

# The Oracle

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## New developments creating more questions about masks

by Addison Kania

Recent developments in the state of Pennsylvania have many wondering, “What is the situation regarding masks?”

First, Governor Tom Wolf announced that he would allow the mask mandate for schools to expire on January 17, 2022, and that the decision for mask requirements will be made by local school boards.

Days later, the Commonwealth Court voided Acting PA Health Secretary Allison Beam’s state-wide school mask mandate saying she did not have the power to issue such an order. The Wolf administration immediately filed an appeal which kept the mandate in effect until the appeal was ruled upon.

Last week, the PA Supreme Court overturned the mask mandate effective December 10.

These developments leave many questions for the administration at Shaler Area with the January 17 expiration date approaching quickly.

The school district sent a letter to families which stated, “Although the state masking order for schools has ended, Shaler Area School District will continue to follow its approved Health and Safety Plan, which requires universal masking for all K-12 students and staff when in an indoor setting, regardless of vaccination status.”

Shaler Area Superintendent Dr. Sean Aiken agrees that wearing masks is a hassle but feels that it



is the best way to keep students healthy and in school.

“Putting personal preferences aside, I recognize the need for masks in schools, especially since a great number of our students are not vaccinated. More important than masks or no masks for me is the fact that we bring the maximum number of our students into our schools each and every day,” Dr. Aiken said.

Knowing the January 17 date is quickly approaching, the district is no rush to commit to a mask plan yet as it plans to monitor things over the next month.

“This decision will always be predicated on the safest option for our students and staff members,” Dr.

Aiken said.

Yet, Dr. Aiken knows that with every decision there is going to be backlash and making everyone happy is impossible as he has to consider the whole school district and the safest plan for that time.

“We recognize that every decision we make has the potential for backlash, especially related to masks or other COVID-related topics. We have a safety plan in place for the district that was approved by the school board back in the summer. We may need to amend this plan depending on the positivity rate in the district and county,” Dr. Aiken said.

When the time comes, Dr. Aiken notes that they will choose the best decision to maintain a safe environment for students and staff members.

“We will review and analyze the COVID data for the district and Allegheny County. Any decision that is made will be reviewed periodically to ensure that we are moving in the right direction as a district,” Dr. Aiken said.

He emphasized the importance of keeping schools open for in-person learning.

“Seeing students engage in learning and connecting with teachers and classmates is so critical for learning, social and emotional health, and other factors related to student wellness. Our staff and students are amazing and we cannot take for granted the opportunity that we have to come here everyday to learn and grow together,” he said.

## District planning a change to cap and gown colors

by Savannah Schultis

After months of school board meetings discussing the color of the graduation caps and gowns, Shaler Area superintendent Dr. Sean Aiken has finally come to the decision to keep the traditional blue and white cap and gown colors for the graduating class of 2022.

The only change this year will be on the selection form, which will no longer ask for a student’s gender and will allow the student to choose either a blue or white gown.

However, the district has decided to unify the gown colors for the graduating class of 2023 when all students will wear the same caps and gowns. It is not certain as to what the new gown will look like, but the dominant color will most likely be blue. Dr. Aiken described how this decision is based on timing.

“We looked at a lot of pros and cons. I think one of the reasons that we really came to this decision is that we like the idea of, at some point, transitioning to a singular gown and having it unified. I recognize that school districts don’t change fast, they change slow, so the best strategy is making decisions where we actually have time to digest it and plan moving forward,” he said.

This decision definitely didn’t come easily, with community members on both sides of the issue expressing their opinions at school board meetings, in letters to the school board, and in petitions on change.org.

However, senior class Vice-President Rebecca Beckas, who was involved in discussions because of her role in student government, is relieved that Dr. Aiken has come to this decision.

“I’m glad Dr. Aiken was willing to listen to student voices for an issue that directly affected them. I know it’s not the result that some of the school board and community members wanted, but I’m proud of the student government for standing up for what we believe in and making our voices heard, and there is promised change in the future for equality within our school district,” she said.

Dr. Aiken compared the issue of the graduation gowns to class rank, which was eliminated in 2020. It took many years to finally come to that decision, so he did not expect that this would be any different.

“I feel like school districts don’t operate by ripping off band-aids and jumping into decisions,” he said.



## FID set to replace school snow days

by Aidan Brophy

As the winter season approaches, it’s fair to say that many things have changed from winters past. Last holiday season, we were still working to remain in the building part-time, and two winters ago, COVID-19 was barely a rumor. This season will bring even more change, however, as Shaler Area will be waving goodbye to the snow days of the past and implementing Flexible Instruction Days (FIDs).

FIDs will function identically to the synchronous online instruction days used last year, when the district was using the cohort A&B system to mitigate pandemic-related risk.

“This is a regular school day, but we will operate on a one-hour delay schedule,” Superintendent Dr. Sean Aiken said. “Our expectation is that teachers and students would engage in a schedule similar to a typical school day.”

Expanding on that, teachers and students need to participate in synchronous instruction for a minimum amount of time. What that instruction will look like will be up to individual teachers. However, the minimum instructional time has to be met for the day to effectively replace a regular day in terms of scheduling

“In order to count this as an instructional day, we need our students and teachers to treat it as such,” Dr. Aiken said.

The district also has its reasons for using synchronous instruction rather than asynchronous instruction.

“Although the asynchronous [method] is an effective and flexible mode of instruction, especially when a student may need to rewatch a lesson, we recognize that direct instruction and the connection between a teacher and student and student to student is an important piece of learning,” Dr. Aiken said. “That reconnection component of learning and engagement is a significant focus for us as a school district.”

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# OPINIONS

## Wearing masks is much better than learning virtually

by Addison Kania

Of course, right now everyone wants to get rid of masks. We are tired of having to remember to grab one when we leave for school. We are tired of not being able to catch our breath when we walk up a flight of stairs. We are tired of only seeing the eyes of our classmates and teachers. However unfortunate the circumstances are, masks may be one of the things that is keeping us actually in school.



We all remember how last year was doing school virtually. For me, it was not the highlight of my year and I feel most can agree with that. I would never want to return to that type of learning. However, I am fearful that is where we could be heading if masks are no longer required.

Recently, Governor Tom Wolf announced that on January 17, 2022, mask requirements would no longer be state-mandated but instead handed over to local control. This means that schools will be able to determine whether or not masks are required in school.

I would love to hop on board with the idea that masks may no longer be required yet there are a few things holding me back.

For one, many people are still not vaccinated. Although this is a personal de-

cision, which I respect, I am not confident that we would be able to keep cases to a minimum if masks are no longer required. At school, students are interacting with each other constantly, causing things like COVID to spread easily.

Additionally, the time at which the statewide mask mandate is lifted is during traditional flu season and when people are already coming down with colds. Masks will help us to stop the spread of germs throughout the building so we can keep absences from schools to a minimum. It does not make sense to me to remove masks in a time of year when sicknesses

are so readily spread.

Lastly, there are a lot of factors that go into the mask requirement policy. The administration will have to look at the current COVID cases and all the CDC guidelines at the time. With our current state, where cases are already rising, it does not seem promising that we will be in a good place come January. We do not want to see a hasty decision be made so we end up in virtual learning again.

I am still holding out hope that we will be able to decrease the amount of COVID cases and have a stronger idea of what is going on in our area, but for now I feel that continuing to wear masks is the best way to go.

## Cap and gown debate harming those its meant to help

by Frank Babicka

The Shaler Area School Board is mishandling the issue of caps and gowns for graduation.

The Board is considering changing the traditional blue or white graduation gowns to a single dual blue and white gown because it feels that the traditional colors have a gendered connotation: blue gowns being associated with boys and white gowns associated with girls. Some of the board feels that the traditional cap and gown colors alienate transgender and non-binary students and are harmful to their identity.

Yet, in considering the change, the school board is singling out the very students they feel are being singled out by the caps and gowns.

The issue of changing gowns has become associated with the transgender community and both sides have weaponized these students -- living, breathing students who have enough problems without their gender identity being used as a weapon.

Some of those opposed to the change have taken to attacking the transgender community over the issue. These attacks are wrong and unjustified. Just because someone may disagree with an issue or opinion does not give them the right to attack that person's identity. That extends to all on both sides of this issue.

Don't attack the people you disagree with; listen to them, question them and even argue with them. There is no reason for anyone to be disparaged over an opinion.

The side for changing the gowns is culpable of weaponizing the transgender community. In a response to a letter from the senior class officers, Suzanna Donahue, a member of the school board, accused the members of the senior class student government of opposing inclusion just because they are opposed to changing caps and gowns.

Being opposed to changing caps and gowns does not equate to opposing in-

clusivity. A person can support the rights of transgender students in the community without supporting changing the colors of caps and gowns at graduation. The two are not the same issue.

The district should allow students to choose which color cap and gown they wish to wear. In fact, it already does. Every student gets to choose a blue or white cap and gown when placing the order.

School board candidate Bryan Whitaker suggested red should be added as a third color option for transgender and non-binary students. Yet, Whitaker ignored the very issue at hand with his suggestion. The issue is whether or not traditional caps and gowns alienate transgender and non-binary students, which having them wear red would almost certainly do.

The whole issue of caps and gown colors is a distraction from the real issue of whether or not transgender and non-binary students feel accepted as members of the school community. The issue of caps and gowns can be rendered moot if the school board simply allows a Google Form to be posted to the grade level Google classrooms where students vote on the issue, instead of the board trying to force their views on the student body.

The real issue is how do we, the members of Shaler Area community, handle transgender and non-binary students on a day to day basis. We've been

focusing so much on the last day of senior year that we've forgotten about the other 179 days of senior year. How do we help those students through those 179 days? How do we help them through the 720 days of high school?

The answer is by taking those 720 days to educate students on how to be accepting of students who are different from them. We have to show students that there is no reason to bully someone because that person is transgender or non-binary. The school board should identify ways that the school district can be more accepting of LGBTQ+ students.

So, Shaler Area school directors, focus on the more pressing issue of providing a network of support for transgender students. By doing so, the students on graduation day will have the confidence and comfort to walk in graduation wearing the gown that they want to, saying "this is me."

**"The real issue is how do we, the members of Shaler Area community, handle transgender and non-binary students on a day to day basis. We've been focusing so much on the last day of senior year that we've forgotten about the other 179 days of senior year."**

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**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.

