

The Oracle

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District finally makes decision on caps and gowns

by Elena Flavin

On November 18, 2022, a message was sent out to Shaler Area students via email declaring a final decision regarding the graduation cap and gown design. After student opinion being taken into consideration, the district has decided on a plain, navy blue gown that will feature the official district Titan logo.

The district website posted a photo of the gowns with the following statement.

“Student voices have been incorporated into the decision to move ahead with the simple dark navy design for our new graduation regalia which features our Titan logo. The new gown honors the Titan tradition with the school colors, advances our mission of unity and inclusion with one design for the entire graduating class, and integrates feedback from students and community. Beginning with the Class of 2023, our new graduation gowns will usher in a new era in Titan history with a unified design.”

However, the process to get to this decision was not an easy one as it was plagued by much arguing and lack of compromise.

A gown design was initially revealed on August 31, 2022 featuring a navy blue gown with a thick white and red stripe at the end of the sleeves. Immediately, there were strong reactions from the community to this draft ranging from those who felt extremely disappointed to those who were satisfied or happy with the design.

“Some people just seem like they don’t care and other people are just so passionate about it,” Superintendent Dr. Sean Aiken said.

Regardless of how they felt about the gown, many people questioned why any change was being made. Shaler Area traditionally had both blue and white gowns worn at graduation.

Dr. Aiken explained the timeline that led to the final design. Following the death of George Floyd in May of 2020, there were a series of protests and movements that called for equality. This prompted a few Shaler Area community members to advocate for



A photo on Shaler Area website that provides a preview of what the new graduation caps and gowns will look like.

more to be done on the school level.

“We had a group of alumni and students that reached out. They wrote a letter to us and they challenged us to think about diversity and inclusion and how we treat marginalized students or minority students in this school,” Dr. Aiken said.

The district decided one way to be more united, the school district should switch to one singular graduation gown color. The concept behind this idea was to promote inclusivity in general, but was also a continuation of discussions that had started earlier regarding gender identity.

“There were a few members of the school board that were very much in favor of changing the gowns. That’s how this initiated really. That started three or four years ago,” Dr. Aiken said.

Graduation gown color had been decided upon

gender, blue for males and white for females. Starting in 2009, students were allowed to pick a color regardless of gender. However, in the last few years there have been concerns about gender nonconforming students and what color gown they should wear.

There were a plethora of meetings last year that were focused on this topic. After a series of meetings, the decision was made to continue to let the class of 2022 graduates have their choice of blue or white caps and gowns, but it was stated that the implementation of one unified gown would happen starting with the class of 2023.

A contest was held where students could submit their design ideas as a plan toward transitioning to one unified gown. However, this generated only three

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Senior places third in West View Water photo contest

by Sarah Naccarato

This past December, senior Rachel Scierka was awarded third place in the fifth annual photo and video contest hosted by West View Water Authority. The winners were presented with cash awards ranging from \$500 to \$1000.

West View Water Authority asked that each project be categorized under the given themes of water, the environment, or school spirit. Scierka’s photograph depicts a Nightwing action figure standing in water surrounded by plastic bottles, overlooking the destruction. The caption reads, “A hero stands in water before the biggest challenge he’s ever faced – Garbage.”

The contest itself was introduced to Shaler Area high school students through the GATE program, encouraging students to push their creativity and work towards a prize. As posted on the GATE Google Classroom page, West View Water Authority was looking for students to showcase their talents while also having fun competing.



Senior Rachel Scierka’s photo which she captioned “A hero stands in water before the biggest challenge he’s ever faced – Garbage.”

Scierka spoke about how she used the resources close to her by taking the photo in her backyard.

“I didn’t really have any inspiration. I was out in my backyard taking pictures of animals and plants to see what would look cool. Then I saw the small body of water that was there and the idea just hit me,” Scierka said.

The contest afforded the students

an opportunity to find easy ways to compete with fellow students. Though the photo and video contest may not have taken extreme amounts of time for everyone, it was a good chance to include an additional award on any scholarships or college applications. Scierka’s effort was greatly rewarded, as her creativity led to her win. Although, the winning photo wasn’t im-

mediately “the one.”

“There were actually two other photos other than the one that I submitted that I considered submitting, but after looking at them next to each other, the one that I submitted ended up being the best out of the bunch,” Scierka explained.

Even when examining the final photo, there was hesitancy in the decision to use the Nightwing action figure. Depending on regulations, it is sometimes frowned upon to use copyrighted media in photos and videos. This was one factor Scierka had to consider prior to submission.

“I had it before the contest, since Nightwing is one of my favorite superheroes. I actually didn’t want to use it at first because I wanted something more natural and I was scared I was going to get in trouble since Nightwing is a copyrighted character. However it was the only figure that I was willing to put into the muddy water, since

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OPINIONS

True crime stories like “Dahmer: Monster” should be more sensitive to the victims

by Kamaria Mutadabur

Recently, the annual Golden Globes were awarded, recognizing excellence in film and television. Most watchers were satisfied with nominees, others were angry, but not for the reason you might think. Anger arose when actor Evan Peters, who plays serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer, won the award for best actor for his performance in Netflix’s drama series “Dahmer – Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story”.

Shirley Hughes, the mother of Dahmer’s 12th victim, was angered by the nomination and then Peters winning. During an interview with TMZ, she mentioned how Peters should have responded to the award by dedicating a part of it to recognize the victims and their families.

Additionally, Peters’ word choice in his acceptance speech was also criticized when he said he “hoped some good came out of it”. Families felt that nothing good could come out of it for them.

Something I find extremely interesting about the interview is that Hughes told TMZ, “There’s a lot of sick people around the world, and people winning acting roles from playing killers keeps the obsession going and this makes sick people thrive on the fame.”

When “Dahmer – Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story” was first released, controversies began to surface quickly. I could talk about how Halloween costumes based on the murderer were banned on Amazon due to the rise in purchases or how many of catch phrases featured in the show became popular. Maybe I could talk about how fanbases were created and bought/made merchandise with said killer’s face on it. However, I’d rather talk about the consequences of highlighting traumatic events and providing platforms for those who perpetrate them.

What causes the fascination that surrounds serial killers? Why is it that we would much rather watch scenes depicting cannibalism and those gory details over scenes that honor victims or tell their stories? Why are monsters rewarded for devastating communities whilst the communities in which they affect are only rewarded with reliving memories of their traumatic experiences?

Perhaps it’s because we’re interested in things that scare us or it’s interesting to dive into an illicit life

"To be desensitized enough to be entertained by watching true murder and crime is a disturbing consequence that those in the entertainment business have a hard time acknowledging."

we are not used to seeing. To be desensitized enough to be entertained by watching true murder and crime is a disturbing consequence that those in the entertainment business have a hard time acknowledging.

In conventional entertainment, the more screen time that the main character receives, the more the character’s actions are understood through characterization. When that is established, the viewer has a higher chance of gaining a sense of empathy and connection with the character.

To be more specific, “Dahmer – Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story”, depicts all of Dahmer’s troubles especially in childhood: his mother abandoned his family, he’s a complete social outcast, he doesn’t get enough attention from his father. All obstacles are common experiences that many others went through, currently live through or may eventually experience because they are universal experiences.

By highlighting these issues, viewers run a high chance of feeling sympathy for the character or killer, perhaps even excusing their actions. By letting a role model or an actor play these characters only increases these chances. To treat serial killers as images and characters to be played by actors, who win awards for the role, glorifies the crimes and opens the possibility of justifying said crimes.

Not to mention, it obviously desensitizes the population. The release of the series was big and it did not fail to create trends on social media platforms. A trend on TikTok revealed users complaining that the show was not “gory enough” and some even

hoped that they would go further into detail with the mutilation of the victims.

