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Rosenwald helping vets through Pittsburgh Warriors

by Sam Himrod

Shaler Area Phys. Ed. and Health teacher Mr. Adam Rosenwald served in the Army from 2005-2008. He was deployed for two tours in Afghanistan for a total of 19 months.

On the first tour, he was a SAW gunner. After his first tour, he was promoted to Sergeant. On the second tour, he was a squad leader and he led a sevenman squad on combat operations.

After over a decade of being home, Mr. Rosenwald was looking for a way to help. That's when he ran into the Pittsburgh Warriors whose motto is "Healing through hockey".

"It was a random email to be honest," Mr. Rosenwald said about how he initially became involved with the Warriors. "I immediately reached out. At that particular time in my life when I saw the email, I was ready for something different. I was ready for a change."

He has been involved with the organization for two years now.

"We are a group of disabled veterans that utilize the team sport of hockey to heal," Mr. Rosenwald said.

There are two criteria that someone must meet in order to be a part of the Warriors: be an honorably discharged veteran and have a service-connected disability, either physical or mental. If you meet the criteria, the Warriors will provide you with an hour of free ice time every week.

The Warriors' main goal is to cut down the national number of suicides by veterans. Right now it is at 19 per day, but last year it was at 22 per day. Organizations like the Warriors are a huge part of this reduction because they provide veterans with the help and support they need after returning home from service.

This organization is in its 5th year now, and has seen growth every year. It went from only having one team to getting up to four teams now, and this year they even put in a league for the veterans to compete

"We have four teams in the league. We have 60 registered players in the league with a subroster of about 10-15 guys," Mr. Rosenwald said.

The league is called the Disabled Veteran Hockey League. It is the first of its kind, and it is sponsored by the Penguins foundation which gives the Warriors access to the ice at the Hunt Armory in Shadyside every Sunday night.



The Pittsburgh Warriors with the championship banner of the Disabled Hockey Festival 2022.

Louis while the other destination has not been determined.

Those involved in the organization found out about the Warriors simply through word of mouth from someone who is already involved or has heard about the organization.

There are a lot of people who make this happen; Mr. Brad Vig is one of them.

"I'm currently the Assistant General Manager within the organization. Lately my main duty is trying to find us ice time to practice at least once a week throughout the summer months. I also meet with a lot of general managers of rinks to build relationships with our organization," Mr. Vig said.

The longer Mr. Rosenwald was involved, the more he realized how much he wanted to help out because he was able to see firsthand the benefits and the healing process through hockey.

"I ended up on the board of directors. I now actually have the role of treasurer. I'm also involved now in running the league," he said.

People who get involved have all different levels of experience on the ice.

"I had probably been on ice skates maybe a dozen times before showing up at ice hockey at 42," Mr. Rosenwald said.

The Warriors hosted a tournament on March 11 to raise funds for for the organization. At these tournaments, the Warriors compete against organiza-Every year they travel to two national tournations like themselves. Teams come from all around but when you think about it it's so much more than ments as well. This year one of the trips will be to St. the country, ranging from as far away as Alaska to just about hockey. It's about healing," he said.

Florida.

Another thing the Warriors have started doing is the Healing Ride, a 334-mile bike trail ride from Pittsburgh to Washington D.C. They do the trail over a course of six days. At the start of every day, they honor a soldier who lost their life in combat and at the end of the day, they honor those who have lost their internal battle after returning home.

"It's just another great way to help out veterans," Mr. Rosenwald said, "It gives everyone that physical and mental break they need. Plus, it's a great way to build connections with others in the Warriors organization."

There is a huge adjustment that veterans must make when they return to civilian life, and it can be very challenging.

"I know that I and others have had a very hard time adjusting to becoming a civilian again and losing your team. The Warriors hockey team has been the center that we all come around. The team gives us all that feeling of being in and serving again," Mr. Vig said. "There is always a helping hand out there, all you have to do is ask...We all have to look out for each other and the Warriors organization plays a key role in helping veterans heal."

For Rosenwald, the best part about being involved is "the amount of growth that you see within yourself and within your fellow teammates. The thing about the Warriors is that yes, it's about hockey,

Military takes Boyles from art room to southern border

by Sarah Naccarato

Shaler Area high school's art department may appear rather small, but it is filled with supportive and creative faculty, including studio art teacher Mr. David Boyles. Since October of last year, Mr. Boyles has been out of the building working with the Pennsylvania Army National Guard as the Director of Strategic Communications and Public Affairs in support of U.S. Customs and Border Protection's Southern border security mission.

The day prior to Boyles' departure from Shaler, he spent his classes cel-

ebrating with students and saying his farewells. Knowing Mr. Boyles will not return until the next school year, seniors he has taught over the years took their opportunity to say goodbye one final time.

Whether remembering him for his excitement in student artwork and artistic passion, corny jokes, or laughter in the art halls, many students gathered hoping to have a joyful last day. Through some tearful remarks, Mr. Boyles parted ways with some students for the last time.

Since then, he has been spending his time deployed supporting the Customs and Border Protection's mission along the Southwest border. His time away is not just time away from his students, but he has also been away from his family and friends.

"The sacrifices I have to make and a lot of the brothers and sisters in arms have to make throughout the globe—is a heavy one, no matter where they are going or what mission they are doing. Leaving my family, leaving the school, leaving my job, the students I deeply love is difficult but if it is not me, it would be somebody else's brother, father, mother, sister," Mr. Boyles said. "That burden of responsibility

and service is something that I signed up for when I was eighteen. I feel obligated to protect our constitutional rights, our freedoms, and our ability to live that way that we live in America."

In this harsh transition from an art teacher to working along the border, there are many different stories. Boyles tries to focus some media attention on the more positive aspects of their mission, but there are still many eye-opening realities that can't be ignored.

"The humanitarian crisis is just overwhelming. Seeing these families

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OPINIONS

It's not easy being the child of a police officer

by Hannah Stelitano

Growing up, I have always watched movies or shows on TV where the plot was based around one big family that was constantly together. The father was always around, playing with his children and not worrying about anything else in the world except the moment. The mother of these families was never worried when her husband would go to work nor was she overly relieved when he returned home later in the day. I never fully grasped the concept of my dad's job and learned more about the true hero he is in not only my life, but hundreds of others lives.

Since May of 1997, my dad has worked as a police officer. In 2008, he got promoted to a detective. Until I was three years old, he was working crazy hours, getting calls in the middle of the night, and being one of the first at crime scenes. Now as a detective, he still works crazy hours and gets calls in the middle of the night, but he is also in charge of figuring out what happened in crimes. His job sounds like a true crime TV show, but trust me, it definitely is not.

While I am grateful for everything my dad provides for me and my family, his job scares me. More days than not, my dad will get called out at random times throughout the day. Whether it is 3 am or 5 pm, my dad could get a call at any second that changes his whole day. Although it is one of the sacrifices that comes with his job, it is also somewhat upsetting for my family. We could be eating family dinner or have plans to



go out as a family later in the day and within seconds, everything changes. I love having my dad around. When he suddenly has to leave, it is hard not just because he's gone, but because of the potential danger he could be facing.

He truly wants to help everyone and gets frustrated when there are issues he cannot help with. My dad has seen some of the most gruesome and scariest crime scenes and has even watched people die, but through all of this, he goes above and beyond to help people.

My dad has taught me many important lessons through his job, one being that the actions of one person in a group does not mean the same for every other member of that group. When COVID-19 was first emerging, many movements were created against police brutality, putting my dad in even more dangerous situations than before. The people protesting did not realize that actions of one bad officer did not mean that every single one is like that.

There were people I was friends with who stopped talking to me and stopped hanging out with me because of my dad's job. This was a hard concept for me to grasp because I did not understand why people did not want to be friends with me because of my dad's profession. I understand that some police officers in the world are not good people, but that is not the same for every officer.

People do not see the crazy hours

my dad works, only wanting to help people. Other people do not realize the sacrifices my dad makes everyday, within his own family, so he can try to make the world a better place. Other people do not realize all of the ways my dad goes above and beyond in his job to make the world better.

My dad has had to work police protests before, which is probably one of the hardest tasks he has ever experienced. In some ways, it's a form of discrimination. Some people have this much hatred for my dad, just because of his job. How is this fair to my dad that people want him dead just because of the job he chose?

