law enforcement matters, assist the school district with matters of safety and maintaining a safe educational environment, as a classroom resource for teachers relating to mat-



Officer Frank Spiker

ters of law, as a resource for students to associate with law enforcement in the student's environment, and as a resource for parents, students, and teachers to conference on an individual basis in dealing with individual problems or questions," Spiker said.

Officer Spiker's experience in the schools has been nothing but positive. He has already been working in many different aspects of his job description.

The new SRO has been called on as a law enforcement officer, a counselor, an educator, and an advisor in planning.

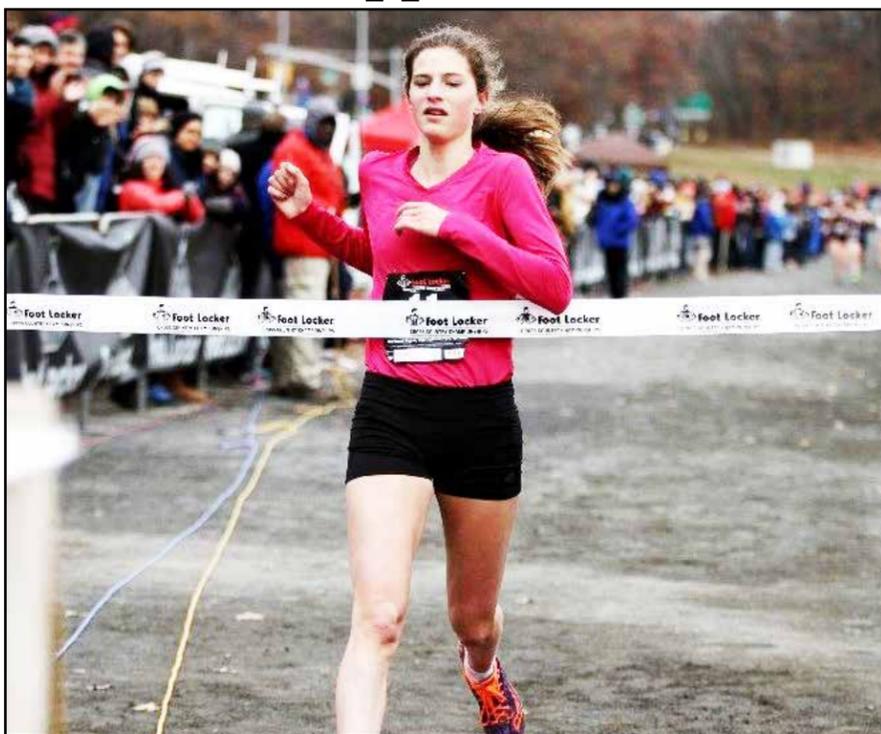
Being in a new position, Officer Spiker and the schools have been spending time familiarizing themselves with each other's assets and learning how they can best work together. Spiker did not feel like a complete stranger in the school environment; he has worked with many school district employees over the past several years.

Spiker speaks highly of those who have been accommodating and friendly as he started at his new workplace. Officer Spiker had nothing but praise for his new colleagues after beginning his position.

"I had no idea until I began to work within the school environment the services and programs that are available to the students. The Guidance, Special Education, and Social Work, and their supporting cast, do great job in assisting the students.

You would be amazed at the work put in by administrators, faculty, office staff, cafeteria staff, building and grounds personnel, the custodial workers, tech support, and everyone who works behind the scenes to make our schools a positive environment," Spiker said.

Schwartz Dapper Dan nominee



Bri Schwartz wins the Foot Locker Northeast Regional Championship

by Jared Panza

To add to her third WPIAL cross country championship, followed by a PIAA championship and a 1st place finish in Regional Championship, senior Bri Schwartz was nominated to win the Dapper Dan Charities' "Sportswoman of the Year."

This is a very prestigious award that has been won by the top professional, college and Olympic athletes in our area. Bri would be the only high school athlete to ever win this award.

"It was really cool to see the other people nominated and to see my name among famous and amazing athletes," Schwartz said.

Project ACE ready to distribute iPads

by Kyle Donovan

Technology in schools has always been a hot button issue, but especially at Shaler in the past few years as the district has decided to distribute iPads to all students.

The iPads are courtesy of the Project ACE (Advancing Classroom Education) initiative, which was created two and a half years ago with the purpose of giving all students in the district access to an iPad for school use, or "going 1:1" as initiative leader and assistant Superintendent Kara Eckert put it.

"We have successfully implemented the first phase with the teachers receiving the devices in August of 2013, phase 2 was when we integrated the Project Carts with the iPad Minis in January 2014 and August 2014 with a total of 1140 iPads on 38 carts spread across all buildings K-12. The 3rd phases will be this next step of the 1:1 at the Middle School and then the [High School] in the fall [of] 2015," Eckert said.

Such an ambitious goal naturally attracts controversy, but by and large it seems like a popular project.

"When we first started rolling it out many people did not like the idea. But now a lot of people are on board with it, which is awesome," said Computer Media Technician and fellow initiative team member Mitch Stivason, who is responsible for the technical aspects of the project.

