

# The Oracle

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## SAES nurse first in district to get COVID vaccine

by Cassidy Laffey

The COVID-19 virus has been a constant in all our lives ever since March 13, 2020. Now, there seems to be a light at the end of the tunnel: a vaccine. People must now make an important decision: will they get vaccinated when they get the chance? Elementary school nurse Mrs. Jessica Wilson made that choice and recently received the COVID-19 vaccine, making her the first in the district.

Wilson is the School Nurse at the Elementary School and she also works at UPMC St. Margaret Hospital, picking up at least 30 shifts throughout the year. She works on the cardiac stepdown unit, which is where patients go when they are too sick for the regular floors but not sick enough for the ICU.

As COVID-19 continues to worsen, her unit is slowly being converted to a COVID floor. Two-thirds of her unit has been transformed to a negative pressure environment, which cleans the air, and this is where they treat COVID patients.

Wilson described the recent addition of COVID to her unit in the spring as exhausting, yet rewarding. But, as beds keep filling up and hospitals begin to overflow, it does become harder to put on a brave face when going to work.

"The hospitals have been booming. There are a lot more patients than one might believe," she said.

With this new influx of patients, Wilson, along with many other front line workers found themselves putting in countless hours of overtime. The hospital never forced overtime, but most of the workers wanted to do anything they could to help.

Recently, the COVID vaccine has been offered to those working at hospitals and front line workers. Wilson was one of the many health care workers that received both doses of the vaccine.

There was a little bit of hesitation from Wilson when she was first offered the vaccine. However, after doing extensive research, she made what she said was an educated decision. She learned that the vaccine was not "rushed," as many media sources make it out to seem, because it followed all the health regu-



SAES nurse Mrs. Jessica Wilson receives her COVID vaccine.

lations, including human testing.

"I also researched the long-term symptoms of COVID-19 and the benefits of the vaccine outweighed the risks of Covid by far," Wilson said.

Wilson received both doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine. It was offered to her early because of her position at St Margaret Hospital while other Shaler Area school nurses are currently waiting for their second dose, which is administered 21 days after the first.

The nurse that administered Wilson's first vaccine was someone she went to nursing school with, which made the experience much more special.

After Wilson received the shot, she was monitored for 15 minutes just to make sure her body did not have an allergic reaction to the vaccine. She did not have any side effects besides soreness, noting that it was better than the soreness after the flu shot. After 21 days, Wilson went back to St Margaret for her second dose.

They followed the same system as before, the

only difference being more soreness following the injection.

"The second vaccine has shown a few more side effects, but I have been blessed to only be experiencing a sore arm - more so than the flu vaccine, but something I am willing to deal with to protect those around me," Wilson said.

For most, the side effects go away after 24 hours. Wilson also thinks it is important to note that some symptoms might have occurred with or without the vaccine.

"Unfortunately, bad things can happen on normal days. People have heart attacks, strokes, break bones, have seizures daily... and these things can happen the day of vaccination completely unrelated to the shot."

An example she cited was when a nurse was preparing to give a child an injection of the vaccine. The child had a seizure moments before the nurse was about to administer the shot, completely unrelated to the vaccine. Wilson wondered what would have happened if the child had a seizure only a minute later and some would have assumed it was a side effect of the vaccination.

Recently, the government started to push the vaccine out to the public. With only a limited amount of doses in the first phase, it is important not to waste a first dose on someone who will back out of getting their second. Besides the limited doses, Wilson could not foresee any other obstacles for mass vaccination. That of course does not include those who are not willing to receive the vaccine or are hesitant.

Wilson understands that everyone has an important choice to make for themselves, and that can be different for everyone.

"Ultimately, you have to make your own decision, but I would encourage you to make an educated one," Wilson said.

She also quoted Paul Offit, a scientist, an Infectious Disease Doctor, and Director of the Vaccine Education Center at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia.

"A choice not to get a vaccine is not a risk-free choice, it is a choice to take a different risk."

## Teachers, school district agree on contract extension

by Aidan Brophy

At the end of 2020, the Shaler Area School District and the Shaler Area Education Association, the teacher's union, agreed to a one-year contract extension.

The decision was made at the school board meeting on December 2. Deceptively simple in the notes for the meeting, item B.3, "Approve a one-year contract extension agreement between Shaler Area School District and Shaler Area Education Association through August 15, 2022," the agreement will bring some short-term peace of mind to the district and its teachers.

The agreement came after many months, meetings and deliberations. Superintendent Dr. Sean Aiken noted that "the Teachers' Association leadership team, the administrative team, and a few school board members have been meeting for probably 13 months."

In fact, the sides were working on a much larger deal, but when the pandemic hit in March things were scaled back.

"We were somewhat close to doing another 'early bird' for a longer term, but then coronavirus hit. We were a couple of weeks from probably signing a longer deal, but with the shakiness of the economy, things got very hectic very fast and (a long-term deal) was the least of our priorities," Mr. Brian Marree, Vice President of the SAEA, said.

**"We wanted to really honor [the district's teachers] with a contract that was fair and respectable, and recognize them for the great work they've been doing."**

-- Dr. Sean Aiken

The pandemic did throw a wrench into the works, according to Dr. Aiken.

"We were getting to a better and better place, and then March 13th hit, and we just put everything on hold at that point," he said.

Talks resumed over the summer, and decisions were made regarding the length and terms of the new teacher contract.

The new contract has the shorter-than-usual term of a single year, owing to the uncertainties caused by the pandemic. It includes an extra instructional day and pay adjustments.

"Normally with an extension, you're not looking to change major things in a contract," Mr. Marree said. "The biggest points usually in contract negotiation are salary, healthcare, and your working conditions."

This move has allowed the administration and the teachers to avoid any work stoppage issues for the near future.

"The last thing a kid should ever have to experience is a conflict between teachers and the district over a contract," SAEA President Mr. Craig Wells said.

The two sides seem to be working together to make sure that is the case.

"We wanted to really honor [the district's teachers] with a contract that was fair and respectable, and recognize them for the great work they've been doing," Dr. Aiken said.

# OPINIONS

## It's time to sentence capital punishment to death

originally published Jan 6, 2021

by Maggie Rea

What do these three people have in common? A Black man with an IQ of 70-75 who killed his 2-year-old daughter by slamming her against the side of a truck. A White woman, sexually abused her entire life, who killed a pregnant woman and removed her unborn child. A Black man who set fire to the trunk of a car when he was 18, burning the already-dead couple inside.

They all have been or are scheduled to be executed by the federal government.

Brandon Bernard, a gang member who set fire to the trunk, was executed on December 10, 2020. Alfred Bourgeois, a truck driver who tortured and killed his daughter, was killed the very next day, on December 11. Lisa M. Montgomery is scheduled to die on January 12, 2021, which would make her the first woman to be federally executed in almost 70 years. Following her execution there are two more execution scheduled. Cory Johnson and Dustin John Higgs, both Black men, are scheduled to be murdered on January 14 and 15, respectively.

This is not normal at all, by the way. There have not been federal executions since 2003. Attorney General William P. Barr cleared the way for executions to resume in 2019, when he had the Federal Bureau of Prisons change the Federal Execution Protocol. Instead of using three different drugs for lethal injection, the protocol now calls for just one, Pentobarbital Sodium, which has been deemed Constitutional by the Supreme Court. This change allowed the government to schedule a wave of ex-

ecutions, and this past July, those executions began.

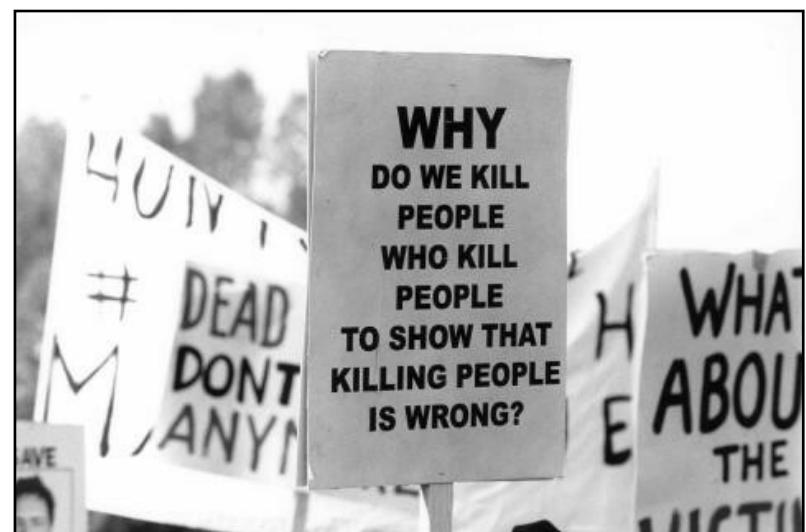
I was born in 2003- I'm 17 years old, and I had never been alive during a federal execution until July. Now, there have been 10 in my lifetime, with three more scheduled this year. The last year the federal government killed this many people was 1869.