Although my dad has been doing this job for a while, I never realized until recently how many sacrifices he has made for other people in his life, not just his own family. Seeing stories on the news of tragic accidents or events that happen puts an awful feeling on anyone, but it puts even more of an awful feeling onto me knowing that my dad is one of the first people at the scene.

No matter how big or small an issue may be, my dad always rushes to help resolve the problems, regardless of how much danger he puts himself into. If my dad receives a call that his help is needed, he is out the door two minutes later, rushing to go help.

It is frustrating for me when people judge him because of his job. I see how much he truly cares about helping people and when I see other people trying to hurt the police through violence, it is hard to watch.

Don't ruin the good of thrifting by making it too trendy

by Jack Salego

Climate change issues are at the forefront now more than ever. The world is changing in many ways, and most are for the better. We take so many things for granted that didn't exist in the same manner less than a century ago. One of those things is the fashion industry.

Think about how many cotton t-shirts are in a single shopping mall. Clothing nowadays is produced, thrown in a mall or store, and then everything that goes unsold is exported somewhere else to get sold for cheaper or donated. Sadly, this doesn't always happen and then some of it is thrown in landfills.

Around 16 million tons of textile waste is generated per year in America alone due to this. Those 16 tons equate to 6% of the world's total municipal waste. Those numbers are supposed to scare you. Our fashion habits must change for the conservation of our Earth.

This is where thrifting comes in. Thrifting allows anyone, even low income shoppers, to shop sustainably and affordably. Since the inception of thrifting, wealthier people have shied away from shopping secondhand. It is only in recent years that the stigma around secondhand clothing has dissipated. Influencers, celebrities, and social media in general have shifted to admire secondhand clothing.

In teens, this admiration stems from vintage clothing especially. Celebrities who post pictures online are often seen in designer brands and newer items, but are also frequently captured by paparazzi in vintage clothing in day to day life. Vintage band tees especially can skyrocket in price if a celebrity wears it, as their fans search for it. Teens also frequently flood thrift stores to secure vintage clothing for cheap prices, but then resell them online.

While reselling vintage clothing may be a simple side hustle, it's important that people who don't truly need the money don't gentrify thrifting. Thrifting started over 100 years ago with stores like the Salvation Army and the more wealthy people completely avoided them. Today there are Goodwill Outlets, a special type of Goodwill, that have bins that rotate in and out throughout the day that anyone can pick through.

A rising problem is that resellers drive to these Goodwill stores and take any piece of clothing that is in good condition and could make them a few bucks. The less fortunate who get the majority or entirety of their clothes from thrift stores

are having to wait to look through clothes all because people who don't need these clothes are taking them.

Thrifting also satisfies another crowd. While newer generations may be the ones participating in fast fashion the most, lots of these younger people are environmentalists. Thrifting is great for the environment because all these clothes that would be thrown out or go to waste might be repurposed. Some people simply buy them and wear them, while others upcycle and repurpose them. Either way, it saves these clothes from just being destroyed.

"Everything is unique and different, so it's truly a one of one shopping experience every time you shop second hand. Second hand is so important because without our Earth we'd have nowhere to wear all these cool clothes, so we have to protect it," B-Sides Vintage owner Alec Munson said.

B-Sides Vintage is a vintage clothing store located in Millvale. The store extends beyond just clothes with donations made to our own school's sustainability projects, the Millvale community library, and more.

Thrifting is enjoyable for everyone, but it still has an intended audience. We need to make sure that everyone can enjoy affordable clothing, but not take away the experience from people who depend upon the industry.

The Oracle

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The Oracle is the official student newspaper of Shaler Area High School. Although it is published by the journalism classes, one does not have to be enrolled in a class to contribute.

Opinions expressed in The Oracle are those of the individual writers.

Letters to the Editor are encouraged and welcome. Any letter intended for publication must be signed, but names will be withheld upon request. Articles and letters may be mailed to the high school (ATTN: The Oracle) or emailed to schotte@sasd.k12.pa.us.

The \mathfrak{Dracle} reserves the right to condense or omit any letters or articles unfit for publication.

OPINIONS

Lack of student involvement needs to change

by Avery Gallant

Formal Dances canceled for two years in a row. Class fundraising events get little interest or participation. Clubs shut down due to the lack of numbers. Intramural sports are losing interest. Can all of this be blamed on the CO-VID-19 pandemic?

While the pandemic may play a part in the decline of student involvement in extracurricular activities, the true reason is that students don't care about being involved anymore. There are things to do other than going to school events. Students can coordinate plans without seeing their friends face to face.

Activities don't cater to what students are interested in anymore. It is hard to say what will get students involved. "Since the introduction of phones into students' hands, there has been a decrease in both clubs and athletics. My hope is one day students will put their technology away and rejoin some of the sports and clubs," Ski Club Sponsor and Woodshop teacher Mr. Craig Wells said.

Not many students are interested in sports like they used to be. Some teams don't even have a JV team. Intramural sports were widely popular because of the kids who didn't get on the teams. Now, intramural deck hockey, softball and volleyball don't even run any more.

"I can remember being part of a faculty team for both intramural volleyball and intramural softball. Those were a lot of fun. The gym was full of teams for volleyball and the turf field had two softball games going at different ends of the field," ELA teacher and intramural basketball sponsor, Mr. Eric Schott said. "When I started helping with intramural basketball, we had 8-12 teams playing each other. Now we are happy if we can get 8-12 kids play."

This is not just a trend with intramurals, but with clubs as well.

"Back in 2002 through probably 2008 we used to take three buses of students to Seven Springs four times per year. Currently we take one school bus full of students," Wells said.

Science Club stopped running last year due to lack of participation. Maybe some students would be involved if there were clubs like ESports and Photography.

When student government does have fundraisers, not many students attend. Those who do are in student government or are the members' friends. Some complain that fundraisers are always on sports game day or when they are busy, but that cannot be the case for everyone.

Most students simply don't want to go or say they have better things to do. But at the same time, the same students complain about class funds and the price of prom tickets.

The problem isn't student government, it's the students. When people don't show up to the fundraiser events, student government stops wasting their time planning them.

Some may argue that the fundraiser events aren't interesting. If that's the case, tell them what you are interested in!! Student government, clubs, activties, and intramurals are all for the students. You only get out what you put in.

DeSantis ban of AP course just shows his true colors

by Aubrey Keane

Florida Governor Ron DeSantis announced he will ban the curriculum for the College Board's new Advanced Placement African American Studies course. Are we surprised?

The new AP course began to be piloted in select schools within the U.S. and is supposed to be available to all schools by the 2024-2025 school year. According to the College Board, "The interdisciplinary course reaches into a variety of fields—literature, the arts and humanities, political science, geography, and science—to explore the vital contributions and experiences of African Americans."

Why put a ban on this?

DeSantis claims that the course, which took a decade to develop, "significantly lacks educational value" and dives too far into the political agenda, with its talk of queer studies and abolishing prisons.

Clearly, this is an attempt by Florida lawmakers to whitewash history. Teaching the history of African Americans, their culture, and their contributions is just as important as teaching any other form of history.

"The fact of the matter is, if it happened it's history. The history of African Americans' challenges and contributions to our country and world are vital stories to include in our discussion as people, regardless of the ethnicities of the people who are included," Mr. Cory Williams, AP United States History teacher said. "The stories of those who have faced obstacles, both those who have been forced to succumb to societal pressures AND those who achieved and overcame barriers, should always be worth studying in historical context. If there is a moral to be obtained from the study of an event or era, it should be studied...regardless of whether it's about African Americans, Anglo-Saxons, LGBTQ+ peoples, immigrants seeking refuge, or any population."

This isn't much of a shock though, since just last year DeSantis passed the "Parental Rights in Education" bill, better known as the "Don't Say Gay Bill". This bill prohibits schools from teaching about gender identity and sexual orientation. The ban on this AP course just proves that DeSantis is willing to silence any group he doesn't agree with or support.

This is simply an attack on free speech within our schools. DeSantis and other Republican lawmakers are making dangerous attempts to undo the efforts of many activists over our country's lifespan, as well as silencing minorities.

"I don't know how we're supposed to grow and do better as a person or a people if we don't have the wherewithal to analyze our past actions, and seek to improve our future selves as a result of our former mistakes...that's literally the definition of learning," Mr. Williams said.

In a statement addressing the conflict, the College Board said, "We had no negotiations about the content of this course with Florida or any other state, nor did we receive any requests, suggestions, or feedback."

