

The Oracle

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Superintendent leaving SASD



Dr. Wes Shipley

by Bri Schwartz

Six months ago, the Shaler Area school board renewed the contract of Superintendent Dr. Wes Shipley. The renewal would be effective August 1, 2015 to June 20, 2019. Last month, the Mars Area school board hired Dr. Shipley as superintendent for a four-year term.

"I was not looking to leave SA, but the Mars position was always one that I thought may be a good match for me. When it became available, I thought, I just signed a new contract, but will Mars be open again in four years? Being honest with myself, I knew it probably would not be so I decided to explore the possibility," Shipley said.

Shipley has worked as superintendent for Shaler since 2011. Before that, he was assistant superintendent under Dr. Donald Lee.

"I was very excited to renew my contract with Shaler. I was glad that the school board expressed their confidence in me to continue the work I've started.

To me, it was a vote of confidence that the district is moving in the right direction. I know the board will find another superintendent that will be a good match for SA and will build on the work we've already done to make it even better," Shipley said.

Dr. Shipley is looking to take his experience from Shaler and help the Mars school district improve and excel as he did in this district.

"I believe in always working towards excellence, always getting better. In my first year, I will have to take a lot of time to learn about the community, the schools, and the students. After that, I can target specific areas where I will want to improve," Shipley said.

While he is looking forward to his new job, he has plenty of things that he will remember about his time at Shaler Area.

"The people are what I will miss most. I've been here almost six years and I've had the pleasure of working with great people. The parents, teachers, support staff, and administrators have been very supportive and it's been a great place to work," Shipley said.

"I hope the people of Shaler Area will remember me as a leader who left the district a little better than when I started. I hope they think that I tried to do the right thing. Even when mistakes were made, I hope they realize that my decisions were made in the best interest of students."

Tower Gardens producing plants in non-traditional way

by Kim Yurasits

If you've been down to the greenhouse recently, you might've noticed two fairly new and futuristic looking plant pots. These are the new Tower Gardens, a hydroponic-type system, and were set up after the GATE program received a grant from the Pennsylvania Dept. Of Environmental Protection.

The system at Shaler is a combination system, using both aeroponics (an air system) and hydroponics (a water system) to get the plants the nutrients they need.

The plants start growing in rock wool before they are transferred to the actual system. From there, the water is forced up through the center of the design and trickles down and flows to the roots of the plants. Because of this, the plants get 100% of the nutrients from the water instead of some of it being absorbed by soil.

"You have to put water in the base and check the pH level a couple times a week to make sure it's in the proper range, kind of like how you would check a pool or aquarium. So we did one test run with peas, broccoli, cabbage and lettuce and that seemed to be doing really well and the system seemed to be functioning the appropriate way," Mrs. Katie Elder, GATE teacher, said.

The creator of this hydroponics system was actually the greenhouse coordinator at the EP-COT Center in Walt Disney World. He had used this system to grow most of the plants seen on the land ride in the park before deciding to make it feasible for the average everyday consumer to buy and use.

"It's interesting if you look at the facts on the website for this system. They talk about how you could put these on top of a building in New York City and you could have your own rooftop garden without soil and without using a lot of space you could grow a lot of plants," Elder said.



A Tower Garden

According to the website, this system uses less than 10% of the water and land required by traditional, soil-based agriculture. And a recent study by the University of Mississippi found it also generates 30% more produce than soil-based growing methods.

The system is also used in places like the Chicago Airport where restaurants there have access to a whole bunch of fresh produce every day.

The GATE program along with the Ecology club came together behind this hydroponics idea once Elder had read about an Earth Day

grant in a magazine.

"Every year the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection puts out a call for educational grants that have to do with the environmental awareness. I saw this in a magazine and then researched it, then wrote the grant, applied for it, and they announced the grants on Earth Day," Elder said.

Elder ended up receiving the grant but the money took awhile to come in so the actual planting couldn't get started until later this school year.

"We were hoping it would be a little faster and we could do a fall planting before it got too cold, but that did not pan out so we just got it set up when the weather kind of broke in March and then we needed a couple weeks for the seeds to develop in the rock wool and then to transplant them," she said.

Now what is going to happen with all these veggies being grown, one might ask.

"We have been kind of experimenting to see what works best and how quickly things grow but ultimately were thinking of either giving vegetables away to GATE students or we could plant the flowers in front of the school to benefit the ecology club. We have a lot of ideas were just not sure exactly how it will all play out," Elder said.

District removes banners and trees

by Natalie Townsend and Ethan Griffin



The "We are Shaler Area" banners that hung on the light posts have been taken down for fear of the light posts falling over.

"The banners were becoming like sails on a ship and the light poles were starting to fall over, we lost three (poles) so far," John Kaib, Supervisor of Buildings and Grounds, said.

There have been no further plans made to replace or reuse the banners.

Additionally, several pine trees in the front parking lot of the high school were infected with blight and removed before they fell over as well.

The island where the trees were is going to be replaced with some tall, decorative grasses of different height and color. The grasses are extremely hard to kill and should survive through the winter and the piles of snow that get plowed on top of them.

The rest of the pine trees in the lot are also dying and will be taken care of in the near future.

OPINIONS

Creativity just as important as math, science

By Kimberly Yurasits

Today, art education has been put on the back burner, with an increase in emphasis on math and science in our society. While this is not a bad thing in the least, it takes away from other forms of education, for example art education, of its importance.

