

The Oracle

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State Representatives share stories of PA politics

by James Engel

Mike Turzai sits at the helm of Pennsylvania politics, representing the 28th district of the state, which includes several sections of northern Allegheny County, including McCandless and Pine Township, since 2001. In 2015, Turzai was elected as the Speaker of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, a position he still holds. In 2018, Turzai ran in the Republican primary for governor of the state but ultimately suspended his campaign three months later. This year, he announced he would not seek reelection, ending a near 20-year hold of the 28th district.

Lori Mizgorski, also a Republican, was elected to represent the 30th district of Pennsylvania, which includes Hampton, Richland, O'Hara, and Shaler townships, as well as part of Fox Chapel, in 2018. Prior to this, she served in several local government positions in the North Hills and Shaler. Mizgorski also served as Chief of Staff to Hal English, the 30th district's previous representative. She is a graduate of Shaler Area High School and has been a lifelong resident of the area.

Both of these Representatives volunteered their time for an extended and exclusive question and answer session with The Oracle.

Q: How did you get your start in politics?

A: (Turzai) I always had an interest in public policy and government. Like Representative Mizgorski, I was on my local borough council in Bradford Woods. Bradford Woods shared a police board with Marshall Township and Pine Township, and I was on that police board. By serving in those capacities I certainly got to know a lot of people in the 28th legislative district. My wife, Lidia, is a pediatrician and we were very involved in the community.

A: (Mizgorski) I am from Shaler and I graduated from Shaler Area. My mother was on the school board right after I graduated, from 1986 to 1992. We were already involved in the community, and for me, it started by helping local candidates run for office. Then the opportunity came up for me to run for Commissioner in the 2nd Ward of Shaler. I served on that board for nine years. I also worked for my predecessor, Representative Hal English. In 2018, when he decided to withdraw from the ballot, I ran for his place on the ballot and was able to secure this seat. It



State Representative Lori Mizgorski and PA Speaker of the House Mike Turzai answers questions for The Oracle staff

started from family and community involvement and progressed from there.

Q: What was it like first going to Harrisburg and entering the world of state politics?

A: (Turzai) It was an honor to go to Harrisburg to represent the citizens of my community. I knew I was not going to miss any votes, and I knew I was going to get involved in issues. I also had to learn how to navigate the legislative process. Really, from the day that I went in, I was focused on how to make Pennsylvania better at bringing back manufacturing jobs and energy jobs. I just started to focus on the issues that I ran on and introduce some bills to see if we could get them through. The Republicans were in the majority at the time, but ultimately, we did become the minority, and I had to learn what it was like to be in the minority. But eventually, we did take back the majority and that's when I became majority leader.

A: (Mizgorski) For me, the transition was probably easier. I had worked for a representative, so I knew people and I knew how some of these things worked. I really took my local government mentality with me, which was to build one on one relationships with people in the community and really care about issues that others might think are small. Relation-

ships are important and you have to truly focus on the people of your community and how to make their lives better.

Q: What is it like to work in Harrisburg and live in the North Hills? What is your work-life balance like?

A: (Mizgorski) It's more than a full-time job, it's really a way of life. When you're in the community you're always available for questions, and complaints, and inquiries. You think about it every day and every night. When other people are going out on Saturday night, I might be planning my week or checking emails. When other people are watching the football game, I might be packing and preparing for committee meetings that week. It is a sacrifice for your family. My husband has had to take on more responsibility at home and I've had to miss some things for my children. I do use the drive to switch gears. I do a lot of thinking and preparation while I'm driving.

Q: What issues are you currently focusing the most in the chamber?

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Four Titan football players sign collegiate letters of intent

by Max Robinson

On February 5, four Shaler Area football players signed letters of intent to continue their football careers in college. Darin Mizgorski and Joey Impavido are headed to Mercyhurst University, Shayn Skelly will be attending Seton Hill, and Jake Miller is going to the University of Akron.

"I think I will be ready, but I still need to put a lot of work in the weight room. There's a lot of grown men in college football," Mizgorski said.

He said he chose Mercyhurst simply because he felt it was the perfect fit for him, as well as a fantastic scholarship opportunity.

"I wanted to get my education paid for by playing football...I didn't want to add to the student debt crisis," he



Shayn Skelly, Darin Mizgorski, Jake Miller and Joey Impavido

said.

Shaler football coach Jim Ryan was extremely happy to see members of the class of 2020 signing to play in college.

"I absolutely expected this class to produce collegiate players," Ryan said. "We had a lot of guys with post-high school aspirations...with the talent we had I expected several of them to

compete at the next level."

Ryan mentioned that he assisted them through the recruiting process.

"Recruiting is complicated...I have access to databases with college coaches as well as personal contacts in the collegiate world."

He also said he put the players through some combine-style drills to prepare them for camps and tryouts.

Ryan mentioned many things that Shaler does to continue to produce elite athletes.

"We want to train kids from a multi-sport perspective...we also encourage kids to stay involved in school activities off the field."

For those aspiring to be a college athlete, Ryan said to keep it simple, focus on the things that matter and don't stress out so much.

OPINIONS

Be experimental; listen to some different music

by Max Robinson

Experimental music has existed since the advent of music itself, and it's always been extremely important. While not often in the spotlight, experimental music has influenced many popular genres and artists.