Why is the US government killing these people? Alfred Bourgeois had an intellectual disability. Brandon Bernard was executed for setting a car on fire. Lisa Montgomery committed a terrible crime, but she did it as a result of the abuses she suffered throughout her life. These people need help, not death.

Yes, these people committed awful crimes (unless they were wrongfully convicted, something that has happened 172 times since 1973), but life in prison is a much better option that still deters crime and sufficiently punishes the criminal. Most importantly, it is a sentence that can be reversed if new evidence comes to light or bias was found to influence the decision.

Humans should not have the power to legally murder someone, because humans are fallible and make mistakes. If someone is wrongfully convicted of a crime and sentenced to death, that punishment can't be reversed. There's no bringing back a person after they've been injected with lethal poison.

Five of the nine surviving jurors who sentenced Brandon Bernard to death have said that they would now sentence him to life in prison instead, based on new evidence that shows that he did not kill anyone.



He should never have died, but it's too late for the government to do anything about that now.

As much as we like to believe that our justice system is unbiased, that's just not true. The race of the accused and the victim play a ridiculously high role in who is executed and who isn't.

According to the Death Penalty Information Center, half of all homicide victims are African American, but over 75 percent of death row inmates were sentenced to death for killing a White victim. The American Civil Liberties Union says that since 1976, 43 percent of people who were federally executed have been people of color, and that's just the tip of the iceberg.

Indisputably, there is so much racial bias present in the American "justice" system that it is not just at all. Biased people should not have the power to kill whoever they want to. Capital punishment is a racist, biased, archaic practice, and it must be stopped. It's time to end the federal death penalty.

## Grey's Anatomy has run out of its original magic

by Mia Schubert

(Caution -- story contains spoilers)

The television show "Grey's Anatomy" combines both medical drama and romance. The first season debuted in 2005, and the show has painfully dragged on for 15 years as season 17 began airing on November 17.

Every time I ask friends if they watch Grey's Anatomy, their answer

is typically something like, "I started it, but quit watching it because I got bored." I used to be astounded by this response as I held the show to such a high standard. I didn't understand what people were talking about until I started watching the later seasons.

The "Grey's Anatomy" story line began with five characters (George, Meredith, Christina, Izzie, and Alex) who were starting their intern year at

Seattle Grace Hospital. The show revolved around their professional lives at the hospital, as well as their personal lives outside of it.

Each episode was filled with humor, drama, romance and even tragedy. I was completely obsessed with Grey's and would binge watch it every day.

Then, the writer and producer of the show, Shonda Rhimes, thought it was a genius idea to have some of the main characters either die or leave the show.

By season 10, only two out of the five main characters remained: Alex and Meredith. Christina and Izzie left the show, and George suffered terribly after a heroic act of throwing himself in front of a bus to save another person; he later died.

Several other characters who were introduced in later seasons quickly vanished just as the audience had come

to love them. One of these characters was Mark Sloan, McSteamy as everyone called him. As characters like this disappeared from the show, it became less interesting and not nearly as riveting. The only thing Grey's still had going for it after season 10 was the epic love of Meredith Grey and Derek Shepherd.

Meredith and Derek helped carry the show for a long time along with a couple of other beloved characters, but after those other characters left, Meredith and Derek's load got a whole lot heavier.

Their lives were filled with an unrealistic level of drama, but that's what made their story so intriguing. I am confident in saying that every Grey's fan loved Meredith and Derek's love story, but, predictably, Shonda, doing

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# OPINIONS

## Retiring Indians nickname is the right thing to do

by Dominic DiTommaso

This is just one man's opinion on an incredibly complex topic. Take it or leave it, but know that this is very personal to me.

This past month, it was announced that the Cleveland Indians nickname will be retired following the 2021 season. Many found this change outrageously wrong, near heresy, but I have zero issue with Cleveland deciding to change a name that should've been eliminated a long time ago.

That being said, the name Indians means something to me. It's the name I have come to know for 17 years; the name I relate to many fond summer memories.

Whether it's watching a game on a clear summer night, sitting down the third-base line with my dad and uncle at Progressive Field or listening to the radio broadcast in the back of our car, the name Indians will always bring back those great childhood recollections.

From an American League record 22-straight wins to a World Series appearance in 2016, the Indians name has been with me all throughout.

All Indians fans have some connection to that name. Whether it reminds them of the team's dynastic run in the 1990s or, if old enough, the championship team of 1948, the nickname Indians brings back many positive memories.

But it is time for a change.

I hope we have reached a point in this country where we realize that Native Americans and their customs are not something to mock or imitate or embody in a mascot or logo.

Over time, people will learn to live with the new name, whatever it is.

In the end, it's just a name. The club will still be a baseball team with a pitcher and catcher and shortstop. We can still remember the 22-game win streak and the 2016 World Series, or the 1948 champs or the team that should have won multiple championships in the '90s. That is still our team and those are our memories, whether the name is Indians or not.

It is finally time to get rid of that name and the racial stereotypes that have haunted it, highlighted by the infamous Chief Wahoo logo, a pathetic display of racism, that was finally retired in 2018.

This is not a new topic of conversation.

Years ago, the mascot during athletic contests at Stanford University was known as Prince Lightfoot. That was when Stanford's nickname was the Indians, something that began in 1930 until it was finally retired in 1972 when Native American students finally stood up and said that Prince Lightfoot was a mockery of Indian religious practices.

More and more Native American students complained the school was showing blatant insensitivity



to Native Americans and their culture, and eventually Stanford said it had to change things.

In addition to the name and mascot, they also had a logo, a caricature of an Indian chief -- a lesser version of Chief Wahoo.

Stanford finally said enough was enough, and it changed its nickname. Stanford's 25-straight Learfield IMG College Directors' Cups, an annual award given to the best overall athletic department in college sports, shows the school's athletic program hasn't been affected by the name change.

That was almost half a century ago.

Equally offensive was Syracuse University's former mascot, The Saltine Warrior, who was named after the city of Syracuse's unofficial nickname, Salt City. That mascot was created due to a myth that an Indian chief was found when the foundation was being dug for the women's gymnasium in 1928.

In 1978, Native American students said the mascot was mocking and stereotyping Native Americans.

The Saltine Warrior was retired in 1978.

More recently, schools such as Dartmouth, North Dakota, William & Mary, St. Bonaventure, Marquette, Miami (Ohio) and Louisiana-Monroe have all dropped Native American nicknames, while the University of Illinois has gotten rid of the Native American mascot and logos.

Somewhat like the University of Illinois, the Indians nickname and logos seem to be on different levels of offensive.

In 1915, the team was the Cleveland Naps after Napoleon "Nap" Lajoie, as it was custom to name the baseball team after its best player.

Once Lajoie retired, the club was left without a name. The local sports writers were asked what the next nickname of the team should be. The best player at the time on the team was Louis Sockalexis, a Native American from a tribe in Maine and whose

grandfather was the chief of the tribe. The sports writers suggested that the team be called the Cleveland Indians after Sockalexis.

In 1947, Chief Wahoo was created. Until just two years ago, the Cleveland Indians logo was Chief Wahoo, a cartoon mascot depicting a red-faced smiling Indian with large teeth, pointed eyes and feather sticking out of its head.

For years, crowds of protesters have gathered outside of Cleveland's ballpark to protest the use of the logo, which was being considered for retirement as far back as 1994 when the Indians moved into their new stadium.

The logo has changed its form over the years, but all the while had remained its usual, pathetic self. Many people complained about the Chief Wahoo logo being retired when it did, and now nobody really seems to care.

And years from now, no one will care that the Indians name isn't around anymore, either.

In speaking with reporters, Cleveland manager Terry Francona praised the organization for trying to "do the right thing", adding that a name change was necessary and inevitable.

I concur.

Over time, people will no longer care that the Indians name is no more. As fans, we root for the team that represents us and our city, and we should be happy that the new nickname is one that represents us and our team without being culturally insensitive.

Does anyone remember, or even care, that the Yankees were once called the Highlanders? Or the Red Sox were called the Americans? Or the Cubs were called the Orphans? Or the Dodgers were called the Bridegrooms?

Soon, the question will be asked whether anyone remembers, or even cares, that Cleveland's baseball team was once called the Indians.

## Grey's Anatomy has run out of its original magic

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what she does best, decided to write a story line in which Derek is killed in an accident.