# OPINIONS

## FIDs not ideal, but a practical option for SASD

by Frank Babicka

COVID-19 has claimed another victim: the snow day. The pandemic gave rise to virtual learning and gave school districts practice in conducting lessons virtually.

Shaler Area School District has taken these lessons and applied them to snow days. Now on days where schools are closed, teachers will be required to conduct virtual lessons known as Flexible Instruction Days.

They will resemble virtual learning during the pandemic, which was considered by many to be a failure. However, these Flexible Instruction Days still have benefits that outweigh the drawbacks of virtual learning.

Shaler Area, unlike schools such as North Allegheny, does not have make-up days built into the school calendar to cover for school closures. This means that any cancellation days that Shaler Area has are usually made up during spring break.

With the Flexible Instruction Days, the school district hopes that the decision to call off will be

made easier since the students won't lose a day off of spring break. If the district is more willing to call off, that is a benefit for the students since they will not have to stand out waiting for buses in cold weather for extended periods of time and some high school students will also not have to worry about driving in weather that can be dangerous.

When Hurricane Ida hit at the beginning of the 2021 school year, road conditions were abysmal. Even before high school buses left to pick up students, there was already flooding on major roads in Shaler making the journey to school more dangerous. Conditions were so bad that the district actually cancelled school for the lower grades. The district made national news, and not in a good way, with a school bus getting caught in flood waters and needed the fire department to come out and perform a rescue operation.

Ida provides the perfect example of why the district needs to be able to quickly and easily make the decision to call off school, without needing to worry about making any of those days up. With Ida, the district hesitated too long to call off and put students

at risk. If the district knew that it would be able to continue with a virtual day, the decision to call off would have been easier and students wouldn't have been put at risk.

This is why Flexible Instruction Days are so vital for the school to have at their disposal. On any day where there is excessive snow or rainfall, conditions on roads can deteriorate quickly making travel dangerous. If the Flexible Instruction Days make it easier for the district to decide to call off, then they are a good thing.

We all can agree that virtual learning is not ideal, but the benefit of keeping students off of roads when conditions are dangerous far outweighs the drawback of having a day of virtual learning. Plus, if the decision to call off is made the night before, teachers will have time to prepare a lesson plan and make the best of the virtual day.

In the end, we may mourn the loss of snow days for now, but when the roads are bad or the weather is cold, we'll be thankful that we get to sit at home and drink our coffees while sorta paying attention to whatever is going on in the class.

## College football coaches sure are getting paid, why aren't college football players

by Dominic DiTommaso

I've beaten this drum harder than Notre Dame usually beats its regular-season opponents, but here I go again. This past week's coaching carousel spin shows why college athletes should be paid every bit the way their million-dollar-earning coaches are paid.

After 12 years at Notre Dame, Brian Kelly headed took \$95 million to fill the coaching vacancy at LSU. After vowing to remain in South Bend and then bolting anyway, Kelly's exit left Irish fans as enraged as they usually are after the team's multiple playoff flame outs. The former Notre Dame coach, joking and always smiling, has become the biggest villain in America.

Somewhere, Lincoln Riley is smiling.

More outrageous than Kelly's departure, however, is that his players, those he left and those he joined, are not allowed to earn a fraction of the money that Kelly will be making.

As of now, the three highest-paid coaches in college football are aforementioned Riley (projected at over \$10 million a year), Nick Saban (\$9.7 million a year) and Kelly (\$9.5 million a year). But where would these coaches be without the players that they beg to play for them? How much would their salaries drop if they didn't have their four and five-star recruits at their disposal?

Ironically, all of those coaches are underpaid. All the money those coaches have gathered for their schools over their years make them worth double what they currently earn. Yet, in Alabama's 24-22 Iron Bowl win over Auburn, it was Bryce Young who made a 28-yard touchdown throw with 24 seconds left to tie and send the game to overtime.

It is un-American that college athletes are forced to play three years of college football for no pay while risking the professional careers. They do get room, board and tuition, but the money they make for the school far outweighs the scholarship money they receive.

So, how wrong is it that players agree to

come out of high school and spend three (for many, unnecessary) years playing a violent sport for no compensation because of a coach who all but implored them to play for him, and then that coach in turn leaves them behind for millions of dollars? It's almost as wrong as Kelly's fake Southern accent.

The players that Kelly and Riley, recruit risk their futures every week for these coaches. Now, these players, many of whom didn't want to play in college to begin with, are now at a program without the coach who was the reason they went to the school in the first place.

Yes, these players have the opportunity to enter the transfer portal and maybe even follow their coaches to their new school, but how unfair is it that these young men agree to give up years of their lives for this coach and then have to rearrange their short-term future because that coach chose to chase the money his student-athletes can't make?

The recent NIL deals that allow student-athletes to profit off their name, image and likeness, have let some athletes make money for themselves. Young, in fact, has already made close to \$1 million with these new rules in play, but it's the play of Young that makes him worth the \$9.7 million that his coach makes.

The NIL money that many of these college athletes are making is chump change compared to their real value.

Now I do not blame Brian Kelly for wanting to leave Notre Dame for LSU. Coaching the Tigers is a better job than coaching the Fighting Irish — a better recruiting base, a better training facility and stadium. If a better job opened up for you and you had to accept it right there on the spot, would you not do it?

I don't condone Kelly claiming he would not leave Notre Dame, and then the next day doing just that. The lying is unacceptable, but the job acceptance is understandable. When dozens of college athletes are affected by your choice, however, it's only fair that these athletes get the same compensation that their coaches do.

## College football playoff field must be expanded

by Andrew Deal

The College Football Playoff needs to be expanded, and it needs to happen as soon as possible. The four-team playoff isn't exciting as it was when it was first implemented in 2014.

There needs to be that excitement and anticipation like there is on the true Selection Sunday in March, when the NCAA basketball tournament field is announced.

The FCS has a 24-team playoff. I'm not saying it needs to expand that much, but the 24-team playoff adds greater excitement throughout the entire season. So far, a two-loss team has never made the playoffs. If a team gets caught with a difficult schedule and loses two close games, their season is essentially over for the ultimate goal.

This year became the first year that a Group of 5 team made the playoffs. That only happened because Cincinnati went undefeated including a win at Notre Dame to add to their typically weak strength of schedule.

An eight-team playoff would likely include the champions from the ACC, Big 10, Big 12, Pac 12, and AAC to get automatic bids. That would leave two teams left to get the at-large bids. This year that would have been Georgia and Ohio State.

However, with this, the playoff would then include 11th ranked Utah, who has 3 losses, and 12th ranked Pittsburgh, who lost to Western Michigan and Miami. Utah and Pitt were never in the College Football Playoff conversation this year.

The addition of more teams would also make Championship Weekend more exciting. This year, after the Big 12 championship, everyone pretty much knew the four teams who would be in the playoff.

A 12 or 16-team playoff would add more excitement to the playoff and add more anticipation for teams and fan bases on selection Sunday.

How many teams from a conference can be included? This year, it would include at least three SEC schools and possibly of a 4th or 5th. At one point, at least five Big 10 schools would have easily been in and there couldn't be that much of a debate about it.

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# Bacco dedicated to help kids in foster care for his son

by Savannah Schultis

Shaler Area Middle School teacher Mr. Frank Bacco has turned his son's dreams into a reality with the Dalton Bacco "Living the Dream" nonprofit organization, which works with children in foster care and helps to keep his son's memory alive. After Dalton's tragic passing in 2017, Mr. Bacco and his wife Kerri knew they had to do something to honor him.

"My son was the most important person in the world to me. I loved him, I still love him, and when he passed away we knew we had to do something to keep his legacy going," Bacco said.

The Baccos adopted their son in 2011 when he was 12-years old. Dalton was in the foster care system, so they had to foster him for six months before they could officially adopt him. When Dalton was a senior in high school, he wrote a paper for his English class describing how one day he wanted to give back to kids in the foster system who were in the same situation as he once was.

"He knew that there were many kids who would not get a family, and he wanted to give back to those kids. He would never forget those that suffer in foster care and group homes," Bacco said.

He was giving back to those kids long before he wrote his senior year English paper. When they first met their son in December of 2010, the Baccos took him out on a shopping trip and bought him two nice pairs of shoes.

When they went to visit him a week later, Dalton wasn't wearing his shoes and explained that he gave them to a kid down the hallway who needed a new pair of shoes. Dalton rationalized it by telling the Baccos that the kid he gave the shoes to may never find a family, so it was the least he could do.

"That shows you the kind of kid Dalton was. He didn't really care about possessions. He cared about other people. That legacy is what I want people to remember about Dalton, that's what I'll always remember about Dalton, the loving kid he was," Bacco said.

When Dalton passed away, Mr. Bacco and his wife received donations and they knew that they wanted to put that money towards an organization that would honor Dalton.

Just a month after his passing, they were able to set up the "Living the Dream" fund, which got its name from their son always saying, "I'm living the dream because I have my forever family." The purpose of this organization is to carry out Dalton's wish of helping kids in foster care and to keep his kind-hearted legacy alive.

With their nonprofit organization, the Baccos are able to spend time with foster children and take them out for activities that they have never done before. Every November, they go on an annual shop-

ping trip at the Grove City Outlets where the kids are able to pick out things that they want to buy. Although it sounds simple, it means much more to those kids.

"A lot of these kids will never get to do that because they don't have a parent or a relative," he said.

The children are very appreciative of what the Baccos do. Several will tell their caseworker that they look forward to going out with them, and one of their kids actually keeps a countdown for when he will be seeing Mr. Bacco and his wife again. A girl once told them that "today was one of the best days of my life" after a shopping trip.

Another component to this is a mentoring program where Mr. Bacco and his wife are able to take individual children, their mentees, out to sporting events, movies, plays, restaurants, Kennywood, etc. In addition, they call those kids about once a week and check in on them, providing help or just someone to listen to them if they need it. With this relationship, they kind of become a family member to their mentees.

"It makes my day when one of my mentees calls me. We mean a lot to them, but they mean a lot to us too," Bacco said.

Mr. Bacco hopes that he can get his mentees on a track where they won't fall in the same footsteps as their parents. Many children end up in foster care due to parental neglect, abuse, drug usage, or arrest. He always tells them that when they "make it big" they have to "pay it back and become a mentor" themselves.

Not only does the "Living the Dream" fund impact the lives of foster children, but it also has impacted the life of Mr. Bacco. He reflected how the organization has given him an open mind and makes him look at kids differently now. It has helped him as a teacher work with students with different needs.