It’s imperative to see the lack of awareness true crime obsessionists hold for difficult images. An article in Newsweek even revealed an online comment that said, “‘When everyone is freaking out about how ‘morbid’ the new Dahmer show is... you’re just bummed they didn’t show the actual morbid parts.’”

So what happens when a community is presented with visual displays of violence regularly as well as the incentive of fame and popularity? Sometimes, a killer is born. The article on Andersonian presented a study in 2018 by Brad J. Bushman that, “demonstrated that media outlets provide a stage for narcissistic individuals to become ‘stars’ through extreme acts of violence, such as mass murders.”

This is through the use of identifying killers and labeling them with an infamous name to never be forgotten. Fame, or infamy, is enough of a reason to commit acts of violence for some. It’s not hard to assume that some might “kill” to have a Netflix series dedicated to their life story, especially if it comes with their name in the title and it becomes the second most viewed English series on the platform.

Sadly, there is no clear solution, but one thing is certain: The families of victims continue to live through tragedy everyday without their loved ones. Making a mini-series centered around someone who destroyed the lives of victims as well as their friends and family for profit is incredibly cold and selfish.

Not having empathy or regard for others (especially those dealing with grief) is something I think should not be overlooked. Grief already follows those who knew the victims for the rest of their lives, but creating a show that highlights the person responsible for that grief only intensifies it. I imagine that when those families see such images, they are forced to relive some of the worst moments of their lives.

See, to us it’s just a show that can be turned off, but for them it’s a reality they can never turn off. Can you imagine what that feels like?

“We’re all one traumatic event away from the worst day of your life being reduced to your neighbor’s favorite binge show,” Eric Perry, whose cousin Errol Lindsey was killed by Dahmer in 1991, said to the Los Angeles Times in September.

Qatar should never have been allowed to host World Cup

by Jack Salego

The World Cup has been a beacon for equality since it started 93 years ago. Thirty-two nations set aside their politics, to a degree, to compete against each other in the world’s biggest sport. The 11-versus-11 aspect of soccer brings a team aspect to the table that the Olympics don’t exactly bring. It’s awesome, and always has been.

That’s why everyone on planet Earth, and that is not an understatement, was scratching their heads when they heard that Qatar was hosting the 2022 FIFA World Cup. The Middle East is full of controversy, which is nothing new. FIFA knew what it was getting itself into when it decided to hand a beacon of equality over to an Islamic Nation, whose beliefs explicitly infringe on equality.

Qatari laws are Islamic laws, which means that same-sex relationships are strictly prohibited. The country imposes fines and imprisonment for violating these laws. You don’t have to delve deep into the country or the Middle East as a whole to see why this is a problem.

LGBTQ+ people, both players and fans, under Islamic laws, can’t be themselves as they represent or cheer for their country. There is no other way to look at it. This alone should’ve been a major red flag, but it’s so obvious why it wasn’t.

FIFA, at the end of the day, is a business. It will take the highest bidder’s offer to host the World Cup. The problem with this is that FIFA doesn’t stand for what Qatar stands for. It is an even more baffling investment once you realize that Budweiser is an official sponsor of the World Cup.

Islam views beer as an intoxicant, which means it is banned in Qatar. But again, FIFA came to Qatar as a business venture, and so the laws were changed. Qatar announced months in advance that the sale of beer was strictly prohibited.

Days before the first match, Qatar took back its statement and beer would be sold on World Cup grounds. That was an embarrassing moment for everyone. On one hand, FIFA exposed its greed by convincing a country to change its laws just so more money could be made. On the other, Qatar went against its religious code. Both parties just wanted money.

This World Cup was full of controversy, and it didn’t take 20/20 vision to see it coming beforehand. The World Cup has never been hosted in a Middle Eastern

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OPINIONS

Steelers season: encouraging or disappointing?
Strong finish shows the arrow is pointed up for this team

by Sam Himrod

Another year, another winning season for the Steelers. It definitely wasn't pretty, but at the end of the day, for the 20th year in a row, the Steelers finished .500 or better.

The Steelers walked into Cincinnati in week 1 to play the reigning AFC Champions and pulled out a 23-20 win in overtime. It certainly wasn't a pretty game. It was a game we had no business winning, and yet we won. The defense forced Joe Burrow into throwing four interceptions, his career high. Certainly a good start for a team that is "rebuilding".

Then the losing began, losing four in a row.

I'm not the guy who likes to blame injuries, but TJ Watt, the reigning NFL Defensive Player of the Year and the man who holds the NFL single season sacks record, got hurt week 1. Obviously the defense wasn't the same without him.

Kenny Pickett, in his second start of his career, beat Tom Brady which was certainly a building block for him. The Steelers lost a close one in Miami, and then were blown out by the then undefeated Eagles. The Steelers were 2-6 and needed the bye week.

They finished 7-2 in the second half of the year, and every single position improved after the bye.

The biggest thing that stands out to me is Pickett's growth and maturity. He threw eight interceptions in his first five games. He only threw one interception the rest of the year, which led the Steelers to a 6-1 record with him playing the whole game.

The recipe for success was fairly simple: take care of the ball and good things will happen.

Another huge reason for the turnaround was the running game. Najee Harris was banged up for much of the first half of the year, but came back from the bye looking like his rookie-year self. He ran more powerfully and more decisively than he had at the start of the year, which paved the way for his second consecutive 1,000 yard season.

Jaylen Warren was the perfect complimentary back to Harris. He ran hard and made the most of his touches. He averaged 4.9 yards per carry and was excellent on third downs, both in pass protection and in the receiving game. The Steelers have found a diamond in the rough with the undrafted Warren.

The run game brings us to the offensive line. It came into the season young and inexperienced, which showed. The run game was sub par, and the pass protection wasn't good either. However, the group got stronger as the season progressed.

The defense stepped up its game as well. Alex Highsmith had a breakout year on the edge, totaling 14.5 sacks and forcing five fumbles, the most in the NFL. If he can keep up the production, the Steelers will have a dominant edge rushing duo in Highsmith and Watt.

Excluding week 11 vs the Bengals, they gave up an average of ONLY 14 points per game. It's no wonder the team finished 7-2.

Minkah Fitzpatrick tied for the NFL interceptions lead, tallying six on the year. He got back to playing like the Pro Bowler that we anticipated he would be after a down year last season. He was also great in coming down into the box and making timely tackles in the running game.

The run defense improved drastically in the second half of the season. They went from giving up 118 yards per game to less than 100 yards per game. Cam Heyward lived in the opposing backfield.

The Steelers front office did an excellent job in this past year's draft. In the first round, they got a franchise quarterback in Kenny Pickett. They followed that up by giving him a big weapon outside in George Pickens. It seemed like anything Pickett threw to Pickens was caught. I think he could end up being the best wideout from the draft class. The future looks really bright with those two in the passing game.

In the third round they grabbed a DT from Texas A&M DeMarvin Leal who showed signs of being a solid player. They then drafted WR Calvin Austin from Memphis who unfortunately suffered an injury that held him out for the year.

Connor Heyward, Cam's younger brother, was an excellent utility piece for both the offense and special teams. In the 6th, they grabbed a raw prospect LB Mark Robinson out of Ole Miss who got significant playing time at the end of the season and showed some promising flashes.

Mike Tomlin proved once again why he is one of the best coaches in the NFL. Despite starting 2-6 and with people saying it was a lost cause, he was able to lead the team to a 9-8 record. The Steelers are in good hands as long as Tomlin is at the helm.

The Steelers were able to put key building blocks into place in the second half of the season that could contribute to the organization's success for a long time.

Don't let Steelers strong finish fool you

by Andrew Deal

The Pittsburgh Steelers had an underwhelming season. The team had to ride a four-game winning streak and win 6 of the last 7 games to finish 9-8 only to not make the playoffs.

Only one win of the six was against a playoff team. The only thing the winning streak at the end of the year did was lead the Steelers to another middle of the first round draft pick.