If Florida lawmakers were able to request things to be changed, why didn't they? The simple answer is that they don't want their kids to learn about the vital contributions of African Americans. Their goal is to keep the white man elevated, while silencing the rest.

Why are guns more important than kids?

by Tess Bursick

School shootings are all too familiar for anyone living in America. There's hardly been a day of 2023 without children dying.

We send children to school, expecting safety, because that's what school is all about. You learn, you socialize, you have time to be a kid.

Now, kids are scared to go to school and parents are scared to send their kids to school. Active shooter drills are the norm for kids across the country.

Why? There is no other country with the same amount of mass shootings, let alone school shootings. Many countries can go an entire year without one mass shooting recorded.

Why is nothing done to protect the most vulnerable age group in America? Not a single person in our government wants to be the one to say we need a change?

It's only getting worse. The number of mass shootings in the United States has only been increasing. Guns are an epidemic in America that no one is doing anything about. There shouldn't have to be a fear for parents or students about going to school.

By the end of March, America had 129 mass shootings in 2023. That's more than the number of days in the year so far. Every single day, people are dying, being shot, losing family members, losing their children.

It's a very scary feeling when you realize you've started to become desensitized to school shootings, to young children being gunned down in a classroom decorated with bulletproof glass on the door windows, and their bright crayon colored art hanging on the walls. It's hard to continue to mourn shootings when you're mourning a new shooting every day.

It starts to feel normal, almost like it doesn't affect you. Until you remember you go to school everyday, your little sister goes to school everyday, the preschool kids you teach go to school everyday.

Even when I graduate, I'll have two siblings in school until I'm 28 years old. I'll be living with the anxiety of my baby sister not making it home for another 11 years.

The thought of a group of first graders huddled up in a corner hiding from someone trying to kill them, not understanding what's happening, why they have to be quiet, hurts.

And it only happens in America. This isn't the reality in any other first world country. From 2009 until 2019, there were 288 school shootings in the United States. The countries with the second most, Canada and France, had two.

In most countries, all it takes is one for immediate change, but change didn't come after Columbine, after Sandy Hook, after Parkland, after Uvalde, I could go on.

"After a British gunman killed 16 people in 1987, the country banned semi automatic weapons like those he had used. It did the same with most handguns after a 1996 school shooting. It now has one of the lowest gun-related death rates in the developed world," New York Times author, Max Fisher, wrote.

If other countries can do it, countries who aren't having mass shootings nearly everyday, then why can't we? Why is our government still trying to decide if it should protect the children of this country or protect the guns?

Tattoo shop in Millvale provides outlet for creativity

by Kamaria Mutadabur

Located in the heart of Millvale, Hometown Tattoo is a shop that caters to not only the craft of body art such as piercings and tattoos, but also to the people of the community. Owned by body piercer Jenny Mendak and tattoo artist Mark Patrick for almost two years, the shop provides an outlet for creativity to the community.

Not only does it provide a platform for dreams and self expression to shine, it makes you feel at home even if you're not technically from the area. Just like the name suggests, Hometown Tattoo is a homey and cozy establishment where customers are encouraged to feel comfortable while experiencing the anxiety that comes with body art. This is evident with the bold interior/exterior colors of bright blue and forest green as well as its unique aesthetic.

"Your business has to look as good as the work that you do. We have cool art on the walls. We had to make sure our front looks nice, it's tidy and clean," Mendak emphasized.

Another way the shop accomplishes this is through the strong emphasis it puts on the concept of consent, especially with children. By enlightening others with information that comes along with their decisions, it creates a specific bond of trust that some businesses fail to create.

"I feel very strongly about teaching kids about consent and choices for their bodies and that's become a reputation for me. That's one thing that my clients seek out and drive distances for. So that I can have that conversation with kids, to make it a safe, fun, positive experience," Mendak explained.

What makes tattoo shops so unique, whether Hometown Tattoo or one of the many others located nearby, is that there is a different aspect in every shop. What does not work for some can work for others and that's the beauty of having a unique craft and job. It's more about how strong of a relationship is built between artist and customer. Body art shops

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-- Jenny Mendak

ing and having fun. I

have a job that pro-

have so much potential to make anyone's body image dreams come true, making competition not as scary as it may seem in different fields.

"There's enough "food" for everyone to go around. There's enough artists for different people. If you build it, they will come. I think competition can be scary, but it's what drives people, so it can be really healthy," Jenny said.

Jenny explained that one unique feature in her shop is being able to have the sense of community support and love. Being lo-

cated at the heart of the town, community support can truly make or break the business. Hometown Tattoo is dedicated to being actively involved in that community support. For example, the pair hosts a "friendsgiving" every year for Thanksgiving.

"We host a 'friendsgiving' every year and leave it open for whoever wants to come. Whether it's down the street or wherever, you can come have some dinner and hang out with us. I think there's not a lot of places that do that, not a lot of tattoo shops that cook for a whole community for Thanksgiving," she said.

Unfortunately, Millvale is prone to having significant small business turnover or shut downs. Over the course of the years, different small businesses often come and go within the community. So it's easy for small businesses to worry about that happening to them, but this is not the case for Hometown Tattoo.

"I don't get afraid of the shop closing or anything happening. It's because we have Millvale, a great community and great community support. We love being here. Our name is 'hometown' for a reason, be-



cause we want to be a hometown for people. So we don't worry about too much turnover for this industry, but I also understand turnover as far as being in a low income area for other businesses."

It's especially unique because of the specific characteristics of Millvale. When the shop was introduced, Jenny and Mark had few struggles with growing it to what it is now. Their biggest struggle, however, was the buildout. This is a plan of construction for the building in mind. Unfortunately for the pair, this resulted in a setback.

"We had a timeline of the buildout that we wanted to do and we did not meet our requirements. It was a lot more than we expected so our buildout lasted a couple more months than we wanted. That was our biggest setback. So we ended up having to open up business on one half of the building while we were still finishing up the walls and stuff on the other side," she said.

What started as a childhood dream, became an adult reality for Jenny. At just 12 years old, Mendak glanced at her sister's 17 magazine picturing a woman completely covered with tattoos, piercings, and

flamboyant hair colors.

"I remember thinking about how beautiful she looked and that was it for me...The first time I ever went into a tattoo shop, I was 15 and I was sold. I told everyone that when I grew up I wanted to work in a tattoo shop. I wasn't worried about going to college. I wasn't worried about doing any of that stuff. I already knew what I was going to be when I grew up," she explained.

And she did just that. Where a couple of years ago she could be seen as an employee of Three Rivers Tattoo, also located in Millvale,

now she is the part owner of her own. It can be assumed that the only push for becoming part owner is her sense of childhood dream accomplishment, but the real push was becoming a mom. To provide for and have enough time for her children was a huge requirement for Jenny when it came to her dreams.

"I wanted to be able to be a single mother while making more money and also be able to tend to doctors appointments, sports, and things like that. So the true push was wanting to be able to make a better life for my kid," she said.

The adjustment from focusing on simpler tasks in your own area of talents, to now managing the lives of others and your business, is a significant one. It's especially hard transitioning from just focusing on you and your family's well being to now worrying about giving enough so that others have the ability to do the same. However, Jenny thought it was exciting and "way cooler" than being a traditional employee.

"There's an idea that the extra work does so much more than the work you were doing before. Sometimes it's like, 'OK, I have to stay late and do bills and paperwork and get stuff ready.' But in the long run it's like 'OK I can keep a roof over my kid's head and put clothes on his back so the overall outcome is so much better than being an employee," she said.

The "extra" work no longer just benefits Jenny anymore, but the work of art the staff creates for other people is in many ways magical. Years ago, the tattoo was more geared for the 'working man' but now all sorts of people from different backgrounds look for a creative outlet.

With the significant popularity increase tattoo and piercing shops have received, it has created memorable characters and stories for Jenny to which she feels incredibly grateful to witness. The act of receiving body art has grown into something more than just a simple procedure. In a way, body art is not only an outlet for creative expression, but also emotional expression.

"I believe in the universe. I believe those people come at the right moment. They come to get their ears pierced, but we'll sit back here and talk for like 2 hours. And I feel like I need that intimate conversation, which makes me feel uplifted," Mendak explained.

For those who receive body art after emotional turmoil has occurred, Jenny has seen it and comforted those dealing with it.

"I recently had a customer who lost a family member and the first thing they did when they came in was tell me. I told him that I was sorry, but I also feel like when we lose someone we never officially get over it as much as we adapt to it. There's a small little chip on our heart for that kind of loss. It's okay to feel sad about that."