One way that money is raised is each year the "Living the Dream" organization holds a golf outing every September. They recently had their fifth outing which included food, gift bags, raffles, and, of course, golfing. Mr. Bacco recognizes that he and his wife will never have another birthday party for Dal-



Shaler Area Middle School teacher Mr. Frank Bacco, winner of PA Statewide Adoption Network Philanthropy Award, and his son Dalton.

ton or ever get to attend his wedding, so this yearly event is just another way to honor their son.

Knowing all of this, it's easy to see why Mr. Bacco and his wife Kerri won the Philanthropy Award given by Pennsylvania Statewide Adoption Network (PA SWAN), an award given to people who financially give back to children in foster care.

The award ceremony was supposed to be at the Wolf Lodge in the Pocono Mountains, but due to COVID protocols, it was held over a Google Meet this year. The award was given to the Baccos by Gisele Fetterman, the wife of the Lieutenant Governor. They accepted it from their living room and were able to have family members join over the meet and watch the ceremony.

To Mr. Bacco, the award gives the Living the Dream Foundation legitimacy as a true organization and he hopes it paves the way for him and his wife to work with more children.

"This is my passion, it really is," Bacco said.

He said he wants to "spend valuable time with kids" and let them know that he "cares about them" and is "doing this because he wants to do it."

By doing that, he will ensure that not only the memory of his son, but his son's mission to help foster children, lives on.

"I've heard when someone dies, when you stop talking about them, they're gone for good," Bacco said. "I'll never stop talking about my son and this is just one way to keep his message going."

# Food drive meets goal of one item per student

by Julia Barbati

Shaler Area high school participated in the annual food drive to collect and send donations to The Bread of Life Food Pantry in Etna. In order to give back to the community, Shaler Area helps those in need who are not as fortunate as others. The total goal was 1,257 items, one item for every student in the building, and with the help of many of the students and staff, the school was able to achieve this goal.

Mrs. Mindy Thiel, SAHS activities director, kept track of the food being brought in as well as the winning 9th period classes. Her encouragement to the students on the announcements at the end of the day to bring in items was no doubt a push to meet the goal. Mrs. Thiel believes that it is important to give back to the community every year.

"The community supports us, they support our school, they support our students, so this is just a really small token by everyone bringing in one item...it's a way to give back to the community to show we care about them just as much as they care about us," Thiel said.

This food drive is more important than some may think. There are people that are in need of help and some of them may even be students in the building.

The incentive that comes with participating in the food drive within the school is a competition between 9th period classes. The class that brings in the

most goods receives a prize. With a reward in place, this encourages students to bring in as many items as they can.

"Normally we would do a pizza party...I'm going to do salty and sweet... each class will get cupcakes and a variety of chips," Thiel said.

The first place 9th period class was Mr. Mitchell's, with an average of eleven items per person donated. Just coming short of that, Mr. Tim Taylor's class received second place, also with an average of about eleven items per person. Mr. Mason's class came in third place, and Mr. Ward's class ended in fourth. Appreciation should be shown to these classes for going above and beyond to support those who truly need it.

There are people within our community that need our help, especially considering how the past year and a half played out. Due to COVID-19, families have struggled, and may still be struggling, to put food on their table for their families. Therefore, it is essential that The Bread of Life Food Pantry can be prepared to provide for this select group of people.

"Every year we see such a great demand from our community, families that are struggling since COVID-19 hit in 2020, we've seen an even greater need so when the Bread of Life Food Pantry reaches out they say...'we are seeing record come through our doors, if you guys can do your food drive again'...we will always do it, so they truly appreciate it and were thrilled when I said we are doing it." Thiel said.

# Shaler grad enjoyed the experience of studying abroad

by Addison Kania

Studying abroad may be scary to some, but Shaler Area alumna Ali Tappe feels it was one of the greatest experiences of her life and it really set a strong foundation for her career. After graduating from Shaler Area, Tappe went on to college at Indiana University of Pennsylvania where she studied international business with an infiltration in marketing. This major required her to study abroad for a semester.

She had been taking Spanish at IUP, but did not feel fluent enough to go to a Spanish-speaking country so she narrowed down her choices to Australia, England, and Ireland. Another factor that went into her decision was tuition. Tappe was looking for a school where she could still pay her tuition to IUP and there would be no additional fees; it would be an actual exchange where a student from another university would come to IUP and she would go to their college. Ultimately, she decided on the University of Worcester in England, which also interested her because of small numbers in class sizes.

“I like smaller classes because then you are not just a number and you can actually get to know your professor and they get to know you as well,” Tappe said.

Tappe was excited for this new opportunity and after getting accepted, she packed everything up and made her way to England. This new experience brought about many aspects of studying abroad that she really appreciated.

“At Shaler and at IUP, when you look around, you see a lot of people that probably look very similar to you and everyone has the same train of thought. When I was able to study abroad, I was not only in classes with English students, but all around Europe like people from Hungary, Belgium, Asia, and much more. I think that having so many different students and mentors in one room really allowed me to have different viewpoints of certain things that I was learning about,” Tappe said.

She scheduled her classes for Tuesdays, Wednes-



Ali Tappe on a gondola ride in Venice, Italy

days, and Thursdays, giving her a four-day weekend. This allowed for her to do a lot of traveling around Europe. She traveled to Spain, Ireland, Germany, Hungary, Italy, the Czech Republic, Wales, and all over England. She loved not only being able to study abroad, but also being able to travel all over Europe.

After her semester abroad, she finished up her senior year at IUP. Yet, after having only a semester in England, she did not quite feel done with it.

“I felt like I had only just started scratching the surface of English culture. I wished I had more time there,” she said.

In her last few weeks of studying abroad, the head of the Master’s program came to her class to speak about the program. She felt that was the sign that she needed: she was going to get her Master’s degree in England.

Tappe applied to the University of Worcester

again for the Master’s program, where she would study International Management, and got accepted. After making some difficult decisions, fearing that she would miss her brother’s wedding if she took the offer, it all worked out in the end and she was able to attend the wedding and go to school in England.

From studying abroad and getting her Master’s in England, Tappe learned a lot through experiencing different cultures and ways of life.

“In Europe, they work to live and in America, we live to work. When they are at the office they have their heads down and are doing their work but as soon as they leave for the day, they leave their work behind them. When I came back to America to work, I definitely took that with me,” Tappe said.

Along with learning about Europe’s live/work balance, she also learned more about different cultures and the viewpoints that they have.

“We got into some really good discussions because in America we all grew up on the same fundamental values, but when you are going to school in Europe, every country has their own values. This means that in discussions taking place, you are then getting viewpoints from all these different people with all these different governments and cultures,” she said.

Having learned so much from her experiences with studying abroad, she would definitely encourage others to take those chances as well. She feels it is good to get outside of your bubble and try something new, because you will never know what you can learn from those moments. As she implements many things into her career that she learned from studying abroad, she wants others to have that same experience and see how other cultures and people can bring about different ideas that you may have never thought of.

“If anyone is reading this article and they are thinking about giving a new state a try after they go to college or after they graduate, definitely take that leap and give it a try. If it doesn’t work out you can always move back home. Nothing is permanent,” Tappe said.

THE GRID		Favorite holiday film?	Secret conspiracy you would like to start?	In 40 years, what will you feel nostalgic for?	Most embarrassing thing you’ve ever worn	If you were arrested with no explanation, what would your friends/family assume you did?
Freshman <b>Ava Molinaro</b>		It’s a Wonderful Life	We’re all still kids in kindergarten nap time and our lives are just us dreaming	High school	Pom Poms in my hair	Probably snuck out too much
Sophomore <b>Johnny Lamanna</b>		The Grinch	Titanic did not sink	People asking others where their mask is	Tom Brady jersey	being a plethora of useless knowledge
Junior <b>Rachel Scierka</b>		Prep and Landing	The world is a simulation	COVID and masks	Pair of ripped pants I didn’t know were ripped	jaywalking
Senior <b>Noah Brown</b>		Anything but Elf	Teachers are going on strike again	Masks	I don’t wear embarrassing clothes	something stupid
Faculty <b>Mr. Gaul</b>		A Christmas Story	Dr. Royall is an alien who wants to control us	Privacy	Jams shorts	behaving like myself

# Shaler Area bus makes a splash with story that went viral

by Aidan Brophy & Julia Barbati

Just weeks into the new school year, Shaler Area made international news. Shaler Area High School was being talked about everywhere, all because of an unlucky bus, remnants of a hurricane, and an ill-fated stretch of Seavey Rd.

The last thing the 40 students riding on bus 443 were ever expecting was to be caught in a flash flood. The remnants of a hurricane were passing over the area, they may have expected some heavy rain, but their expectations were ‘blown out of the water’, so to speak, on the morning of September 1, as the students and their bus driver found themselves surrounded by rising water.

The remnants of Hurricane Ida, a storm which had devastated parts of the southeastern US, began rolling through southwestern Pennsylvania the night before, and the deluge was only intensifying the next day. Early that morning, the students of SAHS were going through their daily routines as if it was a regular school day. Once bus 443 got to the end of Seavey Road, it quickly became far from normal.

“We got on the bus and we probably only went not even 3 miles... we were at the start of Seavey... I don’t think our driver saw the water at first, and it didn’t look as bad at first so we just drove through it and then the bus stalled,” Jaylin Vinski, a student on the bus, said.

Some students wondered if the bus should have entered the water on road, but the driver, ABC Transit, and police investigators have said that water flooded the road too quickly for the driver to react, resulting in the bus stalling out.

What students and first responders do agree on, however, was that the water was rising quickly. The sight of water steadily climbing up the sides of the bus and the front stairs caused some students to, understandably, begin to panic.

“I don’t think anyone was crying but everyone was screaming because we didn’t know what was happening,” Vinski said.

The bus driver and other students were attempting to calm down their worried classmates, while fighting to remain calm themselves.

According to another student on the bus, Jaxson Law, “some people were taking pictures... some people were using humor to cover up their panic, and we all started texting our parents.”

Turning back the clock by fifteen minutes or so, Assistant Fire Chief Aaron Skalos of the Cherry City Volunteer Fire Company was awakened by the first call of the day, one of many that he and his crew would respond to in the next twenty-four hours. The company had already prepared for the worst the previous night.