The start of the season could not have gone any worse. We started with "veteran" QB Mitch Trubisky. To fans, he had a short leash, and he immediately heard it from the home crowd. Every bad throw, which happened more often than it should have, led to the fans chanting for rookie QB Kenny Pickett.

Coaching had something to do with it, however. Trubisky reportedly never had the ability to audible out of a play. He had to call the play sent to him from infamous Offensive Coordinator Matt Canada. How can the starting QB not be allowed to audible?

Some may think the back half of the season was positive for the offense. Yes, the offense looked more competent, but the team played one playoff team in the last 7 games, the Baltimore Ravens. We barely won that game and only scored 16 points.

The lack of scoring touchdowns in the red zone is alarming. Is it Canada's fault or is it Pickett's? I would put more blame on Canada.

On multiple occasions, the Steelers had 3rd downs inside the 20 and had Miles Boykin, Steven Sims, Gunner Olszewski, and one of Connor Heyward and Zach Gentry in the game. Why are Diontae Johnson, George Pickens, and Pat Freiermuth not in the game? Why are the stars not on the field on the most important plays?

Overall the team looked better in the final half of the season, but who did they look better against. Every team except for the Ravens had a losing record. What's even worse, we had to come from behind in multiple games against dysfunctional teams like the

Colts and Raiders.

Even wins against teams like the Falcons and Panthers were closer than they should have been. While we celebrate beating the Ravens, don't forget we lost to the Ravens, at home, against their 3rd string, undrafted QB.

There was a trend in each of those wins. The offense showed promise with their first few drives, but looked inept for the rest of the game and trailing in the 4th quarter. This is where Pickett stepped up and saved the games like the Raiders and Ravens games. However, we wouldn't have to watch him lead a game winning drive if the offense was consistent for all four quarters.

Before the game-winning drive against the Ravens on Sunday Night Football, Pickett had 104 passing yards. An offense can not compete with the top teams when the quarterback has only thrown for 100 yards in the game.

No, Mike Tomlin shouldn't be fired, but some changes need to be made. The fault should be pointed at the offense. The defense kept them in

just about every game, except for Buffalo and Cincinnati, two of the three best teams in the AFC.

The fact Matt Canada is returning for another season is mind boggling. The team had the 26th ranked offense. Other teams to relieve their offensive coordinator of his duties include the Chargers, Titans, and Buccaneers.

All three of these teams made the playoffs. If I'm the Steelers front office and I want to continue the "Steelers Way" of promoting guys from within the organization, I would sign Byron Leftwich to be an assistant. You can give him a similar position to Brian Flores had on defense. Leftwich could be in position to take over for Canada.

The Steelers have left fans like me with a ton of questions. We have too much talent to rebuild, but not enough to compete for a Super Bowl.

The team is just going to continue to get stuck in the middle of the NFL pack – beating bad teams but unable to be considered serious Super Bowl contenders.

Qatar should never have been allowed to host World Cup
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country, and it's not like Qatar had done anything significant in recent years to make itself any better of a candidate than anyone else.

On top of the human rights and ethical problems listed, the tournament also had other issues arise. Hundreds of migrant workers died in the process of the construction of the stadiums, but making this worse is the fact that some of these stadiums were being torn down the day after the games were over. For people that did enjoy the games, they had trouble enjoying the rest of the experience. Fans complained of horrible housing conditions and arrangements.

This whole disaster will look even worse whenever you realize that North America is hosting the next World Cup. The lack of inclusivity in the Qatar World Cup will get an even worse reputation once America's inclusivity is spotlighted. It is unfortunate that politics and money had such an influence on the experience of the World Cup last year.

The issues can and will continue to be brought up before and during every World Cup for now on. Qatar should never have received any consideration for hosting the 2022 World Cup, and this will be a stain on the tournament forever.

OPINIONS

It's time to stop using the term Lady Titans

by Aubrey Keane

You may know some of the female sports teams here at Shaler Area High School as the “Lady Titans.” Whether you are a woman on a sports team here, a parent of an athlete, or just a spectator, the chances are that you’ve heard this moniker.

However, if you’ve been to a game where the men’s teams are playing, they are simply referred to as the Titans. In my opinion, this divides the sports teams by gender and does not create a unified student-athlete body behind one name – the Titans.

“Yes I think that it does [define us by our gender] because if we are all supposed to be one team, why is it just the girls with a gender in the team name?” junior softball and tennis player Paige Sigmund said.

As a woman student athlete, my teams have been referred to as the “Lady Titans” as far back as fifth grade. I didn’t realize it then, but most of the other teams I was playing against were not the “Lady” anything. They were simply the Fox Chapel Foxes, the North Allegheny Tigers, and even the West Mifflin Titans.

“Saying Lady Titans is such an outdated way to say I play basketball,” junior basketball and volleyball player May Engel said.

Going through old newspapers and social media posts, our female sports teams have been referred to as this for years, from a recent Facebook post calling the girls’ cross country team the Lady Titans in



2022, to a 2012 newspaper article congratulating the Lady Titans basketball team on bouncing back after a streak of losses.

Not only are the sports teams here divided by a name, but they do not support each other the way they used to. This “Lady Titans” label just further divides the girls from the boys.

“I definitely do not feel that we are unified in anything anymore,” Mr. Bill Ament, girls soccer coach said, “I graduated high school at Shaler in 1996. When we were here everyone went to the sporting events. If you were on the girls soccer team, you came and supported the boys when they played and vice versa. I miss that happening. It made for a fun atmosphere and a great way for everyone to stay connected and have fun.”

The school has been actively doing things, like changing caps and gowns, in order to create equality. Getting rid of the unofficial Lady Titans nickname would be another great way to promote equality, especially in sports.

For athletes who are non-gender conforming, this label can be harmful. Assigning gender to a team as a whole can make nonbinary and other non-gender conforming students feel invisible to their peers. Sports are supposed to be fun for athletes and promote teamwork, but how can students enjoy them when they feel unseen and unheard?

There are countless examples of nonbinary athletes not having their pronouns and gender identity respected within their sports, both locally and all over the world. If this still happens at a professional level in sports, of course it will happen in high school. Removing gender from the name of our teams will be a first step to stop this from occurring.

“The ‘Lady Titans’ name is a product of the past, when society was stuck on traditional gender roles and titles. I don’t necessarily view it as a negative thing, but dropping the ‘Lady’ from the phrase would be a step in the right direction in terms of equality,” Mr. Brian Duermeier, girls tennis coach, said.

The termination of this nickname for the girls will do more than just take gender out of the name. It will be the first step to reunifying the boys and the girls teams and hopefully recreating the supportive atmosphere within our athletic program.

Gown change debate overcomplicated a simple issue

by Jack Salego

Some people dread it, others think about it for months. Graduation remains one of the biggest milestones in life for high school students and signifies a transition into adulthood.

“Being able to walk amongst my peers after 12 years of schooling together knowing we had all finally made it, and we’re moving onto greater things was an indescribable feeling. Not only was it amazing to do that with my close friends, but seeing my family in the audience and knowing how proud they were of me made me feel on top of the world,” 2022 Shaler graduate Dawsen Lysko said.

A significant amount of people don’t really think about this big day until their senior year.

At Shaler Area, that has not been the case recently. From parents to teachers to community members to students, everyone was talking about graduation... in November.

The school had announced last year that a unified cap and gown would be happening for the class of 2023 and chaos ensued. 2021 had talks about changing the caps and gowns, but it didn’t become as big of a problem until real public talks began.

The school put out a contest last

year letting students submit designs for a new cap and gown, but only three designs were submitted. I wonder why. It’s a gown. Look all around the country, colleges especially, and you’ll see singular color gowns, some of which have nothing to do with the school’s colors.

The gowns should never be the emphasis of graduation. It marks a new chapter in life, and makes the schooling you received along the way feel worth the struggles that went along with it.