I am aware that the actor playing Derek, Patrick Dempsey, wanted to leave the show, but his death was the cue to end the show. Sadly, this didn't happen, and the show only went downhill from there.

Seasons 13 through 15 were a blur. I, and I'm sure most others, felt angry and sad that Derek was no longer a part of the show. The drama that was created was not entertaining and the relationships that were formed were utterly awful. It seemed like the writers didn't know how to keep the story interesting

anymore.

"Grey's Anatomy" completely lost my interest after Alex Karev, one of the only remaining original characters from season 1, left the show.

Alex, portrayed as Meredith's best friend, was the only character that kept me watching the show after Derek died. He was the only one who had a romance that everyone loved and supported. Viewers would watch the next episode just to see what would happen with his relationship and ultimately, his wedding.

Again, Shonda ruined something great in season 16 by having him, not only leave the hospital, but his wife

as well. Do we see a recurring theme here? This was Shonda's second cue to end the show with whatever dignity it had left.

When I thought it couldn't get any worse, it did. I was not enthusiastic at all when I heard there was going to be a season 17. I couldn't think of any new story lines they might create that hadn't already been done. I was wrong. Take a wild guess about this season's focus: COVID-19.

I can't think of a reason why anyone would want to watch a show about a frustrating, annoying, and distressing time in which we are currently living, and have been for the past eight

months. All of the characters, at least the ones who remain, have to wear masks and treat patients with the virus. Every aspect Grey's had that made it unique is now gone. There are no more suspenseful surgeries, engrossing love triangles, or compelling drama.

The fact that the current season is about COVID is completely disappointing and just goes to show that the writers and producers have exhausted all original ideas; they should have ended the series several seasons ago.

The show had a long run of great seasons early on, but its reputation is now destroyed; Shonda Rhimes needs to end "Grey's Anatomy" now.

# Sustainability having impact on students and community

by Alyssa Hillwig &  
Rebecca Beckas

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle. These three words have been used constantly to promote a more sustainable, eco-friendly way of life. But what do they actually mean? And are those practices effective?

This year, a new CHS class was offered to students to help them understand those words on a personal level. In the class, titled Sustainability, Mrs. Abbey Nilson encourages her 71 students to be an active part of their community by helping them self-reflect on a greener lifestyle.

Nilson noted that she has a wide variety of students — some enrolled in the class with the intention of reducing their footprint and the class fits in with a lot of projects that they're already doing, while others were just curious and took the class not quite knowing what to expect.

"I took the class because I've always been interested in living more sustainably, but I wasn't really sure where to start," senior Marlie King said.

No matter what initially sparked her students' interest, Nilson is mostly just happy that she has the opportunity to have a positive impact on so many students.

"Hopefully they'll have conversations and be active in the community with all of the different concepts we've learned," Nilson said.

Mrs. Nilson herself has always been passionate about the environment, much before it became "trendy" to be environmentally conscious. Some actions that have recently gained traction from the media, such as using reusable water bottles or bags, composting, and plant-based diets, are actions Nilson has been taking her whole life.

"I've always been very interested in this, and I've been composting my whole life," Nilson said. "I grew up in a very sustainable family, so it's always been a part of me."

With her knowledge, she hopes to influence as many people as she can to begin to adjust their lifestyle to preserve the environment and she hopes to teach the importance of living sustainably to her students.

"Sustainability is important to me because every little bit helps stop pollution on our planet," King said. "Taking the class has helped me make even more sustainable choices...I now compost as much as I can as well as cutting down my use of plastic."

With the creation of the class, Mrs. Nilson also hopes she can bring to light that sustainability is about much more than just recycling.

"We really need to focus on reducing everything we use, reducing packaging...we won't recycle our way out of the current plastic and waste problem we have," Nilson said.

In order to accomplish this, Nilson creates lab challenges and projects that encourage her students to independently make sustainable choices in their own daily lives. She loves being able to take the creative liberty to adapt her



**Sustainability students help at a community clean up event**

lifestyle into an educational model, so she always completes her assignments alongside her students.

One of their latest endeavors is far beyond the classroom. Alongside other SAHS and SAMS students, the Sustainability students have joined the effort to save widely-loved Girty's Woods and preserve it for years to come.

The 155 acre area of woods is in danger of being sold to a developer, where the trees will then be removed and it will become another housing plan.

Working closely with the Allegheny Land Trust (ALT), a non-profit organization helping local people save local land, the students and community members involved have been hard at work to raise the necessary funds to restore the land.

Brian Wolovich, the founder of the Millvale Library and a community organizer in the area, explained the current situation.

"The current property owners made a deal to sell the property to the Allegheny Land Trust for permanent natural conservation, and there is one year to raise all of the funds," he said.

With the fundraising deadline of March 31, there is still about \$90,000 to raise before reaching the full amount of \$723,656. Wolovich expressed the importance of community involvement in the cause.

"Our community members have been focusing on educating people and organizations, encouraging people to come and visit the woods, and raising money," he said. "The Allegheny Land Trust set a goal for our local community to raise \$40,000. So far we have raised \$52,000 and have more events and efforts planned."

Wolovich specifically praised the efforts of willing students who have done their part to contribute to the cause.

"Students at SAHS and SAMS have been doing outstanding work learning about and visiting the woods, creating promotional and educational outreach materials, and raising money including at community events and a Spaghetti Dinner fundraiser," he said.

Mrs. Nilson described her excite-

ment in being a part of the project.

"It's a long-term project that we want to continue to be a part of," Nilson said. "It's important and it's exciting to have this green space in our district so we want to continue to use it."

Students have also expressed how they have done their part, and their excitement to contribute to this community effort.

"I love the Girty's Woods project because we're contributing to a local area," King said. "I have a little tree farm going on at my house right now and I plan on planting more trees because it's important to regrow the habitat for wildlife at Girty's woods."

Do you want to begin leading a more sustainable lifestyle or contrib-

uting to community campaigns? Mrs. Nilson is always looking for more people to join the effort to impact the world positively.

"The more the merrier. We would love to have more people help out if they want to grow trees or make eco bricks," Nilson said. "They could just email me and we could set something up if there's interest, almost expand it into a club, even."

Until then, she has some valuable advice to offer for those looking to make a change:

"Be positive. Know that nobody is perfect. Just continue to try to do the right thing for our planet and to spread the word and encourage others to do the same in a positive way!"

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# Teachers trying to conquer the numerous challenges of the 2020-21 school year

by Maggie Rea

The 2020-21 school year has been hectic. The start of school was pushed back. Students and teachers began the year staring at iPads. The district switched to hybrid, and students could actually go into their schools, but only twice a week. Then full virtual learning began again. Now students are back to hybrid. What learning model will Shaler be in two weeks from now? With circumstances constantly changing, who can say?

The constant transitions, the uncertainty, and the completely different way of running school have all added up to make this year much more difficult than years past. It's been hard on students and parents, but it's also been hard on teachers.

Teachers from all different subjects and grade levels said two things stood out as the most challenging for them.

The first was the overwhelming amount of work they have this year. They have had to learn to use new technology, redo most of their lessons, and communicate with students in a completely new setting. In a sense, they have to learn how to teach all over again.

"This is, without a doubt, the most exhausting year I have ever had in the classroom," Mr. Kevin Keenan, a 6th grade Social Studies teacher, said. "Everything is new, and because I want everything to go just right, I am putting a lot more time, effort, and, honestly, stress into my work. Trying to keep up with grades and missing or late assignments feels like an endless task."

This idea of school being "an endless task" is a sentiment shared by many other teachers.

"I feel like I'm always on a treadmill... going NOWHERE but more hills keep coming and it never turns off," Mrs. Holly McCarthy, a high school History teacher, said.

Most teachers agreed that it has been the year they've put the most time into.

"I'm putting in the most hours this year, because every single lesson has to be rewritten or revamped to make it technology based," Mrs. Michelle Bucek, a 6th grade ELA teacher, said.

In order to rewrite lessons for a virtual setting, teachers have to learn how to use new technology, which requires them to put even more time into teaching.

"It's not less work or more, it's just different. It's definitely more time, because this is new," Mrs. Nicole Henne, a 1st grade teacher at Burchfield Primary School, said. "Google Classroom was new to the Primary teachers. We never used that," she said.

In addition to incorporating new technology into

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-- Mr. Kevin Keenan

hear their students, they receive little to no feedback about how effective their class is, and they can't interact with their students the same way they would in a classroom.

"The current circumstances require high levels of preparation, and the payoff is so much less, because we don't get the same student interest, the same enthusiasm or the same energy. So we put much more time in for a smaller payoff," Mr. Gregory Foster, a high school Chemistry and Physics teacher, said. "It's just much harder. It's much more difficult to do. There's less motivation to really take time and prepare something when you're not getting the same level of interest and enthusiasm from the students."