“Obviously we knew the hurricane was coming, we prepared the night before. We got our boat ready,



Shaler Area students are rescued from their school bus which stalled in a flash flood. (Cherry City Volunteer Fire Co.)

actually, in case creeks were overflowing in Millvale...we got our pumps ready for house basement cleaning,” Skalos said.

At 6:51 that morning, a call came in regarding a water rescue from a stalled school bus on Seavey Rd.

The Cherry City VFC was one of four fire companies to respond to that call, though only two were water-rescue capable. Skalos said that, upon hearing the specifics, namely that children were potentially in danger, “the adrenaline went up... when you’re a first responder, that’s one of your worst-case scenarios: kids. You don’t want to see kids involved.”

He also said that the students on the bus being of high school age certainly helped, as they were less prone to panic than a primary school student, but the danger of the situation was still present.

Although preparations had been made the night before, and the students had managed to remain mostly calm, the situation was still an urgent matter, potentially life threatening, according to Skalos.

“The water was rising very quickly for us... [the water] was at the tire marks, and then at the one point it was just about at the emergency exit of the bus... we were counting down our minutes, trying to hurry up,” Skalos said.

He, along with the other firefighters involved, managed to rescue all 40 students and get them to safety within about 7 minutes of their arrival to the scene. The students then waited in the plaza next to the flooded stretch of Seavey for another bus to arrive to bring them to school.

During the process of evacuating the bus, students were told to leave any personal belongings behind, as the rafts had a weight limit and items could have fallen off or been dropped into the waters below.

In the moment, Law said that his thoughts were along the lines of, “this is fine. They’ll probably give it to us right after...”

That assumption turned out to be misguided, as the belongings that were left on the bus arrived at SAHS long after the students themselves did.

The students arrived somewhat damp, but unharmed near the end of first period. They were greeted at the front of the building by Dr. Royall, who told students to take their time getting back to class. A number of students, after operating under the assumption that they would be going home rather than returning to school for the day, decided to go home anyways, and were picked up by parents.

Mrs. LeeAnn Guido, one of the social workers in the counseling office that morning, like the students of bus 443, was not expecting the events that unfolded. And she certainly was not expecting a bus-full of soggy students, some missing shoes and jackets and most lacking their bags, to into building.

However, she was more than willing to lend a hand.

“Mrs. Townsend walked a couple of kids over here that didn’t have any shoes on,” Guido said. “We happen to have some of those things here for students,” she said.

Students were given spare shoes, shirts, sweat-shirts, and emotional support if needed.

“It’s always amazing to me how our school, our high school community, can come together to support students and staff whenever things like this happen,” Mrs. Guido stated. “I appreciate working here because of the staff, and how much they really care about their fellow human beings in the building. Whatever we can do, we just step up.”

## Sadie Hawkins to be replaced with outdoor dance in May

by Melanie Celender

Even as schools try to return to normal, there are still a copious amount of adjustments that have or will have to be made for the 21-22 school year. One adjustment Shaler Area has been forced into is deciding not to host the annual Sadies Hawkins dance this school year, which was normally held in February. With COVID-19 numbers still high and no way to predict if that will change this winter, a dance in the gym is not possible. Do not worry, the high school will not be without a second dance this year. In place of Sadie’s, the first Spring Fling will be held on Biles Field in May of 2022.

“The idea was since we can’t do Sadie’s in February, let’s have a May

dance outside. So that is the plan,” said activities director Mrs. Mindy Thiel.

In September, the annual Homecoming Dance was held outside on Biles Field. Although there were a few bumps along the road, moving the dance to an outside venue was regarded as a success. Homecoming was a good experiment with an outside dance and with that experience to look back on, the school can plan for this one.

The plan is to have the dance in early May, but the exact date is not

certain yet with AP testing, concerts, and everything else going on around that time including prom at the end of the month. The theme for the dance as usual will be chosen by the juniors after the seniors pick the theme for prom (usually in January).

The reason it is so important to have this dance, aside from it being a fun and popular event for students, is that it is the last significant fundraiser for the junior class. It is essential for the class of 2023 to have an event like this to raise money as they’re somewhat

behind in their fundraising efforts.

A main concern with this dance is the number of students who will decide to come after attendance at Homecoming lower than usual.

“In terms of Homecoming—we usually have 800-900; this dance we only had close to 700,” Mrs. Thiel said.

There are many reasons why students may not have attended. There is the COVID-19 concern, hesitance to try an outdoor event, the last minute guest announcement to seniors, etc.

To plan better for this event and to encourage student attendance, juniors and seniors will be given more time in advance to invite their guests from other schools. There is hope that having Homecoming as a test of sorts, that everything will run even better this time.

**“The idea was since we can’t do Sadie’s in February, let’s have a May dance outside. So that is the plan.”**

— Mrs. Mindy Thiel



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# New nurse excited to be a part of the high school staff

by Addison Kania

With this somewhat “normal” school year comes many new things, including our school nurse, Mrs. Darcy Lutz, who took over for Mrs. Scheuer who retired at the end of last year. Mrs. Lutz has a lot of experience, from working in the Emergency Care Unit for eight years to becoming a school nurse. However, it is surprising to think that she did not actually want to become a nurse when she was younger.

Mrs. Lutz actually went to college twice; the first time she studied as an English major in English Literature and Creative Writing. She wanted to be a writer for a long time and graduated with an English Degree from John Carroll University. With this degree, she then worked at a doctor’s office as a receptionist, filing charts and scheduling appointments. It was here that she figured out what she really wanted to do with her career.

“I worked with some really great nurse practitioners who were really inspiring to me and so that’s when I decided I wanted to go back to school to become a nurse,” Mrs. Lutz said.

At first, this was not easy as she had to take science classes four nights a week at community college while still working full-time. Yet, she was able to push through and applied for an accelerated nursing program that allowed her to complete the degree within one year since she had already earned her bachelor’s degree.

Although a Nursing and English degree are very different, she believes that her English degree has helped her through her career as a nurse.

“It helps me in my career everyday because so much in life regardless of what your career is relies on written and oral communication. I think that that degree really gave me a good foundation for good communication skills,” she said.

After receiving her second bachelor’s degree, Mrs. Lutz worked in the Emergency Care Unit for eight years. However, when she got married and had kids, she decided that she wanted to work a more consistent schedule. That was when she decided to become a school nurse.

Her first school nursing job was at a private school



High school nurse, Mrs. Darcy Lutz

in the city, St. Edmund’s Academy, where she worked with kids from preschool through eighth grade. After that, she came to Shaler Area and worked in the primary schools. She only worked there for about a year before the opportunity to work at the high school came up. She had formed a close relationship with the Mrs. Scheuer and had a good idea of the work that she would be doing.

“Mrs. Scheuer was a great mentor to me when I was going through my certification process and we had talked often about what the high school does and I was really attracted to some of the things like the student assistance program and all the levels of support that exist for adolescents. I wanted to be a part of that,”

Mrs. Lutz said.

So when Mrs. Scheuer had decided to retire, Mrs. Lutz applied for the job. While it was a bit intimidating at first with the bigger school and larger student population, she has taken to one motto that has helped her stay positive throughout this school year.

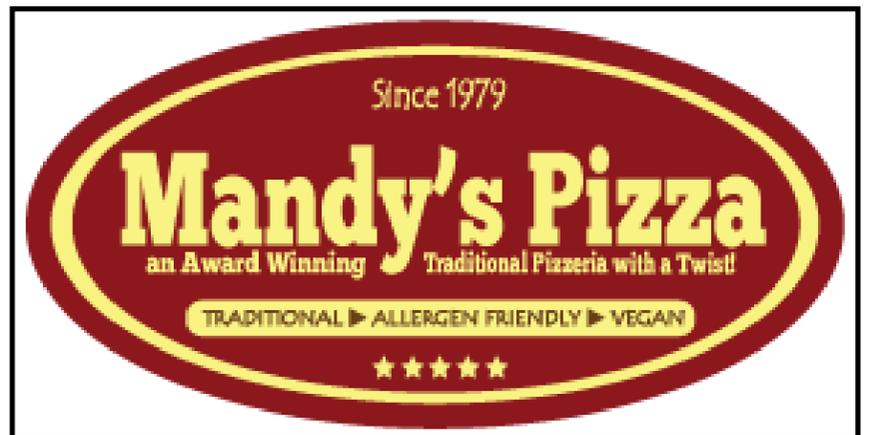
“I have been telling myself that I have to ‘ride the wave’ because even when it’s busy and stressful I know that a calmer time is coming,” she said.

This is a good motto for her right now. She has not only been adjusting to her new job, but she has also been completing her Master’s degree of Education in School Health Services. Already having to receive the credits that the state of Pennsylvania requires for a school nurse, she was just two classes away from a Master’s so she figured it would make sense to just get it. She has been pushing through all of her classes and will finish her degree over the summer.

In addition to loving her job as a school nurse, she also enjoys spending time with her three kids and getting to know more people in the community. Working in the district, and also living in the district and having her kids attend Shaler Area schools has brought her a sense of community that she loves.

She is very excited to be a part of Shaler Area High School and cannot wait to make more connections within the community.

“I am just looking forward to getting to know more people. There’s probably lots of students that I haven’t met yet but it will be nice when I get to meet them eventually,” she said.



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# Grief group helps students who have lost loved ones

by Savannah Schultis

Children’s Grief Awareness Day, recognized on November 18, was started to help others understand the impact that the death of a loved one can have on children and teens. Our school is encouraging everyone to wear blue on November 18 to show support for this initiative.

At the high school, that support can be found year round. Librarian Ms. Kate Wilcox and chemistry teacher Mr. Jeff Ward help grieving Shaler Area students with a peer grief group. The group is supported by the Highmark Caring Place whose goal is to “raise awareness of the needs of grieving children and how to respond to them”, and provide a place that supports families who have experienced loss.

The support they provide for students started five years ago when Wilcox had an idea.

She noticed that three students, whom she knew had all lost a parent, were sitting in together in the library. She decided to ask one of them what sort of support they had at school, and the student made a motion of a teacher handing them a stack of books.

At the time, Wilcox had a vague notion of the Caring Place and decided to check out their website, where she discovered that they could bring a grief

he wasn’t going to talk. “The first meeting he was the first one to open up about his loss. So people change their minds and come around too,” she said.

The peer grief group usually has its first meeting at the beginning of the second semester in January and runs for ten weeks, ending at the end of April/beginning of May. Once a week during the school day, the students meet with a grief counselor from the Highmark Caring Place, along with Wilcox and Ward.