“The day I graduated high school was a day full of emotions, and I could not have been more grateful to be a part of something so special,” Lysko said.

While those are the important emotions about graduation, they aren’t the ones that are being focused on.

Everyone has an opinion, but no one can agree on what to do with the gowns. I didn’t think it would be such a mind boggling concept to just keep them blue and white.

The gowns haven’t been gender-locked since 2009, so why is it causing so much uproar now? Sure, the world is a much different place than in 2009, but is this really the biggest issue we should be tackling towards inclusivity?

One day, actually only a couple of hours, for seniors is at the center of this. Is this really the most effective thing to

do? Scrolling through social media, it seemed like most agreed with me.

“I saw a general dislike of the new gowns, mostly from seniors. Everyone was posting petitions to change them back to the way they were previous years,” senior Trey Grazier said.

With a change this big you can’t please every single person. It just simply isn’t possible. But as you look at the timeline of events, it is outright embarrassing. A survey about the gowns was emailed to 1000 students but only 400 responses were received which is embarrassing. Then there was a town hall meeting where parents argued nonstop? Even worse.

Shaler Area is a good school and a good community. It really is. Laugh all you want. We have one of the biggest homecoming parade traditions, Millvale Days, massive 4th of July events, Lite Up Night, and the list goes on and on.

We do so many things that deserve praise, which makes the whole cap and gown argument so disappointing as we have highlighted some of the divisions in our district.

The first gown chosen was horrid. I mean that in every sense of the word. I would hate to graduate in that or to see my kids graduate in that.

It was blue with red and white on

the sleeves and the colors just didn’t mesh together well that way. A big red line and a big white line on the sleeves just didn’t fit the formality of graduation. The sleeves looked like a college football jersey.

“I think the first redesigned gown was flat out hideous. I was very disappointed. I believe the outrage by the senior class was completely justified,” senior Chase Schiffhauer said.



Finally the official statement came out for the new gowns was made. A universal blue gown with a small Titan head logo on the left side of the chest. Simple, but effective.

That’s what the entire issue should have been, a simple issue. The gowns used to be gender locked, but lost that restriction more than 10 years ago.

You shouldn’t get rid of the gowns that have been a tradition for so long. Everyday we should strive to make the world a better place, but we wasted way too much time to change one day of the year.

Two years were spent debating these gowns, and in that timespan we saw a complete divide in Shaler Area. Whenever graduation approaches I’m concerned that frenzy will come back to life, and it will feel as if all the fighting didn’t solve anything. We can do better.

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District finally makes decision on caps and gowns — from page 1

designs being submitted. Activities Director Mrs. Mindy Thiel said those designs were sent to Jostens, the company that provides the caps and gowns.

From those submissions, a design was created and revealed on August 31. Many people were disappointed at this reveal, some because of the actual look of the gown but others because they did not like the choice made by the district to switch to one gown.

“I was just disappointed and upset because growing up, I always had this idea of graduating in a white gown. My two sisters wore the gown and so I always thought I would too,” senior Norah Strout said.

Shaler Area students will no longer wear both blue and white gaps and gowns at graduation.

The school district hosted a town hall meeting on September 28, 2022. According to Dr. Aiken, the meeting started well, but then it turned into an opportunity for those in attendance to air their grievances towards the school.

“In that town hall meeting, there were some seniors there that raised some concerns, and it got to be somewhat of an emotional meeting for some of the parents that were in there,” Dr. Aiken said.

The school district released another survey asking students to share their opinions about what they wanted in a graduation gown. The results revealed that out of the approximately 400 students who responded (the survey was sent to about 1,000) over 300 said they wanted to be able to make the choice of either a blue or white gown. However, the survey was not a vote and was simply looking for feedback.

“Change is just not easy, it’s hard. Especially if

they feel like it’s a tradition they hold on to,” Dr. Aiken said.

There were also quite a few students from the class of 2023 who had concerns about the price of the gowns. They were worried that any price increase would be taken from senior class funds, which are already lower than what they should be coming out of the pandemic. They feared having to pay more for gowns would take away from other opportunities for the seniors.

Mrs. Thiel confirmed that the new design will cost more than previous years, but she also confirmed that Dr. Aiken agreed to have the district cover whatever extra cost may come with the new gown design.

With all these factors to consider, many have been wondering if this whole process has been worthwhile.

“We’ve put such a negative light on our district with all of our in-fighting. I wish we would have had time to focus on the positivity that we do here because we do so many good things here that we’re not focusing on and we’re not advertising all the good stuff we’re doing. We’re worried about caps and gowns,” Mrs. Thiel said.

Everyone from parents, students, community members, and even those from nearby districts, wanted to be heard. Although a majority seem to disagree with this change, there are many people who view this change as one that should have happened years ago.

“It’s good, and long overdue. I always thought it was silly to have this binary of blue and white. When

I was a student, there was a girl who graduated a year ahead of me who really wanted to wear a blue gown. She had to fight all year and I just remember thinking how silly, this is a stupid robe. Why are we losing our minds over this?” Mrs. Anne Loudon, Shaler Area graduate and current high school teacher, said.

Mrs. Loudon has three kids who went to Shaler Area, one of whom graduated with the class of 2022 and was involved in student government in the midst of all these changes.

“Yes, a change needed to happen, but you can’t change the rules in the middle of the game. I think that it was wise to wait until this year and give everyone the warning that this was going to happen. The choice was made for a positive reason. On graduation day, the students will present a united front,” Mrs. Loudon said.

There are many people who are still upset about the change, however, more people seem to be accepting of the change.

“The gowns could be a lot worse. Although I wish we still wore the blue and white gowns, I’m okay with the decision,” junior Josie Wilkins said.

While the cap and gown issue is settled, Dr. Aiken hopes that there will be new things to focus on to improve the district.

“This graduation gown is just one piece of the larger work that really needs to get done.” Dr. Aiken said. “I feel like how we treat each other is more important than the color of our graduation gown. I feel like there’s so much more we could be and should be doing.”

Senior places third in West View Water photo contest — from page 1

it is entirely plastic. Right after I took the photo, he fell right into the water,” Scierka said.

Competitors also had to consider what message to share with judges. Students had to present their photo or video with a related message about their chosen topic. On the West View

Water Authority website, it is stated that “all photos must be educational, informative and appropriate or they will not be considered.”

Scierka talked about the significance in taking the right steps toward fighting water pollution to help the future of our planet.

“My message was that pollution, specifically involving water, can be a huge threat, but people can step up and be the hero if they are willing to work for a change,” she said.

In the end all of the thought and effort was worth it, as it resulted in her winning \$500.

“When I saw I won, I was super excited. I thought that I didn’t win since there was a long period of time without response from them,” Scierka said. “I got the email right before English class started, so I had to keep myself composed, but I literally started shaking when I saw it.”

14. (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

15. (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

16. (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

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Holocaust Museum leaves an impact on visitors

by Matt Purucker

On November 7, 2022, 39 students of AP European History went on a field trip to Washington, D.C. to visit the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The trip served to educate students on one of the darkest episodes in human history.

The museum chronologically depicted events from Hitler’s rise to power to the liberation of the concentration camps and the end of the Second World War in Europe in 1945. After taking an elevator from the ground to the third floor, the exhibit began.

“The visual evidence and the verbal testimony of starvation, cruelty and bestiality were... overpowering,” states a quote from General Dwight D. Eisenhower posted in the museum. “I made the visit deliberately in order to be in a position to give first-hand evidence of these things if ever, in the future, there develops a tendency to charge these allegations merely to ‘propaganda.’”

Horrifying, eye-opening, and disturbing were just some of the words students like sophomore Austin Shaw used to describe this experience.

“It’s a very sad place. It’s very moving. You see things in that building that you might never see the rest of your life,” Shaw said.