For example, The Broward County Public School system, in Florida has reduced arts funding in more than a third of their middle and high schools.

In New York City, between the 2006-2007 school year and June 2010, the funding for the arts in public schools was cut by 68 percent, or \$7.2 million.

Federal funding for the arts and humanities rolls in around \$250 million a year, while the National Science Foundation is funded around the \$5 billion mark.

It is time to refocus on the arts.

Almost everyone has heard of the benefits of art education. Playing an instrument promotes concentration and discipline in kids while helping improve their math skills, reading and writing music establish mental organization, and art in general promotes creativity and teach children that problems can have more than one solution and that questions can have more than one answer.

“We use a system here which is the dynamic creative process and in the dynamic creative process we teach you how to problem solve in a more abstract manner instead of a more formally driven manner. That way when you come upon a problem in the future, you’ll be able to use the skill sets that you use in art to come up with a creatively and out of the box way to solve a problem,” art teacher Mr. Dave Boyles said.

Some believe that art education in general improves overall academic. For example, there was a study done by the President’s Committee on the Arts and Learning. It showed that art education had a positive effect, not only with academic achievement, but with overall achievement as well.

Yes, science and math are essential, especially in today’s job market. However, if we only place an emphasis on these subjects we are not only depriving kids of a good education, we are depriving them of self-expression.

but wait until you get to the real world, your opinion will change. I was told that those dreams weren’t realistic and those jobs wouldn’t pay enough and I would have to fight to eat each day.

The worst thing we can do is suppress the budding artistic spirit in students.

An article for Seattle PI pointed out that slashes in funding for art programs is

linked to an increase in dropout rates coupled with a decrease in test scores. And because wealthy communities often find ways to fund arts programs while their less affluent counterparts cannot, cuts to arts programs create deepening disparity between communities and their citizens.

Yes, science and math are essential, especially in today’s job market. However, if we only place an emphasis on these subjects we are not only depriving kids of a good education, we are depriving them of self-expression.

If more artistically focused people are required to take years of math and science, then it should be the same way for more scientific or mathematic minds to have to take classes in the arts. Or a simpler solution would be to not force either type of person into classes that they do not plan on focusing on for the rest of their life.

It just doesn’t seem right that, for example, if a math or science person is not as strong in art, they are told not to worry and that not everyone is artistic. However, if an artistic person is not as strong in math or science, it is assumed that he/she is not trying hard enough or is not intelligent.

As Steve Jobs once said “It is in Apple’s DNA that technology alone is not enough—it’s technology married with liberal arts, married with the humanities, that yields the results that make our heart sing.”

When I was but a wee tot, I told people when I grew up I was going to be a painter or a writer or an actress. My sister too said she wanted to be a singer or an actress. The people I told would always smile and comment, very kindly, on how cute we were,

Leung named finalist for PA teacher of the year

by Samantha Dietz

Science teacher Ms. Jade Leung gives her physics and biology students a well-rounded education, and is for sure one of the best teachers in Pennsylvania! That’s not an exaggeration, it’s a fact proven by her nomination and finalist stance in the Pennsylvania Teacher of the Year program.

Leung, a Northgate and Duquesne graduate, is passionate about her students and her interests. Not only is she an science teacher, but she is a researcher as well.

“I have an interest in bone tissue engineering and regenerative medicine from the research I was involved with at Duquesne University and in the Pittsburgh community.”

If she wasn’t teaching that might be one of the areas she would look for a career.

“I may consider returning back to tissue engineering research full time to try to design new ways to heal torn ligaments that require grafts to heal.”

Outside of the science community she is also interested in the arts, both traditional and martial.

She holds a seat on the Carnegie Museum of Art’s Teacher Advisory Board, and has a black belt in tae-

kwondo.

If she had not persued a career in science, she might be in the wilderness.

“In college I enjoyed rock climbing. Perhaps I would consider a career as a wildlife photographer. When I rock climbed in Wyoming the view from the top was spectacular!” she said.

With all those interesting aspects of her life, why spend her time back in a high school?

“I teach because I enjoy working with young people to excite them about education and the world around them. I knew from a very young age I wanted to become a high school science teacher. I thought it was a great field and would provide a lot of enjoyment because of the uniqueness of each day,” Leung said.

Leung is not only a great teacher, but an important support system for students as well. She creates an open yet constructive learning environment where her students are comfortable enough to confide in her.

“It doesn’t surprise me that she’s a finalist for Pennsylvania Teacher of the Year program because you can tell that her passion is so deep-rooted for teaching, and that she genuinely cares. I know that if I ever have a problem, I could go to her. And she would be there

for support no matter what the circumstance was,” junior Kayla Snyder said.

It is because of that passion that she was nominated not once, but many times for this prestigious award.

“I have been a semi-finalist for the 2013, 2014, and 2015 application process. I am honored that I made it this far in the process,” Leung said.

The first and second rounds are full of a lot of essays and letters of recommendation, but the third round asks for a video of a real classroom lesson, unedited, and a lesson plan that follows.

“It is a long process that requires

multiple steps but ensures that the candidate chosen as PA Teacher of the Year is well equipped and ready to represent the state in education,” Leung said.