“It’s not like a therapy session, it’s not like a counseling session, it’s more giving the kids a safe space to be,” Wilcox said. “The counselors are so good; they really know how to support the kids and encourage them to feel safe and I just can’t thank them enough for everything that they do.”

They usually spend the first four or five weeks just “dipping their toes in the pool”, encouraging students to open up about their experiences. But, as Wilcox describes it, the way the kids open up from the first meeting to the last is “really remarkable.”

Wilcox and Ward receive a lot of positive feedback from the group; whether it be students thanking them or joining again the following year, or just a nod in the hallway from a kid they didn’t previously know, they truly believe it helps.

“It’s helped a lot. It’s about being in that environment and everyone who’s around you because there are a lot of people who can relate to your stories and know what you’ve been through,” senior Kollin Williams said.

The group has grown tremendously since its start in 2016, as the first year they only had eight students. This year they have so many that they are splitting it so Wilcox takes some students, and Ward takes the others. Their reasoning behind this is they like to keep the groups fewer than ten.

Despite the increase in students,

Wilcox and Ward still want to bring light to their group and raise awareness of grief and loss.

“We want to make people in the school aware that we have this group available, and whether or



not you have had this kind of loss in your life, other people have. As human beings we have the capacity to support those people and let them know that we are here for them,” Wilcox said.

To accomplish this, Wilcox and Ward had small activities planned for the week leading up to Children’s Grief Awareness Day on November 18. It was started to help others understand the impact of death on children and teens and their need for support.

“It’s still hidden outside of the kids that we talk to. There’s a National Grief Awareness Day, but we’ve never celebrated it. We’re trying to dispel that let’s keep it quiet, keep it hidden. Instead, let’s have it out,” Ward said.

On November 18, all students are encouraged to wear blue to show support for Children’s Grief Awareness Day. Wilcox and Ward also plan on setting up a table in the library with cut-out butterflies, the symbol of the Highmark Caring Place. On these butterflies, students can write an anonymous note of support to a friend who is grieving or a message to someone who has passed away. They also see this as a great opportunity to remember the teachers we have lost this past year.

“(The butterflies are) going to become a memory wall, which is important. Who wouldn’t want to remember somebody they loved?” Wilcox said.

If you have any questions regarding their peer grief group, please see Ms. Wilcox or Mr. Ward.

**“It’s helped a lot. It’s about being in that environment and everyone who’s around you because there are a lot of people who can relate to your stories and know what you’ve been through.”**

— Kollin Williams

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## District to use FID from page 1

To “help staff and families get situated for virtual instruction,” Dr. Aiken said flexible instruction days will implement a one-hour delay schedule.

FIDs were considered as a possible alternative to snow days more than two years ago, before the pandemic started. However, Shaler Area did not plan to use them then.

“At the time, we had a lot of questions about the viability, especially since our K-6 students did not have an iPad as we were not 1:1 K-12,” Dr. Aiken said.

The usage of synchronous and asynchronous instruction during the pandemic made the implementation of FIDs much more viable, as every student in the district now has a school-provided iPad. The extra steps taken by the district’s tech support teams to ensure teaching during lockdown ran smoothly are now allowing FIDs to be used.

Should extremely inclement weather result in conditions that prevent students from getting online,

“we would most likely cancel the virtual instruction for the day,” Dr. Aiken said.

For example, if a blizzard causes widespread power outages in the district, preventing students without alternate devices and/or data plans from having internet access, the instructional time would be made up in the form of a day taken off of spring break, like in previous years.

“We try to apply the common sense rule for this, and we recognize that some inclement weather may not provide students and staff the opportunity to join online,” Dr. Aiken said.

From the district’s perspective one of the main benefits to FIDs is the ability to keep spring break at its originally planned length of one week.

“When we take a snow day, typically that takes away from your spring break. There are some teachers and students that plan trips during spring break, and protecting that time... is also another important factor,” Dr. Aiken said.

# Pittsburgh native's book and movie open door for job opportunity at Pixar



Jesse Andrews

by Sarah Naccarato

On March 1st, 2012, a novel titled, “Me and Earl and the Dying Girl,” by the author Jesse Andrews was published, telling the story of a boy who is forced into a friendship with a classmate recently diagnosed with leukemia. About three years later, it was brought to the big screen and received outstanding reviews.

Andrews was born in Pittsburgh and is a graduate of both Schenley High School and Harvard University. “Me and Earl and the Dying Girl”, his second novel, was set in Pittsburgh within the bounds of the city’s community. It isn’t very often readers get to see Pittsburgh in works of fiction, whether that be novels, movies, or other fiction media.

In the fictional Benson High School (named after musical artist George Benson), the audience is quickly introduced to Greg, a closed-off teenage boy who enjoys making short films with his friend Earl.

It is not much later that his world is changed when his mother forces him into pursuing a relationship with a classmate who was diagnosed with leukemia. Andrews tells a unique tale in which a boy’s life is changed forever.

“Finding that character and figuring out who they are and what is the most interesting thing that could happen to this person—that’s where the book begins.”

An important aspect of Andrews’ writing style is that it is constructed similarly to a movie script, so when it came to adapt the novel to a film, he was offered to write the screenplay. Despite the fact that authors are not normally offered the opportunity for wide involvement in filming,

Andrews made some important decisions in relation to the movie. Taking into consideration the process behind the adaptation, there were some concerns surrounding what would need to be cut or added in

order to properly express the message.

“Things really changed from book to movie because a book is very different object than a movie and some of that was tonal in the sense of the book is more cynical and nihilistic than the movie, (because) the book is told in first person, but a movie can never really happen in the first person.”

With the production came a surprising decision to film in Andrews’ childhood house, depicting Greg in the same house Andrews was raised in at the same time in his life.

While this artistic choice was most definitely not planned, it added a bit of personal significance and emotional touch to the set for Andrews. Although, this was unexpected for Andrews’ parents.

While they initially quite disapproved of the idea, stating they were “never going to let that happen,” they eventually gave in and accepted the brief transition to a hotel while the filming took place. Overall, the filming process behind “Me and Earl and the Dying Girl” ended up being very unique to the story.

Given the experience of producing the screenplay for his movie adaptation, Andrews also was given the opportunity to co-write the screenplay for Disney’s 2021 movie “Luca”. This moving animation told the tale of two growing sea-monster friends as they explore life above sea in an Italian village.

Both stories have a central plot surrounding two characters that form an unlikely friendship and end up in a position in which they must be vulnerable and exposed in a way in which they never have. The project behind “Luca” may have been quite different, but at heart they share similar stories.

That experience led to a Andrews landing a position at Pixar, where Andrews stated it is common for those in the studio to reference famous animated characters when developing other character personalities. The characters within Luca had lots of thought put into them, and a common character brought up was the classic Woody from “Toy Story.”

“People in the studio talk a lot about (Woody) and the other major characters from Pixar movies.”

Andrews currently resides in California, still working with Pixar. Although what he is currently working on, he could not say.

## College football playoff field must be expanded — from page 3

The committee would need to create some sort of variety with the inclusion of Group of 5 teams or independent teams like Notre Dame and BYU.

Another major factor to consider is conferences realigning and expanding. Oklahoma and Texas, who are typically ranked pretty high, are moving to the SEC. Some of the major Group of 5 schools will be going into a bigger conference like the Big 12 or Pac 12. College football could time it right that by playing into the fact that teams are re-aligning and by 2024 there is the expansion of the College Football Playoff.

With this idea of the expansion, I would like to point out a few teams and players from those teams that we would have seen on the biggest stage had the playoff been more than 4 teams from the start.

One of the first teams that comes to mind from previous seasons is the undefeated UCF team from 2017, which would be played as the 2018 College Football Playoff. UCF not only went 12-0 with an AAC championship, but then went on to beat Auburn in the Peach Bowl. This team not only should have made the playoffs, but would have been a fun team to watch throughout an

expanded College Football Playoff.

The 2017 College Football Playoff would have been the perfect season for an expanded playoff. There could have had an eight-team playoff including Big Ten Champion, Penn State, who had arguably the most electric running back in College Football history, with Saquon Barkley and Rose Bowl winners USC, with Sam Darnold and a group of current NFL wide receivers.

Those teams went on to play in one of the most exciting Rose Bowls in history. Imagine if they were in the playoff in an eight-team bracket with the regulars like Ohio State, Alabama, Clemson, and Oklahoma, who won the Big 12 and missed out on the playoff as well. The 2017 College Football playoff, expanded to at least eight teams, would have had a slew of future NFL superstars that would make the playoff more exciting to watch.

So, how does an expanded College Football playoff sound? It needs to go to at least eight teams. Before this year it’s just been a repetition with Oklahoma, Ohio State, Clemson, and Alabama. The College Football playoff needs more excitement, and an expansion will do just that.



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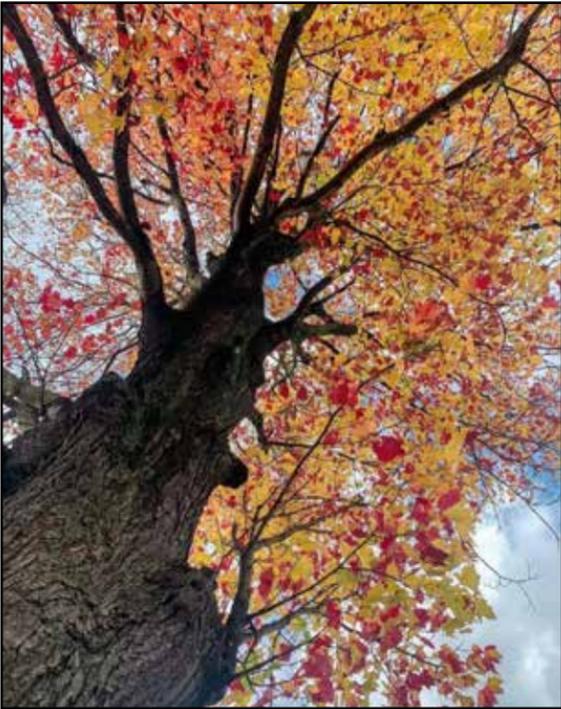


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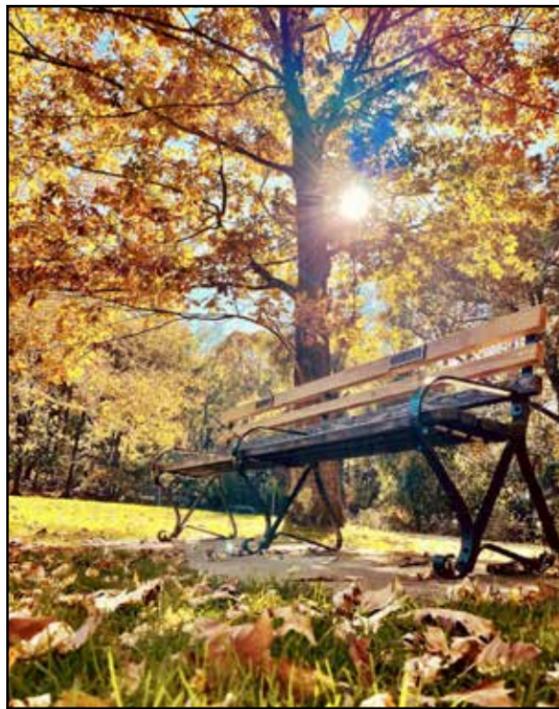


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# Fall photo contest showcases student abilities



1st place – Emma Ranallo



2nd place – Kristel Mendoza



3rd place – Lillie Gilder

by Sarah Naccarato

As the widely loved season of autumn comes to an end, the National Art Honors Society has declared a winner to its fall foliage photography contest. Hosted by Mr. Jeffery Frank and Mr. Brad Susa, the contest encouraged students to scramble outside in search for the perfect fall photo.