"It seems like almost every teacher has it on them to do their every day responding to emails, checking emails, [looking at] websites and stuff. As far as class use, we have a checkout system for eight carts and all eight are always checked out, so a lot of teachers are using them every week," he said.

"Library time is hard to come by, it just makes that [resource] so much easier," ELA teacher Mrs. Loudon said about how her iPad cart helps her students.

Cont. on page 2

OPINIONS

The Christmas season starts too early

by Kyle Donovan

Christmas is coming up next week, and it's evident by looking around. Christmas music is playing, trees are going up, reindeer and candy canes and elves adorn lawns from sea to shining sea. But wait, hold on a second, are you sure its December? It seems all of the aforementioned things have been true since July 5th, after all.

Joking aside, it's hard to ignore the encroachment of the holiday season earlier and earlier into the year. Decorations have been in stores since October, holiday deals since November, and lets not forget Black Friday this year.

As our readers are certainly aware, Black Friday is the day after Thanksgiving where stores across the nation slash prices on limited items causing gladiatorial combat amongst hordes of shoppers.

Black Friday has been the official unofficial day of holiday shopping since the 20s, when Macy's and other businesses began running Thanksgiving parades. These usually ended in the arrival of Santa Claus, officially unofficially opening the holiday season. This year's black friday (or is it thursday

now?) was terrifyingly notable, as more and more businesses began to open their doors on Thanksgiving itself. While Walmart has done this since the 80s, this was the first year that many other retailers followed suit.

This creates a dangerous trend, because basically Thanksgiving is being dismantled by consumerism and the forward march of the Christmas season.

The endless onslaught of whimsical diddies about Santa and Rudolph and chestnuts roasting on an open fire upon our eardrums in our cars and work-places for months is annoying.

While there is something wonderful about hearing big band hits in winter, when we are all sentimental about the warmth of the summer gone by, it gets old alarmingly fast. Hearing the same antiquated songs in that maddeningly cheerful style for two months straight, as the workers among us students shall certainly attest, wreaks havoc on one's mental health.

If you make every day Christmas, then Christmas is just any other day.

What's more, it makes us come to despise many of the songs, to pick them apart, and feel the stress of repetition every second that we listen. So these songs are destroyed for us, their sentiment scattered by overplay. It takes a wonderful aspect of the holiday season and dilutes it to the point where it actually detracts from the holiday.

Decorations are the same story. The halls of stores everywhere began to be decked by Santas, snowmen, candy canes, and other decorations before Halloween. At that point, who even cares? Just like the music, its biggest draw is its exclusivity to the season; the more exposure it gets, the less special it becomes.

As The Fairly Oddparents taught us, if you make every day Christmas, then Christmas is just any other day. The holidays are diluted every day earlier that stores decide it should begin. The question for us consumers is, how far will we let it go?

Santa Claus comes at the end of the Thanksgiving Day Parades, and so Christmas shouldn't come until after Thanksgiving.

Project ACE ready to distribute iPads

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She went on to talk about how in her english classes the iPads can be used for annotating texts, giving feedback, and quick reference.

Others, such as GATE teachers Mrs. Elder and Mrs. Palladino, say they are glad to have new ways to engage students. They also talked about how it has made books cheaper and more readily available thanks to ebooks.

While there are plenty who in favor of the initiative, there are some who question how much iPads will change.

"You can download a flash cards app, or you could just make flashcards, the tech doesn't really increase that. I've yet to find any apps that teach completing the square better than I do or show factoring in a more immersive way," math teacher Dante Orsini said. "Investing in this technology doesn't guarantee a certain outcome. At the end of the day, the big question is why are you investing in this technology, how does that make you a better student?... I'm not saying an iPad can't do that, but just because you give carpenters all these different hammers doesn't mean that their job becomes easier or their product becomes better. Tools are tools."

According to Mrs. Eckert, the Middle School integration will cost the district a \$223,000, three year lease, or about \$329 per device. She also said that the district will pay its bills in two ways: the state "Ready to Learn" grant, which awards the school \$100,000 for the first year for the school's high performance, and budgeting whatever remains into the general operating budget for the technology department.

"If you look at the cost break-down for each school day per student, it would cost \$1.83 per day" she said.

She also said that following the conclusion of the three year lease, the devices will be returned to Apple, at which point the district will be able to upgrade to the latest version of the device as needed.

Concerns also have also been raised about the integrity of the iPad system as it performed in other school districts.

Christine Armario wrote in an Associated Press article about a Los Angeles school district that has gone 1:1.

"Hundreds of students initially given iPads last school year found ways to bypass security installations, downloading games and freely surfing the Web. Teachers complained they were not properly trained to instruct students with the new technology."

Eckert believes that Shaler is prepared to deal with many of the possible problems that may arise with this initiative.

"Our team has been involved in many planning meetings with other schools that have had a 1:1 initiative to discuss problems that have popped up unexpectedly, and have an idea of what to expect. We have plans in place to address student conduct and/or loss or destruction of the device. In the student handbook for the initiative these consequences are outlined, and will be treated as any other misconduct that occurs in the school," she said.