In virtual learning, teachers aren't interacting with their students like they usually would, and that makes it difficult to know if their students are learning anything at all, much less getting excited about a lesson.

"Teaching to a screen of black squares or bitmoji avatars doesn't give any visual feedback from the students that you usually get when you're teaching in the classroom," Mr. Dennis Reagle, the middle school GATE teacher, said. "You gauge much about your effectiveness in real time just by the looks on

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## Some students choosing to not schedule a lunch

by Mia Schubert & Tia Bozzo

As old school traditions have begun to fade, the once all-time favorite period of the school day has gone with it: lunch. Lunch period used to be a getaway for students to connect with friends, eat, and take a break from their busy day. In today's world, a growing number of students have opted out of taking this break.

For some students, it's about academics. They would rather incorporate additional classes into their schedule in order to maximize it.

"I didn't take a lunch this year because it's not beneficial to me. I find times to eat throughout the day and I can fit all my classes into my schedule," junior Alyssa Hillwig said.

Dropping their lunch allows students to add more elective courses, like a music or art class. A.W. Beattie students commonly elect to not schedule a lunch period in order to fit their core classes into their split-day schedule.

On the other hand, some students want to avoid what they see as the chaotic environment of the cafeteria.

"Some students choose to drop lunch because they would prefer the opportunity to have a study hall or quiet space," guidance counselor Mr. Mat Anselmino said.

With concerns about the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers in the 2020 school year have been reluctant to allow students to eat during class. In years past, students without a lunch period had the ability to eat in most classes with the permission of their teachers. However, this year, due to health and safety concerns, some teachers are not allowing students that option.

"The removal of a mask to eat within the classroom, especially when the student made the choice to remove their lunch, could certainly create an unwanted dynamic within the (classroom) environment and is at the discretion of the instructor," Anselmino said.

This year more than ever, the pandemic has made this choice a larger platform for discussion. If students were worried about their safety eating alongside many other students without protection, that concern could also lead to the choice of dropping lunch.

This growing trend has left many adults concerned about the social implications of students who have chosen not to take a lunch. Without adding this break into their day, which some people believe is necessary, staff members are worried about the effects it could have on students.

"I believe there is value to the mental reset a lunch period could offer students as well as the opportunity to socialize with peers and staff," Anselmino said.

Over time, this group of students has grown with this year totaling the highest number yet. Students opt out of taking a lunch for various reasons, all of which are a personal choice. This leaves many people wondering if this trend will continue or if the school will take a stand on students opting out of a lunch period.

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# New musical director ready for the challenge

by Rebecca Beckas

This year, Shaler Area High School welcomes Mr. Anthony Martello to the performing arts department as the new musical director.

The Woodland Hills graduate is now taking over the responsibility of Shaler Area's spring musical. He's been on the stage ever since the age of two, and he is now behind the scenes, ready to direct a wonderful show.

Martello has a long history in theater, starting dance at the age of just two years old. At fifteen, he started teaching dance as well, at Lorraine Busch Dance Center. In his childhood, he joined Larry Cerri's East End Kids Performance Group, similar to a glee club; they would perform for nursing homes, the school for blind children, and even at the Arts Festival.

Musicals are not something new to Martello, though. Throughout middle school and high school, he performed in Woodland Hills' productions of "Pippin", "Les Misérables", "Beauty and the Beast", and "Wizard of Oz", with lead roles of Cogsworth and The Scarecrow his junior and senior year.

Not only does he have experience performing, but he also has experience as a director. He choreographed four shows for Woodland Hills junior high; "High School Musical Junior", "Seussical", "Aladdin", and "Guys and Dolls". Even after graduating, Martello continued to be involved in performing when he got the opportunity to play Bobby Strong in "Urinetown" at Pitt-Greensburg.

Martello is now part of a Woodland Hills Alumni Facebook group, where he learned about the opening for Shaler Area's position. Once he was offered the job and he accepted it, he was able to go through resumes and pick who he wanted to interview for the other positions.

This is not a given for all school districts, so being given a final say in who he'd be working with made him feel a lot more comfortable going into this. Since he doesn't know any students, being able to build his own team has given him a stronger sense of hope in what they will be able to achieve.

"It was really exciting to be able to pick my team and have a team I was confident and comfortable with, that way it was a group effort instead of just me

trying to do everything," he said.

It is now almost a year into the pandemic, and things are still not "back to normal," but Martello is ready for whatever issues may come his way. Outside of the normal challenges of directing a musical, he has the extra challenge of dealing with the restrictions from the pandemic.

Everything from where they can do the show, to if they can be on stage, if they will have to be outside, where they can be outside, masks, is all going to be different. Even so, he says that he and the directors are ready and eager to be creatively challenged.

"There are challenges. I'm not gonna pretend like there aren't. I'm not naive to them... At the end of the day my priority is the safety of the students and the adults involved; that's number one. After that it's putting on a good show and making sure the kids have a good time. If I can keep everyone safe and put on a good product and make sure the kids are happy, then I'm good," Martello said.

Martello is not completely unknowing of what Shaler Area High School's performing arts has to offer, though. He was able to see "Shrek", so he has a solid gauge of what he will be working with this year.

"This is an established program where the quality of the show is high. My challenge is to not only maintain that quality but build upon it... to see how much we can do with it," he said.

Because of the timing of his hiring, Martello decided to conduct auditions in a different way this year. Normally a show is selected and auditions are held for that show. This year, auditions were held pri-

or

to a show being selected to help the directors see what type of talent is available.

Regardless of the show, Martello has a vision for what he wants from his program.

"There's one thing I do want to make abundantly clear: I know what good a healthy high school theater program can do for a student who may be struggling or may feel left out, or feel like an outcast, or just might need a place where they feel comfortable and confident and welcomed," he said. "Everything I do, I do out of love. Every rehearsal, every schedule I make, every casting decision, is made out of love. There are times that I have to make decisions that are best for the group and I want to make the environment the best for the group. It's important for me to make sure people understand that I want to build an inclusive, welcoming, loving environment where students feel cared for and comfortable to express themselves as true as they can."



**Musical Director Mr. Anthony Martello**

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# Q&A: The Oracle chats with actress Shelby Young

by Savannah Schultis

Shelby Young is an American voice, motion-capture, and on-camera actress. She received the opportunity to work in theater as young as three years old when she did pageantry in her home state of Florida. However, her mom realized this wasn't exactly for her. Thankfully, the judges of the pageant were modeling and acting agents who decided they wanted to represent her, kick starting her career.

As a child, Shelby loved performing for her friends and family, so she always knew she wanted to be an actor. Her love for acting took her and her mom to New York, where she found success in film and television. For this reason, her agents convinced her family to move to Los Angeles where "the opportunities are endless".

Her first acting opportunities included commercials when she was around five years old, but she filmed her first TV show in Florida when she was just seven years old. As she has grown, her career focus has shifted to voice over and motion capture acting for animation and video games.

Her voice over credits include Rayna in Nickelodeon's new series Baby Shark's Big Show!, Princess Leia in Star Wars Forces of Destiny and Soph Blazkowicz in the newest installment of the award-winning Wolfenstein series. However, she has played a few smaller roles in film and TV such as Wild Child, The Social Network, and, most notably, American Horror Story.

**Q: How did you earn the role of Leah in American Horror Story? What was the auditioning process like?**

A: As far as American Horror Story, I originally submitted an audition tape for the role of Violet. Then casting brought me in to audition for Leah a few weeks later. The audition scenes were the first scene where Leah meets Violet and part of the basement scene. I committed super hard to the basement portion and threw myself up against the wall so hard acting it out that my shoe went flying over the casting director's head. We were all cracking up as soon as they said cut.

Filming the show was such a dream! I was originally only going to be in the first episode so when they invited me back for two more episodes I was over the moon. For the pilot, aka first episode, we filmed in the actual "Murder House" which was very cool (and very creepy!). Everyone on set was so warm and you'd never know we were filming something so dark and twisted between scenes, it was such a positive atmosphere.

One of the funniest moments on set is when we were taking a lunch break, we had our lunch area set up outside in this neighborhood and I had my bloody prosthetics on my face and Evan had his skull make-up on and I'll never forget the looks we got as people walked by wondering what the heck was going on. It was truly one of my favorite projects to work on in my entire career!