The photo contest was started last year by art and jewelry teacher, Mr. Frank as a way to inspire student's creativity as well as encourage them to go outside. While COVID-19 had hit the school district hard, the art department found a way to hit back. Mr. Frank wanted students to have a moment outside, away from online schooling, that allowed them to enjoy nature and take in the beauty of fall, while also being excited about participating in a student contest.

While it may have been fun for the students, it created some difficult decisions for the judges.

"Mr. Frank and I pick our top five then compare them with each other's picks. It is fun but sometimes very difficult," said Mr. Susa. "Everyone finds beauty in different things."

On top of the encouragement from teachers, participants were offered prizes

for the top three ranking photos. The third place winner was given twenty dollars, the second place winner thirty dollars, and the first prize winner was awarded fifty dollars. Top prize winner junior Emma Ranallo spoke about even though her photo didn't win last year, it wasn't time to give up.

"I thought it would be a fun challenge to try again and see if my picture would win," Ranallo said. "I was happy and excited I won!"

Lots of contest participants weren't newcomers. Many students involved with the art department knew of the contest, and were excited to participate again. Kristel Mendoza, the 2020 winner and 2021 runner up, spoke about her experience with photography within the contest.

"The real reason I wanted to participate again is for experimenting with angles and the natural lighting to bring the environment to life," Mendoza said. "It is quite interesting to do. Especially when it comes to experimenting."

While the contest encourages art students to go outside, it also allows them to try new things. Whether that be learning about different perspectives in photography, embracing natural lighting, or just having a fun time, the fall photo contest has a lot to offer each year.

## Japanese Honor Society provides safe space, cultural experiences

by Kamaria Mutadabur

The Japanese National Honors Society (JNHS) is an experience in which students in the Japanese program can learn more about Japanese culture. For some, it's a second home and a place they can comfortably express themselves and their love for Japanese through cultural based activities and events. It is also known for its comfortable and stress-free environment where others can have fun learning about their interests and sharing it with people of the same.

"It's a safe space where anyone can relax and simply have a good time. In another sense, it's also like one big family considering how small the Japanese program at Shaler is," senior Mai Swendsen, JNHS president, said.

The Japanese National Honor Society consists of about 37 members this year which makes it easy to develop a close relationship with participating members. The cultural aspect spreads across a wide spectrum making the learning opportunities that much more exhilarating.

"We do everything from traditional Japanese activities such as Shogi (Japanese chess), Sado (tea ceremony), Japanese calligraphy, Ickamana (Japanese flower arrangements). Every so often we watch movies and I try to choose movies that are harder to find," Mr. Steve Balsomico, Japanese teacher, said.

The culture that surrounds not only the JNHS, but the Japanese program as a whole, is what makes the language class so unique. What's beautiful about culture is the way that it affects others. Since JNHS specializes in culture, how the events affect the participating members is essential.

"The biggest thing about JNHS for me is how it has exposed me to so many things from Japanese culture. Every event that I have participated in opens

the gate to new and exciting ideas and concepts that I wouldn't be able to find in American culture. There's such a distinct difference between the two, and I've learned to appreciate the value of these differences," Swendsen said.

One particular, memorable event Swendsen remembers and said she enjoyed the most was the folding crane event in her freshman year. A legend says that if one was to fold 1,000 origami cranes, he/she would be granted one wish. In light of the Tree of Life Synagogue shooting that took place that year, students were instructed to fold 1,000 origami cranes as a tribute. They would string the cranes into a decorative display and donate them to the synagogue.

"I remember that my friends and I would take home tons of sheets of origami paper every day, and the next day, we would excitedly talk about how many origami cranes we were able to fold the day before. It was thrilling knowing that we were doing something good for the community. In the end, we did fold all 1,000 origami cranes."

Mr. Balsomico and Swendsen each have important roles in organizing JNHS. Swendsen's many responsibilities include planning out logistics, making sign up sheets, gathering materials for events, and acting as an ambassador for the students. She also acts as a motivator for Balsomico to actually plan numerous activities.

"He is also a busy person, so staying on top of things for him allows him to actually plan and do more JNHS events."

This can be tedious work for Mr. Balsomico; incorporating fun with education is no easy task. To

keep students interested enough to continue coming after school so it doesn't feel like a chore, but something to look forward to, can be challenging. Luckily with Mr. Balsomico's spirited, lively character, he creates a comfortable environment for students to enjoy.

"It is something that I will say I enjoy doing, but there is no doubt in my mind that it is a job," he said.

In recent times, of course, JNHS has changed.

Due to COVID-19, activities have been cancelled or restricted. Because there weren't many activities that they were able to do safely, there were few meetings and little participation due to the hybrid/ virtual instruction model.

Thankfully, the society is recovering.

Extensive planning have gone into this year's activities so students can participate safely. As the year continues students are still encouraged to stick around after school and indulge in Japanese culture. Everyone is welcome.

"To those not in JNHS who are taking Japanese right now, I would definitely encourage them to get involved. Not every activity appeals to everyone obviously, but I'm sure that there is at least one thing for everyone," Swendsen said. "JNHS is also a good space to meet and talk with people with similar interests since everyone in JNHS is in the Japanese program. Regardless, those not currently a part of JNHS are always welcome, no matter what."

**"It's a safe space where anyone can relax and simply have a good time. In another sense, it's also like one big family."**

— Mai Swendsen

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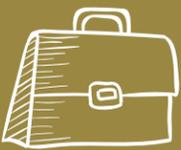
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# Shaler Area modifies Veterans Day celebration



by Rebecca Beckas

Established as a holiday 67 years ago, Veterans Day honors the military veterans who have served in the US armed forces. Over about 20 years ago, the Shaler Area Middle School faculty and students found their own way to honor the veterans, through events such as a breakfast, music performances, and this year, even a drive through incorporating the two.

For almost ten years, Mrs. Merrit McDaniel, a teacher at the middle school, has organized this event as a way to honor the veterans within the Shaler Area community, emphasizing student involvement and their participation and engagement in community service, whether it's by serving breakfast, waving flags and greeting veterans, or even playing music.

The middle school students typically involved are the cheerleaders, the choir and band students, student government, and even sometimes the sports teams. This year, though, the high school Jazz band and choir seniors joined the event.

Before the pandemic, this event was always advertised as a Veterans Day Breakfast, where more than 500 veterans were invited for the breakfast.

Along with food, there was war memorabilia, cards from students, music performances, speeches from faculty, and vendors, like Quilts of Valor, for the veterans to enjoy as they visited the middle school for the event.

During COVID, though, Mrs. McDaniel admitted that it was harder to host this event, but she was able to put together a tribute video to share with the community.

"Unfortunately, we did not have the celebration last year [since] we were remote, and no one was in the school. However, I made a tribute video that we put out and shared with the community," she said.

This year, however, as restrictions have been lifted and everyone is back in person for school, McDaniel took inspiration from the drive-through graduation and birthday celebrations during quarantine. The goal was to show their appreciation for the veterans as best as they could, incorporating old traditions into a new format.

"This year, we still wanted to do something. We came up with the Drive Through Parade, offering coffee and donuts... We wanted all of the students to line the building and wave flags and cheer them on.

Just something to honor the Veterans."

McDaniel wants to bring back the traditional breakfast, as it was not only a meal for the veterans in the community, but a social gathering as well.

"I would really like to host the breakfast again; it was more of a social event for the Veterans. I felt they missed that, and they looked forward to that all year. We had more of a turn out with the breakfast. If we do the drive through parade again, we have learned what to do differently and will advertise more to have as many Veterans attend as possible," McDaniel said.

Even so, McDaniel takes pride in what she and everyone involved does for this event, and what it means for the veterans. She wants to let the veterans know that they are appreciated for all they have done for the country, not only by the adults, but by the students learning about them as well.

"I love seeing all the Veterans and the pride they have. They all usually wear some of their military attire or even a uniform," she said. "I also love to see them interact with the students. They are very impressed with our students and compliment how they are so well behaved, respectful, and interested."

## YouTube video launches a musical group to stardom

by Addison Kania

Straight No Chaser, an a cappella group, went from typical college students in a music group to worldwide sensations, performing just about everywhere and sharing their talents with the rest of the world. Straight No Chaser originally formed in 1996 at Indiana University where the members were all a part of the show choir, Singing Hoosiers. While this choir brought them together, they spontaneously formed Straight No Chaser and began performing together as an a cappella group.

Throughout college they continued to perform together, creating comical performances that tied in their musical talents. However, after college the group dissolved and each member went their separate ways. In 2006, original member Randy Stine uploaded a video of their rendition of "The 12 Days of Christmas" to YouTube as a remembrance of the good times. The video went viral and soon after the group signed with Atlantic Records. With this publicity, they did receive some initial backlash in regards to their name.

"Initially, our name wasn't universally liked or accepted, as some people (including our alma mater) assumed our name came from an alcohol ref-



erence, when it actually was sourced from a Theolonous Monk jazz album and song. Eventually, it became a non-issue and the name has worked for us now, for 25 years," Stine said.