If you ask anyone who went on the trip, you will be met with similar sentiments. Better yet, you take it from Holocaust survivors. A quote on the wall near the end of the museum summarized their experience.

“There were not six million Jews murdered; there was one murder, six million times,” a quote from Holocaust survivor Abe Herzberg said.

The Holocaust museum serves as a testament to the suffering of every Jewish person who died and the Jewish community at large. It stands to remind us of this tragedy to ensure it never happens again. The museum made a



A train car that transported people to concentration camps is on display at the USHMM

lasting impression on those who visited, but it is also very important to the museum workers and volunteers there.

“I was inspired to volunteer here mostly because I wanted to understand how people could be evil enough to cause the Holocaust,” Erlyn, a volunteer at the museum, said.

Visitors are able to go inside a rail-car that was used to transport Jews to concentration camps and see thousands of pairs of shoes that were stripped from them upon their arrival. Many more horrors await inside this memorial, and while it is a haunting experience, it is also a very important one.

“It is one of the most important field trips we can offer here at Shaler because the Holocaust is such an impactful event in history,” AP European History teacher, Mrs. Mindy Thiel said. “For you to be able to experience the museum in its entirety is going to make the biggest impact so you then become an advocate to stop hate in the future.”

Shaler Area students have been taking these trips for years.

Mr. Nick Haberman, a former

Shaler Area teacher who taught the Holocaust class, and Mrs. Catlyn DiPasquale, the current Holocaust teacher, regularly took their classes to tour the Holocaust museum. Mr. Haberman saw the museum as a call to action. It helped inspire him to create the LIGHT program here at Shaler Area.

“How do we use the lessons of the Holocaust to help students have opportunities to lift people up?” Mr. Haberman said. “This [organization] is Leadership through Innovation in Genocide and Human rights Teaching (LIGHT). It started here in Shaler with just me and now we’ve got over 10,000 people in our network.”

The LIGHT program has since expanded its focus to other human rights issues, but its origin in Holocaust teaching has emphasized the importance of remembering the Holocaust and preventing other such events from occurring. Visiting the museum itself is such an experience that you cannot get through textbooks.

A train car that transported people to concentration camps is on display at

the USHMM.

“When you’re standing in that train car, it’s one of the few times in that museum where you’ll find yourself alone in the middle of the exhibit, where the whole world seems to be falling down around you,” Mr. Haberman said. “It’s so immersive and you have a second to reflect on what it must have been like. In the train car, it’s dark, it’s quiet, it smells different, the sound is different, and it really puts you back in time.”

The train car is for many people the most memorable part of the museum, but everything in the museum, even the most minute details represent the lives of Holocaust victims and survivors.

“For students who are going or have gone I think it inspires you a little more. It puts a feeling inside of you in your heart about wanting to know more for these people,” Mrs. DiPasquale said. “We look at these statistics (six million Jews who were murdered) and they’re shocking; but when you go to the Holocaust museum, it’s somebody’s face, it’s somebody’s name, it’s somebody.”

We can never really comprehend the Holocaust, but we can remember the lives of Holocaust victims and honor their memory.

“I think the museum is one of the most important places you can visit at any age. It is the most comprehensive space you can physically be in and see that’s going to cover what happened, why it happened, and what happened after,” Mrs. DiPasquale said. “Things didn’t just end. We still have anti-Semitism and other genocides happening today.”

The museum has inspired and uplifted people all across the country and the world and is why this trip is made annually by so many Shaler students.

“The Holocaust museum was very beneficial in introducing us to the horrors and atrocities that happened at that time. It is something that I think everyone should see,” Shaw said.

Pre-school program has inspired many to be educators

by Avery Gallant

In the early 80’s, Shaler Area High School created a preschool program run by Mrs. Susan Fisher where high school students would be the teachers with Fisher as a supervisor. Fisher came up with the idea after realizing students who took the Childhood Development course needed to put their knowledge into action. During her graduate work at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Fisher had seen the model work with a Laboratory Preschool program. She convinced Shaler Area administration it could work on the high school level.

Within a few years, the program flourished in popularity. Parents would wait in line for hours to register their children for the program. Many families would continue to support the program by enrolling siblings. The preschool program had two semesters of preschoolers with two classes each day: a morning and afternoon class. There had to be two different sets of preschoolers each semester due to the demand of the program which was very popular despite many stay-at-home mothers.

“The knowledge gained through this program can be used for a lifetime,” Fisher said.

The preschool program is a great opportunity



for high school students to experience working with children. Taking the course helps many students decide if childcare or teaching is a career they want to pursue. Many current teachers and students attended the preschool program when they were younger.

“Knowing that many of the high school students completed a career in education makes me feel I accomplished my goal, especially when I find out some of the high school students and even the preschoolers are now teachers at Shaler Area,” Fisher said.

Current Physical Education teacher Mrs. Heather Verbanic attended the program in the late 80s. Verbanic remembers enjoying hanging out with the high

school students, trying unique foods like kiwis and doing activities together.

“I really enjoyed being with the high school students and feeling like they were all our teachers. I remember liking how that felt and knew I maybe wanted to teach in the future as I continued to get older,” Verbanic said.

Senior Shelby Lunn attended the preschool program from 2008-2010. Lunn remembers meeting new people and doing crafts. She also remembers the Halloween parade and dressing up. She was impressed with the patience that the high school students had with young preschoolers.

“They were very patient and taught me important life lessons on how to behave and use my manners,” Lunn said.

Mrs. Tara Wells continued the legacy of the program after Mrs. Laura Garman retired in the 2018-19 school year. As well as teaching one foods class, Wells took on the preschool program and the childhood development classes.

“I absolutely love this program and being able to teach both younger children as well as high school students. It is the best of both worlds! My hope is that the value and interest of this program stays as is and continues for many more years to come,” Wells said.



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Sustainability helps preserve another green space

by Julia Barbati & Danielle Berdik

In 2020, the Shaler Area Sustainability class helped in an effort to save Girty’s Woods, a 155-acre green space in Reserve township, from becoming a housing development. The area is extremely important as it absorbs rainwater to help prevent flooding. The class had great success as it raised more than \$10,000 which was used to help purchase the land, and the Sustainability class made a name for itself. Because of the effort, trails, overlooks, and wetland areas are open for the public to enjoy.

This year, Sustainability set its sights on a new environmental project: conserving another local wild green space, very close to Girty’s Woods.

The green space is a plot of land which used to be farmland that was owned by the Pavkovic family until they retired from farming. Miles Hegedus, a new farmer, decided to work with the Allegheny Land Trust to help preserve the land instead of selling it to a housing developer, which would have had a negative environmental impact.

“This would be extremely detrimental to the community, as the rainwater absorption would be dramatically decreased, leaving our community at a higher risk for flooding,” Sustainability teacher Ms. Abbey Nilson said.

This land is not yet a part of Girty’s Woods and will not be until the Allegheny Land Trust, an organization that works to protect land of significant value to our region’s unique scenic landscape, biodiversity, and water quality, acquires it. Until that occurs, it will function as a “wild green space” and although it is not accessible for recreational activities like hiking, it is very important for absorbing rainwater and providing space for monarch butterflies.

“This land will eventually be a part of Girty’s Woods. It’s right next to Girty’s Woods but there is a small parcel of land that someone else owns blocking it from Girty’s Woods. When that gets acquired one day it will all be one thing,” Ms. Nilson said.

When the area experiences excess rainfall, it produces significant runoff water that does not get absorbed into the ground. Instead, this water flows



into the sewer system, forcing the sewers to overflow which can cause leaks of raw sewage into local rivers. Replacing the green space with pavement and housing, the original plan for the land, will only exacerbate this issue.

Sustainability class with their seed packets of native plants, including several types of milkweeds, which help the endangered Monarch butterflies.