The Pennsylvania Teacher of the Year award is a prestigious award, and an honor to receive. The winner will be announced this December.

“Next December there is a banquet that the 12 finalists are invited to and one of us at the end of the banquet will be named the PA Teacher of the Year. Winning would be amazing because it would change my teaching career in an unbelievable way,” Leung said.

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.

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Confusion abounds with recycling issues

by Kayla Snyder and Claire Costello

A lot of classrooms within the high school are provided with a green recycling bin supposedly used to recycle paper only. However, the paper put into these green bins does not get recycled. Instead, it gets tossed into the trash dumpsters outside at the end of the day. While it may seem like Shaler Area recycles, the reality is that the school district has had a very hard time going green.

The problem is that the majority of school administrators and personnel are under the impression that the waste management company used in Shaler does not offer recycling services.

The waste management company contracted by Shaler Area is called Republic Services. This company collects trash for the entire district but recycling is limited to cardboard if separated.

However, Ms. Maryellen Stanko from Republic Services contradicted what the school district has been saying by stating that their company offers a service called single-stream recycling. Single-stream recycling allows any recyclable items to be placed in the recycling bins provided. The company will do the sorting instead of the consumer.

When the school district was asked about the single-stream recycling program offered within the contract set up by school administrators, Head of the Building and Grounds Department, Mr. John Kaib seemed surprised by this discovery.

"If they came out with something new, it's something we didn't know about," Kaib said.

While Kaib seemed surprised, Stanko, from Republic Services also shared the immediate confusion when asked why the district continually said recycling was not available.

"I am a bit confused, as we have always offered recycling," Stanko said.

Stanko said that Republic Services offers recycling of plastic, paper, aluminum, cardboard, metal cans, and glass. In a school district, the majority of the recyclable items are plastic, cardboard, and paper.

According to Activities Director, Mrs. Mindy Thiel, around 11,000 plastic bottles are purchased each year in the Activities office alone. That does not include any plastic bottles purchased in the cafeteria.

According to Nutrition Director Jenny Pearson, as of May 1, this year the cafeteria sold almost 60,000 bottles of tea, which also includes the lemonade and nearly 4000 bottles of Gatorade. Due to the

"Recycling is important for society. By modeling it in a school we help to set the standard for what students should be doing at home and out in the real world."

-- Mrs. Kathleen Elder, Ecology Club sponsor

fact that Shaler Area does not utilize the recycling services provided in their contract, all of those bottles are thrown into the trash.

The main problem is that Shaler Area doesn't utilize this single stream recycling or even paper recycling. Republic Services has eight recycling bins on site, one at each school including the primary building. At the high school alone, there is one 10-yard recycling dumpster that is rarely used.

Instead, the school district dumps the paper collected in the green recycling bins (within the classrooms) into the Abitibi dumpster outside of GYM B. Reoccurring problems such as throwing trash into the recycling bins have made it harder for the school to be successful in recycling. If any garbage is thrown into the recycling bins, no matter how much paper is with it, it is all thrown into the trash.

These recycling dumpsters outside of GYM B that are supposed to be full of the paper Shaler Area (supposedly attempts to recycle) is full of cardboard even though the company placed a sign that states cardboard will not be collected in those bins.

"We have a cardboard container just for cardboard. And you know what happens? People put trash in it. No one reads anything. They just throw it all in one bin. It's terrible. It all starts in the classroom. Even the kids don't even know what those green bins are for if they're not told or explained to," Kaib said.

In past years, that same company, Abitibi would give our school \$4 a month for recycling paper. The company is strictly for recycling paper only. Green and yellow Abitibi bins are located behind the school where paper can be put into for recycling but no trash or cardboard are to be included.

Abitibi is still the company Shaler Area supposedly uses for paper recycling, but it no longer gives the \$4 a month because the company had almost gone bankrupt. The school district has yet to recycle

plastic because of the expenses.

"Collecting plastic would be a cost. Not many companies responded when we tried to contact them about our school district recycling plastic," Kaib said.

However, Stanko's earlier quote about recycling contradicts this. Everything involving waste management, from trash collection to recycling (including plastic) is included in a yearly bid package.

The combined cost for the 2014-2015 school year totaled \$47,107.00 including the \$3,528 that recycling costs. In the high school alone, the price for recycling totals to \$528 for the 2014-2015 school year. That price seems like a small portion of the overall, combined price, but yet, Shaler Area still denies the fact of recycling through their current contract. The contract is up for reevaluation through a bidding process every school year.

The school district has a closed bidding session and chooses the least expensive offer from the companies. In the bidding session, all of the deals are sealed and then opened at the meeting. This process eliminates the chance for companies to change their original bid. Then, that company signs a contract with the school district for the school year beginning in July. A bidding meeting takes place around February to decide who the next candidate will be.

For many years Shaler's Ecology club has made tremendous efforts to raise awareness of the importance of recycling. Last year, Mr. Chris Lisowski, former sponsor of the Ecology club, and his club members took the initiative to make recycling a more well known issue in the school district.

"Last year, I organized with my Ecology club to collect bottles and we made a sculpture in front of my room with a petition up with several hundred signatures," Lisowski said.

Due to the ignorance of the single-stream recycling service offered by the waste management company that the district already pays for, Shaler Area is not as environmentally conscious as it can be.