"There are women who lose their breasts due to breast cancer and get this giant beautiful chest piece because it makes them feel feminine and powerful."

"Even if it's a 6 year old when they get to choose something that significant and big for themselves for the first time as an individual. When they look in the mirror after it's done, they stand so tall and they look so proud of themselves in the mirror. It's a really rewarding feeling to give to someone. Sometimes I turn away because I'm about to cry," she said.

Even though stories that accompany the people who step inside the shop are beautiful experiences to witness, the power that lies in the hands of those who create are also a big piece to those stories. To be able to make others feel better about their self image is a rewarding experience.

"Especially with tattoos some people will look at themselves with their tattoos and it's almost like they feel like that's what they should have always looked like and that you gave that to them. I just think that's a powerful thing that we provide."

With that being said, Jenny truly loves her job because, "I'm lucky to wake up to not only have a job that provides for my family and home, but something I enjoy everyday. I spend most of the day laughing and having fun which I don't know many other adults that have that. I'm super grateful for all of it," she said.

"Dear Evan Hansen" actress finds her passion in musicals

by Hannah Stelitano

Micaela Lamas is truly leaving a huge impact on the theater world by showing that no matter what age you start theater, you always have a chance to make it onto Broadway.

Born and raised in Missions, Texas, Lamas was not directly involved with musical theater until she was 17 years old. She had been in choir since she was 11 and had previously danced for seven years, but never participated in a musical.

When she was a sophomore in high school, Lamas attended a production of "Seussical" put on by McAllen High School. The second the cast of that show came out onto the stage, Lamas knew she wanted to move to McAllen to be in their musicals.

"I had never moved schools in my entire life but after watching that musical, I suddenly had the urge to move to that school," Lamas said.

Lamas attended McAllen her junior and senior year. Her junior year, she was cast as Pennywise in the musical "Urinetown". In her senior year, she was cast as Nina in "In The Heights". During her two years there, Lamas also participated in a few plays.

"I realized that when I was just doing plays, I was not extremely happy and when I was just doing choir I was also not extremely happy, but when the fall musical was going on, I was the happiest I could have been. I realized that musicals were my passion," Lamas said.

It was quickly discovered that Lamas had a true talent for musicals. After having little experience and moving to a new school, her teachers were extremely impressed with her talents. They were so impressed that they even encouraged Lamas to go to college for musical theater. After graduation, Lamas did just that and attended Texas State University.

"I truly, truly learned everything I know as an artist now because of the program and faculty at Texas State," Lamas said.

Lamas expressed how much this program prepared her for not only her future in musical theater, but also in life. Her teachers, specifically Kaitlin Hopkins, director of Texas State University musical theater program, taught her important life skills such as how to do your taxes and fill out other paperwork. Because of the compassion from these mentors at Texas State, Lamas felt very welcomed coming into the program, even with the little knowledge she had about musical theater.

"I really had no idea what I was doing going into college. Where I'm from, theater isn't very financed and it was hard having a good understanding of the background of it," Lamas said.

After receiving her BFA in musical theater, Lamas was quickly thrown into the professional world.

Last March, she was called into an audition. She did an initial audition, a callback, and

then a final callback before landing her first professional role as Alana Beck in "Dear Evan Hansen". These auditions lasted over a span of four weeks and landing the role, she was on tour two weeks later. This was a quick turnaround, but Lamas was ready for it.

"The way that my college program was run made me feel extremely prepared to transition into the professional world," Lamas said.

Her talents have not gone unnoticed. After performing her role of Alana Beck last year in Canada, Lynn Saxberg of the Ottawa Citizen wrote, "Another standout is the work of Micaela Lamas, who plays

student networker extraordinaire Alana Beck and provides comedic foil, lighting up every scene she's in."

Her first Broadway tour has been a dream, but like anything, Lamas has faced a few challenges.

"The mental health aspect of this tour is definitely challenging. When you're doing a show like this that has a lot of hard topics, it is easy to not take care of your own mental health," Lamas said.

Lamas is an inspiration in the theater world and her journey shows that when you put your mind to something, anything is possible.

She performed in "Dear Evan Hansen" at the Benedum Center May 2-7.



Micaela Lamas



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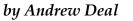
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Walker and Bednar linked by more than WPIAL roots







The Pittsburgh Pirates have had players from as far away as South Korea, Japan, India and Lithuania on their roster at some point in team history, but recently two of their players, Pine-Richland's Neil Walker and Mars' David Bednar, were products of the WPIAL who have become hometown heroes playing for the team they grew up watching.

Walker and Bednar took very different routes to get to PNC Park.

Walker was drafted by Pittsburgh in the first round in 2004 right out of high school.

"It was incredible. It was always my dream in high school. PNC Park didn't exist. My family would go down to Three Rivers Stadium. I was always interested in the Pirates, guys like Andy Van Slyke, Barry Bonds, and Bobby Bonilla were guys that I grew up watching and idolizing. I knew from a young age that I wanted to play Major League Baseball, and more than that I wanted to be a Pittsburgh Pirate. It really was a dream come true," Walker said.

Bednar was drafted by the San Diego Padres in the 35th round after his college career at Lafayette College. He came to the Pirates in 2021 as a part of the trade that sent Joe Musgrove to the Padres.

"I didn't really believe it at first. I wasn't too sure it was true because I first saw it break on Twitter. I wasn't expecting it in the slightest. I'm so blessed to be a part of this and have this opportunity to play for the Pirates," Bednar said.

Just being from WPIAL schools is not the only thing that links the two of them. Growing up, Bednar looked up to players that were a part of the 2013, 2014, and 2015 Pirates teams that qualified for the MLB postseason.

"The easy answer is Neil Walker. I think that's the best part of why it's so cool to know him now. You see a guy from Pine Richland, the next school district over, get drafted by the Pirates, and be a part of that Buctober team, and have such a great career," Bednar said. "You see that and always have that dream. The next thing you know, I get drafted and then get traded to the Pirates and now I'm doing the same thing."

One of the links the two have is the famous 2013 Pirates/Reds wild card game known by many Pirates fans as the Cueto game.

"The Blackout Game when Cueto dropped the ball, is probably my top memory from watching the Pirates, growing up. I always think back to that game when I think about those teams," Bednar said.

The difference is while Bednar was watching that game, Walker was playing in it. Walker went 2 for 5 with a double and an RBI, as well as scoring a run. Oddly, it was the pregame atmosphere that stood out most to Walker who was only 7 years old in 1992 when the Pirates were last in the postseason before



David Bednar (Brian Rothmuller, Icon Sportswire)

"David and I have become

pretty good friends. I've

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-- Neil Walker

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"There weren't many players that understood the magnitude of that game. Cutch understood it, I understood. They didn't really understand the fact that it had been 20 years since the last playoff game. They didn't fully understand what it meant to this city," Walker said. "It was about 30 minutes before the game and I could hear the crowd through the clubhouse. That's when it hit the rest of the team about how much this meant to the city of Pittsburgh. It still

my life."

Another link between the two is arguably the greatest of Pittsburgh Pirates, Roberto Clemente.

goes down as one of my favorite sports moments of

Walker's dad, Tom, was playing baseball in Puer-

to Rico and helped Clemente load supplies on the plane that would crash and claim Clemente's life on December 31, 1972. Walker even volunteered to fly with Clemente to Nicaragua to deliver supplies to survivors of an earthquake, but Clemente told him to stay behind and enjoy his New Year's Eve.

that game.

"He almost got on the plane that crashed and ended up killing Roberto Clemente. I was fortunate enough to play 2nd base at

PNC Park. When running from the 3rd base dugout to 2nd base, I always saw that 21 out in right field, and I would always try to give a little salute to him because he pushed my dad to not get on that plane," Walker said.

Clemente's efforts to give back to his community led the MLB to name an award to honor him. According to MLB.com, the Roberto Clemente Award (originally the Commissioner's Award, but renamed in 1973) "is bestowed annually to the player who best represents the game of Baseball through extraordinary character, community involvement, philanthropy and positive contributions, both on and off the field."

In 2022, Bednar was the Pirates nominee for this award.

"It's really special. That's one of the higher honors. Growing up here, everyone has a greater understanding of how incredible Roberto Clemente was as a player and as a person. As great of a person he was on the field, he was an even greater person off the field. To know how great of a person he was from being around here, it made it even more special," Bednar said.