Temperature in the school needs to be more consistent

by Antoni Miladinov

Have you noticed the temperature around school lately? You may have noticed it has been experiencing mood swings like the teenage girls surrounding you. Some days you will walk into school with a big coat on due to the dropping temperatures outside and won't ever know what to expect.

It is quite obvious that by the end of the day, some classes become a little bit warmer than the beginning of the day. This is understandable due to all of the body heat that the 2,000 people within the school produce. But what about those days where you walk into 7th period and realize you will dread your next two classes because you will feel like you're sitting in a sauna? This just gets to be ridiculous some days.

The last few weeks, I have noticed that particularly the rooms on the second floor hallway have become almost unbearable to sit in for class. I have been able to physically feel the layer of heat that hits me when I walk through the door for last period. This can also be said for other various classrooms throughout the school.

Whether it is selective or not, there should not be separate class-

rooms around the school that are warmer than others. Now, there are exceptions for the computer rooms due to the computers needing to be kept colder to prevent overheating but even some days these rooms are scorching hot! Then as soon as you walk out of the classroom into the hallway, it feels like just having escaped an oven.

The fact that I have come into school before wearing a shirt with a hoodie and found myself wanting to take it all off by the end of the day really needs to stop. We don't need a bunch of sweaty cranky people running around the school. This can easily be prevented by having more control over the air conditioning unit.

Now, we don't necessarily need to crank the A/C down to 60^o from the beginning of the day but the janitors should at least periodically bump down the temperature a few degrees after every class. By doing this, we will account for the temperature increases throughout the day from all of the people in the building.

I am in no way trying to blame anyone for this problem but something has to be said. I hope that by the end of the year we will all be pleased with how we physically feel in this school.

The Oracle

Staff: Gavin Cannon, Claire Costello, Samantha Dietz, Kyle Donovan, Ethan Griffin, Adriana Imhof, Justin Jockel, Taylor Laffey, Antoni Miladinov, Jared Panza, Kaitlin Parente, Brianna Schwartz, Kayla Snyder, Natalie Townsend, Marina Varvaro, Ed Wynkoop, Kimberly Yurasits

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.

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

Lunch becomes optional for some students

by Marina Varvaro and
Natalie Townsend

Some students in the school are very enthusiastic about their high school experience and have opted out of their lunch period to take an extra class. Many students might find this surprising because lunch is generally the favorite period of the day.

But there are real reasons why people audit their lunch. It could be a hobby, but there's a lack of space on schedules because of academics. Auditing in a class allows students to participate in the class if they're interested in it and don't have time for it. Or there are students who want to get ahead in an academic field so they have a better knowledge basis when preparing for college.

The majority of students who gave up their lunch did it for the music programs. With all the required credits students have to fulfill, it's hard to get those elective classes to work to a schedule.

Music isn't the only place where you can find people who opted out of their lunches. They can also be found in the art and TechEd classes in our school.

"I couldn't do my third year of art. So I had to drop my lunch to get my third year," student Kirsten Gairing said about her Studio Art class.

There is the issue of receiving a credit for the class. Most people don't have an issue with the fact that they don't get a credit, but some are a little weary about it.

"I took time out of my day, so I think I should get credit," sophomore Sierra Vogel, who audited choir in place of her lunch said.

Then there's the concern, that they don't have a lunch. At first it was difficult for some of the students to adjust to not having a lunch, but most have adapted now that it doesn't bother them anymore.

Not many students are aware that they can opt

"I'd like to see them get credit because if a kid is going into college or a second field which would require this background, it would be nice to see it on their transcript." -- Mr. Craig Wells

out of their lunch. If they do know about it, they aren't sure what the requirements are.

Principal Dr. Timothy Royall mentioned that there is not a required QPA a person has to have to audit a class. The only parameters are if the class is happening during a lunch period and whether or not the specific class has reached full capacity.

Talking about the regulations and requirements, some of the students who opted out of their lunch filled out paperwork, while others did not. Dr. Royall said that all students should be filling out this paperwork. The reason for this would be if there was a fire or lock down or another issue in the school, a teacher or principal would know where to locate you. The staff in this school needs to keep track of all the students for safety purposes.

Students may wonder why anyone would want to opt out of their lunch period. Well there are many motives behind why a student would drop their lunch, and the school definitely keeps an eye out for the students who are taking a class to slack off.

"If it turns out that someone's goal is to just be with a friend and hang out, obviously that wouldn't be appropriate," Royall disclosed.

Many of the teachers are not that well versed on what goes on when a student drops their lunch to take that class. All they really know is that the student was

placed in their class. Teachers noticed that there were really no behavioral issues or many missed assignments from these students who audited their class.

"They usually need our permission. Obviously I'm not going to let someone come down who is not going to be productive and work," Mr. Zach Fisher, robotics teacher, stated.

Students who do opt out of their lunch don't receive a credit and it doesn't appear on report cards or factor into GPA. Some teachers believe that students should get credit for the class if they took the time and got rid of their lunch and worked hard for the course.