"Recycling is important for society. By modeling it in a school we help to set the standard for what students should be doing at home and in the real world. It seems to be the socially responsible thing to do. It's so easy," Ecology club sponsor Mrs. Kathleen Elder said.

Robotics team wins 1st place in VEX Competition

by Antoni Miladinov

Shaler Area High School's robotics team "Fish's Minions" entered the VEX Robotics Competition for the first time at Ambridge High School on March 26. Shaler's team includes Daniel Borgen, Colin Morse, Sean Easler, Garrett Provident, Alec Logan, Matthew Prosser and Maxwell Borza.

In previous years, the robotics team would build battlebots that would cost nearly \$2,000 to create but were then destroyed by the end of the competitions.

"We decided to switch to VEX to level the playing field. With battlebots, the more money you had the better the bot. This year everyone had the same kit so it was more about how creative the students could be," technology teacher Mr. Zach Fisher said.

This year Fisher received a grant to purchase a VEX Kit and decided to switch competitions.

"This is our first year doing VEX, the kids did really well," Fisher said. Fisher was proud to see his students do so well in their first year doing this competition.

This year's competition, "Skyrise", challenged students to build a robot that could stack red and blue blocks on top of each other via remote control with a 15 second autonomous portion at the beginning of the run. This autonomous portion



The Shaler Area winning robot (Zach Fisher)

of time was given to each team at the beginning of their run where the team would have to successfully get the robot to run by itself without remote control.

"The scissor lift was definitely the more complicated aspect of it. Building it was like 10 times easier than getting it to actually work," senior Colin Morse said.

To program this robot, students used a program called EZC which allows the programmer to drag and drop icons with specific robot commands.

"Our original goal was to have a functioning robot that could be able to compete with other teams in the competition and that could also show other teams how we may not necessarily have the funds that other teams have but how we have the creativity and ingenuity," senior Daniel Borgen said.

This creativity and ingenuity was shown in the teams' scissor lift design which had a claw on top of the scissor lift that could move horizontally and vertically, allowing blocks to be easily stacked on top of each other. A bot of this complexity took the team nearly 10 weeks to construct.

"This was the first serious competition. We had a serious team together and we'd meet regularly after school so everything lined up for us," senior Sean Easler said.

With all of this hard work, the team was able to receive first place for Best Robotic Design at their first ever VEX competition.

Ten staff members set to retire

by Marina Varvaro

This year, Shaler is losing some of its valuable staff members. The faculty members at this school are one of the best things Shaler has to offer, so it's a sad moment when they leave. But they have many plans and goals for after their years here and are taking away good memories (and bad) to last a lifetime.

The retirees this year consist of Mrs. Teresa Cardone, Mr. Roger Depew, Mr. Mike Dusch, Ms. Anne Frazier, Mrs. Shari McGill, Mrs. Jeanie Francic, Mrs. Linda Jansen, Mrs. Lynn Musgrave, Mrs. Becky Shanko, and Mrs. Deb Stepnick. Every person is a crucial part of the machine that is Shaler and will be dearly missed.

Some of the staff was asked a few questions about their lives without working at Shaler. They were asked what they would miss the most and the general response was the students. When asked what they'd miss the least, there were a variety of responses. There was the 5:15 alarm, stress and homework (yes, even teachers don't always like it!), but Mr. Depew's lengthy list takes the cake.

"Turning in lesson plans, keystone exams, in-service days, student learning objectives, ipads, parents micromanaging coaches. None of this existed when I started 36 years ago," the math teacher said.

They were also asked about plans after retirement. Mostly they expressed desires to travel and have new experiences. Ms. Frazier, a communication arts teacher, has some wide-ranging plans.

"My plans are to do whatever I want to do. I have worked all of my life and have not had many choices to make about each day. I want to awake without an alarm, take better care of my mother, play the piano and read. I also have a book of short stories in mind that needs to be written," she stated.

People might not be aware of this, but teaching isn't the only thing these faculty members can do. They explained their passions for playing the piano, getting involved in helping children with musical theater careers, and going to coin shows and auctions.

"I love love love to cook and bake. I tell my family all of the time that I need to adopt a fraternity at a local university so that I can try out all my new recipes on them. Hungry boys that miss their mom's home cooking would make a good 'focus group'," guidance counselor, Mrs. Stepnick, divulged.

Finally, some last words of thanks were provided for us at Shaler.

"Thanks to all that I have learned while teaching. It is not just a job: it is a beautiful gift given to me," Frazier expressed.

Good wishes for health and happiness to all of the retirees.

Junior to compete in national conference

by Ethan Griffin

On June 29, Shaler Area Junior David Berdik will travel to Chicago to compete in the Future Business Leaders of America's National Leadership Conference.

He will be competing in Desktop application program, a career he would very much like to pursue after high school. He is the first student from Shaler Area to qualify for Nationals.

Berdik competed in the State Leadership Conference back in April and won, which now qualifies him for nationals. Following the state level competition Berdik is permitted to modify his project and resubmit it for the national competition.

"At the moment, my focus is on implementing changes to the program that were suggested by those who judged it," Berdik said.

Though a field that Berdik enjoys competing in, he said it does come with some challenging aspects to it.

"Although you may think you put together a very good program and gave a very good presentation, you have absolutely no idea whether or not any of your opponents did anything better than you," Berdik said.