Walker, who has played in many cities, knows there really is no place like playing in Pittsburgh.

"PNC Park was one of my favorite places to play. I played for the Phillies, Brewers, Mets, Yankees, and Marlins. Those cities and stadiums are all great places to play in, but there's nothing like playing in PNC Park. The city is in the background. The fans are incredibly passionate," Walker said. "I loved even just going to the grocery store, and getting asked questions about the team. I rarely got those in other places

that I went to. The heart and the passion, I could feel it more in the Pittsburgh area."

It was a passion that they grew up with playing in the WPIAL

"The competition was huge in the WPIAL. I played with and against all of the top guys throughout the area in the summer. I really think that helped me and prepared me to take the next step to professional baseball," Walker said.

Bednar agreed. He talked about how much fun it was playing high school baseball with the guys he grew up playing with and then getting to play with or against other WPIAL major leaguers like Ian Happ of the Cubs and Brendan McKay of the Rays in fall leagues.

Walker noted that all baseball players are a member of a fraternity and that WPIAL guys are part of a fraternity within the fraternity.

"Everyone from around here knows when someone around here is going to get drafted. We try to take care of our own and we try to support our own because we know how hard it is to get noticed around this area," Walker said.

An even more exclusive fraternity is the hometown hero playing for the hometown team. Walker blazed the trail that Bednar is now on and the two have bonded over the unique links they share.

"David and I have become pretty good friends. I've talked to him about being a yinzer. Your mantra around here is to be a hard worker and to have a ton of pride. He takes a ton of pride in that. Growing up in Pittsburgh, we both have had a greater appreciation playing for this city," Walker said.

LIGHT hosts Celebration of Storytelling

Event was highlighted by keynote speaker Njaimeh Njie, a multimedia artist

by Danielle Berdik

The LIGHT initiative, a group devoted to bringing awareness to the discrimination experienced by minority groups, held an event at Shaler Area High School on April 21. The overarching theme of the event was "Storytelling," and it was designed to empower students to recognize that every person has a different story and each one matters.

"We chose the theme of 'Storytelling' because everyone has a story to tell from their life experience or their expertise. Bringing people together in a fun, hands-on way gives students the opportunity to interact, make new memories, and experience new things which could lead to new stories to tell," SAHS teacher Mrs. Catlyn DiPasquale said.

Schools from all over the Pittsburgh area attended and participated in multiple activities including watching a performance by "The Royal Girls", a majorette team from the University of Pittsburgh.

Attendees also had the chance to visit the many tables that were hosted by various groups including League of Women Voters PGH, Rivers of Steel, and Shaler Area High School world languages.

"By offering students the opportunity to meet new people and interact with organizations outside of their community, there is hope both groups can find common ground, learn from one another, and combat hate in the future," Mrs. DiPasquale said.

In addition to these activities, the students got the opportunity to listen to the event's keynote speaker, Njaimeh Njie, a multimedia artist who focuses on Black lives in her community, the Hill District of Pittsburgh, and how the past shapes the present.

"I chose Njaimeh to be our keynote speaker because she embodies all of the principles of Story of Self, Story of Us, and Story of Now," DiPasquale said

Njie graduated high school and worked to earn a degree in film and media studies. After that, she began teaching. As a teacher, she enjoyed bringing different media into the classroom as a part of her lessons.

She incorporated documentaries, artwork, and photographs into her lessons, noticing that students reacted better to material when multimedia was added. Njie saw how it enlivened the classroom and became inspired to create media herself. She also thought that through creating media, she could make a positive contribution that others could learn from.

Njie has created multiple projects that each have a different focus. However, one of her overarching messages is to bring awareness to how different groups are viewed and the prejudices they face everyday.



Njaimeh Njie speaking at SAHS during the Celebration of Storytelling event.

"I want to talk to people about how they feel about themselves and their communities, because when you look at the outside world, when you look at textbooks, when you look at history, a lot of people have things to say about Black folks, and about marginalized communities, but I think it is important to go directly to the source," Njie said.

Njie's first project is titled "Powered by Grace." It was a photo and video exploration of black women and girlhood in Pittsburgh. Njie picked this as a focus because she learned that Pittsburgh was reported to be one of the worst cities for black women to live in. However, there was no input from those who actually lived in the city.

"It kept telling us about ourselves, but they weren't asking us how we felt about ourselves," Njie said.

Njie went around the city and took pictures of the places she went to in order to add to the visual story of Black womanhood in the city. Whether it was at her parent's house, girls' night, or a protest, Njie included pictures to showcase how black women truly lived in Pittsburgh.

Another one of her projects, titled "On the Daily", included Njie taking landscape pictures of Pittsburgh and putting them next to black residents of Pittsburgh. Her goal was to show that black lives belong in Pittsburgh and that their stories have a place in Pittsburgh's history.

"We are a part of this environment, our story matters here, because there is a rich and long history of black folks in Pittsburgh, but a lot of times when you think about the city, you don't necessarily think about the black history," Njie said.

With this project, she wanted to point out that there has been destruction of black communities and what was once in the city, is no longer. Although some groups have continued to hold their ground, this is not the case everywhere.

Njie wanted to convey the fact that you can remove the buildings belonging to black lives, but you cannot remove the history of black lives.

One of the pieces in the collection displayed a father and daughter to exemplify how different generations will remember their community differently because of how drastically things have changed over the years. Even though things are changing, we must ensure that newer generations can still feel in tune with their community.

Another one of Njie's projects is titled "Homecoming Hill District USA." This project focused on the Hill District, a community in the middle of Pittsburgh that has a historically black background. The Hill District was the center of culture, work, and residential life, leading to it being one of the most important areas for black people. Many important black role models also came from the area, such as August Wilson.

The pieces in the collection capture the everyday black lives living in the city. These include people just passing by, people who supported the community, and people who were heavily involved in the community.

Njie also included photographs of different sites in the community, but similar to her other project, a lot of the places photographed no longer exist. Even though the pictures were taken as recently as 2017, the fact that these sites are not there anymore further supports her idea that things are continuously changing.

Although each project has a different focus, when it comes to all of her work, Njie hopes for people to gain an understanding of black history and realize it is a vital part of our history. She also wishes for black people to gain a sense of pride in themselves and their culture, no matter what anyone may tell them.

All of her projects have taught her the importance of getting different perspectives and the impact those can have on her artwork.

"When we talk to people, and get different perspectives from our own, we push our own thinking and we can build off and become better," Njie said.

By having different views included in her artwork, Njie is able to deepen her message by showing how people are not always accurately portrayed in the media.

"No group of people is solely stereotyped or solely depicted one way in the news, we have nuances, we all have complexities, and it is important to understand that, so you don't think a very narrow set of opinions of any group of people."

Even though Njie has seen and documented many accounts of hate, she has also seen how new generations have responded to these situations. Instead of being fearful for the future, she is very encouraged for future generations and wishes for them to keep "fighting the good fight."



Sports custodians are the unsung heroes of SA athletics

"It doesn't matter

if you are a varsity

there's a problem or

you need something,

coach or middle

school coach. If

those guys are

working on it as

soon as you ask."

by Brady McGuire

Odds are that if you have been at a Shaler Area sporting event, you have seen the sports custodians that help make those events happen. Whether it was dragging a baseball or softball diamond, pulling out the bleachers for basketball or volleyball, fixing a scoreboard, or anything else, you probably have seen them hard at work. The reality is this is only the tip of the iceberg of what these people actually do.

Some of the custodians who have been or currently are part of the athletics staff are Frank Chatham, Bob Sauter, Fred Slaney, and JR Wikert. They work all levels of sporting events from middle school to varsity and range from summer practices for fall sports to the end of the spring seasons.

Their job is to meet the needs of the teams throughout their seasons. Recognized by many people, the custodians are responsible for taking care of playing areas before, during, and after games as well as for practices. They also do a lot of behind the scenes work such as keeping track of inventory, making sure equipment is clean and ready, handing out uniforms and doing laundry.

"Those guys are great. They will do anything for you as soon as they can," Mr. Eric Schott, who has coached

JV, 9th grade and 8th grade boys basketball, said. "It doesn't matter if you are a varsity coach or middle school coach. If there's a problem or you need something, those guys are working on it as soon as

Not only does their work help the players and coaches, their work gives a positive initial impression of Shaler Area to visiting

teams and fans

based on how

the fields and

you ask."

facilities look. Their job rarely has any "cookie-cutter" days in

which the custodians go to work and know exactly what they are going to

"Everyday is a different day. Everyday you are always in different situations." Sauter said.