In recent years, it has seen a massive boom. Streaming services such as SoundCloud, YouTube, and Spotify have given avant-garde and experimental artists a platform that did not exist 15 years ago.

Experimental music is defined as "a general label for any music that pushes existing boundaries and genre definitions."

With that being said, it is much wiser to break it down into specific subgenres with "experimental" tagged on such as Experimental Metal, Experimental Pop, etc. There is truly something for everyone, as artists delve into every corner of the music universe.

The first "avant-garde" music I listened to was various extreme metal genres and noise rock. While these aren't technically classified as "experimental", it set the groundwork for my music tastes later down the road.

Experimental artists are typically underground and small artists, however a few have broken into the mainstream. Artists like JPEGMAFIA and Death Grips have exploded with the rise of hip hop listeners. Their takes on rap music are very unique and definitely worth a listen if you're getting bored with trap rap.

JPEGMAFIA's newest release, *All My Heroes Are Cornballs*, has various musical influences. It in-

cludes elements from punk rap, ambient, glitch hop, and experimental pop. It truly has layers. The album has some aggressive bangers as well as more laidback, poppy tracks.

Death Grips is probably one of the most well-known and influential experimental groups. Their style pulls from punk, electronic, noise, hardcore, industrial, and so on.

Their soundscape typically includes abrasive synth lines and insane drumming. MC Ride's unique vocal delivery adds to the chaos. Death Grips is not the most accessible music by any means (difficult to listen to), but those who developed a taste for their brand of rap love it.

My personal favorite experimental artist at the moment is 100 gecs. Their music is incredibly hard to classify, but sits under the umbrella of experimental pop. Their recent release, *1000 gecs*, pulls from many corners of music.

Best described as "hyperpop", it includes elements of EDM, night-core, pop rap, metal, noise, and maximalism. And as said by music critic Anthony Fantano, "there's even a ska track". It definitely is NOT for everyone, but the catchy hooks are undeniable. Their music is rooted in pop after all.

At the end of the day, this side of music is not for everyone. It's experimental for a reason; it's not supposed to fit the mainstream.

However, music fans will always chase something that's fresh, and there's an abundance of it. You should take a step out of the mainstream, and start listening to something new. You may find something new you enjoy!

Want to help your community? Shop at local, small businesses

NOTE: this piece was written weeks before the Coronavirus shutdown, but it's message may be even more important now as we watch so many small businesses fight for survival during the Coronavirus shutdown and we see the impact it is having on everyone associated with the small businesses and then on our community.

by Max Robinson

When you did your shopping this past holiday season, did you shop mostly on Amazon or in "big box" stores? Or did you go to your local small businesses? If you answered the latter, thank you. If you said Amazon, why? Huge corporations don't walk you through the buying processes, they just shove product in your face and tell you to buy more.

I work at Fox Chapel Ski and Board, a small family run business in Blawnox. I am one of just ten employees. Three employees' livelihoods are completely dependent on how much the store makes in a given year. They give it their all every day to keep the place going strong.

When you go to small businesses, you are getting a very personal shopping experience. No online retailer is going to choose products best suited for you, and then give you a discount for being a loyal customer.

Small business owners love regulars and you may even create friendships with the employees if you shop local frequently. Also, the money you spend goes to your own community and not an international corporation.

Gerry Greisenegger, owner of Fox Chapel Ski and Board, spoke about owning a small business in today's landscape. FC Ski and Board was started back in 1982, and he began running it himself in 2005, fresh out of high school.

"In the mid-2000s, every small retailer thought the apocalypse was coming with online shopping...I think people have caught on to the fact that online shopping isn't cheaper...you're just buying old or lower quality stuff," he said.

Along with other small business owners, he chooses to spend his own money locally to keep the community thriving.

"Almost all of my spending budget is used at small business or brick and mortar stores. Little shoe stores, local bike shops, family owned restaurants and cafes outside of maybe the occasional Mickey D's breakfast sandwich."

"Local businesses offer you a lot of info that [online] reviews don't...they also offer services and an atmosphere that is impossible for online retailers...and of course they bring money and jobs to your community," he said.

At the end of the day, you should be spending your money at small businesses when possible. It's better for you, your neighbors, and your community as a whole. Next time you even go out for something small, make sure you buy it locally.

"Local businesses offer you a lot of info that [online] reviews don't...they also offer services and an atmosphere that is impossible for online retailers...and of course they bring money and jobs to your community."

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The Oracle

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Holtz completes journey from WPIAL to NFL



JP Holtz plays for Shaler Area vs Erie McDowell in October 2011



Holtz plays for the Chicago Bears vs. Dallas Cowboys in December 2019

by *Dominic DiTommaso*

With the Dallas Cowboys up 7-0, on Thursday Night Football, the Chicago Bears had the ball, first-and-ten, at Dallas' 39-yard line at the start of the second quarter. The Bears threw a screen pass to Shaler Area graduate JP Holtz, who roared his way inside the ten-yard line.

The Bears went on to win that game 31-24, and it turned out to be a break-out game for a man who went from playing in Titan Stadium on SATV to catching passes from Mitchell Trubisky at Soldier Field on FOX.

"It felt like we went out and were ready to play," Holtz said. "It was a big prime time game. We just played really well that night and took care of business."