When it comes to helping get ready for a competition like this Berdik will need to make some minor changes to his program and make some final tweaks before presenting it at nationals.

"This is a field David truly enjoys and has taken all of the classes at Shaler and is very knowledgeable when it comes to this content," Mrs. Lisa Klugh, FBLA sponsor, said.

Berdik will compete in Chicago at the FBLA National Leadership Conference on June 29- July 2.

Senior Athletes Sign with DI & II Schools

1.School and Sport 2.Biggest deciding factors 3.Intended Major



Annie Bozzo

- 1. Syracuse University
- 2. Good academics, connection with coaches
- 3. Inclusive Elementary Education



Shannon Lynch

- 1. Albany Lacrosse
- 2. Highest competition, purple color, dog mascot
- 3. Undecided



Neely Regan

- 1. Saint Leo University (Florida) Lacrosse
- 2. Good for my major, small school, location
- 3. Sport Business



Nate Porter

- 1. Clarion University Swimming
- 2. Scholarship, location, education
- 3. Business Undecided



Steph Fleming

- 1. Saint Francis PA -- Lacrosse
- 2. Distance from home, school and team are the best fit for my difficult major
- 3. Nursing



Lizzie Kline

- 1. University of Connecticut Volleyball
- 2. Big school, big sports program, chance to play as a freshman
- 3. Biology



Andi Lydon

- 1. Central Connecticut State Basketball
- 2. Good for my major, good relationship with coaches
- 3. Elementary Education, minor in Psychology



Hannah Bradford

- 1. West Virginia Wesleyan Volleyball
- 2. The team was great, and it was my greatest financial choice.
- 3. Biology



Bri Schwartz

- 1. University of Colorado Cross country and Track & Field
- 2. Connection with team and coaches, beautiful location
- 3. Undecided



Jake Potock

- 1. West Virginia University Baseball
- 2. Cost, better competition, good for my major, location
- 3. Civil Engineering

Japanese exchange students experience Shaler Area



The group of Japanese visitors and their hosting students during their visit to Shaler Area (Balsomico)

by Kayla Snyder and Kyle Donovan

The Kakehashi cultural exchange has come and gone from Shaler, leaving students and teachers awestruck. It was the first major visit by foreign students to Shaler since a group of French students came to Shaler four years ago.

Despite the differences in length (the French were here for two weeks, the Japanese for two and a half days), it seems like this trip had an important impact.

"About three or four years ago there was a French exchange, but this is not the type of thing Shaler has been involved with... However once the Japanese students came, I think the response has been overwhelmingly positive," Japanese teacher Mr. Stephen Balsomico said.

The students came as part of the Kakehashi Cultural Exchange program. The project which literally means 'to build a bridge' is an initiative by the Japanese government to exchange culture between the United States and Japan at the high school and college level.

According to Balsomico, Shaler was chosen as one of the last host schools by the Laurasian Institute, the organization that facilitates the program which also brought the current Japanese assistant teacher, Iwasaki Sensei. The institute based its decision on a recommendation from the Japanese Consulate for Shaler Area's exemplary Japanese program.

During the two-and-a-half-day visit the 24 Japanese students from Sugunami Sogo and Igusa High Schools in Tokyo got to experience popular tourist locations around Pittsburgh including Mount Washington, the Incline, and Primanti Brothers, as well as life with typical American high school students.

The Japanese students gave two presentations on their culture, daily life, how they spend their free time, and other topics including traditional Japanese dances and sports. On March 24 during third and

fourth period, the Japanese students gave their first round of presentations to a select group of students.

Among those in attendance were students currently taking from Mr. Chris Gaul's AP Literature class. Gaul brought this group of students to the assembly to expose them to real Japanese culture firsthand.

"I think it's absolutely crucial, given the way that the world is getting smaller, that our students have an understanding of different cultures, especially one that is as economically powerful as East Asia. We've got to get out of the [mindset] that the world revolves around the United States," he said.

Despite the brevity of the stay, all the Japanese students seemed eager to be here and quietly took in all the new surroundings they were exposed to. Right away, the Japanese students began notice all the differences around them.

"So big, everything so big," visitor Hikaru Shirai, said. "It's the food. Japanese food more small and healthy. American food is so big and there's a lot of meat... I like it!"

However, food was not the only difference the exchange students encountered. Another notable difference was the way American schools differ from Japanese schools.

"American school and Japanese school, very different. We have uniforms, we can't drink or eat in classes, and Japanese students... very shy," another visitor Natsuki Tanezaki said.

The hosts shared the same excitement as the exchange students. Some of the reasons for hosting students stemmed from personal benefit such as exposure to a different language while others stemmed from the overarching idea of bridging the different cultures and learning to accept the Asian cultures.

"I decided to host a Japanese student because I'm really interested in Japanese culture and thought it would be a really cool experience. I got to learn about another culture from someone who has lived

there their entire life like that. It's much more realistic than reading a book about it," junior host Erin Mazzotta said.

No matter the reason, the hosts learned as much as their guests during the trip. The guests taught the one thing they know best to the hosts and many of the hosts agree that this experience was life changing in many ways.

"Exchanging cultures is fun. I like hearing about what's happening in Japan and teaching what's happening in America," senior host Stephen Callen said.