This is especially true with spring sports such as softball and baseball. With both fields having dirt-playing surfaces, they are vulnerable to the notoriously unpredictable-spring weather of Western Pennsylvania. Because of this, both fields require constant attention from the custodians.

One instance was a game last year against Hampton. It was raining so

bad last year that many other teams around did not play their games, but not Shaler Area.

"They normally ask me if I want to get the game in. If I say yes, then they start loading up on that dry. That day they ran out. I think they drove to local little leagues because they ran out. Lots of raking and dragging that day," Varsity Baseball Coach Mr. Bri-

Although the job may seem overwhelming at times, these guys work everyday with a positive attitude. They always want the best for our students, student-athletes, and coaches.

"I love the job. I really do. I love having everything looking really nice for the players to come in, play, and just be happy. That's what makes me happy. I love seeing everyone have a good time," Chatham said.

When all three of the interviewed custodians were asked about their inspiration for the job, they all had a simple answer: "the kids".

All of these guys have been a part of Shaler Area for many years.

"It's enjoyable to see the kids grow (within the community)," Wikert said.

Athletic Director Mr. Rauscher works with those custodians on a daily basis and is very aware and appreciative who they are and what they do for our school.

"It's just not a job (for them. They are) committed to what they do and they want success for our kids and our teams," Mr. Rauscher said. "Fantastic

These guys are the "unsung heroes" of Shaler Area athletics. They are appreciated by the players and coaches, but rarely get the recognition they deserve. If these guys weren't involved, none of it would be possible.

an Junker said.

-- Mr. Eric Schott

Not only do the custodians care about the facilities, they also care about the teams' performances as well.

"They always seem to know what's going on with your team. In terms of successes of the season, your record, who you're beating, who you're losing to, if you're playing well. They always seem to be on top of that," Boys Volleyball Coach Mr. Paul Stadelman said.

Military places Boyles on southern border

and the strain and the difficulties that they go through to get here is very surprising to me, and it's very hard to understand that until you see it in real life," he said. "The reality of this experience is so overwhelming; that part effected me more than I was prepared for, but it is important to maintain border security and the safe, orderly, and humane processing of migrants."

As immigration has become forefront in news, there is a wide variety of conversations happening with a multitude of differing opinions on how the United States should handle new migrants arriving. As a public affairs officer, Mr. Boyles' main job is to promote the US Military's efforts to aid The Department of Defense's mission-enhancing support enables Customs and Border Protection to address security challenges and conduct their law enforcement mission more efficiently along the Southern border.

"Different media groups contort and skew the news to what they decide is necessary for the storyline they are trying to portray. It's not wrong, it's just the way that they do it. We just want to portray the military as a service-based industry...So for news, we try to give them good news stories and make sure that they see the good work that is being done in the community from us."

In an age of biased or inaccurate news, political division, and tension in our country, a big aspect of Mr. Boyles' job is to shine a light on the positive work that is involved in the mission.

"I focus on the the soldiers throughout the area of operation. I make it my goal to honor their story,

"The humanitarian crisis is just overwhelming. Seeing these families and the strain and the difficulties that they go through to get here is very surprising to me, and it's very hard to understand that until you see it in real life."

-- Mr. Dave Boyles

honor what great work they've done. We've had (to perform water rescues) multiple times throughout this mission where people were in desperate need of assistance and the service members reacted and helped," he said.

In addition to their duties related to their mission, he spoke about people who have taken time beyond their mandatory duty to commit to volunteer at their stationed locations.

"We try to better the civilian area that we live in.

We have over 50 soldiers committed to civil service because they chose to do so on top of their mission requirements. They go and work at places like Children's Hospital as a volunteer. They go and work at humanitarian aid areas as a volunteer. When they see a need, they react," he said. "I have a soldier who works directly for me. Today, she's working at Children's Hospital because she sees the humanitarian crisis that's happening in the area and there are children that are in the care of the children's hospital."

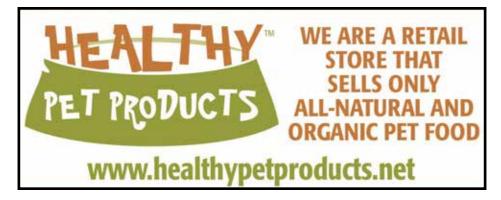
Boyles' mission continues, working with communities to better these situations and make the best of such a pressing issue. He is scheduled to return in October, though the mission of the Department of Homeland Security will continue.

Until Boyles returns home, he left his students with a letter of some words of wisdom.

"Three words of advice: see the world as much as you are able; acquire education in life and the books, gain wisdom and take advantage of every moment on this earth, good or bad. All experiences are learning opportunities to grow and flourish in them. Stay strong in intelligence and the body, embrace your values, and keep an honor-bound attitude," Mr. Boyles wrote to his students.

Towards the end of the letter, Mr. Boyles wrote a final remark.

"Good luck at whatever venture you plan on pursuing; it is a beautiful journey ahead of you. Chase your dreams with a fervent passion. Be adventurous, ambitious, intrepid, be careful, but don't be afraid."



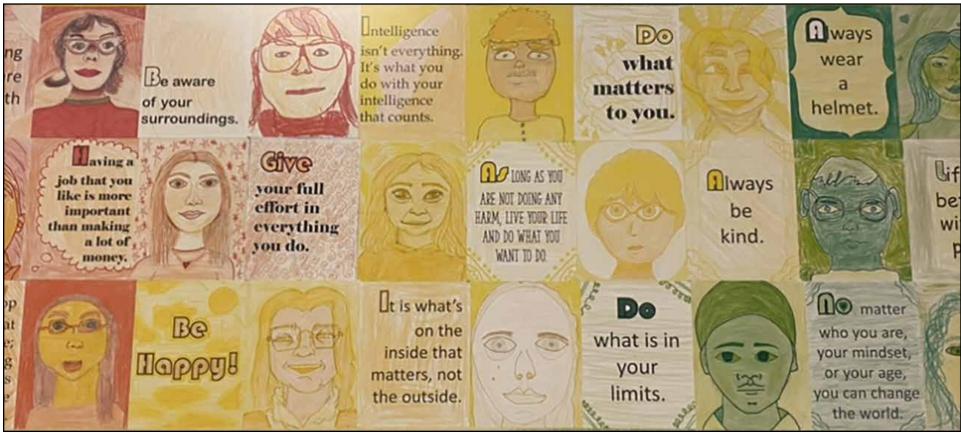
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Students team up to bring Wisdom Corridor to SA



A portion of the final project, which is displayed outside of room 214 in the high school.

by Jack Salego

As you walk through the hallways of the high school, you will see art projects, posters, murals, and now, a wisdom wall displayed outside of room 214. Fifth and sixth grade students and senior students interviewed each other to spread wisdom and knowledge. The project includes monochromatic handdrawn faces and accompanying quotes from both parties involved over a rainbow backdrop.

"What I like about the wall is that you look at it and some of the messages are philosophical, and then some of them are just saying to be nice. I hope anyone can look at the wall and connect with at least one of the things and have a better day because of it," GATE teacher Mrs. Kate Elder said.

While most quotes that people think about come from celebrities, larger-than-life figures, or works of fiction, these are from everyday people who show that you don't have to be famous or even grown up to be inspiring.

This "wisdom group," headed by Mrs. Elder, was assisted by Mrs. Christina Palladino, Ms. Heather Oros, and Mr. Michael Penn. The idea came from Mrs. Palladino after Mrs. Lisa Anderson, an aide at our high school, told her about the project at other schools.

Avonworth High School started the first wisdom corridor in the area, which was inspired by Avonworth Primary teacher Maureen Frew and her #BeTheKindKid movement. The movement aims to encourage children to make a change in the world through crafts and positivity, often combining the two. Mrs. Palladino then began looking back at previous projects in the GATE program and in Shaler Area that consisted of younger and older students working together, and the positive feedback they received.

The project came to fruition through funding from The Grable Foundation and was created in conjunction with Project FUEL. Project FUEL, short for "Forward the Understanding of Every Life Lesson," was started in 2009 by Deepak Ramola. The initiative aims to spread learning and lessons from all over the world through interactive learning and workshops.