"I would really like to see them get credit," Mr. Craig Wells, woodtech teacher, confessed. "I'd like to see them get credit because if a kid is going into college or a second field which would require this background, it would be nice to see it on their transcript to at least see that they took the course and received a commendable grade or an above average grade so they could use it later on in life."

There are multiple reasons why a student doesn't get a credit for the extra class.

"You can't exceed eight credits in any one school year. The purpose is, not because, of course, we want to limit students, but those numbers- credit count and grades- all factor into GPA and class rank. We want to make sure that everybody is on an even playing field and nobody did something to kind of tweak the numbers and possibly get ahead in the scheme of things or create an unfair opportunity for that student and other students didn't get a chance to take advantage of," student counselor, Ms. Danielle Grimaldo said.

People who have opted out of their lunch for a class have found it beneficial and enjoyable. This experience is available to any dedicated person, with the willingness to give up their social and meal time.

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Christmas traditions have strange histories

by Marina Varvaro

There are many traditions that people try for the holiday season. But they didn't just magically appear. It had to come from somewhere didn't it?

Christmas trees were originally used for winter festivals and in churches to symbolize everlasting life with God. There is not a specific time or person who put a Christmas tree in their house first, but the tradition appeared about a thousand years ago in Northern Europe. At that time, the trees were hung upside down from the ceiling. The first documented use of a tree for a Christmas decoration was in Riga, Latvia in 1510.

It later spread to Germany where they began decorating the tree with gingerbread and golden apples in 1605. After that, it found its way to Britain in the 1830s and became popular in 1841 when Queen Victoria's German husband put one up in the Windsor Castle. A drawing of the tree in the castle was published and from this publication, the trend then swept through the UK and USA.

In Victorian times, they decorated the trees with candles to represent stars (um, dangerous!), then adding tinsel followed. Since it was a fire hazard to put candles on trees (duh...), a man named Ralph Morris invented the first electric Christmas tree lights in 1895.

Mistletoe comes all the way back from the time of the Druids. It's supposed to have magical powers to bring good luck to a household

and to keep away evil spirits. Then from Norse mythology it is supposed to symbolize love and friendship, which is where kissing under the mistletoe comes from.

The tradition of mistletoe used to be that a person would have to pluck one of the berries off the mistletoe to be able to kiss the person, and once all the berries were gone, there could be no more kissing. Mistletoe's literal meaning comes from "mistel" which means "dung" and "tan" which means "twig or stick". So I guess you could say mistletoe means "poop on a stick" which isn't very romantic.

Something that people either love or hate is eggnog. But where did that come from, whether you find it delicious or totally repulsive? Eggnog is typically an alcoholic beverage, a milk mixture with alcohol infused. It is believed that eggnog came from the "Old World", a concoction of milk and wine. When it moved to become popular in Colonial America, the wine was replaced with rum, and rum was commonly called "grog". So it was an "egg-and-grog" drink, then became "egg'n'grog" and then transformed into its current form.

But others think eggnog was derived from something else. A small wooden, carved mug was called a noggin. People would put their egg drink concoction into these noggins, thus they began calling the drink eggnog. Some who have looked into eggnog's history believe that it could be a combination of both stories.

WEIRD

News

by Kaitlin Parente

Lafayette, Indiana: ABC News

Two boxes of cremated human remains mistakenly included among household items donated to an Indiana Goodwill have been reunited with the deceased's next of kin, police said.

Goodwill employees sorting through donated items Friday found two small, white boxes filled with cremains, Lafayette police Sgt. Grant Snyder told the Journal & Courier

A merchandise sorter found the boxes inside velvet pouches inside a larger box, store manager Paula Strong said.

"When she pulled them out of the red velvet bags, that is when she realized that they were from a crematory and what they were," Strong said.

Each box was marked with a date and name, which police used to reunite the remains with survivors.

Rolling Hills Estate, California: ABC News

Thieves have made off with a statue of Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer that's been a holiday fixture in a Los Angeles-area neighborhood for half a century.

Residents of Rolling Hills Estates say the 200-pound wooden statue was taken sometime Friday night. The culprits left Rudolph's broken antler behind.

Resident Tim Taylor, whose family has taken care of the handmade statue for several years, says he's hoping it's just a prank and that Rudolph will be returned.

Amsterdam: ABC News

A Dutchman's attempt at a romantic wedding proposal was simply smashing.

The unidentified lover in the central town of IJsselstein rented a crane, planning to descend in front of his girlfriend's bedroom window first thing Saturday morning, play her a song and then pop the question. Instead the crane toppled over, smashing a large hole in the neighbors' roof. The man clambered to safety and no one was injured.

According to the Algemeen Dagblad newspaper, the girlfriend said "yes" anyway. After speaking with police, the pair traveled to Paris to celebrate.