In addition to helping the issue of runoff water and absorbing 52 million gallons of rainwater, the land will also provide a habitat for the recently endangered monarch butterflies. Part of the reason the monarchs are endangered is because they have lost a lot of their habitat locations. This green space will not only act as a habitat for the monarch butterflies.

“It is home to a lot of Milkweed which is the sole diet of the monarch butterfly species. Destroying the monarch butterfly habitat would do irreparable damage to a species that helps a lot in our ecosystem,” Shaler Area High School senior Connor McAninch

said. The area has yet to be given a name but it will not be called Girty’s Woods, despite being a part of it. There has been communication with families who have roots and history with that land which could ultimately be named using some those family names.

The Allegheny Land Trust needed \$650,500 by the end of December 2022 to purchase the land. The Allegheny Land Trust couldn’t do this alone, and required \$50,000 of this amount to be raised by the community. This is where schools and other local organizations offered to help.

In order to raise money, the Sustainability classes created a fundraiser which included sending seeds and instructions on how to grow a pollinator garden at home in exchange for a \$15 donation.

Donators could also choose to have students plant the seeds in their name if they do not wish to

Cont. on page 11

THE GRID		What mythological creature would you pick to exist in real life?	What is your most unpopular opinion?	What famous person would you want to spend the day with?	What is the most dangerous thing you’ve ever done?	Ice cream cake or regular cake?
Freshman Ben Yeckel		Dragon	Sandwiches aren’t good	Babe Ruth	Ride a high roller coaster	Ice Cream Cake
Sophomore Kendal Keane		Mermaid	Panera is overrated	Ariana Grande	Banana Boat ride in the ocean	Ice Cream
Junior Izzy Dutkovic		Minotaur	Books are always better than the movies	Henry the VII, I want to talk with him and understand what went wrong	Got lost in Hartwood Acres	Ice Cream
Senior Lexi Pilyih		Mermaid	Peanut butter is disgusting	Elvis Presley	Dropped a bowling ball on my foot	Ice cream cake
Faculty Mr. Leiden		Narwhal and Jackalope	Students should participate in class	John Lennon	Cliff jumping with a parachute in Argentina	Ice Cream Cake

As Holocaust survivors pass away, their legacies live on

by Sarah Naccarato

Teachers who are involved in lessons about the Holocaust have had access to remarkable resources to lean on to help support their lessons: survivors of the Holocaust.

But, as Holocaust survivors continue to age and eventually pass away, the stories and lessons of the Holocaust have been taught differently, leaving the survivors' legacies in the hands of younger generations. This presents a dilemma of how stories are shared and taught when survivors no longer can do so themselves.

Though this issue has hit us much harder in the last few years due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it has been an issue that many have known was coming. Mr. Nick Haberman, who used to teach a Holocaust class and is the leader of the LIGHT (Learning through Innovation in Genocide and Human rights Teaching) initiative, spoke about an interaction he had with Holocaust survivor Jack Sittsamer following his cancer diagnosis after he had given a presentation to Shaler Area students.

"The first [Holocaust survivor] I brought in was Jack Sittsamer...as soon as he gave his presentation, I said 'You have to come back,' and his response was, 'I'm going to die soon, and when I do it's up to you to tell my story.'...He died not many months after that statement. He knew he had cancer, he knew he was trying to speak to as many people as possible before he died," Mr. Haberman said.

As we begin to understand just how rapidly the generation of the Holocaust is being lost, it's important to start looking for new ways to teach about the genocide. There must be a collective acknowledgement that it is up to younger generations to preserve that history and to continue to teach the stories of this genocide.

Mr. Haberman noted he felt incapable of teaching about these crimes against humanity without relying on bringing survivors. Being in Pittsburgh allowed for easy accessibility to people with first hand experience who would visit the district and give presentations.

Mr. Haberman talked about how Holocaust teachers across the country and even the world were almost never afforded access to Holocaust survivors.

"It's rare for teachers to have the opportunity to connect a Holocaust survivor to their students or to meet a Holocaust survivor. But Pittsburgh, when I started teaching, had at least 60 to choose from to bring in depending on what topic in the Holocaust you were teaching," Mr. Haberman said.



Holocaust survivors meet guests at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC.

This is no longer the case as there are fewer and fewer survivors. In addition to this, we must consider the strain that comes with constantly telling stories of such a traumatic experience, regardless if it is for educational purposes or not. It is not fair to expect survivors to use the remaining part of their lives just to accommodate us.

"I kept bringing in survivors and then the story was the same, they kept passing away. I started to realize we really needed to change the way we teach about the Holocaust and also that it can't just be about the Holocaust—the Holocaust is done and over with. What we need to do with the Holocaust is help people your age counter all forms of identity-based discrimination and hate," Mr. Haberman said.

It is important to first understand the main takeaway of survivor's stories and how they apply to today's stories. Everyone's experience is different, but Mr. Haberman has noticed that there are a few recurring messages.

"The lesson that we take from all of our Holocaust survivor's presentations is resistance and resilience. How important it is to stand up against things we know are wrong, even if people in charge tell us their right. And resilience—as bad as things get, we can face those challenges head on and we can respond in a way that is meaningful and positive to make those around us better, safer, more compassionate, kinder people, make our community more com-

passionate, safer," Mr. Haberman said.

By framing education this way, students learn both the cruel history of genocide while also learning how to foster the traits that will stop the hateful acts we see in our world today as well as developing problem-solving skills for real-world scenarios.

"It is my hope that young people can learn from the lessons of the past so that they can construct a better present and future for the world. It's what motivates me to teach and empower my students everyday," Holocaust and multicultural studies teacher Mrs. Catlyn DiPasquale said.

Understanding the Holocaust, even as those who survived it are no longer around to share their stories, is still best learned by listening to the survivors. Their words push for progress in education, in our communities, and in us as human beings.

"Be compassionate. Be kind. Take care of each other. Look after each other. Give back to your community. Those are the lessons I have learned from Holocaust survivors and they have helped me connect very closely with the content because it has made me realize Holocaust survivors are just regular people. And so are the perpetrators who carried out the horrific acts. They're all just regular people. This is the story of other people, and this school district has done a wonderful job of helping younger people to adopt stories that are very different from their own story," Mr. Haberman said.

SAHS students take part in research by Princeton

by Hannah Stelitano

Four Shaler Area High School senior performing arts students were interviewed by Princeton University as part research for a book on Disney musicals.

Dr. Stacy Wolf, America's foremost musical theater scholar, and research assistant Elliot Lee are in the works of writing the book "The Oxford Guide of the Disney Musical". Both Wolf and Lee identified Shaler Aea's musical program as one they would like to include in their research.

Last year, SAHS put on an extremely successful production of "Newsies". Since this is a Disney musical, Wolf and Lee knew that they wanted to include quotes from students in this production into their research.