The group continued its rise to stardom, getting to experience many opportunities throughout the years.

"Some of my favorite experiences have been getting to work with some of our favorite artists, like Sara Bareilles, Stevie Wonder, Paul McCartney, Elton John, and Phil Collins, among others. Also, playing in some legendary ven-

ues, like Red Rocks in Colorado, the Hollywood Bowl in Los Angeles, and both Royal Albert Hall and the O2 Arena in London," Stine said.

Being a part of this group has not only allowed Stine to have these amazing opportunities, but it also greatly shaped his college experience and directed his life into the music industry. Stine feels that the best part about being in Straight No Chaser is "the opportunity to perform for audiences all over the world." After so many years in the music business and being a per-

former, Stine learned countless lessons that he looks back on and would share with aspiring artists.

"One, even if you have a particular goal or career in mind, make sure you have diverse skills and interests. Keep your mind, and your options open. Second, don't burn bridges with anyone. The boss you despise in one job may end up being the person you need to impress a few years later, to get the job you really want. If you anger or disap-

point them in that first job, they are not likely to recommend you for that next job," Stine said.

With these lessons in mind, he and the group are continuing to perform during their tour from November to June. They are coming to the Benedum Center in Pittsburgh on December 14 to give their fans a live performance that they have not been able to see for a few years due to COVID. Stine is excited to see what the tour brings and for their future after the tour is done.

# Girls volleyball reaches new heights during playoff run

by Dominic DiTommaso

The Shaler Area's girls volleyball season came to an end following a 3-1 loss to North Allegheny in the semifinals of the PIAA tournament. The loss came just more than a week after the Tigers beat the Titans in the WPIAL championship match.

Shaler finished the regular season as section champions with a 15-1 record. The Titans entered the WPIAL playoffs as the number two seed, receiving a first-round bye.

Facing Latrobe, who upset Bethel Park in the opening playoff match, in their first WPIAL Tournament game, the Titans swept the Wildcats 3-0. Five days later, Shaler Area did the same against Oakland Catholic and completed the sweep with a 25-15 third-set win. This sent the Titans to the WPIAL Championship game for the second straight year, and secured them a berth in the PIAA Playoffs for the first time in school history. After North Allegheny beat Moon in their WPIAL semifinal match, the Tigers and Titans were set to meet in what would be their third of four matches against each other.

The Titans won the first match 3-0 which ended the Tigers' 27-match win streak. North Allegheny won the second match 3-2, after trailing 2-0 in that match.

"We were confident [going into the game against NA]," coach Mr. Paul Stadelman said. "We liked our chances against them and knew that it would be a great match, which it was."

Shaler Area fell to North Allegheny in five sets, after gaining a 2-0 lead on the reigning WPIAL champions.

"The game was a lot of fun, and I am really proud of how we played," senior Tia Bozzo said. "The game didn't go our way, but we learned that a medal doesn't always mean that you 'won'. How you conduct yourself on and off the court, and playing with your teammates, is more important than any title."

The Tigers lost the first two sets 25-19 and 25-22, and were in the same 2-0 hole that they were in when they played Shaler Area earlier in the season. North Allegheny came back to win that match in five sets, and did the same in this case. It was North Allegheny's fifth-straight championship game appearance, its second WPIAL title in a row and fourth championship in five years.

"The game was separated by a few plays here and there," Stadelman said. "It was a close match for both teams."

The Titans won their first match in the PIAA



The Titans and Oakland Catholic battle at the net in the WPIAL semifinals.

playoffs, the first PIAA tournament win in program history. The 3-0 victory came over McDowell.

The next opponent in the tournament was the District-3 champion Hempfield. Shaler Area won the first two sets over the Black Knights. After losing the next two sets 25-20 and 25-19, the Titans were in danger of blowing a 2-0 set lead for the second time in their last three matches. The Titans would, however, win the fifth set by two and move on to the state semifinals for the first time in Shaler Area volleyball history, boys or girls.

In that match, senior Mia Schubert would hit her 1,000th kill, an athletic milestone. In the regular season, fellow senior Bozzo recorded her 2,000th assist.

In the state semifinals, Shaler Area once again matched up against North Allegheny. The Titans took an early lead, winning the first set 25-19. In the second set, NA led 22-13 before Shaler rallied and tied the score at 24, then took the lead 25-24 and then 26-25. NA would come back, though, tying the extended set 26-26 and 27-27, before winning 29-27. The Tigers would win sets three and four 25-18 and 25-18 to win the match.

"I was proud of this team all season," Stadelman said. "Not just for making it to state playoffs or returning to the WPIAL Championship game, but for how they act. They play with a lot of passion and energy. They are also great students and people on and

off the court. It was my pleasure to be their coach."

Schubert led the Titans in kills and digs against the Tigers, with 11 and 23. Bozzo had 35 assists, and senior Sierra Ricci had 22 digs while junior Madison Barr had 21.

"Although the semifinal game was a tough loss, I think we played a very good 'team' game," Schubert said. "All of us worked together to pull off a win in the first and almost the second set. It ultimately came down to who made the least amount of errors, which ended up being NA. It was a very good match up between two very good teams that just didn't end up with the outcome we had hoped."

The Titans finished the 2021 season with an overall record of 19-3, all three losses coming to the WPIAL and PIAA champion North Allegheny Tigers.

"All of us are extremely upset with the outcome, as we did not meet our goals," senior Kayleigh Newland said. "We cannot let this take away from the fact that we had an amazing year. So much has been accomplished this season and I am beyond proud of it. I believe we are a well-bonded team with a lot of drive. We all had so much fun being a part of the program this year, excited to practice and work every single day towards our goals. I feel as though I have the true grasp of what a team is after this season. I will always remember this year because of the success and the environment of the team."

## Football team endured tough schedule and many injuries

by Andrew Deal

The Shaler football team had its ups and downs throughout the season. After starting the season 2-0, the injuries that built up through those games, and in the 3rd game just caught up to them. They went on to finish the season with a 2-8 record.

Entering the season, the coaching staff implemented a new offensive and defensive system that showed flashes of success throughout the season.

"The players having a collective buy in and having the belief to be able to grow helped the team build up momentum and confidence throughout the season" head coach Mr. Jim Ryan said.

The amount of injuries that the team dealt with is just something no team can withstand and continue to play at the same level.

"Despite all of the injuries, they realized what they were capable of in smaller instances, they re-



alized they can move the ball on teams and make big plays. Full strength, they would've been able to capitalize and win more games," Ryan said.

To add to their struggles, Pine-Richland, a perennial powerhouse in 6A moved down to 5A and into the same section as the Titans. The Shaler football team had arguably their hardest sched-

ule in years. Three of the final four teams in the WPIAL 5A playoffs played the Titans, as well as Hampton who was undefeated in the regular season.

The team started off 2-0 for the first time in almost 10 years. The Titans won at New Castle 37-20 and then beat Mars 25-6.

"Starting 2-0 was a statement and I think if we can do it again next year, while being fully healthy, we could have something special," junior Zach Hartung said.

## Girls Golf recap

by Frank Babicka

The Shaler Area Girls Golf Team finished their season on September 30 with a 6-12 record.

Coach Anthony Prodenté chooses not to focus on the team's record, however.

"The Girls Golf Team had a very successful season," he said.

Instead of the record, he focuses on the growth of the team during the season, especially since they played in a competitive section.

"One memory stands out in my mind and that is the way that the ladies came together as a team and became a family of lady golfers," Prodenté said.

Sydney Lang, one of three seniors on the nine member team, focuses more on the people she met during the season.

"I had the pleasure of meeting so many different people from so many different places and I'm very grateful I was able to golf this season," Sydney said.

While a third of the team will be graduating this year, Prodenté still looks forward to next season.

"I'm looking forward to building on their skills next season," Prodenté said.

# Seniors lead the way for Cross Country team

by Ella Katona

The Shaler Area Cross Country team has completed another season. Though the athletes are sad to see the season end, there are many achievements to be recognized as a result of the hard work and dedication of the athletes.

The team had normal sectional meets throughout the fall and also ran some competitive invitationals as well. Some of the most notable ones were the Red, White, and Blue Foundations Meet in September, the Grove City Cross Country Invitational and WPIALs.

“We have a small team, but we were competitive in each race,” coach Justin Eskra said. “The team had an extremely close bond with one another which allowed for everyone to practice and train at a high intensity.”

Though the athletes endured hard races, many of them achieved new personal records that they were extremely proud of and still had a lot of fun memories.

“My favorite memory from this year was getting a personal record at the White Oak course (Red White and Blue race) and going on a haunted hayride with the team,” senior Samantha Hennen said.

Three of the seniors also qualified for states, which was exciting for some of the athletes, because they had never gone before.

“The season was great. It started off slow with injuries, but I adjusted and found a groove. Ryan, Sam, and I all made it to the states this year and I couldn’t



Tyler Paszkowski, Sam Hennen and Ryan Paris

be more proud,” senior Tyler Paszkowski said.

The seniors will miss the memories they created with their cross country family.

“I am going to miss high school cross country in general,” senior Ryan Paris said. “After spending four years with coach Eskra and running with Sam and Tyler since middle school it will be hard to leave them. From this year specifically, I am going to miss all of our fun team memories, like taking timer pictures every day or going to a haunted corn maze with the team. We have definitely had some good memories this year and this is the closest the team has ever been with each other.”

Sam, Tyler, and Ryan want to further their running careers in college and compete at the next level.

“I definitely want to continue running moving forward and take it to the next level. I’ve talked to plenty of college coaches and I’m very excited for what the future has,” Paszkowski said.

The head coach will miss the athletes he has been training ever since they were just incoming freshmen.

“The seniors were the heart and soul of the team this year,” coach Justin Eskra said. “They organized activities all season long for everyone to join. Their hard work and self-motivation allowed all three of them to compete at the PIAA meet in Hershey.”

## Losing record does not define girls soccer season

by Addison Kania

The Shaler Area Girls Soccer team has wrapped up another season. While it may have not been as successful as it had hoped, finishing with an overall record of 3-13-1, the team continued to work toward their goals and create lasting memories throughout the season.

The season started out with a much younger team than usual. With only eight upperclassmen on the team, it was difficult to introduce a varsity level of play to the younger members. This was especially challenging considering many of the returning players were learning to play new positions. However, these challenges brought about goals for the team in the beginning of the season.