The Chicago Bears have not won a Super Bowl since 1985. That was when they had arguably the greatest defense of all time, but since then, they have had anything but all-time. They have not won a playoff game since 2010, and did not make the playoffs for another eight years after that. Their franchise dates all the way back to 1920, and being able to play on the hallowed ground that is Soldier Field, to Holtz, is "awesome".

But there was a long journey for Holtz to get to that "awesome" place, and it took him a long time until he got to where he currently is.

Growing up a Steelers fan, especially a big fan of Heath Miller and Troy Polamalu, Holtz was born here in Pittsburgh, where he played both football and basketball at Shaler Area.

Holtz grew up in a football family and has been around this sport for years.

"My dad played in college at Cal U. My older brother also played at Shaler [and then at a] division-three school in Ohio."

He grew up playing football, and contributed much to his high school team.

"We knew JP was a special athlete when he first arrived here [at] Shaler," said one of Holtz's high school coaches, Jim Ryan. "He's only one of two players in Shaler Area football history, when we were a 10th-12th program, to move up as a freshman."

Holtz did many impressive things during his time at Shaler, including playing on the varsity team as a freshman, but perhaps the most impressive was when Holtz, as a freshman, once played quarterback in a playoff game -- and won.

"Tyler Bills was the starting quarterback -- a pretty significant talent on the team, as well," Ryan said. "JP was a freshman. We made the first round of the playoffs [and we were] playing at Canon-McMillan and Tyler was out with a concussion and unfortunately he couldn't play."

"The decision was made to put JP in as quarterback. He was not a quarterback by nature, but JP being the talent he was, the smart football player that he

was, we beat Canon-McMillan."

During his time in high school he played numerous positions, including fullback, running back, tight end and even punter.

"He was everything that we needed him to be," Ryan said.

Holtz said playing at Shaler "started showing me that my work ethic was important. Just being around the team and being a leader, and that really helped translate into Pitt."

Holtz did play basketball as well, and described his team as "pretty good".

As a junior, Holtz and his team went 22-2 and made it to the quarterfinals, and as a senior he and his team went 25-4 and to the WPIAL semifinals and state quarterfinals. It was always football, though, for Holtz.

"I knew that's where my future was at."

Holtz is still used as a resource for the Shaler Area football program today.

"I often invite him back to speak at our youth football camp," Ryan said. "To have a hometown guy in the NFL that wants to come back, be a part of the community, that's a really special thing."

Holtz may not be the number-one option yet for Chicago, but Coach Ryan said he believes that Holtz will "excel because of the kind of person that he is."

When deciding where to go to college, Holtz committed to Penn State, but ended up going to Pitt, where he even ended up meeting Heath Miller.

His commitment came right around the time of the Jerry Sandusky issue, which made him reconsider his Penn State commitment. He does credit the change, though, to being, at least in part, due to location.

"I wanted to stay home. That was the biggest reason. I wanted to be close to my family," said Holtz. "I grew up here in Shaler, it's not really far from Oakland. I'm very happy I did choose Pitt. It was a great opportunity for me and I got to stay home."

Holtz said he is still in touch with a lot of his teammates, who include Tyler Boyd, James Conner, Aaron Donald, and Brian O'Neill.

When asked what he'll remember most about playing at Pitt, Holtz said, "Just having fun with my teammates. You never get that back. We were all very close."

"It's definitely crazy to look back at my team at Pitt and see some of the guys that I played with that are having so much success in the league."

What might be even crazier is that now, Holtz is also playing in the NFL for the Chicago Bears.

Holtz went undrafted out of Pitt, and ended up being signed by the Cleveland Browns in 2016. Cleveland waived him a few months later, but was signed to the practice squad in December. The cycle continued until he was released by the Browns in October of 2017.

He was signed, and waived, multiple times by

Washington, and even played in a game, his debut game against Philadelphia, in which he played exclusively on special teams. However, he was waived by Washington in 2019 and claimed the following day by the Bears.

"I finally got my opportunity this year and took advantage of it. [I] showed everyone that I could play."

Holtz feels he was motivated initially by going undrafted.

"Everyone wants to get drafted. That's the goal out of college. I felt like I had a good college career and got overlooked a lot," Holtz said.

Holtz also feels he was overlooked his first three years in the NFL during his stints with the Browns and Redskins.

"[The] NFL's a tough business. There's different factors, but all it takes is one opportunity in the NFL, and that happened this year, and I'm very happy about it."

Holtz said it was hard going through the ups-and-downs of being signed.

"I just tried to stay positive through it all, but I know my rookie year I had a good training camp, and they told me they were going to sign me to the practice squad when cuts came around," he said.

He said getting released by Cleveland was "tough". He said that getting cut again after what he thought he was doing well was something he "never saw coming."

Holtz realized he got another opportunity when Washington called.

"I knew I had to do anything I could to stick around. I did and [I] ended up getting released from there and they signed me back about four days later."

With all of that turmoil, Holtz admits he wasn't sure he'd ever get the opportunity he currently has.

"I thought I was done at one point," Holtz said. "I honestly thought I was done playing and then I got an opportunity with Washington, and I'm very thankful I did because I wouldn't be where I'm at today if I didn't."

Holtz says the main reason he fits with Chicago is because the team and coaches trust him and believe in him.