**Q: Did you expect Murder House to become as popular as it did?**

A: I honestly didn't really have any expectations! I was a fan of Ryan Murphy's already from Nip/Tuck and Glee so I had a feeling whatever he made would be gold. I could tell the quality of the show would be amazing right off the bat so when I heard the pilot was picked up into a full series, I can't say I was surprised but I was so excited! It blows my mind that people still stop me and recognize me from the show all these years later, it really is a special moment in TV history to be a part of.

**Q: Have you watched Murder House and if so, what was it like seeing yourself on the screen?**

A: I have! It's funny, I watched the show weekly with friends. Whenever I would come on, I'd hide and feel embarrassed, but I've gone back to re-watch, to cut scenes for demo's or to share on social media, and I'm genuinely proud of my performance as Leah.

**Q: Does it feel surreal looking back on it considering how popular the show has become?**

A: It does! Sometimes I'm even like... I can't believe that's me! It feels like another lifetime in some ways but it's so incredibly cool to see how popular the show remains to be!

**Q: Were you able to meet Ryan Murphy, and if so, what was that like?**

A: I was! Ryan directed the first episode. He was fantastic, he really knew how to get us in the moment, not just emotionally but physically. Before the scene where I run out of the basement after being attacked and then Violet and Tate have their fight, he had us all do jumping jacks to get our hearts pumping. Made the scene even more real, in my opinion. I really loved his directing style when it came to finding the emotions for the character's as well. He's really kind and just all around just a super dope person.

**Q: What was it like working with Taissa Farmiga and Evan Peters since most of your scenes were with them?**

A: I loved working with both of them! Aside from being talented professionals, they were both super kind and made the set even more fun than it already was.

**Q: Most of your scenes were with Taissa and Evan, but were you able to meet/get to know any other cast members?**

A: I was able to chat a bit with Dylan McDermott, and we've seen each other at some events outside of the show. He's such a stand-up guy, also crazy talented! I also chatted with Eric Stonestreet a bit at the premiere, I'm such a fan of his work. And then I hung out with Kai and Bodhi Shultz at the wrap party along with my friend Brennan Mejia. It was fun getting to celebrate with someone I'd already known for years!

**Q: Do you have a preference for voice acting or on-screen acting? What's the difference between those like?**

A: There's a common misconception that on-screen acting is "real" acting, and voice over acting is just doing silly voices, but that couldn't be farther from the truth. Some of the most intense acting moments of my career have been in a VO booth. The ability to change your voice is, of course, extremely helpful if you want to be a voice actor, but without that acting background and ability, funny voices won't get you far. My current focus is voiceover and motion capture (that's when they capture your body



Shelby Young

movements and facial data to make a really realistic looking character -- think Avatar or any recent video game cutscene), but I never like to close any doors in my life.

A major difference between the two is with on-camera acting, you have your face to rely on conveying your emotions. With voice over, that acting and those emotions need to come out through your voice. There's also a freedom in VO you don't get in the on-camera world. For on-camera, I'm a 20-something woman. My range would be a late teens girl (for certain networks) to early 30s woman. That's it. But in the VO world, I can voice babies, aliens, little boys, grandma's, animals and everything in-between! The sky is the limit, which I love.

**Q: What was the change in atmosphere like moving from Florida to LA?**

A: It absolutely changed my life. The opportunities I've been afforded and the projects I've been able to audition for and work on would have never happened if I weren't in Los Angeles. Things are a bit different now with the pandemic, all auditions and callbacks (and most jobs for VO) have moved online so the ability to live outside of LA and still work is an option now. But, if you want to be a continuously working actor I recommend living in a major entertainment hub city like LA, New York, Chicago, etc.

**Q: Do you have any future projects or films you're working on? What direction would you like your career to go?**

A: I do! I feel very lucky to have numerous animated projects, video games, commercials and more coming out soon! This past year was one of my busiest, surprisingly, since all of my work was from my closet. I feel grateful that I was able to continue chugging along and that the VO industry was able to figure out ways to keep us working while keeping us safe. I'm not able to share most projects as they haven't been announced yet, but you can hear me later this year on Baby Shark's Big Show! as Rayna (our first "Fishmas" special aired in December on Nickelodeon)! Other recent VO projects include Star Wars: Tales from Galaxy's Edge, Call of Duty: Black Ops Cold War, Spirit Riding Free's interactive special on Netflix and additional voices for The Mandalorian.

As far as the direction I'd like my career to go, I'm really happy with the direction it's going now! Playing so many versatile characters across children's animation, adult animation, games and more is truly a dream come true.



# Titans back on court after brief COVID-19 shutdown

by Cate Gordon

After the boys basketball team played Armstrong on Friday, January 15, the team received a call Sunday afternoon explaining that a JV player from the Armstrong team had tested positive for the Covid-19 virus.

The team as well as many others expected the season to be shut down for at least 10 days. This pause in a very crucial part of the season would have been tough for the team.

After investigating the situation, the health department decided on January 19 that there was not enough evidence to prove the boys were exposed and the team was permitted to resume activities.

"Unfortunately it happened to us, but it is happening to so many other teams. We are lucky that our season is back to normal and now we can see what the rest of the year holds for us and start looking towards playoffs," junior Josh Miller said.

Within the two-day quarantine, the team was not allowed to practice or play. They missed out on a game against Bethel Park that Monday and a game against Elizabeth Forward that Wednesday.

Unfortunately, these games were canceled and not rescheduled. A game against Indiana was scheduled for Friday, January 22, but has been postponed to a later date. Fortunately, the boys were able to get



**Boys basketball head coach Rob Niederberger**

a replacement game against Derry on Friday.

"The uncertainty has definitely been a nuisance, but also we acknowledge that everyone is going through it and we can't control the unknown. What we can control is what we do socially, how we work in school and on the court, and how we conduct ourselves," head coach Robert Niederberger said.

As of right now, the team does not have any players with the Covid-19 virus. They are doing their best to stay safe, healthy, and have a successful season.

"We talk about making good decisions and putting ourselves in good positions so that we don't jeopardize our season. Our players have been great about this," Niederberger said.

## Brady, Tampa a Super match

first published Sept 16, 2020

by Dominic DiTommaso

Let me make this clear, the amount of disrespect Tom Brady gets does not offend me.

While leading the Patriots to nine Super Bowls in the past 20 years, Brady also leads the NFL in hate generated. The humble, genuine and impossibly nice guy is hated by most in this country -- out of jealousy.

So when Brady announced he was headed south, the Doubting Toms spoke out: They will miss the playoffs! They will finish third in the division! This season has 6-10 written all over it!

Go ahead and hate -- while you can.

When the NFL released schedules in early May, it hit me that the Buccaneers' schedule has 13-3 written all over it. When I got over the shock that Tampa has to go to New Orleans opening week without any preseason games, I realized that Brady's team will start 0-1 and finish 13-2.

Having the 16th-ranked strength of schedule, Tampa will easily win games against the likes of Denver and New York and Detroit. They will beat Green Bay in Tampa, and will certainly handle the Chiefs at home (Brady is 2-1, against Patrick Mahomes, after all).

After losing always-tricky road division games to Carolina and Atlanta, Brady's Bucs will finish with 13 wins and a division title.



Brady is arriving in Tampa after taking the Patriots, who easily could have been 6-10, to a 12-4 record.

Brady achieved all of that surrounded by the worst group of weapons in pro football, and by far the worst of his career. His "best" receiver, Julian Edelman, led the league in drops.

This just in: things have changed.

Brady is now on a team with two Pro Bowl receivers, Mike Evans and Chris Godwin, who combined for 153 catches and 2,490 yards last year. Brady's tight ends include OJ Howard and Cameron Brate, who combined for just under 800 yards last season, plus Rob Gronkowski, the greatest tight end of all time.

Yes, Brady did have a pretty good defense in New England last season, but, it did allow 27 to Miami, whose offense ranked, appropriately, 27th in the NFL.

Again, things have changed.

In the last six games of the 2019 season, Tampa's defense ranked 10th in yards allowed while the team went 4-2. The team won

in spite of its turnover-machine quarterback, Jameis Winston.

Winston led all quarterbacks in interceptions with 30 last season. Brady's career-high is 14.

Last season, Brady had 24 touchdowns to only eight interceptions in a "bad" year.

Last season, with no deep threat to see, Brady had a passer rating of 98 on "deep balls" (passes 16 yards or over), while completing 40 such passes. In 2017, his MVP season, his passer rating on such passes was 96, so he was worse on deep passes in his MVP season than he was last season.

Tampa Bay's team looks as bright as the Florida sunshine, especially with a head coach in Bruce Arians who has worked with Peyton Manning and Ben Roethlisberger, and a top defensive coordinator in Todd Bowles.

That's right, I'm picking Tampa Bay to win the Super Bowl, this upcoming February.