Then the crane fell again during attempts to right it with a larger crane, bashing in the rest of the neighbors' roof. The town's mayor is on the spot after the building was declared unsafe. Six apartments were evacuated.

| SCG SHALER CULTURE GRID | | Favorite holiday song?  | New Year's Resolution? 2015 | Top item on your wish list? | Least favorite holiday movie?  | How long do your decorations stay up? | Worst gift recieved on the holidays?  |
|---|--|---|---|---|--|---|---|
|  Senior Ellie McPherson | Baby, It's Cold Outside by Zoey Deschanel and Leon Redbone | I think they're stupid | A car  | Elf | All year baby! | None, I get everything I want  | |
|  Junior Justin Yuiska | Jingle Bells  | To come up with a New Year's Resolution | New hockey stick | Elf  | They come down 2 weeks after Christmas | Toilet paper  | |
|  Sophomore John Melde | I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas by Michael Buble | To get fat | Cash Flow  | Charlie Brown's Christmas | Forever and ever | Partridge in a pear tree | |
|  Freshman Hannah Mikovitz | All I Want for Christmas is You by Mariah Carey | Get more involved in life | A tattoo | Nightmare Before Christmas | What decorations? | A bible  | |
|  Teacher Mr. Boyles | You're a Mean One, Mr. Grinch, original version | To embrace the simple | For my daughter to sleep through the night  | Miracle on 34th Street | They never come down, ever | Empty promises | |

Ward achieves goal of running a marathon in every state

by Kim Yurasits

It was once said about marathon runners "How do you know if someone ran a marathon? Don't worry, they'll tell you." However that isn't exactly the case here at Shaler Area.

In fact, teacher Mr. Jeffery Ward has run more than 50 marathons as part of his goal to run a marathon in every state and is really quite humble about it.

Ward, who teaches chemistry, has had the unique goal of trying to run at least one marathon in each of the 50 United States.

"Years ago, before I was a teacher, I was an engineer and my boss at the time had run the London Marathon. And he and his wife and run the London Marathon and I had looked at their [scrapbook]. And so I was looking at it and I got kinda interested in it and so that's how I started running because I hadn't done any type of running," Ward said.

He started running the Pittsburgh Marathon every year and got addicted. In fact, at the end of one of these marathons, he saw another runner with an unusual t-shirt.

The t-shirt had the abbreviations of all the states on it with some of them crossed out. Ward decided to go up and ask about it. As the runner explained, there was this group called the 50 Marathoners Group. If someone ran a race in at least 10 states, he/she could join the club.

"So that's how it all started. You know I saw some guy at the end of one of the Pittsburgh Marathons have this shirt on and had some of the states marked out and I wanted to try and do that," he said.

This past summer, he was able to complete his 50-state goal when he ran a marathon in Hawaii.

"It took about 12 years, I thought it was going to take longer," Ward said.

While one would think that the actual running of 26.2 miles would be the most difficult aspect, Ward contends that the planning of which race and then the travels plans were more challenging than running.

"The most difficult thing is the logistics behind it all. Running it, once I got trained, running was the



Mr. Ward receives his finisher's medal at a marathon in Kona, Hawaii this past June.

easy part," he said.

Even after successful planning, there was always the chance that weather could interfere. Weather can wreak havoc on the races making them difficult or impossible to run.

"The Myrtle Beach Marathon is in February when we have President's Day. They had an inch or two of snow the night before and they cancelled the race. So you get down there and they cancel the race. I had to wait to the following year to do that one," Ward said.

Running a marathon takes an incredible amount of discipline and stamina. Recovering after running them can take days.

"You usually you are just tired and you drink a lot of water, drink a lot of Gatorade and you just sit

for awhile and then I'd say a day or two later, you're shoveling food in," he said.

Speaking of training, to get ready for these marathons, Ward would aim to run every day so he could do one 20-mile run a month.

"So that means you're 3, 4, days a week I don't do a 20-mile run but I try to run to where I am able to do a 20 miler a month type of thing," he said.

Actually, Ward ran a total of 75 marathons as he has not limited himself to just one marathon per state. He runs the Pittsburgh Marathon every year and does other races multiple times, if they aren't too far away.

While he has reached his goal, he is thinking about adding to it by wanting to get his marathons in all states done in a specific time.

"Of all the states, I'd say about 20-25 of them I've done under four hours. The ones I haven't, I want to try to get under four, if I can," he said.

After all the work, all the training, what is the best part of the races?

"The best part is finishing, getting the medal," Ward said.

After the 12 years and the hundreds of miles, finishing was bittersweet.

"It's a relief in one respect but in the other I'm kind of empty in that I want to find another type of goal. But I'm happy that I did it," Ward said.

As he looks back on his accomplishments, his most memorable races were in the state he did not have to travel to.

"Although going to Alaska and Hawaii were memorable for various reasons, I think that my most memorable marathon will always be the Pittsburgh Marathon. I have completed this race 8 times and every time I look forward to running through the streets on which I have trained, seeing students like the SA Track and Field team's water stop at mile 4 or 5, and seeing colleagues like Mr. Gaul at mile 20 in Highland Park or Mr. Spell at the finish line. But most importantly, the 2001 Pittsburgh Marathon was my 1st marathon, something that I will not forget."