"I just felt like I was a good fit for their offense and they saw that and they really like me and since day one they made me feel accepted and welcomed me with open arms," he said.

Not only does he love his team, he also now loves his city.

"[Chicago] is awesome. It's a big city. It's a nice city to live in. They have a great fan base out there."

He also enjoys playing his home games at Soldier Field in Chicago.

"It's a great home stadium. The fans pack in every home game. They are very passionate and loud."

Cont. on page 8

Working in Washington DC to improve life at home

by James Engel

Though in this modern era of politics, many Americans look for grandiose denunciations of the opposing party in the Capitol or rowdy press conferences in the White House, the core of Washington's political debates and law-making occurs behind the scenes in the office buildings and conference rooms throughout the city.

The prime movers of the nation's legislation are the staffers and policy writers in the employ of Congressmen and Senators. These men and women research issues and data that Representatives will eventually present to the nation and, with luck, pass into law.

Ms. Heather Painter is one such example of these prime movers. Painter has worked on the staff of Representative Connor Lamb as a Legislative Assistant since his election in 2018.

Lamb represents the 17th Congressional District of Pennsylvania, of which Shaler is a part.

Painter's primary area of focus is education, having worked as a teacher through the non-profit "Teach for America" for a time.

Painter is a graduate of Washington and Jefferson College. While pursuing her studies in political science and education, Painter also studied the German language, in which she is fluent, and earned a Fulbright scholarship to study in Austria.

"Austria, Switzerland, and Germany collectively are known for having really strong apprenticeship programs. So, my research revolved around the Austrian school system and how it differs from our school system," Painter said.

Upon returning to the United States, Painter found her first job on Capitol Hill working for Seth Moulton, a representative from the 6th district of Massachusetts, which covers the Salem area.

When Congressman Lamb was elected in 2018 Painter, a native of South Park, began work for the

"The hours are long... But I think a lot of us here are excited or are from the area and want to spend as much time as we can trying to get the projects just right."

newly elected member.

"I thought it would be impactful if I was helping to fix the roads, and potholes, and bridges, and making sure education is funded and teachers are cared for, and students were presented with opportunities. I knew it would be even more special to me if it was for the place where I'm from," Painter said.

Painter's work is intensive and meticulous. Researching data on education and transportation in the district requires patience and the understanding that at any point her hard work could be shut down in the halls of government. Washington can often be unforgiving in its speed and unpredictability. This is a reality Painter and her legislative colleagues must face every day.

"The pace is really fast. Especially on the House side, there are different committee meetings every week. There are dozens of other meetings and calls and requests. So, I think, the best words for it are fast-paced and busy in a good way," Painter said.

Although it is easy to be caught up in the controversies and larger nationwide debates of Washington, it is still important to focus on local issues that affect the communities back home.

A large part of Painter's time is spent on researching how to improve the infrastructure and economy

of the Pittsburgh area. In recent times, Pittsburgh International Airport has been the focus of much discussion in the area of commerce.

"The airport is going through a big modernization project right now, and the Congressman wrote letters and led meetings to try to get positive attention for what they were doing. As a result, he secured 18.7 million dollars to build a new cargo facility... That should result in a large number of jobs... getting to help with those types of projects that help put people to work and help the economy back home is really exciting," Painter said.

Such important work leaves little time for personal enjoyment. Depending on the day, Painter and her colleagues could spend upwards of 12 hours in the office keeping track of congressional debates and votes. Fortunately, the staff understands the value of their work and is willing to put in the time that is required.

"The hours are long... But I think a lot of us here are excited or are from the area and want to spend as much time as we can trying to get the projects just right," Painter said.

Even with these long hours, Painter maintains an active social life, in which she tries to avoid the world of politics. She also dedicates four hours each Saturday to maintaining her German language skills and is a frequent reader of German news, which offers an outside perspective of American events.

The members of Congress serve an important purpose in our democracy. All the laws of this nation are debated and voted on by them, but these representatives have entire teams behind them, who play an enormous role in researching, writing, and developing the bills that will eventually be voted on.

Although Congress sits at the head of the great legislative machine of Washington, policymakers, like Heather Painter, sacrifice their time and energy to make up the many gears that power the machine forward.

Famous for throwing shoe at President Bush, journalist still active fighting for people of Iraq

By James Engel

Translated by
Zin Elabidine Zouliga

Muntadher al-Zaidi is an Iraqi journalist. He attended the University of Baghdad and worked for Al-Baghdadia TV, an Arabic language broadcast company.

As he began to report on the coalition invasion of 2003, al-Zaidi soon rose in the world of Middle Eastern reporting. In 2007, he was kidnapped by unknown assailants and later released without a ransom.

Al-Zaidi reached the peak of his fame in 2008 when he threw both of his shoes at then-President George Bush during his last press conference in Iraq. Bush was deeply unpopular in Iraq as he continued to deliver positive reports to the public while the nation descended deeper into lawlessness.

Although he received support from much of the Arab world following the shoeing, al-Zaidi was sentenced to three years in prison which was later commuted to one year, of which he served nine months, where he says he faced torture and solitary confinement.

Following his release, he accepted a job at a Lebanese news station and began work on a humanitarian organization to help poor and starving Iraqis. In 2018, al-Zaidi ran for Iraq's Council

of Representatives but was defeated.