The added pressure of being the first team to play a home Super Bowl is something Brady will gladly accept. Going 13-3 and winning the division, something many believe they can't do, will seem like a consolation prize when Brady is holding the Lombardi Trophy again.

So please, count out Brady and the Buccaneers.

Brady will thank you later.

# Christian Athlete group starting up



by Dominic DiTommaso

Shaler Area High School will be introducing the Fellowship of Christian Athletes to connect student athletes with their faith.

Founded in 1954, the FCA (Fellowship of Christian Athletes) is a nationwide organization that guides players and coaches to follow in the faith while playing a sport, while fostering a better connection with their religion.

"FCA focuses on serving local communities around the globe by engaging, equipping and empowering coaches and athletes to unite, inspire and change the world through the gospel," says the Fellowship's website.

The group will be sponsored by faculty members Mr. Matthew White and Ms. Karen Howell.

"The goal of the FCA club at Shaler Area is to provide a space for any student to commune together by encouraging one another, lifting each other up during difficult seasons, as well as keeping each other accountable," White said.

White also mentioned how FCA encourages student athletes to conduct "huddles" where athletes on the same team, as well as one large group of athletes, meet together and discuss how their faith plays a role in sports, and how they can support each other through the season.

Ms. Howell hopes that this group will help students apply their faith properly.

"So many students don't have a picture of how faith actually applies and makes a difference in their day-to-day lives. FCA will enable these students to encourage each other and learn to live out their faith in practical ways," Howell said.

Student leaders Virginia Lesnett and Jocelyn Schwartz are hoping that students can use this group to comfortably follow their religion.

"There are not a lot of people who have a faith, or if they do they are not very public about it," Schwartz said. "I think it is important to be a light of God on these teams and to share the gospel with them, FCA will be a great way to accomplish this."

To become a member, students are encouraged to reach out to get the Google Classroom code to join the class page. Meetings must be attended, the first of which is Feb. 1 at 7 p.m. on a Google Meet. Meetings are scheduled every other Monday evening, and will begin virtually, but they will transition to in-person once it is safe to do so. Meeting discussions will be based on videos made by FCA leaders.

Besides Shaler Area, Quaker Valley and Plum School District are in the process of integrating this organization into their districts as well.

"What I hope to achieve with FCA is to create a safe space for anyone who is looking to learn or strengthen their faith surrounded by others who are facing similar things as them," Schwartz said.

# Teachers working through challenging school year

from page 5

the students' faces. Teaching virtually might as well be explaining something to a wall."

All the teachers we talked to care about their students and want to see them doing well mentally, not just learning the day's material. It's worrisome when they try to connect with their students and get no response.

"If I'm reaching out and saying, 'Hey, are you okay?' and if I'm reaching out and I'm not getting any response, that's concerning. That does bother me," Mrs. Bucek said. "I am not as concerned about their grades right now as I am about just making sure that they're okay. I just need to know that they're listening. I want them to know that I'm there to listen."

As much as it feels like all these issues could be solved if students would just turn their cameras on, and it seems like teachers all wish that they could see their students, the bigger issue isn't seeing a kid's face, it's knowing that they're engaged.

Making eye contact and seeing someone face-to-face is helpful for teachers because they can see that their students are engaged. Some teachers do wish all their students would turn their cameras on, but others are okay with kids keeping them off as long as they're actively participating in class.

"Students having their camera off only bothers me when the students do not participate or do not answer when they are called on to answer questions," middle school Math teacher Mrs. Melissa McConville said. "There are times when all of the students have their cameras on that I am very distracted by all the activity on my screen - students up and down from their chair, spinning in their chair, family/siblings/pets interrupting, etc."

However, it will be expected that online students will turn their cameras on during the second semester classes so teachers can see their students.

Even though full virtual learning presents teachers with so many challenges, all the teachers we interviewed agreed that hybrid learning was much more difficult for them. They described the chaos of trying to pay attention to two groups of students

**"...if I'm reaching out and I'm not getting any response, that's concerning... I am not as concerned about their grades right now as I am about just making sure that they're okay."**

-- Mrs. Michelle Bucek

at the same time, and how hard it was to teach both groups simultaneously.

"It was very difficult trying to engage the (students) that were in-class and the people at home," Mr. Foster said.

While it was nice for teachers to have their students physically in their classrooms, the safety measures implemented due to the COVID-19 pandemic made in-person learning challenging. Wearing masks in the classroom meant that teachers couldn't do something as simple as read their students' facial expressions.

"I really rely on seeing their smiles, knowing that they are enjoying class and they're actively engaged, and when kids have masks on it's really difficult to see that," Mrs. Bucek said.

An upside to hybrid, though, was that teachers could see if their students were paying attention or not. In full virtual, this was not the case. However, most teachers reported seeing satisfactory levels of participation from students during full virtual learning, although they usually had to call on their kids to get a response.

"Overall I have been pleased with the students' participation," Mr. Keenan said. "There is always going to be that group that always participates and the

group that always quietly goes about their business. But overall, participation has been good."

Most people would probably argue that overall, this school year has been challenging, but even in this strange time, teachers have found many different positives about remote learning.

Mrs. Henne has been impressed with how well the year is going for her students, even after they had to be taught how to sit still and turn their microphones on and off.

"I mean, they're six!" Henne said. "It's amazing to see how they adapt. Little kids just adapt. I mean, they just go with the flow. They come on every day, most of them very happy and smiling."

Teachers at the upper level buildings have found positives in how new technology has enhanced the learning process, for teachers and students. The district is being forced to use our technology, and we're learning from it.

"Not all students were checking their iPad or using their iPad, but now teachers and students alike are being trained to do that," Mrs. Loudon said.

Mrs. Bucek and the 6th grade English Department are celebrating Shaler's 1 to 1 technology distribution, something that became necessary when the district transferred to virtual learning. Now every 6th grader has a Chromebook, and that's been a game changer.

"For 6th graders, in order to advance their writing and really utilize the writing process we need to have 1 to 1 devices," Mrs. Bucek said. With the new technology, this is now possible. "I'm able to do things with giving them feedback on their writing and using websites that we couldn't use before."

Shaler Area teachers are adapting and finding positives in the new ways they're teaching, even during this difficult time. That doesn't mean that they want to continue teaching virtually or even in hybrid indefinitely, though.

"I miss the kids," Mrs. Henne said. "I just miss them. I just miss their little hugs, and their little cute smiles. I don't know if I miss tying the shoes, but I just miss their little faces."



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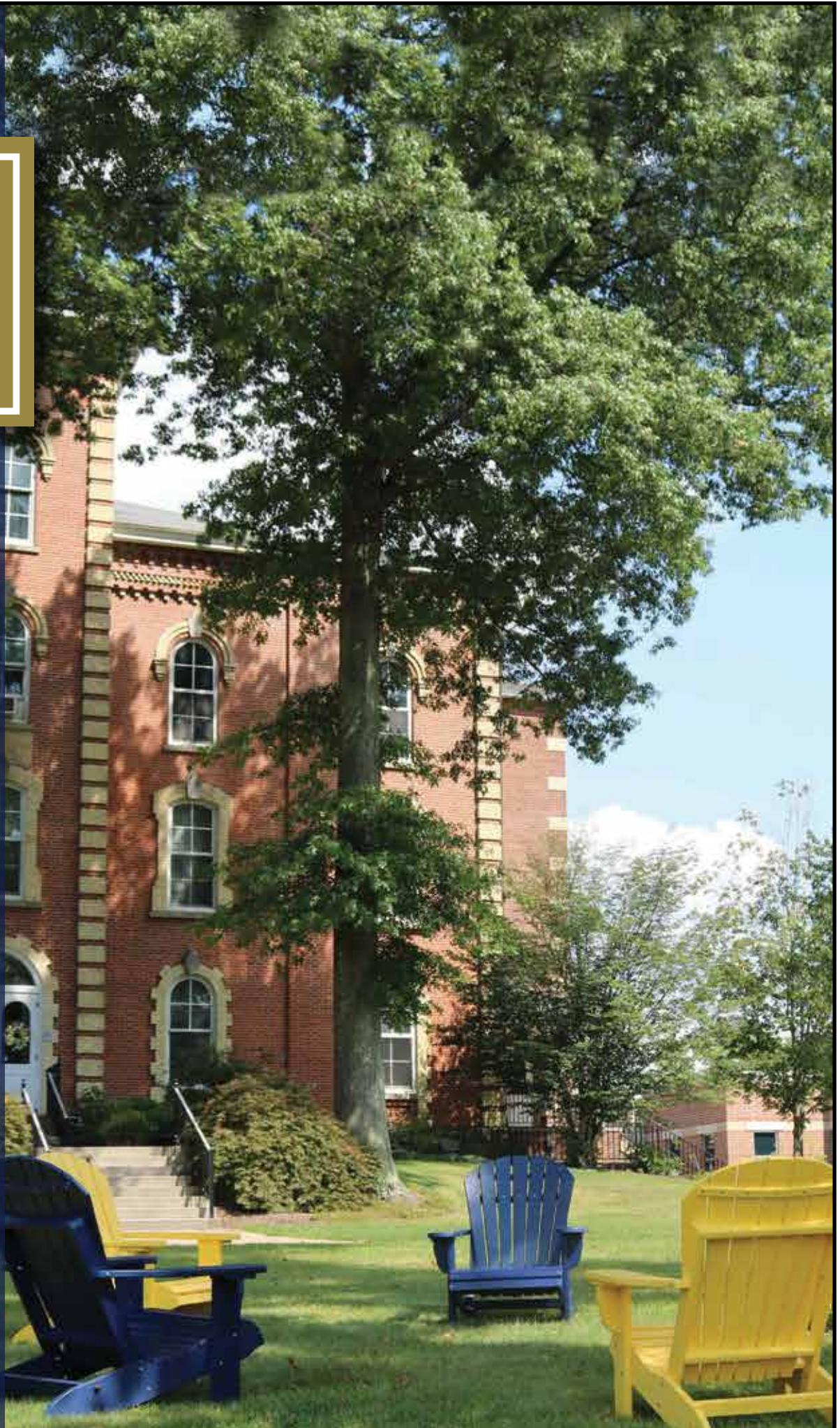
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# Q&A: The Oracle chats with performer Braden Sweeney