Alex Eastly (Jack), Lauren Lorenz, (Katherine), Hannah Stelitano (featured dancer/ dance apprentice), and Josh

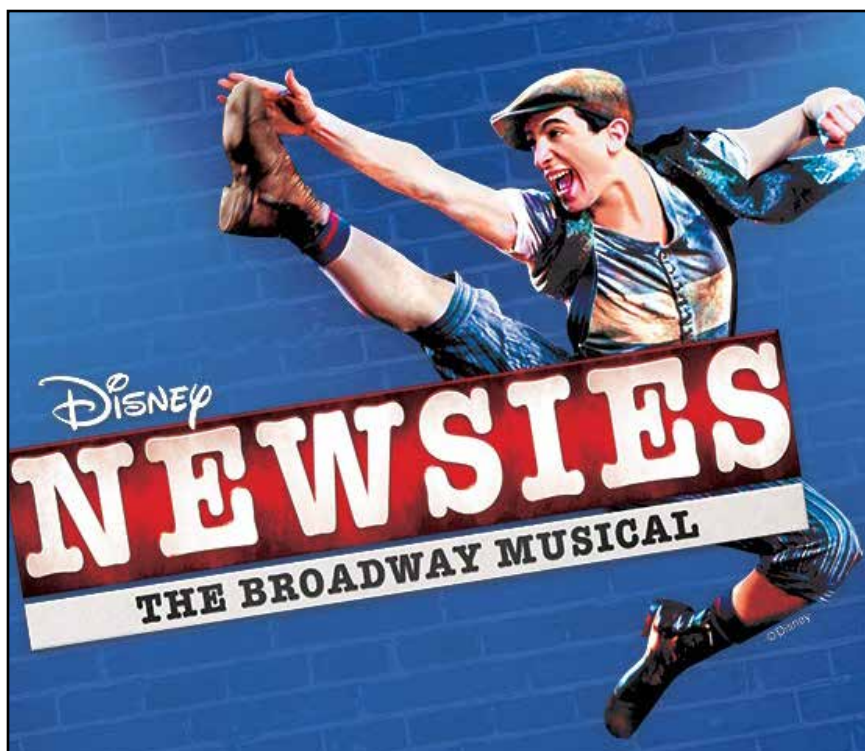
Fedorek (stage crew/ set design) were all chosen for this opportunity and took part in the interview process.

"Being a part of this experience was incredible and it is neat knowing that my school was recognized on this level. I am excited that I was able to represent my performing arts program in this way," Lorenz said.

Throughout the interview, which was led by Lee, these students were asked basic questions in regards to their experience of the show, what they contributed to the show, and how participating in a Disney show has impacted them.

"This is such an honor and exciting opportunity for our program," Mrs. Jennifer Birch, SAHS musical director, said.

Wolf's book is going to feature a section about amateur Disney performances from across the country and these four SAHS students will be quoted in this research.



Hockey legend Trottier discusses life on and off the ice

by Joey Duty

There are very few players in the hockey world as accomplished as Bryan Trottier. His resume includes six Stanley Cups, the Hart Trophy (MVP), the Calder Trophy (Rookie of the Year), the Conn Smythe Trophy (play-off MVP), and the Art Ross Trophy (most points in a season). All these accomplishments in his illustrious playing career led to his being inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame in 1997.

Trottier started his career playing for the New York Islanders where he would go on to win four consecutive Stanley Cups in large part due to his elite two-way hockey. In 1983 Trottier and his Islanders teammates swept the Wayne-Gretzky-led Edmonton Oilers in the Stanley Cup Finals to achieve their 4th consecutive championship.

He was famously the center of the “Trio Grande” line alongside two more Hall of Famers in Clark Gillies and Mike Bossy. Bossy was a goal-scoring machine that provided the offensive firepower that drove those Islanders teams.

“I played 10 years with Mike and nine of those were pretty impressive. It’s hard for me to think of anybody who could score goals like Mike Bossy. In the era of clutching and grabbing and a lot of interference, Mike fought through it,” Trottier said. “He was an impressive, impressive goal scorer. In my mind, there is no greater goal scorer than Mike Bossy.”

After the Islanders dynasty came to an end, Bossy retired and Trottier was let go. He signed with the Pittsburgh Penguins in free agency in order to provide some championship winning experience to such a young team. A major factor in him signing with the Penguins was the lure of being able to play with Mario Lemieux. Trottier was blown away by Lemieux’s abilities on and off the ice, especially considering the injuries and health issues Lemieux dealt with.

“There’s countless times where Mario was hardly able to walk, but then he’d go on the ice and score three goals and do it all over the next day. He was an impressive human being as



Bryan Trottier won 6 Stanley Cups as a player — 4 with Islanders and 2 with Penguins

far as pain threshold,” Trottier said. “If he had been healthy, who knows what type of numbers he would have put up. He put fear in the other team with his big man presence. For me Mario was always the best player on the ice especially in the big games. He has the innate ability of leadership and has an inspiring presence that brings out only the best in everybody else.”

Trottier’s championship winning acumen added to Pittsburgh’s unparalleled strength at center where their depth chart listed three Hall of Famers: Lemieux, Ron Francis and Trottier. To complement these centers, the Penguins had the likes of Rick Tocchet, Kevin Stevens, Mark Recchi and Jaromir Jagr on the wings to create a lethal attack.

“Mario and Jaromir in the ‘92 Cup final put the fear of god in Chicago because no one could stop them. In my mind Mario is right there with Bobby Orr as my all time greatest player to ever play the game. I could talk all day about Mario,” Trottier said.

These Penguin teams were also loaded with talent on defense and at goalie. Paul Coffey and Larry Murphy, both Hall of Famers, were stalwarts on the blue line while Tom Barasso helped keep Penguins opponents off the scoreboard. Based on Bryan’s description of what makes a championship winning hockey team, it’s no wonder this Penguins team won back to back cups.

“Great teams have goal-tending, staying healthy, your best players have to perform, your depth has to contrib-

ute, and your special teams have to be great. There’s no secret. Those are the keys, and the teams that find ways to do all of those things win,” he said.

After winning six Stanley cups during his playing career, Trottier transitioned to the world of coaching. Luckily for him, he played for some of the most successful coaches in NHL history including Al Arbour, Bob Johnson and Scotty Bowman. From them he picked up the principles of coaching he thought were most important to success.

“I’ve learned that the greatest coaches are the ones that communicate best, have really good command of their benches, and their bench coaching as far as line-matching, and finding and playing the hot hand.”

After leaving the Penguins and coaching in the minor leagues, Trottier joined the Colorado Avalanche in 2000 as an assistant coach. The GM promised him that Colorado was building a Stanley Cup team, and he was right. With Hall of Fame players like Joe Sakic, Ray Bourque and Patrick Roy, the Avalanche went on to win the 2001 Stanley Cup with Trottier behind the bench.

After he got out of coaching, he has stepped into the field of the various NHL alumni associations. He currently works with Penguins alumni, a job in which he doesn’t plan on leaving anytime soon.

“The best part of my job is that I’m an ambassador of the game of hockey. I represent the sport, the Penguins, and

obviously the NHL. Our job is to support the Penguins, support the community, and support charitable events. Being able to be involved in all of the events makes it for me. It’s been a wonderful role.”

Being in and around the game for 40 years, Trottier has seen the game change in many ways, but he’s no curmudgeon. In fact, he is a huge proponent of the skillful and more analytical direction the game has gone in recently.

“It’s for the better. Any kind of rule change that brings the skill of the game is always great,” he said. “The athleticism, the nutrition, the training, and even the coaching has improved so much.”

Although Trottier is a hockey legend, he is far from just a hockey guy. He has been surrounded by music his whole life as his father was part-time farmer, part-time touring musician across the prairies of Canada. Since adolescence, he has been playing the bass in his family band, and these days he’s still quite the blues singer who can get any crowd on their feet with a few of his favorite songs.

“There’s a few staples. Everybody loves ‘Folsom Prison Blues’ by Johnny Cash. It’s a good foot stomper, it’s up-tempo, and everybody knows it. Merle Haggard has ‘Working Man Blues’, and there’s ‘Good-Hearted Woman’ by Willie Nelson. They’re just up-beat songs that really get the crowd stomping.”

Not only can he sing, he is also an avid writer, an activity he’s been doing since his high school days. Whether it be writing down line combinations as a coach or writing a chorus, Trottier prides himself on his penmanship. Not wanting to keep all of his stories to himself, he recently took on the task of writing his own book.

“I write all the time, even as an assistant coach I took notes and wrote to improve my communication skills. Writing has always been a big part of my life. I write songs. I write little jingles for the grandkids and stuff.”

His memoir, “All Roads Home”, is now available. It was a writing journey that he was happy to take.

“It’s wonderful to be able to reflect and go back.”

Sustainability helps preserve another green space ————— from page 9

do it themselves. Pollinator gardens contain plants, mainly flowers, that insects such as the monarch butterfly, can go to in order to pollinate. These gardens are also a great way to improve air quality.