Currently, Iraq is experiencing large scale anti-government demonstrations because of poor living standards, governmental corruption, and Iranian and American influence over the nation. The current Iraqi government recently voted to oust all American troops on Iraqi soil as tensions rise, but America has so far failed to obey the order.

Al-Zaidi agreed to answer some questions about his career and the current state of his nation.

Q: What was your first experience with journalism or the media?

A: My first media experience was in a student newspaper. I was its editor-in-chief.

Q: What were your goals or ideals when reporting to the public?

A: My goals when reporting were to expose the crimes of the American occupation in Iraq. My ideal is a Muslim figure named Abu Dhār al-Ghafari [a companion of the prophet Muhammad known for his truthfulness and avocation of economic equality].

Q: How did your life and work change after the invasion in 2003?

A: I changed from a citizen and a student who was trying to finish his studies and get involved in working life to revolting against the American



Muntadher al-Zaidi with his sister after being freed from prison in 2009.

occupation as a journalist.

Q: How did your kidnapping in 2007 affect you?

A: The kidnapping did not affect me at all. I remained as I was.

Q: Why did you decide to throw your shoes at former President Bush?

A: What made me throw my shoes at George Bush was that he lied to the people and told them that Iraqis would meet him with roses. I wanted to tell the world that the Iraqis did not receive the occupation with roses, but with shoes.

Q: What were the reactions from the Arab world after the shoeing?

A: Indeed, the whole world was

with me. They were in solidarity with me.

Q: What consequences did you face for your actions?

A: I faced a prison sentence of three years, but it was commuted to one year with constant torture in a solitary cell for three months.

Q: Why did you decide to start your humanitarian foundation?

A: In Geneva, an institution called the Al-Zaidi Foundation was established to aid the victims of the American occupation in Iraq.

Q: Why did you decide to run for office in 2018?

A: I wanted to bring justice to my people and end corruption.

Q: What are your thoughts on the current tensions between Iran and the United States? How are these tensions affecting the people of Iraqi?

A: We have been demonstrating for three months, and this is the fourth month. It [the tensions] has certain impacts and repercussions on our demonstrations. Many demonstrators have been killed [upwards of 600 according to some human rights groups].

Q: What are your future plans for your life and career?

A: I am a journalist and I will stay a journalist. I will defend human rights. These are my future plans.

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Musical is culmination of hard work by many

by Ashley Llana

Every year, Shaler Area High School puts on its annual spring musical. The show is always well-prepared and is an occasion that many people look forward to. Nonetheless, there is an abundance of work that is put in by the cast and crew in the months leading up to the show.

There are three main groups that work together to make the musical possible. The cast, stage crew, and pit orchestra work hard to perfect the show before it hits the stage. The annual success of the musical comes thanks to the intense preparation.

The musical preparation begins many months before the show hits the stage. Auditions take place in early December, with rehearsals starting after Christmas break.

The audition process itself requires an abundance of work and preparation. With only about two weeks to prepare, students who are planning to audition must use their time wisely in order to perfect the part they are hoping to get. In the week following auditions, call backs are held, and the cast list is released soon after.

Cast and pit members both have to audition. While the process differs slightly, the requirements are very similar for each part. For the cast, each person trying out has a choice between multiple scenes and songs to use as their audition piece. For the pit orchestra, the audition process requires people only to pick a song to play.

There is about a month long gap between auditions and the beginning of rehearsals. Rehearsals last for two months leading up to the show. The first month and a half of rehearsals consists of things like blocking and vocals. Three weeks prior to the show,

stage crew works together with the cast in order to figure out what might need fixed. The two weeks leading up to the show are by far the busiest for everyone involved in the musical. These two weeks consist of many late rehearsals, and running the show in order to tie up any loose ends.

The week of opening night is dress rehearsal. Since the musical is performed the first two weekends in March, there are still rehearsals the week between opening weekend and closing weekend. However, these rehearsals are more low maintenance.

Overall, the musical requires commitment from everyone involved. Each person is expected to put in the work to perfect his or her role in the show.

For most people, learning lines, songs, and dances is like homework. It is important for cast members to practice often in order to keep the routines and lines fresh in their memory.

“There’s no deadlines for learning the scenes and songs. If you get awarded the part you want, you’re going to put the effort in,” senior Michaela Brining, who plays the dragon in this year’s musical, said.

For stage crew members, the process requires less commitment but more teamwork. The crew meets on the weekends for a few hours rather than throughout the week. Up until February, the crew works on building the sets and figuring out the proper lighting and music adjustments. The month leading up to the show is important for stage crew because they have to work together with the rest of the cast and pit orchestra to make sure everything is perfect.

While the process for stage crew is more laid back, things get really busy right before the show hits the stage. Even though preparation can be stress-



ful at times, when things go wrong, the entire crew takes the blame and quickly solves any issues.

Although the musical requires a great deal of individual preparation, the process is also very group oriented. One of the most bittersweet aspects of the musical is the group work. Although everyone involved works well together, it can be stressful during times like tech week when the whole group is together on stage. However, it is crucial to work out the kinks in the show before it hits the stage.

“As much fun as you have, you have to put in work to compensate for it,” junior Sonny Demasi, the lead in this year’s musical, said.