by Addison Kania

Looking to get into performing arts? Braden Sweeney has been pursuing that dream for most of his life. Braden grew up in California and went to Rider University in New Jersey. He majored in musical theater and earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts. He then went on to perform on three cruise ships, including the Norwegian Cruise Line and Regent Seven Seas Cruise Line. After cruising, he got a part in a national tour called Finding Neverland where he traveled all over the country to perform. Now, with the pandemic, things have settled down for him but he is looking to move to Los Angeles in the future and work to become a backup dancer. In a recent interview, he shared what drew him into musical theater and all of the opportunities that he has had in that field.

**Q: When did you get into musical theater?**

A: I got into musical theater when I was seven. I did dance class when I was younger around two years old and I also did choir, but I auditioned for my first play when I was seven with my mom. She and I did Oliver Twist together because they did not have enough adults audition so the director said, "you are going to be here all the time anyways with your child, why don't you just do it also?" She played a couple different parts and I was something like Orphan #5, very far down the list. It was cool though because that was my first play. Then I did Wizard of Oz and after that I did the musical Oliver - so maybe a year and a half later, I played Oliver. I went from Orphan #5 to Oliver which was pretty cool.

**Q: Did you start dancing before you got into musical theater or was it the opposite?**

A: It was definitely opposite. I started dancing when I was in 8th grade so that would be around 13 years old. Of course, there was dancing in the shows that I was doing but around that time in 8th grade I was starting to think about college and continuing musical theater. I did another production of Wizard of Oz and we had more of a dance sequence with the jitterbug which was so fun but also challenging and that got me thinking that I need to be in dance



class to make myself more usable and more marketable. I was literally shaking going into my first dance class because I was so nervous, but instantly I was like "this is amazing, how have I been missing this?" I had been taking voice lessons since I was nine and acting since I was seven, but dance quickly became my favorite even though it was the last thing I did.

**Q: Who was your biggest inspiration when you were younger?**

A: One hundred percent, Lady Gaga. She is 200% full-out commitment all the time. She dances full out, sings full out, and has tons of production value. I had a meeting with one of my musical theater advisers in college and he asked me who my musical theater choreographer and male dancer inspirations were. Needless to say, I couldn't name one. I said I am just inspired by Lady Gaga and he was not happy with that, but I stand by that answer. Definitely Lady Gaga.

**Q: When did you start thinking about actually**

**pursuing performing in college and after?**

A: It's interesting because it kind of just always was. I didn't really ever have a moment like, "Oh yes I am going to school for musical theater." It was just like this is what I have always done and this is what I will always do. Certainly around sophomore and junior year there was definitely a moment where I thought "do I just keep on this path?" However, I could not imagine doing anything else. Nothing else was super exciting to me. Just recently, within the last year or two, as I have gotten a little older my body has started to hurt a little bit more. It's just been an interesting set of ideas to think about that I'm no longer in the post college or during college phase. Now, it's like we are in the how do I keep this being a career phase.

**Q: Was it a difficult transition from high school theater to college?**

A: Not really. I would say that the thing that I struggled with right away in college was that you put a bunch of big fish in small ponds into one pond. All of my classmates were the star in their high school and in theater not everyone is the most humble so I got there day one and thought "holy cow I am so out of my league! Everyone is more talented than I am! Everyone is going to blow me out of the water!" It took me a year or two to realize that a lot of people are more talk than walk. I honestly learn the same lesson every single new show that I do. Every time, day one, I walk in and I think I am the worst one and that everyone seems like they know what they're doing. I feel I have to really prove myself. However, I always realize that everyone is just trying their best and most people talk more than they walk. So you should just kind of put your blinders on and do the best that you can do. Normally that is more than enough.

**Q: What was doing aerial work for the first time like?**

A: It was very exciting! It was really hard. I have never experienced something like when you are holding your body weight on the aerial silks. They

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<b>THE GRID</b>		<b>Do the cars in the movie Cars have car insurance or life insurance?</b>	<b>Best fast food fries?</b>	<b>Do you like Valentines Day? Why or why not?</b>	<b>If you could see anyone in concert, dead or alive, who would it be?</b>	<b>Starbucks or Dunkin'?</b>
<b>Freshman</b> <b>Paige Sigmund</b>		Life, their cars are their bodies so if something breaks in their body they need life insurance	McDonald's 	YES, because my godmother sends me money	<b>Joshua Bassett</b>	Starbucks -- I don't like coffee but I get the refreshers at Starbucks
<b>Sophomore</b> <b>Emma Ranallo</b>		this one is hard, but I'll say car insurance	McDonald's 	I like Valentine's day. It's a simple holiday that is filled with chocolate	<b>Ariana Grande</b>	Starbucks
<b>Junior</b> <b>Noah Gabriel</b>		<b>Life Insurance</b>	Hardee's Curly Fries	No. It's a scam cooked up by the greeting card companies	<b>Bruce Springsteen -- 1978</b>	Dunkin' because I'm not a chick
<b>Senior</b> <b>Emily Kubic</b>		<b>Life insurance</b>	Arby's	No, no reason	<b>Mac Miller</b>	Starbucks
<b>Faculty</b> <b>Mrs. Siedlecki</b>		Car insurance, life insurance is only for when you die	Chick-fil-a waffle fries	No, it's too commercial	Journey	Dunkin'

# College not the only option for students after high school

by Hannah Stelitano

After receiving a high school diploma, many students struggle with what their next steps in life should be. With all of the different options offered in today's society, it can become overwhelming and stressful to figure out what to pursue.

"We want every student to begin developing their post-secondary plan as early as Freshman year, which allows for proper course exploration as well as time to evaluate and potentially adjust. It's not where the student begins their process, but where they want to be at the conclusion," guidance counselor Mr. Mathew Anselmino said.

Many assume that the next step after the conclusion of high school has to be college.

This leads many to ponder if college is actually worth it. If a student can find a different career path that saves thousands of dollars by avoiding college and allows the student to do what he/she loves, why waste time and money on college?

Freshman year may seem early to start thinking about what career you want to pursue, but starting to plan early for the future allows time to consider and reconsider choices and weigh options.

Depending on the path you choose after high school, college may be the best option.

Duquesne University freshman Elisa Gabriel chose to attend college because of her desire to be a Speech Language Pathologist.

"I knew that I wanted to go into Speech Pathology. To be a Speech Pathologist, you need a masters degree. I feel like I've always valued going to college, and it was a goal I was working towards in high school," Gabriel said. "College has been really beneficial so far! I think it's sometimes hard to see the benefit of college classes when you're first starting, but I know that I'm on track to have a degree in something that I'm really passionate about," Gabriel said.

Throughout high school, Gabriel was an overachiever, graduating with straight A's, being captain of Shaler Areas Dance Team, taking all honors and AP classes, being in honor level choirs, and playing roles in the play and musical. Seeing her hard work pay off and contribute to her goals is a great feeling.

Ohio State University freshman Allison Himrod expressed her love for col-



lege by saying how it helped her grow as a person.