The class was successfully able to raise money for the land as well as advocate for space for the monarch butterflies. Students want those who received the seeds to be a part of a positive change for these beautiful insects. With the land providing habitat for the monarchs, there is a lot of hope for change.

“Monarchs have to migrate all the way to Mexico. That’s where they are over winter, so they go through Pittsburgh on the way. There will be more of these plants because of the green space and the seeds we sent out,” Ms. Nilson said.

Initially, the Sustainability class set a goal of raising \$5,000. Shaler Township officials reached out to Mrs. Nilson and the Sustainability class, and offered to match the original \$5,000 goal if it was achieved. This quickly became a reality and the goal was met. This initial goal was then increased to \$15,000, which has also been surpassed. When the fundraiser ended,

the final amount raised was \$19,356.

“It exceeded my expectations. We actually raised more money for this than Girty’s Woods,” Ms. Nilson said. “I think students have tremendous power because people care when young people get involved with things like this.”

Right now, the land is still a “wild” green space and Ms. Nilson and her Sustainability class will not be building trails, but they will be planting trees on the land which help both with water runoff absorption as well as improving air quality.

“We are currently growing Shagbark hickory trees to transplant in Girty’s Woods in the springtime. We will also continue with the native species identification project in Girty’s Woods (using iNaturalist) which the Sustainability classes last year had started,” Ms. Nilson said.

Sustainability class has given students the opportunity to learn more about their own actions and what they can do to improve the impact they have on our planet. This fundraiser was no different as it taught students about the benefits to keeping this land, hav-

ing a green space, and protecting the monarch butterflies all while requiring the students to perform actions that directly improved their community.

“It is important to be involved because you can help combat climate change and positively affect the neighborhoods around the green spaces. It also feels really good because you know you are directly helping the environment,” Shaler Area sophomore Madeline Walker said.

Most students who have taken the class claim that they have changed their outlook on the environment and the importance of getting involved in community-based activities.

“Having a real world application to things I’m learning about in school and being able to combat some of the problems we learn about in our Sustainability class is really an incredible opportunity that has made me see how much of an impact we as students have,” McAninch said. “A great thing about it being in our own school district is it gives students an opportunity to stand together and make a difference that’s bigger than just us.”

Shaler Adaptive Aquatics for Health provides special program for those with special needs

Program is in need of volunteers to continue providing this service to the community

by Kamaria Mutadabur

Shaler Adaptive Aquatics for Health (SAAH) is a program coordinated by Shaler Area teachers Mr. Jim McDermott and Mrs. Juliana McDermott. The goal of the program is to improve socialization and aquatics education for disabled participants. They meet every Sunday from 11:30 am to 12:30 pm for a fall and spring swimming season at the indoor pool at the Shaler Area Elementary School and the township pool at Kiwanis during late spring.

This unique program is open to those involved in special education. No matter the disability, Sundays are for the kids who do not fit in the conventional swimming lessons on Saturday morning. Although the program gives preference to families in the Shaler Area School District, if enough volunteers and spots are available, families from out of the district can participate.

“For decades there wasn’t anything else in the surrounding communities like it,” Mr. McDermott said. “There are activities around for kids like this, but still there aren’t too many swimming programs around. Not better or worse, just different,” he added.

When the group isn’t swimming, they still meet to do other activities such as a summer picnic at the pavilion at Kiwanis, a fall hayride at Cheeseman Fright Farm, a holiday party at the fire hall, and they are currently trying to bowl as they once did before.

“Shaler Adaptive Aquatics for Health has existed for 40 years other than COVID so you figure there are a lot of memories like the kids dancing while the DJ plays music at the party, the kids picking out their pumpkins at

the patch, and memories at the campfire. There’s definitely things they can look forward to,” Mr. McDermott said.

The reason the program has the chance to coordinate exciting activities at a lower cost for the parents is through donations from numerous local organizations. Organizations like the Kiwanis Club, Glenshaw Century Club, Veterans of Foreign Wars or VFW, and American Legion have all contributed to make it possible.

“We want to keep costs as low as possible for the parents since they have enough expenses having a child with special needs,” Mr. McDermott said.

Although Mr. and Mrs. McDermott have been in charge for the past 15 years, the program has existed far longer than that. The idea developed in 1982 when Mary Lou Hapner and her brother realized that there weren’t many opportunities available for her son to socialize and swim, so she created one.

She went to the township to gain

approval, visited the commissioners to help coordinate Sundays at Kiwanis and then talked to the school board to coordinate use of the indoor pool at the elementary school. In the end, everyone felt that the program was worthwhile, demonstrated by the fact that the program has lasted 40 years.

Mr. McDermott explained how those involved have created a sense of family and unity. Families might meet through the program, make friends with each other, and continue the friendship outside of Sundays to hang out and bond further.

A sense of unity comes into play knowing that those involved share the same circumstances so they have something to identify one another with. No longer is it a program, but a family helping each other navigate through life.

“If it wasn’t for [Mr. and Mrs. McDermott] we would not have a program and our kids would not be a part of the community,” Mrs. Gina Bollman, an aide at Shaler Area High School and mother involved in the program, said. “I don’t know what I’d do without it.”

Another important aspect to the program is the volunteers. The program relies on one-to-one interaction between the participants and volunteers, so every child in the program requires a volunteer.

Some adult volunteers left due to COVID and health issues that accompanied it which was a major setback. It’s already hard to get adult volunteers, so the program relies on students from the high school.

A majority of instructors are juniors or seniors, who donate their time and talent, but eventually they graduate and then the McDermotts are back at square one again. There is currently a waiting list of children that want to participate in the program, but are not able to due to the lack of volunteers.

“It’s really sad. I would say we have five to seven people on a waiting list and I feel terrible. I have kids and I know what it’s like when you want

your kid to join the soccer team or the baseball team and you’re like, ‘What, I can’t? But my kid wants to,’” Mr. McDermott said.

One issue that may keep students from volunteering is misconceptions about what is needed. One may look at the flier and assume that he/she has to be a teacher. That’s not necessarily the case. The main role of a volunteer is to just get in the water, help with socialization, and some sort of exercising.

“My role in the program is to not necessarily teach the kids and adults how to swim, but to swim with them and make sure they are getting some sort of exercise by swimming,” junior McKenzie Mine, a volunteer within the program, said.

“So really the program is just, ‘Will you be a swim buddy with a kid who wants to get in the water?’” Mr. McDermott said.

There are many benefits that not only come with volunteering at the program, but volunteering anywhere. Students have a chance to earn volunteer hours as well as having the experience to put on a resume. Mr. McDermott has also written many recommendation letters based on the students’ work towards the program.

Some volunteers even discover a passion through the program, like for teaching or instructing. It can also be rewarding simply guiding others towards their goals and donating time to help others.

If you would be interested in volunteering, please email the McDermotts at saah.swimming@gmail.com.

“You never know, in life as you get older you realize you shouldn’t turn down many opportunities to experience something new because you really can’t predict what’s going to happen,” Mr. McDermott said.

More importantly, however, the program provides a space for those who normally can’t express themselves within a conventional community and environment. It allows joy and fun, free of judgment or feeling like one doesn’t belong. Together everyone shares learning obstacles and laughs, as well as creating a family.

Some people have traditional sports teams or activities that they can join. Those who are unique have Shaler Adaptive Aquatics for Health. Everyone deserves a chance for an activity that represents them and includes them into the community.

In Mr. McDermott’s words, S.A.A.H is “about seeing the kids discover that they can do it. Every kid is scared to go into the deep end at first. Every kid is scared to let go of the kick board at first. But you watch them grow,” he said. “Before you know it, they are in the deep end...and then you realize anyone can do all of these things even with the different needs that they have.”



Shaler Adaptive Aquatics program provides swimming and socialization for those with special needs.



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