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SPORTS

Hockey team off to impressive start

by Jared Panza

With any early season loss comes early worry. But for the Titans hockey team, after an early loss only came unwavering and unsurpassed success. After losing their first game of the season to a nail-biting 3-2 overtime loss to the Fox Chapel Foxes, the Titans have dominated every team since. With a record of 8-1, they are currently sitting atop the Eastern Conference.

After the Fox Chapel game, the Titans quickly fixed mistakes and beat Norwin their next game with a score of 6-3. The team continued its streak of dominating teams when they beat the Plum Mustangs the next game with a score of 12-2. Goalie Vinny Evans posted a shutout and racked up 21 saves the following week with an easy win against Greater Latrobe.

Along with a talented goalie and dominating defense, the team has notable offensive power. Alex Ficorilli is currently in second place in the division for total points scored. With 16 goals and 10 assists, Alex is 6 points behind first place.

"It feels good, but I try not to worry about that. I would rather just get a win than worry about if I get any points," said Ficorilli.

Not only is Alex a top goal scorer but several Titans have made their way into the top 25. Justin Yuiska, Austin, Biondo, Austin Martz, and Cole Stay-



Cam Bardsley clears the puck from in front of the net. (Shaler Journal)

duhar are all also among the top scorers in the league. With increased success came great enthusiasm amongst the team which has translated to the players becoming much closer.

"We have started to come together as a team. We believe we can beat anybody. Our win against Hampton really showed that we have a team that can win the Pens Cup," said Cole Stayduhar.

The Titans will play Cathedral Prep on January 12. Cathedral Prep is currently in first place of the Western Conference, and will be stiff

competition for the Titans.

"We need to work on more back-check blocking, shots, and shooting off pad. Communication is probably the biggest part in our game we need to improve on," said Ficorilli.

Recently on December 8, the hockey team beat Bishop Canevin in another overtime game. Ficorilli scored the game winner in overtime, also giving him his third hat trick in three straight games and his fifth hat trick of the season. Ficorilli's goal in overtime made the final score 8-7.

Wrestlers hope to build on strong start

by Gavin Cannon

Shaler wrestling has been able to produce excellent individual performers over the past couple seasons. The only set back the Titans have faced as a team is a lack of wrestlers at specific weight classes.

This season however the Titans have the numbers to fix that problem, and barring any injuries the team has a chance at a very successful season.

"We have a lot of real quality guys including two guys that missed last season because of injury, Logan Heintl and Benji Kane," said Head Coach D'Agostino.

Heintl placed 4th in the WPIAL as a freshman then missed last season and Kane was preseason ranked 3rd in the WPIAL last season.

"They are absolutely going to help. Logan is usually my workout partner so it doesn't only help the team having him back but it helps

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SPORTS

Lady Titans set out to prove doubters wrong

by Justin Jockel

The Lady Titans Basketball season is underway and there is a different feel amongst the players and coaches when they view this year's team.

"We graduated some multi-year starters, so many people are not expecting much from our team this season. It's fair to say we are entering this season very much under the radar," Head Coach Neal Martin said.

However, the team proved doubters wrong early on as the Lady Titans won both its games at the Norwin Tournament, beating both Norwin and Penn-Trafford by one point.

"Winning by one point was exciting, but it's much more special after the buzzer goes off. Anything can happen in a close game, we are just thankful that the outcome went our way on both days," Martin said.

Going into the fourth quarter in the game against Penn-Trafford, Shaler was down by 7 points. With 5 seconds remaining in the game, Liz Kline made one of the most remarkable plays.

"Liz was on the wing with less than 5 seconds. Liz got great lift on her shot, and was hit on the wrist. The shot fell and she was at the line to complete the iron and bounced about 4 feet in the air and fell straight through! Like she has done so many times before, she came through in a big moment. She is a 'gamer'," Martin said.

Following the dramatic wins at Norwin, the team shifted its focus to its game against North Allegheny. Last year, the team finished with a 7-5 division re-



Lizzy Kline drives to the hoop (Shaler Journal)

cord and an overall record of 16-7. The girls would be eliminated by North Allegheny in the Quarterfinals last year. The girls lost to North Allegheny 62-42, but this loss will not stop the team from showing up for practice.

"The girls have worked very hard all fall, which carried into the start of the season. We have rededi-

cated ourselves to fundamental work almost exclusively, which certainly should pay off against our tougher opponents," Martin said.

The team went on to play Butler its next game, winning 43-28.

Kline firmly believes this team can succeed if they enable themselves to rely on each other.

"We will win games if we trust each other and play for each other. That will be the key for victories. If we are talking strategy, making free throws, lay-ups, and not getting involved in foul play will lead to wins," Kline said.

Martin believes this team does have the chance to make the playoffs this year, but only time will tell.

"There are so many positive aspects about the girls that represent Shaler Area in the sport of basketball, but I think most coaches would agree that it is much too early to make such predictions," Martin said.