"Though I am only one semester into college, I have grown so much since high school. I'm so much more independent and having so much more freedom has allowed me to gain a better understanding of who I am and what's important to me."

Along with Gabriel, Himrod graduated with all A's in honors/ AP classes. Both girls knew that college was right for them. Just because they are both succeeding and knew that college was the right option for them, this is not the case for everyone.

One option to take into consideration would be a 2-year college. Most colleges offer traditional 4-year programs, but some offer 2-year programs. These

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## Q&A: Braden Sweeney

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actually flew in circus performers from Canada to teach us! I would want to take notes, but I literally could not hold a pen. They call it baby grip and it happens after an intense grip. However in general, it was really cool and I really enjoyed it! There is a move at the end of the three minute routine that we did on the aerial silks where most of the routine you always have a foot or a hand locked or knotted in but they chose the very end of the routine to have a move where you hold onto both aerial silks and you flip upside down. You get your feet locked in but there is a moment when you are flipping where you are completely upside down and if you let go you are literally dead because you are not locked in. That moment was super terrifying!

**Q: What places did you go on all of your three cruises?**

A: My first ship was in Alaska. My second ship sailed around the entire continent of South America. My third ship did a 90-day tour throughout northern Europe. I was able to hit about 40 countries in 11 months which was really cool! For the first ship, we would start in Seattle and go up to Alaska then back to Seattle. That route never changed. On the other hand, my second two ships the route always changed which allowed us to go more places. On my second ship, we traveled through a little bit of the Caribbean and we went down the Amazon River. Then we went through the Panama Canal and down Peru, Argentina, Chile, and Brazil. We also went over to Barcelona and Spain. Then on my third ship, we started in New York and went up to Canada. We hit Greenland and Iceland on the way over and we went to Russia, Norway, Spain, and Portugal. We also visited some random islands literally in the middle of the Atlantic that I didn't even know existed. It was pretty cool!

**Q: Were there any crazy memories that you have from the cruises?**

A: We did a tour in the Amazon River. The point of this tour was to see these little alligators called Caiman which everyone says you need to see when you are in the Amazon River. So we got in these little canoes and we are going on the Amazon River at night with no light. It was beautiful, but at the same

time you are thinking the water is right there, is there an alligator in this water? We had just seen piranhas the day before. Basically, the tour guides jump in the water with this flashlight that picks up the eyes of the Caiman. They find these Caiman and grab them out of the water by holding the snout and the tail. Then they passed the Caiman around the canoe. For me being terrified of reptiles, that was not good but everyone said you have to do the Caiman. It's the thing to do when you are in the Amazon River. I didn't want to be a party pooper. While on the canoe, my dance partner took off her life jacket and was holding this Caiman and I am a row behind her, terrified. I survived that experience and we got back to the landing dock.

**Q: What was your favorite part of the Finding Neverland tour?**

A: My absolute favorite part was the experience of walking into theaters for the evening and not knowing what you were going to find. Sometimes we had no space in the wings and there was not enough time to solve every problem before the show started.

Sometimes we would get to a theater and there would be all these spreads like bagels, cookies, juice, and coffee and you just felt like a superstar! However, other times you were literally in a college auditorium and most of the set pieces were cut because they didn't even fit and there were not even enough spots at the makeup station for you. You just grabbed a chair and just threw your stuff in a corner. I literally was stretching in a corner. There was not even a hallway. I loved this part of the tour because for me it was like problem solving 101 and I found it really exciting and interesting. I really do miss that part of the tour!

**Q: What have you been doing to keep up during quarantine?**

A: The first couple of months I didn't do anything because my body was so broken from Finding Neverland. It was awesome to just rest and not have to force my body to do things. Then I started feeling like "I sat on the couch a little bit too much and had a little bit too many Doritos. I need to start working out." It was a little weird for me because I never have to work out. Working out is just part of work so the mentality of setting aside time to workout is new to me. I have always wanted to get better about or learn more about lifting weights but I never can because I am always injured in like four places. I have really enjoyed it! I also started taking voice lessons again. My voice teacher from when I was growing up moved to Atlanta a few years ago and has been teaching online for the past three years. Now we do it on Skype three times a month and it has been so helpful! I am amazed at how effective it is! So I am doing voice lessons, working out, choreographing, doing some dance classes online but it has also been really nice to just kind of be a human. There was always a stress that I should be in a dance class right now or I should be in a voice class and now I am happy to be getting a break and working on the new job that I have. I am working for one of my mom's friend's health care companies reorganizing and consolidating data in Excel and I love it! I feel like it is working a different part of my brain that is still part of me but that I don't use most of the time.

# Art teachers turn snowstorm into a student contest

by Natalie Spears

Art teachers Mr. Jeff Frank and Mr. Dave Boyles decided the snowfall on December 17 would be a great opportunity for their students to demonstrate their art skills through photography and decided to hold a "Winter Wonderland" photo contest for their art students. The top three winners of this contest received an Amazon gift card.

"Photography is a good way to use a lot of your artistic skills to quickly create a work of art," Mr. Frank said. "The snowstorm created the perfect setting and our students did an amazing job capturing the scene."

The art teachers received hundreds of amazing photographs, but had to choose the top three champions of the photo contest.

Coming in third place was Josh Maida, second place Olivia Barbarti, and the first place winner was Kristel Mendoza.

Mr. Frank wanted to find some way to get his students engaged with the recent snowfall, and thought a photo contest would be the perfect way to do so.

"I came up with the idea after our first snow storm of the year on December 1st. I got some nice

pictures that afternoon and decided that I would have the students take pictures of the snow the next day, but it had already started melting. I had missed my chance to get the students outside and get some nice pictures" Frank said.

Luckily that was not the last snow of December. Mr. Frank was overjoyed when the next snow storm hit, so that he could assign his art students to take some pictures of the fresh snow.

"I hoped that capturing a landscape with an interesting composition and dramatic contrast would be fun," Frank said. "I was also thinking that it might be a good idea to get our students out of their rooms/houses for a few minutes and get some fresh air."

Sophomore and winner of the contest, Kristel Mendoza, was very excited to get outside and capture a few photos of the snow. She has a passion for photography, and could not wait to test out her skills.

"The contest brought an opportunity to experiment how I would take a picture with various angles of the camera," Mendoza said.



**Sophomore Kristel Mendoza's winning photograph**

The popularity of the contest already has Frank thinking of the next opportunity for something similar.

"We hope to have a 'Colors of Spring' photo challenge next," he said.

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programs can help students start their careers quicker. There are certain careers for which this type of schooling is available such as dental hygienists, cardiovascular technologists, or air traffic controllers.

Although college is a great option for some, it is not for everyone.

Another option would be a technical school. Shaler Area is one of nine school districts in the area that offers elective credits at A.W. Beattie Tech. Rather than attending college, some students are able to start careers or businesses right out of high school.

"I really enjoy carpentry and think that Beattie is a great source of money for the future. I love the people there and the ability to take a break from school work," senior Mollie Rutkowski, a student who attends Beattie for carpentry/ building construction, said.

Rutkowski says that she hopes to join the AmeriCorps, but she has also applied to a few colleges. No matter what option she decides to pursue, she will have options and experience she will have taken from Beattie.

Mr. Shawn Annarelli, public relations worker at Beattie Tech, said there are a variety of options students have to pursue after attending Beattie.

"Typically, less than half of graduates have full-time employment right after graduation. More than half of graduates attend college, and many of them take advantage of opportunities to earn college credits at dozens of post-secondary schools like CCAC, La Roche, Robert Morris and Waynesburg. There's also a small percentage of students who work full-time and attend college," he said.

Another option to consider instead

of college would be to join the United States Armed Forces (Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Armed Force, Space Force, and Coast Guard).

There are multiple levels of intensity, each that require a different training, which help you to build lifelong skills at a minimum cost. You can develop skills that you will use the rest of your life, qualify for multiple benefits, and help your country all at the same time.

Art teacher Mr. Dave Boyles, a Major in the US Army, joined the military after high school looking to both serve his country and to help pay for college.

"The military has two avenues to take. You can go active duty and leave to be stationed on a base in this country or around the world or join the reserve component and serve part time in your

local area. The actual benefits of many of the different branches vary slightly but the existential benefits such as values, self-discipline, honor and pride are given to all service members no matter what branch," he said. "The military offers many practical benefits that many students do not consider as they enter adulthood: comprehensive healthcare, housing, cash allowances to cover the cost of living, money for education, family services, and even career support after you serve."

Is college worth it? That is for each individual to determine. If you know that college is right for you or necessary for your career goals, then go for it. If you don't think that college is right for you either because of your career goals or the cost involved with going to college, there are many other options.

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