The biggest challenge both students and hosts had to overcome was the language barrier. It comes to no surprise that the American students are certainly not fluent in Japanese and the same is true for the Japanese for English. Most of the exchange students were not fluent in English which made it extremely difficult at first.

"It was enlightening, I'd say. It showed the differences between cultures and what they were shocked about. I think the language barrier was the coolest thing it made you actually think about what you were saying and forced you to speak a foreign language," junior host Nick DeBortoli said.

Due to the brevity of the trip, few teachers were able to work the visit into their lesson plans, however Mr. Balsomico intentionally kept his lesson plans unchanged figuring that the Japanese would be interested in comparing an average day in their English classes back home to an average Japanese class in America.

"I thought it was a good experience for people studying Japanese because they got to talk to someone fluent in Japanese other than the teachers," freshman Japanese student Kira Katich said.

Despite the positive feedback of the trip many wished for a longer stay. It seems everyone was disappointed in the fact that if anyone had blinked he/she would have missed the whole affair.

The program is currently under renewal by the government of Japan. If the program is renewed, Balsomico said, he will try to bring it back to Shaler and for much longer.

The last hurrah for the Japanese exchange students was their second performance the night of March 25. This was a community held event where anyone could attend instead of a select group of people. The presentation kicked off with a speech from Japanese National Honor Society President Luke Pomerence. Following the speech, a group called Pittsburgh Taiko performed a traditional Japanese drum routine. Then, the exchange students gave the same presentation again to end the show and the trip.

The next morning, the Japanese students were put on a bus and sent to the airport to go to San Francisco their next and last stop in America.

"Judging from when they were getting ready to leave on the bus to go back, judging from the outpouring of emotion from many of them, and that they did not seem to want to leave, I think they had an excellent time," Balsomico said.

Music Department does well in VA Beach competition

by Adriana Imhof

On April 16 the music department traveled to Virginia Beach with over 300 students. Different ensembles from band, choir, and orchestra all competed in the Festival of Music VA Beach.

The band traveled with three groups including the advanced jazz band, wind ensemble, and concert band. Students from each of those ensembles then gathered together to be adjudicated on their marching band parade march. Each group took home 1st place and was awarded a superior rating. The wind ensemble also received the best overall band award.

As for the orchestra, it traveled with one ensemble and was successful like the rest of Shaler Area bands taking home 1st place and a superior rating.

The choir department traveled with three groups including Chamber, Women's, and concert choir. Chamber and Women's choir took home 1st place and a superior rating and the concert choir took home 2nd place and an excellent rating.

The music department as a whole was judged on its musicianship, school pride, courteousness, and behavior throughout the whole competition. An optional award, Esprit de Corps, was given out if the judges felt a department went over and above to prepare. This year Shaler Area was given this award.

"I believe that the entire music department represented Shaler Area with pride as young adults and musicians. Sometimes, it is not just about achieving those high levels of musicianship, but it is about learning life lessons of teamwork, support, hard work, and dedication," Ms. Kristen Demsey, director of choirs, said.



T H E C E N T E R

5 people, 5 questions

1. Favorite summer activity
2. Who is the funniest person you know?
3. Do you think high school makes people insecure?
4. What would you do for a klondike bar?
5. Is it better to fail at something or never attempt in the first place?

1. Basketball
2. Cody Siwicki
3. Definitely
4. Nothing, I hate chocolate
5. Never attempt so you don't look stupid



Freshman Gia Thorpe



Sophomore Justin Titterington

1. Tricking
2. Matt Cipriano
3. Yes because if you're not part of a group, people judge you
4. Open the freezer
5. I don't know how that's possible

1. Skateboarding and Smash Bros
2. Josh "Snake Arms" Ashmore
3. No; if it does, you're doing it wrong
4. Sumo wrestle Mr. Davis and Mr. Stadelman at the same time
5. Fail. Come on, learn from your mistakes



Junior Elliot Fix



Senior Lizzie Kline

1. Chilling by bonfires late night with a fun group of people
2. Cody Siwicki
3. Yeah! People in high school are mean and like to put others down to make themselves feel better
4. Kiss a polar bear
5. Never attempt in the first place

1. Being a full-time Dad and getting a babysitter so I can golf
2. my wife
3. I hope not
4. Give up my Teacher of the Month parking spot
5. "No one gets remembered for things they don't do." - Frank Turner



Mr. Krenn

WEIRD News

Two accused pizza thieves may have cheated up their plans to make lots of dough by attempting to sell some of the stolen pies to on-duty police officers.

Eighty frozen pizzas were stolen Sunday from a warehouse in Gambell, Alaska. The purloined pies had an estimated street value of more than \$1,100, or about \$13.75 per pizza, Alaska State Troopers told Alaska Dispatch News.

Investigators didn't have to work too hard finding the culprits.

Two suspects, John Koozaata, 29, and Lewis Oozeva, 21, allegedly called the Gambell Police Department offering to sell some pizzas to the cops on duty, according to KTUU TV.

Koozaata and Oozeva allegedly admitted eating five of the stolen pizzas. The other 75 have been recovered, KTVA.com reports.

A Washington teen who strapped fake explosives to his body in a stunt to ask a date to prom has been suspended from school.

The Columbian newspaper in Vancouver reports (<http://is.gd/x04w-KA>) that the five-day suspension will prevent Ibrahim Ahmad from attending La Center High's dance Saturday.