Cast members are often required to put themselves in their character’s shoes. After landing a role in the musical, it is crucial for the cast members to fine tune their part. Overall, the cast is able to learn parts best by rehearsing at after school practices.

Some of those involved in the musical have more responsibilities than others. The cast members who are required to play more than one character

in the show have to find a way to balance being multiple different parts.

Overall, everyone involved in the musical has to prioritize their responsibilities and find a way to balance practice and other activities. Most cast and crew members learn to use all of their free time responsibly and stop procrastinating things such as schoolwork. Although the entire process requires those involved to balance their daily duties, it gets more difficult to make time for everything when tech week begins.

“Most nights I go to bed really late. You have to avoid procrastination with schoolwork. If I know that something is due on a certain day, I can’t start it the night before,” Brining said.

Despite the fact that the musical preparation is not easy, it has many positive aspects. Although it requires everyone involved to develop good time management skills and dedication when practicing, it gives many students an opportunity to showcase their talents and develop a wide range of skills. Additionally, it allows students to make new friends and learn the importance of working as a group.

The Oracle eats out at Shady Grove in Shadyside

Shady Grove is a restaurant located on Walnut Street in Shadyside. It is very casual and serves American comfort food for reasonable prices. The restaurant gives off a very comfortable vibe and has a variety of different food options to choose from. “The Oracle” ventured out to the streets of Shadyside to truly experience the vibes of Shady Grove.

Ashley: Shady Grove has a very comfortable atmosphere and the food is nothing short of delicious. Although I eat there often, I wanted to order something that I had never tried before. As an appetizer, I ordered the shazam shrimp, which was a nice twist on your typical fried shrimp. It was tossed in a creamy sauce that came with a kick. For my entree, I ordered a Portobello pesto sandwich with waffle fries. The sandwich had the perfect ratio of Portobello to pesto and the waffle fries were well cooked. Overall, I would rate Shady Grove a 4.5/5 only because the restaurant itself is a bit of a drive away and parking is limited.

Bailey: The Shady Grove is definitely a restaurant that I would go back to. For an appetizer, I ordered potato skins that had cheese and bacon on top. This was by far my favorite part of the meal. My entree was pesto pizza and a side of fries. The pizza was good, but nothing too different from normal pizza. The fries were crispy and another favorite part of the meal. For dessert I ordered an ice cream sandwich that came straight from the packaging, but



I didn’t mind because I love them. Along with the amazing food came the great environment and vibe. Sitting next to a flower shop, you smell the fresh flowers while eating. Overall the night was very fun and earned a solid 4.3/5.

James: I enjoyed my time at Shady Grove. The service was good and my food was tasty. I ordered the Bacon Swiss Burger, which included a thick beef patty, warm melted Swiss cheese, and tender bacon all between a soft bun. This was entirely filling and very satisfactory. Shady Grove also features the rarely seen waffle fry. These were crispy but not too greasy, and they are definitely worth a try. Overall, Shady Grove offers a good meal at a snazzy, albeit expensive, location. 4.8/5.

Julia: The food at Shady Grove was very enjoyable and I would without a doubt go back. For an appetizer I had the Ahi Tuna Poke bowl. It had fresh seared tuna which had a very good taste and wasn’t fishy at all. It also included mango salsa in the poke bowl which added a great taste to the entire thing. For an entree I had the Thai shrimp tacos. The shrimp alone on the tacos was very good but the rest of the taco, like the tortilla was okay. I was disappointed with the fact that the entree was \$14 and only came with three small tacos and no side. Lastly, for dessert I split a warm cookie with Stephanie. The cookie comes with a glass of milk rather than ice cream, which is original, but I would rather have ice cream with a warm cookie. I would say overall the experience was a 3.5/5.

Stephanie: The food at Shady Grove was very good. I ordered sweet potato tater tots with a spicy ranch. The tater tots were very good and the portion sizes were very big. The tater tots were very good and I would go back just for the appetizer. For my dinner I ordered a margherita pizza, which was just mediocre. The dough in my pizza was raw, like the consistency of playdoh. The actual pizza itself was very good but the dough by the crust was very gummy. I would definitely go back but just not get the pizza. I also shared the cookie with the nonexistent ice cream with Julia. I would rate my experience a 2.5/5.

Local sportswriter shares thoughts on baseball issues

Perrotto covered the Pirates since the 80s, covered 24 World Series and has Hall of Fame vote

by *Dominic DiTommaso*

Watching a World Series on TV is special enough for me, but imagine going to one. How about 24? How about I throw in a couple of Super Bowl trips? John Perrotto has done all of that and more.

"I've covered 24 World Series," Perrotto said. "I covered two of the Steelers Super Bowls when they beat Seattle in Detroit and when they lost to Green Bay in Dallas."

That's not even close to all that Perrotto has done in his long career in sports journalism, mainly covering baseball. It all dates back to when he started covering games in high school to covering professional games at the highest level.

Perrotto is a graduate of Western Beaver High School, where he began covering games.

"I covered local high school games," Perrotto said. "The football coach recruited me to be the statistician for the football team. There was a local paper in Beaver Falls and [they] paid me five dollars a story and I wrote them by hand and that was [how] my journalism career started."

Perrotto echoed how important that was to him getting his start.

"It always helps if someone gives you a break, and I got very lucky [that] I found someone who took an interest in me," he said.