The group attended a total of four online meetings with four or five different schools directed by Richa Nautiyal, the program manager of Project FUEL. Over the course of the meetings, students of both ages were able to gain inspiration, life lessons, and learn of the importance of sharing stories. As these meetings went on, the GATE teachers saw that the younger elementary school students added so much to the experience.

"Both groups benefit from this type

of hands-on interaction, and so we decided to veer off from the normal path of this project and have no adults on the final product," Mrs. Palladino said.

The students met in person twice, and after the project was completed they were reunited again at a wrap-up event at Avonworth Elementary School. At this event, Ramola spoke in person, congratulating Shaler Area and 12 other schools for their work done on wisdom corridors and similar projects. He also participated in fun activities with the students and everyone enjoyed food and snacks.

"It was so exciting to see the connections that students are building with everyone in their lives, not just with their peers, through projects like the Wisdom Corridor Project. It was great to be a part of it. My favorite part of the project was being able to mentor and just be a friend for some of the younger students," senior Natalie Ondo said.

Sophomore volunteers to help Ukrainians learn English

by Elena Flavin

Bella Minyo, a current sophomore at Shaler Area High School, volunteers for the "ENGin Program," a nonprofit organization that focuses on connecting Ukrainians, 10 to 35 years old, with native English speakers to improve their spoken English. Minyo originally got involved because she was looking for a way to get volunteer hours that would be flexible with her busy schedule.

"It's a really easy process to get started and it's a great way to get volunteer hours for NHS and Global Scholars Programs while also helping people globally," Minyo said.

ENGin was first created in March 2020 as a way to help Ukrainian children improve their English and make Ukraine stronger and more economically developed. There are many European countries that use English in business and workplaces as well as in universities and colleges. With the ongoing war between Ukraine and Russia, this program is especially important and helpful to Ukrainians.

The founder of ENGin, Katerina Manoff, moved to the United States from Ukraine as a child. As she became older, she had the idea of a small project that would help a group of Ukrainian teenagers learn English, which grew to be successful. After seeing

the results, she broadened the program to a wider audience and now ENGin is a global nonprofit organization that works with students and countries from around the world.

"15,000 students have been served in the ENGin Program and there are 10,829 active students right now. There are about 8,769 active volunteers in the program and there is an average of about 93% of students whose English improved after 3 months with ENGin," Minyo said.

Minyo is one of the many volunteer tutors who helps her assigned student by meeting with her once a week for an hour through Zoom. Conversation practice incorporating words or phrases that are in the current unit, as well as acting out scenarios are just some of the ways the tutor can help the student. The focus of their conversations are mostly on common situations they could experience traveling or in educational institutions, while also instructing them about cultural aspects in those situations.

"This sort of one-on-one conversation practice helps them to get used to conversations they might have while traveling or other scenarios if they are in a different country," Minyo said.

While the learning and progress that is accomplished by the Ukrainians through this program is incredible, there are also other important experiences

and knowledge that can be gained through ENGin.

"I have the opportunity to learn so much about a culture that is different from our own from someone who lives in Ukraine and it is a very globally eyeopening experience," Minyo said.

As the war on Ukraine continues, Minyo's student has been able to open up to her about what is happening and how it's affecting people on a personal level and sharing stories.

Minyo and her student have interesting conversations, and both have learned a lot from each other through this process. It has given her a new perspective that she would never have without this program.

"The hour just seems to go by so fast because talking with my student is so interesting and fun," Minyo said.

Recently, ENGin has been getting a lot of new students and is in need of more volunteers. This program can be a great volunteer opportunity as well as a good chance to meet a new friend and learn more about the world and other languages and cultures.

"In an increasing global community we live in, it's more important than ever to be understanding of the way people think and do things even if it is different from the way we do them. It helps us to understand more about the way they might think because of their culture and where they live," Minyo said.

Devlin's Painting providing service for over 25 years

by Matt Purucker

Throughout the Pittsburgh area, there are many small businesses that provide the city with goods and services that prop up the economy and make the area unique. They allow entrepreneurs to chart their own path, spark innovation in their fields, and create

jobs. Even something like a painting business can bring joy to a community.

Devlin's Painting was established in 1996 by Mike Devlin as a residential painting service, but it has since grown to a residential and commercial property improvement company. Along with painting services, Devlin's company provides other residential and commercial services such as wood and drywall repair, exterior siding, pressure washing, property management, and other handyman work.

Devlin's vision for his painting business began after he graduated from the Indiana University of Pennsylvania in 1991 with a degree in marketing and management.

"My parents didn't save up for me to go to college so I had a bunch of loans I had to pay. Back in high school, I painted a couple houses," Devlin said. "When I graduated from college, I wasn't making enough money so I was doing side work as a painter, and it got to the point that I was making more money as a painter by myself than I was making as a sales rep for Nestle Foods. So, I just quit and started a painting business."

He called the business Devlin's Painting because of his commitment to customer service and the personal touch of having to represent his name on the



back of his truck.

"All of my business is from word of mouth. My biggest advice I can give anyone is to have good customer service. Anytime anybody calls us we call them back immediately. Any time something needs to be fixed we fix it, even if it's not our fault," Devlin said. "I fix it because if I fix it you're gonna be happy and you're gonna tell your neighbors and your friends that I did so. That's been working for 27 years."

His commitment to customer service has served him well as his business has an A+ rating on the Better Business Bureau and has been accredited since 2010.

Devlin worked by himself for the first two or three years of his business before he started hiring employees. He has provided jobs for up to 26 employees at any given time since he started his business, and he now has five vans.

Devlin uses Sherwin-Williams and PPG Paints for his projects. He makes contracts with his customers and his suppliers listing out everything that needs to be done on their houses and what supplies they need. After providing proper documentation, his clients can be sure that the correct supplies are ordered and that they are satisfied with a job done right.

As a whole, small businesses were devastated by the pandemic. However, Devlin's Painting was the exception.

"The pandemic made my business better. It drove all the people in the workforce to stay at home. That made them notice all the things in their houses that needed to be upgraded with painting projects," Devlin said. "My business was better the year after the pandemic shutdown than it was the previous year.

Doing painting projects increased the value of their home, which is how most people gain most of their wealth."

Devlin has found success by following a passion and taking a chance on himself. For other entrepreneurs, what can they do to find similar success?

"If you wanted to start a company, I would suggest you apply for a job with a local successful business person within that industry and let them know what you want to do. I have had many guys that have come to me and say I want a job, but I want to learn the business because I want to go on my own. After about five years, when you absorb all the knowledge you can from that business person, then you can confidently go out on your own," Devlin said. "There's four people that have worked for me in the last fifteen years that own painting businesses, and we all stay in touch. When they need help, I help them out because the last thing you want to do is burn that bridge. Lastly, my last advice is that if you start a business, keep an open line of communication with that business owner because he is smart, he has been doing it for a long time, and he can always give you advice."

If you are interested in Devlin's Painting, you can visit their website at devlinspittsburghpainting. com.

SENIOR STAFF GRID		What accomplishments are you most proud of?	What teacher inspired you or helped you the most at the HS?	What was your favorite "What's the Deal?"	What are your plans after graduation?	Favorite story you have writ- ten for The Oracle
Julia Barbati		Winning a PA and national award for Sustainability story. Getting an excerpt from an article published in an online textbook.	Ms. Nilson and Mrs. Barie	Karaoke Christmas	Kent State for Fashion Design	Sustainability class helps pre- serve another green space
Andrew Deal		Winning a Best of SNO, PMEA District and Regions, and Superior ratings during music trip to Nashville	Mr. and Mrs. Tepshich	The OG : "What's the Deal with Ice"	Penn State for Digital and Broadcast Journalism	Walker and Bednar linked by more than WPIAL roots
Avery Gallant		Being a student representative of the school board and speaking up for all students.	Mrs. Loudon	Karaoke Christmas	Seton Hill for Secondary English Education	Preschool program has inspired many to become educa- tors
Kamaria Mutadabur		winning Best of SNO, get- ting Award of Excellence from DMAC, getting the seal of biliteracy imple- mented, being vice presi- dent of Japanese NHS	Mr. Balsomico Sensei	None, sorry Andrew	Point Park to major in English (hope to minor or double major in Digital Journalism)	True crime stories like "Dahmer: Mon- ster" ignore victims for money
Sarah Naccarato		Winning Best of SNO, two Gold Key artworks and a Silver Key portfolio in the Scholastic Art Awards	Balsomico Sensei	"Last Christmas" Karaoke Christmas	Chatham to major in Communications with a minor in Journalism	Holocaust survivor history preserva- tion and Tom Savini special effects hor- ror program
Hannah Stelitano		Dance team winning in Nashville performing my choreography, choreo- graphing "Newsies", twice receiving Trib Out- standing Young Citizen	Mrs. Tepshich and Mr. Schott	Karaoke Christmas or Mr. Shaler Area	Duquesne to double major in Multiplat- form Journalism and Integrated Market- ing Communications	Living with a police officer and "Hamiliton" inter- view with Brad Broman

The Last Word

Six senior staff members get an "open-mic" for their final byline

by Julia Barbati

The feeling you get starting into May is—odd. I know I'm going to graduate soon yet it doesn't feel that way. I still have so much I want to do and experience in this high school. I cannot change time and this will soon come to an end.