The 18-year-old senior says he was trying to go all out with his proposal, wearing a vest filled with paper-tube props made to look like explosives. At lunchtime, Ahmad stood on the cafeteria stage and held a sign that said he was "the bomb" and inviting his would-be date to prom.

Superintendent Mark Mansell says Ahmad's actions were inexcusable and that he deserved punishment for disrupting the learning environment.

Ahmad says the girl accepted, so they will likely go to dinner on prom night.

A creative firefighter rescued six baby ducks that had fallen through a storm drain in Slidell, Louisiana, over the weekend by luring them to safety with the duck ringtone on his iPhone.

Firefighters responded Saturday to the drain on Oak Tree Drive after a neighbor phoned in to report seeing the ducklings plunge through the drain, Chad Duffaut, chief of fire prevention for St. Tammany Fire District 1, said in a statement.

Firefighter Cody Knecht then wriggled into the drain and got the bright idea to impersonate their mother using the "quack, quack, quack" ringtone on his iPhone.

Steelers slamming at Shaler Area



On Friday April 18, several members of the Pittsburgh Steelers played faculty members from Shaler Area in a charity basketball game that raised money for PTO's from every building in the school district. (Above) Steelers WR CJ Goodwin goes up for a dunk much to the dismay of Mrs. Scott.

(Below) Plays from both teams pose for a picture. Photos courtesy of Gerra Gembarosky



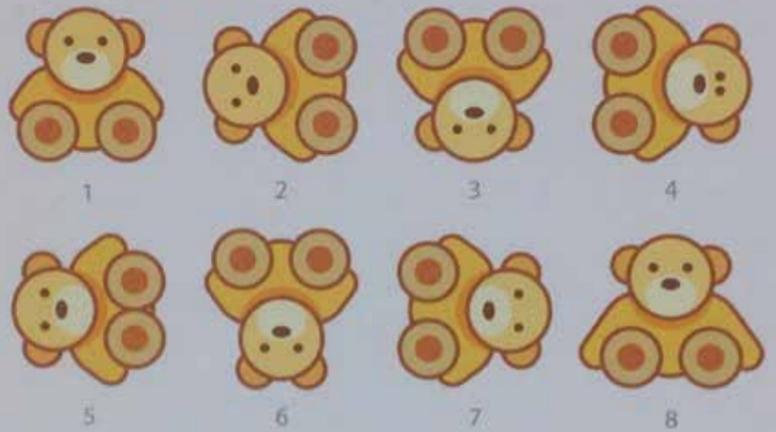
S P R E A D

Did you know?

1. Cats and other animals that are active in the day and night have pupils shaped like vertical slits because that shape allows the pupil to change size much faster than the round pupils we humans have.
2. The joey stays in its mother's pouch for about 6 or 7 months, drinking only milk. Before it can tolerate gum leaves, which are toxic for most mammals, the joey must feed on a substance called 'pap' which is a specialized form of the mother's droppings that is soft and runny. This allows the mother to pass on to the joey special micro-organisms from her intestine which are necessary for it to be able to digest the gum leaves. It feeds on this for a period of up to a few weeks, just prior to it coming out of the pouch at about 6 or 7 months of age.
3. There's a "blue marble" alien planet just 63 light-years from Earth. On Giant Blue Alien Planet, it rains molten glass. The planet's atmosphere is scorching with a temperature of over 1000 degrees Celsius, and it rains glass, sideways, in howling 7000 kilometer-per-hour winds.

CONNECT SUMS

** Connect the numbers into two groups by drawing horizontal and vertical lines from circle to circle. The numbers in each group must add up to the same sum: 42. Each circle may belong to only one group, and lines may not cross each other. I have drawn in the first line.



PERFECT MATCH **
Which two figures match perfectly?
The figures may be rotated.

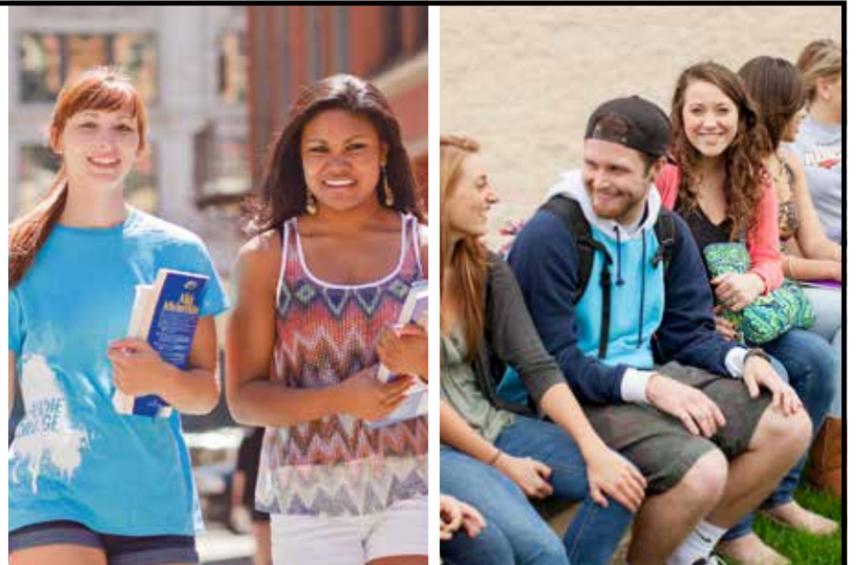


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Engaging Minds. Embracing the World.