Perrotto then graduated from Geneva College and started writing for the Beaver County Times while still in college, and his work still shows up in the Beaver County Times today. He mainly covers the Pittsburgh Pirates for the Beaver County Times, and has been a baseball writer for Baseball America since 1990. In 2007, Perrotto was the first beat writer for the Baseball Prospectus.

Perrotto decided to cover sports because he's always loved it.

"From the time I was a little kid, I loved sports, [such as] going to games with my dad and watching games on TV," he said.

And his love of sports has got him to where he is today, and where he is today has gotten him a vote in the Baseball Hall of Fame.

Perrotto has the vote due to being a member of the Baseball Writers' Association of America. He also votes for other MLB awards in addition to the

Hall of Fame, which he doesn't "take lightly".

Since he has a vote, Perrotto has been around many of the big controversies and debates regarding the Hall of Fame, such as the fact that Derek Jeter was one vote short to be unanimously voted into the Hall of Fame. Perrotto thought Jeter should have been a unanimous selection.

"I voted for Derek Jeter. To me, it was a no-brainer."

He figures the only reason someone would not vote for Jeter is because someone has a grudge against him, which Perrotto said does not make sense because "[Jeter] was always very nice to deal with and was cooperative and friendly."

Perrotto echoed how good Jeter was, and that maybe he was not the best in any one stage of the game, but was as an all-around player, spectacular, especially in the playoffs.

Perrotto has also dealt with the issues surrounding Barry Bonds and Roger Clemens, especially since he covered Bonds in Pittsburgh.

"I think he's the best player of my lifetime," Perrotto said of Bonds. "To me, Barry Bonds is the greatest player I have ever seen. I voted for him. I'm sure some players used steroids and they never got caught. He hit the most home runs of any player in the history of baseball and I don't think you can [take] that off the record."

Perrotto also describes how Bonds treated him and the other media members.

"The guys that covered the team every day, he always was good with us. I saw a different Barry Bonds than a lot of people did. I did see him be a jerk to people. I asked him once [about why he acted that way towards people], and he said 'I can't be somebody I'm not. That's who I am,'" he said.

Perrotto voted to induct Roger Clemens into the Hall of Fame as well, citing how he won the Cy Young Award seven times, more than anybody in Major League Baseball history.

"He was one of the great pitchers of all time. They were part of the game, whether you liked it or not. To me, they're part of history."

In addition to believing Bonds and Clemens should be in the Hall of Fame, Perrotto said he has come around to believing Pete Rose should be in the Hall of Fame as well.

"I used to think he shouldn't be [in the Hall of Fame], but I think the morals changed. It's no longer an illegal-type activity. I do think he's paid a price. He's been out of the game 30-plus years. I'm not 100-percent sure I'd want him in, but I'm not 100-percent sure he shouldn't be in."

Perrotto has additionally been a part of the ongoing Houston Astros sign-stealing scandal, which did not exactly surprise him.

"I'd been hearing things for a few years, and this wasn't a total shock when it came out."

Perrotto does not believe they should be stripped of their championship, and believes the MLB has handled the situation well.

"I think they have [handled it well]. I know some people thought the players should have gotten suspended, too."

He states how MLB granted players immunity so they would speak honestly, and Perrotto went on to say that he doesn't think the MLB "would have gotten to the bottom of it if the players didn't tell them what happened."

Perrotto has been able to talk and write about these topics, among other sports-related topics, for his whole career. He has even appeared in two short films, "ESPN SportsCentury" in 2001 and "ESPN 25: Who's #1?" in 2005.

Perrotto has covered many, many events in his career, but some stick out in his mind more than others.

"Probably the coolest thing ever was when I got to cover the Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony in 2001. All the living Hall of Famers come back for that Induction Ceremony, and I was in the hotel where they all stay.

"I went to this reception at night and as I was coming out, all the Hall of Famers were coming down the elevator into the hotel lobby to get on a bus to go to a dinner, and it was like all these people that I idolized, they're all walking right in front of me," he said.

John Perrotto started his career in high school, covering his local high school games for his local paper. Since, he has covered 24 -- 24 -- World Series and multiple Super Bowls and has voted for the Baseball Hall of Fame.

"I've been very, very blessed."

Titans endured ups and downs of basketball season

by *Dominic DiTommaso*

The Shaler boys basketball team, led by Coach Rob Neiderberger, had a very good season that saw the Titans ranked as high as #2 in 5A before losing in the WPIAL playoffs.

Neiderberger says the moments he remembers most was the time he spent with his team, whether it was in the locker room or someone else outside the court.

The season started off in spectacular fashion as Shaler started out 3-0, including a 20-point win over Burrell and a 30-point win over Freeport.

At one point in the season, the Titans went on a six-game winning streak. That was, however, followed by the Titans losing six of their next eight games.

"What I'm most proud of about this team is that we went through major highs for the first 2/3's of the season, and then went through some tough lows the last 1/3 of the season," Neiderberger said. "We could have easily folded. But when the playoffs started, you could feel a revived energy and motivation, and we left everything on the floor in our playoff run."

Neiderberger said how the end of the season showed him the kind of guys that were on his team.

"They all got mentally stronger from their experiences this year," he said.