I have felt an immense amount of pressure these last four years. I let that pressure take over me, my performance, and relationships. This has consumed so much of my life but it was all self sabotage. Although it is easier said than done, and I am still learning — don't take things so seriously. I can recall so many times where I could have enjoyed myself, had fun, and spent more time with friends but I was so focused on taking things seriously. Have fun — you will not remember the times you were stressed out, but rather you'll remember the things you experienced.

I wish someone would have told me before this year that I didn't have to have everything figured out for my future plans. I had no idea what I wanted to do up until a week ago. It is ok and you will figure it out.

I never thought I'd miss something that I spent so much time hating. We have been surrounded by the same people for as long as we can remember and we will soon go our separate ways. In a way you are proud of your classmates for what you have watched them accomplish and you want them to go onto better things in life, but it is still so bittersweet.

I am thankful for so much from these past four years. I finally found people who were genuinely my friends and care about me. I have dealt with some of the most kind, patient, and dedicated teachers and I give them the credit for my success. I am thankful for the opportunity to challenge myself in classes.

Most importantly, I am thankful for Mr.Schott. I would have never joined the newspaper if it wasn't for his recruitment process. He has given me opportunities that I would have never had if it wasn't for him. This year I won a PA award and a national award for a Sustainability story as well as having a quote published in an online textbook. Opportunities like that do not always happen so I am very grateful.

I am emotional about leaving this high school but I am excited to see what the future has in store and I will always treasure the memories I have made here.

by Andrew Deal

If my current day self was able to go back in time to the beginning of Freshman year and tell my Freshman Year self everything that I was going to be able to achieve throughout high school, my freshman year self would have thought I was crazy.

I entered high school small and scared. I didn't really know what to expect in the next four years and I didn't expect it to go this fast. However, I adapted quickly and learned to truly be myself. For anyone not sure of the future and what to expect, just be yourself and everything will fall into place.

That's what I did and I was able to have opportunities and experiences I never would even have dreamed to have.

The fact I was able to interview people like Neil Walker, David Bednar, Thomas Tull, Jason Mackey, and others is just mind blowing to me. Newspaper has allowed me to reach out, to be who I am, and to achieve goals that I didn't even think I would want to achieve in a high school newspaper class.

There are so many things that I am going to miss from this school that I can't even begin to start. For anyone in the future that is going through this same thing – just be yourself, don't do things because you want to please others, and don't wish it away too fast because it will go by way too fast.

by Avery Gallant

I am lucky to say that I am proud of the person I have become since freshman year. I used to think that being involved was stupid. I never expected to be involved in stage crew or honors societies.

Being involved has given me more opportunities that I never expected. I have been able to have leadership positions and help foster change for things I care about. I don't have many regrets coming out of high school but I do regret not getting involved sooner.

I feel like I've missed out on something because I missed out on my freshman year. Though I regret it, I know that it was all meant to happen. If I would've joined sooner I probably wouldn't have met the people I have and had the same experiences. I know that I would not be where I am now.

If I can give any advice, I would say to get involved and don't let wanting to be the cool kid stop you. You will realize that no one cares what you do anymore. "Never be ashamed of trying...effortlessness is a myth" – Taylor Swift

by Kamaria Mutadabur

Dear Class of 2023:

Over the course of the year, we would say, "I can't wait to get out of here" along with many other similar statements. As much as I believe that we are all tired and ready to move on with our lives, I think it's important to take a step back and focus on the times where we were not tired, or even (call me crazy) the times when we were tired. The times where we were nervous to present something in class, or the times we were angry over a grade. The times where hours were spent studying the same material over and over.

It's important to reminisce on the times we struggled because being able to reminisce is living proof that we lived through it. We tried our hardest and whether or not we believed it, it was more than enough.

It's okay to appreciate that it's almost gone, but I appreciate that it happened. Being here taught me more about myself than I could have ever known. It taught me that I won't be the best at everything, but if I put the effort in, it will always be worth it. It taught me that people change and grow apart, but this is no one's fault. It taught me that no matter how strong someone seems, at the end of the day we are all human and there will be moments where we will crash. When we crash what matters is that we got back up and kept pushing forward.

When we were underclassmen, "I can't wait for summer" meant that the school year was over, but we would be back in a couple months. We would see the same classmates again, the same teachers in the same building. We earned a break from the pressures of school work. Summer meant fun, sunshine, relaxing, and just being a kid.

But now summer just means another season. We will never return to high school from summer vacation, never come back to the same building seeing those familiar people. The chances of all of friendships, relationships, clubs, or opportunities we never tried, will never exist again the same way it did when we were here. Before it becomes too late to say this, as sappy and corny as it seems, I'm happy to have had the chance to grow up with you all.

by Sarah Naccarato

Over the course of my high school career, I have had my highs and lows. I have been put in many uncomfortable situations, met lots of people I don't like, dealt with some of the worst assignments I have ever seen, and yet I find myself grateful for the ride.

A lot of people talk about being so eager to graduate and leave some people behind (justifiably), but I never imagined how sad it is going to be to leave hundreds of people I grew up with, no matter how little we have said to each other. We all, unknowingly, grew up together.

It was in this high school building that I learned so much—and no I am not talking about Ohm's Law or foreign exchange rates. When I was a freshman, I was so incredibly scared of the world and not knowing who I wanted to be—and I still am. Yet at the same time, as I started growing up I found myself leaving my comfort zone more and more, not caring what people think of me as long as I am having fun, and simply trying to make the best of my time here. Yes, I am a bit frustrated at myself for not adopting this mindset sooner, but what can you expect?

Now as I leave, I have come to recognize that what made my years so much better were the incredibly supportive teachers that have always listened to me complain, the friends that I have most likely been a little too obnoxiously loud with, and all the little moments in between that we have taken to enjoy. It's the fun chatter before a class actually starts, the way you can tell when a teacher is very passionate about what they teach about, making ridiculous inside jokes, and learning to really have fun.

Thanks to Mr. Schott. Being a part of the newspaper has brought me so many joyful memories (including the ice cream cake) and taught me that when an opportunity arises, no matter how far from your comfort zone it is, you must take it. I've heard incredible stories about 1980s horror movie special effects, exposing corrupt politicians on the front page, the power of human perseverance, and so much more. For that, I am thankful.

One of my favorite movies taught me, "If you don't stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it." As corny as it may sound, it is also incredibly true. It will never be like this again. Thank you to everyone who got me here, and farewell.

by Hannah Stelitano

Four years is a lot to reflect on but when looking at it all, I am grateful for the experiences I have had. Before entering high school, I never thought I would enjoy it, but I have had so many opportunities and experiences that make it hard to leave. I have paraded down Main Street USA, choreographed a dance winning many 1st place awards and titles, been president of two honors societies, interviewed multiple famous actors, and won the Trib Outstanding Young Citizen award two years in a row.

One of my most memorable experiences has been being on The Oracle staff for the past three years. Mr. Schott has truly made this class something to look forward to every morning. I have had many opportunities for interviews, seeing live shows, and writing stories that allow me to show a side of myself nobody realizes. This class has given me some of the best memories (Flight 93 field trip, getting stood up on an interview with Becca Beckas, Frank's golf recap, etc.) and I am grateful for everything Mr. Schott has done to make this class what it is.

One piece of advice -- do not worry about what others think. Do what makes you happy. People will say things that hurt you, but it is how you respond to these words that defines who you are. If you are constantly thinking that people are judging you, you will miss many opportunities. "Words can break someone into a million pieces, but they can also put them back together. I hope you use yours for good, because the only words you'll regret more than the ones left unsaid are the ones you use to intentionally hurt someone." (Taylor Swift)

I do not want to say goodbye, but see you later.