Martin states that the play of Senior Captains Liz Kline and Andi Lydon will be the biggest factor in this year's team. As of right now, the example these girls are setting will lead to good outcomes for the Lady Titans.

"We will go as far as they (Kline and Lydon) carry us. Everything we do, offensively and defensively runs through them. They are well respected by teammates and coaches. They have just accomplished so much for us that our level of trust in them is extremely high. However, they have great support from our freshman and sophomore classes. There are some very talented girls in those grades that will only get better as the season goes on," Martin said.

Swimming team works for success in tough section

by Adriana Imhof

The swim team kicked off their season December 5 with a victory over Montour. Competing in the toughest section in the WPIAL is no easy task, but the team is preparing for this challenge.

The team competes in the toughest section in the WPIAL, against the defending champions, North Allegheny. Although they don't have a large team in numbers, they still put up a fight against the other teams in their section. The boys are working on a 15 consecutive winning season streak and the girls had a winning record for the first time last year.

"I believe my team has the potential to win it all this year. The boys' goal is to beat the defending WPIAL champions, North Allegheny, and the talent on our team looks promising," said sophomore Nate Sellers.

Coach Keith Simmons has really high hopes for his team and has helped each member set goals that they can attain with hard work and commitment.

"Our goals are always to have our swimmers prepared to compete to the best of their ability and for them to have as much success as possible. We help them set team and individual goals for the season (winning as many meets as possible, qualifying as many swimmers as we can for the WPIAL championships, placing at WIPs and then qualifying for the state meet)," said Coach Keith Simmons.

The team has a rigorous schedule which consists of practice six days a week. Monday through Friday it practices after school from 3-5:30 and on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday it also practices before school at 5:30am and Saturday mornings from 6:30 to 8:30 as well. These practices consist of weight lifting, occasional running, and mastering techniques.

The captains this year are seniors Nate Porter, Brittany Hernon, and Jeremy Wakely; each has been committed members of the team all throughout high school. They have been working hard this year to demonstrate how to be an asset to the team.

"So far our seniors have all displayed fine leadership qualities. They are leading by example with their work ethic and they are always encouraging their teammates to give an honest effort every time they step on the pool deck to compete or in practice," said Simmons.

The team swims four more meets over the next two weeks before they have a break in their schedule. They begin again on January 6th with a home meet against Mars and swim two meets a week until the end of the season.

Titans hoping to rebound from tough start to season

by Eddie Wynkoop

This year's boys' basketball team will look to rebound as it is coming off of a 4-18 season in which the Titans lost 13 of their 14 section games.

The boys will try to turn it around with only two returning players who have had any significant varsity experience: seniors Brendan Deasy and Rob Reinheimer.

The players are doing different things schematically this year. Running a different type of offense this year, they hope to have more success than last year.

"We changed our style of play a little bit. Our coaches are giving us a little more freedom on offense and that should be an advantage for us. The team's mentality changed as well. We know we are a talented group and our season expectations have changed," Deasy said.

Unfortunately the offensive changes haven't resulted in too many victories.

Through five games, the team's record is 1-4. Playing against Plum, the team struggled and eventually lost by a score of 59-36. Then the next day playing against Gateway it struggled once again and lost 72-58. The Titans also have a loss to McKeesport by the final

score of 76-55 and North Allegheny by a score of 86-53.

"We competed hard against Plum and Gateway. I was proud of the players effort and we were able to identify some key areas where we need to improve. That being said we also excelled in several areas - such as defensive rebounding," coach Brian Bibey said.

The Titans posted their first victory of the season last Saturday when they defeated Penn Hills, 62-56. They played Butler on Tuesday and will play Seneca Valley Monday.

While the team may not have a lot of seniors to provide leadership, the six juniors and two sophomores are showing up to practice ready to work every day. This has impressed Coach Bibey.

"Every single player on the team stands out in a good way in some form," Bibey said.

Bibey, along with his assistants, enters his second season as head coach and the players have noticed a difference.

"The coaching staff has without a doubt grown in the past year. It is hard for a coach who is used to college basketball to adjust to high school, but our coaches are doing well with the transition," Reinheimer said.

Monday
Dec. 22

Gym A



vs



Boys 6:00

Girls 7:30

Girls & Boys Varsity basketball double header

Living Wall helps clean air, engage students

by Kaitlin Parente

Last winter, students may have noticed that the wall across from the Activities Office was covered with plants. The living wall, a project conducted by junior Elliott Fix, was produced from a grant Fix wrote for The Pittsburgh Foundation New Voices of Youth project.

"The grant was an online submission of a series of questions with 300 character max answers. These questions included things like explain the sustainability of your idea, explain its social impact, what makes your idea innovative, and why air quality is important to you," said Fix.

"So the living wall was something that was thought of by him because the grant information had to be something that would clean the air of the school. It was a healthy air concept. He was trying to think of something to beautify the school along with clean the air so he came up with the living wall," said Mrs. Palladino, one of the GATE teachers at Shaler.

The grant Fix received was for \$2000. The living wall was bought and is maintained completely from the \$2000 grant. With the grant, plants, planters, natural light light bulbs, and an irrigation system were purchased.