Mekhi Reynolds vs. Gateway in the playoffs

The Titans finished the season 14-9 heading into the playoffs.

In the first round of the WPIAL playoffs, the Titans beat Gateway 48-43, a game in which they raced out to a 14-point lead, but had to fight to come out on top after the game was tied at 42. Mekhi Reynolds led the Titans with 19 points and two baskets in the final minutes to help seal the victory.

That win moved them on to play #2 seeded Chartiers Valley, who ended the season 19-6 overall. Shaler had a one-point lead heading into the second half, but fell to the Colts by seven, 52-45. Reynolds led Shaler in scoring with 21 points, while Nick Rispoli had 12 and Chris White had 10.

Reynolds had a spectacular season for the Titans including reaching 1,000 points with the Titans during a game against Indiana.

"Mekhi, individually, had a great senior season. Everyone knows it, and all of the recognition he gets he deserves. His work ethic became an example not only to players on our team but for the school. He is going to go to college and get a free education because he put in all of the hard work,"

Neiderberger said.

Reynolds averaged more than 21 points per game and has drawn attention from multiple colleges.

"If you really want something, you can get it," Neiderberger said. "Mekhi is the poster boy for it."

State Representatives share stories

from page 1

A: (Mizgorski) We recently made changes to the “PA Do Not Call” [a service in Pennsylvania that allows people to opt-out of scam calls] list. I introduced a bill that passed the House and Senate unanimously, and the governor signed it into law. We already had a “Do Not Call” list, but the legislation made enrollment permanent so that you only have to register for it once. Many of the calls we get are scam calls that are coming from overseas or from non-legitimate businesses. If a legitimate business calls you with a robocall system, they have to give you an opt-out at the beginning of the call. It also prohibits those phone calls on legal holidays, and it extends the “Do Not Call” list to businesses. That was something both sides of the aisle could get behind because we all get those nuisance phone calls.

I also have solar legislation out there right now. We’re having a hearing on it on March 16th. It’s called “Local Solar”. You see people with solar panels on their homes, you can do that if you own a home. But if you’re living in an apartment or a condo, you don’t necessarily own the roof you’re under, so you can’t put solar panels on your own roof. This legislation would open the doors and remove barriers so that all electricity customers, which we all are, can subscribe to locally produced solar energy.

Q: During your term(s) in office, what do you believe to be the most important piece of legislation you have worked on?

A: (Turzai) During this term, there have been a number of important bills. “Energize PA” is the name our group uses for a package [of legislation]. Bill 1100 is one of those bills [in the package] that is designed for manufacturing and energy production opportunities in the state. Some of these bills have become law and others are still pending, but Bill 1100 is receiving the most attention right now.

A: (Mizgorski) Even though it may not be the most impactful bill out there, I am very proud to have pushed a bill [“Do Not Call” reforms] through in my first year as a legislator. I am glad that I have the experience of moving something all the way through from an idea to the governor signing it. In the future I definitely see myself moving more into transportation. It’s a big issue that affects everyone throughout the state, and it is of great concern to me.

Q: (To Turzai) You recently announced that you will not seek reelection this year. What are your plans following the conclusion of your term?

A: I think I have an opportunity at the end of my session to enter the private sector. I am an attorney by education and practice, and I have maintained my legal license. I do think that there will definitely be some opportunities for me in the business world. I will definitely miss it, it’s bittersweet, I’m honored to represent the communities and citizens of the 28th district.

Q: (To Mizgorski) You’ve moved from the local level of government to state government, do you have any plans in the future to possibly seek federal office?

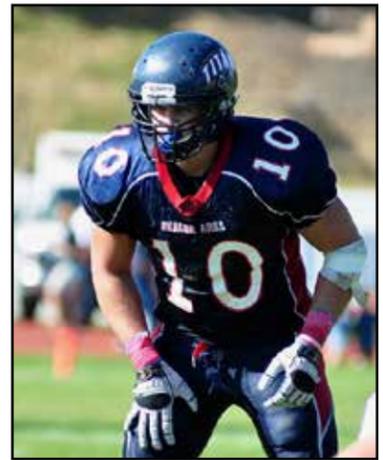
A: I really like the state level, that’s what I hoped to achieve even though I really love local government. I still consider myself local government at heart. There’s a lot of cooperation in Harrisburg that I’m not sure really happens in Washington, so I very much like this level. At the state level, you’re still in close contact with the people you represent, but I think the farther you go the more removed you get. Not that your intentions aren’t good, you just can’t have the personal relationships that I like to have.



PA Speaker of the House Mike Turzai

Holtz makes it from WPIAL to the NFL

from page 3



Holtz says he really enjoys the professional atmosphere.

“Pro atmosphere is pretty neat. It’s a little different than college.”

Holtz is on a team where his quarterback is a highly-criticized player, and Holtz has learned from that that it is crucial to block out all the negativity.

“I don’t [look at my social media]... I don’t read into stuff. I could care less what people say about me or think about me. I just do my own thing,” he said.

Not a lot of people will recognize JP Holtz in the streets of Chicago, but as Holtz will tell you, he likes it that way.

And now, this former Titan has gone from playing football in Titan Stadium to sharing a room with Adrian Peterson and being teammates with guys like Khalil Mack.

“It’s surreal,” Holtz said. “Wow, this is actually happening.”

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