“Our goals were to work on the team dynamic and try to connect better as a team. We wanted to bring a strong effort to every game and give our all even if the odds weren’t in our favor,” senior defender Anna Sheets said.

With these goals in mind, the team faced some of their biggest opponents like North Allegheny and Seneca Valley. Although they were unable to pull out the win against these teams, they still brought everything they had and continued to fight until the time ran out. The girls played with this team mentality all throughout the season allowing them to create many lasting memories.

“My most memorable moment from this season was when we beat Highlands 6-0 and Coach Craig did a somersault for every goal we scored down the track and bought us all t-shirts from the tournament,” Sheets said.

Senior defender Diana Shebetich also formed many memories from this season with the team.

“My most memorable moment was prob-



Sydnee Cruz plays the ball against Butler.

ably our overtime win against West Mifflin. I just remember being so tired as Taylor Pierce kicked the ball in the net and it went right through the West Mifflin goalie’s hands. It was a great feeling to run over and form a dog pile on top of her,” Shebetich said.

Shebetich learned a lot of lessons throughout the years and wanted to share some with the younger members of the team.

“Do not get discouraged. You cannot hyper-fixate on one pass you didn’t make or not getting rid of the ball sooner because the game is constantly changing. In the end, I would try to focus more on the positives, creating lasting memories with your teammates,” Shebetich said.

Coach Craig Wilkins was happy to see his team come together with the older players helping out the younger ones. With this young team, he is excited to see what the future holds for them.

“I’m looking forward to seeing this group continue to work hard, stay positive, and build a winning culture,” Wilkins said.

## Boys golf team shows promise for the future

by Dominic DiTommaso

Led by sophomore Joey Miller, the 2021 Shaler boys golf team ended the season with a 4-8 record and exceeded most expectations heading into the year.

“I was not sure what to expect for the season to be honest,” coach Chris Catanese said. “With some of the biggest schools in the WPIAL in our section, I knew winning matches would be difficult. With that said, we were very competitive within our section this season.”

The Titans’ first section win came in their third match of the season in early September, against then-undefeated Butler at Butler Country Club. The match ended with a two-hole playoff that saw Miller and freshman Jacob Crissman defeat their opponents.

Later that month, Shaler beat North Allegheny 200-214, a match that Catanese described as the Titans’ “best effort of the season”, after losing to the Tigers a few weeks prior.

Catanese, as well as assistant coach Brad Stone, completed their first year in charge of the golf team after being hired shortly before the season began. Because of the late hire, Catanese said the two had to “hit the ground running.”

Helping the new coaches was Miller, who led the team in stroke average and most statistical categories. At Shannopin Country Club, Miller became the first golfer in Shaler history to win the Section Championship by five shots. Posting a score of 71, Miller was in front of Crissman and sophomore Jake Kunc, who both barely missed qualifying for the WPIAL Semifinal. Kunc missed by one shot and Crissman by two.

Looking ahead to next year, Catanese says that his players have what it takes to bring the team even further.

“The team that returns next year should be very competitive in the section,” Catanese said. “We had 3-4 first year golfers competing in the starting line-up and their experience should really pay dividends next season. The returning group loves the game and understands what it takes to improve for next season. If a player or two can step up we could make a run at the WPIAL Team playoffs. With a full season under our belts next year should yield improvement now that the players know the expectations.”

# Shaler Area inducts 7 new Hall of Fame members

by Dominic DiTommaso

Shaler Area School District inducted six former student athletes and one former coach into the Shaler Area Athletic Hall of Fame for the Class of 2021.

Three-time WPIAL champion Brianna Schwartz, three-sport athlete Ryan Mincher, and four-year volleyball player and captain Annie Bozzo headline a class featuring six athletes that continued their high school athletic careers into college and a WPIAL-champion head coach.

The class was enshrined on October 8 after being featured before the varsity football game, and were celebrated the next day during a ceremony at the Shaler Area High School auditorium.

The complete list of inductees features John Balouris, Annie Bozzo, Ryan Mincher, Eric Mozzetti, Carlos Reisen, Brianna Schwartz, and David Sibenac.

Schwartz was a member of Shaler Area's cross country and track and field teams, and was a three-time WPIAL cross country champion, PIAA state cross country champion, and two-time PIAA state champion in the 1600m event.

"I am honored to be inducted into the Shaler Hall of Fame," Schwartz said. "Shaler athletics has a history of amazing athletes and coaches, so it is special for me to be named among them. I remember walking through the hallway that displays the Hall of Fame photos and thinking highly of those athletes. I hope that hallway gives encouragement to young athletes at Shaler so that they can be there one day, too."

During her senior year, Schwartz won her third consecutive WPIAL cross country championship by breaking her own record by 27 seconds. A week later, she won her first PIAA championship by running the second fastest time ever set by a female on that course. Subsequently, Schwartz has become known as one of the best female runners in Pennsylvania state history, with the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette dubbing her as "arguably the best distance runner in WPIAL history".

"[The Post-Gazette quote] means that my times and championships from high school put me in great company," Schwartz said. "My coaches did an amazing job at gradually building up my training each year. The motivation to actually dedicate myself to this training came from a combination of spiritual and mental strength. I know that any ability I had to



Class of 2021 Shaler Area Athletic Hall of Fame inductees: John Balouris, Eric Mozzetti, Bri Schwartz, Carlos Reisen, Dave Sibenac, and Ryan Mincher. Not pictured: Annie Bozzo.

train was a gift from God, and so that motivated me to be grateful for it."

Ryan Mincher won ten varsity letters in high school after being what is rarely seen today: a three-sport athlete. Mincher was the starting quarterback on the football team, the starting point guard on the basketball team, and starting shortstop on the baseball team where he still holds the record for all-time batting average for Shaler Area baseball (.516).

Mincher went to the University of Pennsylvania to continue playing baseball, and it was there that he became a captain of the baseball team.

Annie Bozzo, now a teacher at Shaler Area Elementary School, enters the Hall after being a four-year captain and starter of Shaler's volleyball team. Bozzo was a two-time All-WPIAL athlete and two-time All-State athlete, and continued playing volleyball at Syracuse University as a setter.

John Balouris was inducted after competing in track and cross country, becoming a WPIAL and PIAA qualifier. Balouris continued his athletic career at St. Francis University, where he was named a captain of the cross country and track teams. It was there that he was able to take some lessons he learned while at Shaler Area.

"Some of my closest friends were my older teammates at Shaler," Balouris said. "They taught me how to be a leader without necessarily being a vocal one.

I took those principles when I became captain of my track and cross country teams at Saint Francis."

The only non-athlete being enriched this year is Eric Mozzetti, a coach of the girls basketball team who led the Lady Titans to two section championships and a WPIAL championship in 2011. In his final year as coach, 2010-2011, he was named WPIAL Coach of the Year.

Carlos Reisen, who competed in track and field, becoming a WPIAL champion in the low hurdles. He continued competing at the University of Pittsburgh where he was a three-year letterman and in 2013 was named the Pitt Varsity Club Awardee of Distinction, an honor that he said pales in comparison to being inducted into Shaler's Hall of Fame.

"[Being inducted] means more to me than having been named a Pitt Varsity Letterman of Distinction because high school was a formative experience and I could not have been successful in college without an impactful high school experience," Reisen said. "Shaler was my genesis for later life. My life became one of always achieving excellence in whatever I did, and failure was just a momentary diversion."

Finally, David Sibenac was a three-sport athlete, in football, baseball, and wrestling. He won the MVP in both football and baseball in the same year (2003) and continued playing baseball after high school at California University of Pennsylvania.

## Boys soccer focuses on more than just wins and losses

by Andrew Deal

The Shaler Area boys soccer team's 5-12 record does not accurately reflect how the team played this season. Every game, the players played every minute with high energy and a never-give-up mentality that will help each of them in the future.

Entering the season, the Titans knew they had some grueling match-ups in front of them.

"At one point, our section housed 4 of the top 5 teams in WPIAL. It's difficult, but we played well and know what it takes to beat those teams," head coach Mr. Tyler Schultz said.

The WPIAL semifinals occurred last week, and included 3 teams from the section, including the eventual champion, Seneca Valley. Class 4A Section 1, is nothing short of stacked, and Shaler is looking to join the top of the pack in the upcoming years.

The Titans saw some positives

out of those match-ups. They were able to stay competitive in most of the match-ups, and fought until the very last minute. The experience gathered by the underclassmen will help them compete and get over the hump and get some wins against those top teams.

"The boys found the will to do it each game. I believe it will pay dividends for us," Schultz said.

The game that defined the season was their first game, a tough loss against Bethel Park.

"It was notable because the boys played so well, we moved the ball, we had chances, we were communicating. Seeing the boys play this way showed they had this ability in them, and it was something we referenced the rest of the season," Schultz said.

The Titans were able to send their seniors off with a 3-2 win on senior night over Brashear. They also went on to win their final game of the season at Butler 4-2.

## Girls tennis enjoyed the season

by Sarah Naccarato

The Shaler Area girls tennis team finished its season in October, coming together to face struggles and work as a group. With a final record of 5-7, the team made a comeback after having two early matches cancelled due to the rain. Despite this and a few initial losses, the team was supportive of each other through the ups and downs.

"Everyone loves winning, and we did win some matches, but I am proudest of the way the kids supported each other during matches," coach Mr. Brian Duermeyer said.

With 14 seniors and 13 underclass players, the tennis team was forced to face some issues regarding scheduling time for each individual to play. With patience and practice, they figured out a way to find fair scheduling.

"To their credit, my players were patient and accepting of the opportunities that came their way," Mr. Duermeyer said.

Each player also faced their own

individual struggles, and was forced to find ways to overcome issues. Corey Sigmund, a tennis and softball player, spoke about the challenges of being both a tennis player and softball player.

"One of the toughest struggles (for me) was forcing myself to not swing the tennis racket like a baseball bat. At first it was definitely rough but it always ended up getting a lot better throughout the season," she said.

While there were some beginning conflicts, the team maintained an open environment for learning and overcoming challenges. Each person found ways to communicate, teach, and make the best of the game.

"The season and the program was so fun! I would recommend joining tennis to every girl if they want to feel like part of the team and get involved at Shaler," Sigmund stated.

Being a part of a team allows everyone to unite and learn together and it was obvious with this group.

"They are talented tennis players, great students, kind humans, and fun to work with," Mr. Duermeyer said.