"Mr. Lisowski first came up with the idea of planters in the hallway by the cafeteria. I loved the idea and when he proposed this grant to me, I ran with it. With a budget of \$2000 from the grant we could make a full scale living wall possible. I owe a lot of this to Mr. Lisowski, really. It was all his idea, I just did the essay writing," said Fix.

The wall, which holds over 50 plants, was built and designed by Mr. Gasowski from buildings and grounds.

"The plants that remain constant in most of



The living wall, showcased in front of the Athletics Office.

the planters include spider plants (*Chlorophytum comosum*), snake plants (*Sansevieria trifasciata*), and pothos (*Epipremnum aureum*). We rotate some planters seasonally, like poinsettias during Christmas time, tulips and daffodils in the spring and chrysanthemums in fall," said Fix.

The planters used in the wall are from Woollypocket. Woollypocket discounted the price of the specific planters Fix had chosen for Shaler's use, so more planters were able to be obtained.

"I reached out to a company called Woollypocket because I saw on their website that they are willing to work with schools and encouraged the idea of biophilic design, or the effects of plants on people indoors, which is a topic I researched heavily for the grant," said Fix.

Recently, natural light light bulbs were installed and an irrigation system is in the works. Hoses have

been set up, but they have not been connected to the main water line yet. With the installation of the irrigation system and the natural light light bulbs, the living wall will be able to self maintain itself.

"It's been a learning process because plants need light and water, even if they're house plants, so we had some problems with that. Plus, the biggest thing we noticed was it was still winter when we planted everything, so the heat was on. In the transition from winter to spring and the air conditioning coming on changed the dynamic in there, so we had a lot of problems with the roots rotting, which we never thought of. It's been a really interesting learning process for us," said Palladino.

The Ecology Club and GATE have taken over the responsibilities of taking care of the multiple plants on the wall. Recently, the Ecology Club planted poinsettias on the living wall as the seasonal winter plant.

Respect between teachers better as a two-way street

by Sam Dietz

In a public setting, respect is essential, especially in a learning environment where success depends partly on the student-to-teacher relationship.

There is a lot of interaction between the students and faculty, so when respect is missing from the equation, there is only a negative result. Thankfully, it doesn't seem to be an overwhelming problem at Shaler.

"I've always thought the students, for the most part, are very respectful. I am a veteran teacher so I think students expect me to act a certain way and so I do. I always tell students that I respect them a lot and I respect what they're about so there's a mutual respect that occurs," Mr. Dennis Dudley, a physics teacher at the high school, said.

Though the students are said to be mostly respectful, of course there are exceptions. The goal is to keep it under control.

"When you have over 1,500 students and over 120 teachers, with all that humanity in this building, you're going to have situations where tempers can flare and people lose control for a moment or two," Dudley said.

People have a tendency to argue, so altercations are inevitable. Without a mutual sense of respect, said

altercations can spiral out of control. Both students and teachers have to accept that respect is a two-way street.

"Just because I'm a teacher doesn't mean I am superior to my students. I might have more experience and a degree behind me but I still need to treat students with respect or else I should not expect respect in return," Mr. Paul Sorby, a business teacher, said.

When problems do arise, there are several ways a situation can be handled.

"I find that having a one on one conversation with a student will sometimes be helpful if you can learn what the student is about, what their motivations are, why they act the way they act and maybe get some feedback as to if there's something you could be doing differently as a teacher that would help them respond to you in a more positive light," Sorby said.

Most people agree that a conference of sorts should be held when serious issues between the student and teacher take place.

"There should be some type of remediation. You have a meeting with the student, meeting with a parent. It has to be a student, teacher, parent collaborative," Mr. Bill Ament, teacher and part of the Bridge team, said.

Wrestlers hope to build on strong start from page 6

me out a lot as well," said defending section champion junior Jake Hartman. The senior class is lead by Jordan McGonigle who is coming up on his 100th win this season.

The Titans are also full of young talent like freshman Dylan Winters, Garret Reinsfelder, and Eric Warn.

"I think our freshman are and can be very good they just aren't proven at the varsity level," said Coach D'Agostino.

The Titans started off the season with a match on December 6 at Hampton. Hempfield ranked 7th in the WPIAL, Mount Pleasant, and Ligonier Valley were all defeated handily by the Titans. Injuries to Jake Hartman, Benji Kane, Eric Warn, and Jordan McGonigle however hurt the team going into the last two matches costing the Titans a chance at winning the tournament.

"We wrestled very well. We got a little beat up with injuries but hopefully nothing serious. Honestly, we should have won the whole tournament if we could have kept a healthy line up throughout the tournament," said Hartman.

The Titans next big match was at North Hills a formidable section opponent. Defeating North Hills proved to be an achievable but difficult task for the Titans because of the injuries sustained at the Hampton tournament.

"North Hills was a big match for us because they are in our section, but with key players out it was a tough one to win. People needed to step up including myself to win that match," said Junior Mike Heint.