SPORTS

Individual success leading to wins for boys baseball

by Ed Wynkoop

The boys baseball team has started its season the way that it had expected. Going on a nine game winning streak, Coach Brian Junker is very satisfied with the way his team is playing.

"Coming into the season we knew we had a good team. The team has worked very hard. So with that, the team is playing very well right now including win over the WPIAL champs Seneca Valley," he said.

After losing to Seneca Valley in the first round of last year's playoffs, the boys felt great about getting some revenge.

"We expected to beat them, but it was how we beat them that was nice. (Senior Gavin) Cannon threw a one hitter I believe, and we ended the game in 5 innings 10-0 due to the 10 run rule. That's always nice," Junker said.

The team is doing very well as of right now with an almost flawless record at 10-2. Many players are helping the cause by playing great all around.

"There hasn't been 1 standout. All 9 guys in the lineup have stood out at different times. We knew Potock, Cannon, Ireland, Mueller and Hernandez would be great this year. And they have been. But Noah Seelhorst, Adam Zulka, Corey Nasiadka, Alex Ficorrelli, Nick Fugh and Anthony Venezia stepped it up this year and have been outstanding," Junker said.

With a team full of talent, coach Junker believes that there is always room for improvement.

"We have the talent. We have the pitching. I still think the ticket to becoming



Jake Potock looks to throw strikes on the mound (Shaler Journal)

Lady Titans stride for WPIAL title

by Bri Schwartz

This spring, the reigning WPIAL champions kicked off their season with a scrimmage against last year's WPIAL runner up, Chartiers Valley. Shaler lost by one, but Chartiers Valley will now be playing in Division I while the Titans are in Division II. A game that close with a talented team shows promise in what the Lady Titans can accomplish this year.

With a 19-1 record and two consecutive Section and WPIAL titles from last year, the team has a lot to live up to. With big wins against Hampton and Mars, the Lady Titans did not hesitate to start off the season strong.

The team currently has a 14-1 record, with their first loss a close scoring game, 11-13, against Mars last month. On May 1st, the Lady Titans showed their potential by defeating Seneca Valley. The Titans beat the talented Division I team 11-10.

"I am expecting so much from our large senior class. They have dedicated themselves to setting the precedent for our program over the past three years, and have high hopes for their fourth and final year with the program. They are all leaders on and off the field," head coach Jen Perestock said.

The biggest challenges the team faced this season did not come from opposing teams. The Lady Titans lost two starters from last year, Nellie Philips and Morgan Burke. Philips was the team's center and Burke was the low defender. With losses like that, the underclassmen have been looked upon to step up and contribute.

"The position of center is a very unique, finesse, and important role. Morgan was also a key role on our defense. Therefore, we have been working to move younger players up, move some positions, and fine tune the newly assumed positions," Coach Perestock said.

"Our biggest challenge this season is getting the underclassmen and new players to fill in those roles and get adapted to our style of play," senior Cristine Cafeo said.

One underclassmen who is stepping up this season is sophomore Kara Jans. Jans is a second year starter at attack/midfield. "We have high expectations for playoffs, and the seniors have all been there to guide the younger players," Jans said.

"The younger girls come to me for help and I enjoy helping and teaching them. We have a lot of expectations on us and I just want to show them that working hard will help us live up to those expectations," senior Shannon Lynch said.

Another area the Titans will look to strengthen is in the draw circle. Winning draws can help win games, a factor in the Titans' first loss against Mars.

The senior class consists of seven skilled and key leaders who have faced those challenges head on. Kaylee Coyle will contribute on the defensive end in goal. Captain and 4-year starter Steph Fleming and returning starter Shauna Talbot will be counted on defensively. At midfield, Neely Regan, a 2-year captain, has stepped up to assume Philips' role as center. Shannon Lynch will be at midfield as well, and the team will look to her to excel on the draw circle. As leading scorer, Lynch has high expectations to contribute on the offensive end. At low attack, returning senior starters McKenna Ash and Cristine Cafeo will tally a significant number of goals and assists. These girls will also be key leaders in the offensive sets.

"This senior class is extremely special to me because they have been a part of our team when we earned our first and second WPIAL title. The emotions involved with such exhilarating and exciting experiences will never be forgotten," Coach Perestock said.

The best team in Shaler's section is Mars, who they are 1-1 against, winning the first and losing the second. Mars currently has a record of 10-5. In Shaler's division, Moon and Blackhawk have impressive records and could be a more equal matchup with the Titans on their quest for a third consecutive WPIAL title. Led by the experienced senior class, the team will continue to clear their path to a shot at another WPIAL title.

ing champions this year is becoming better at controlling the things we can control. Some of the players still have some trouble dealing with failure for example, striking out from a bad call from the ump, the other team talking trash, making an error etc. We can't control these things. But we can control how we react to them and our energy and attitude. I do believe in these guys and I do believe they will continue to do the things it will take to win a championship," Junker said.

And with the way that the team is playing right now, they certainly are poised to do great things this season.

"We are going to play the rest of the season one pitch at a time. We don't get caught up in who we are playing or what the score is. It is about playing as hard as you can for that pitch, and when it is over, we do it again and again," Junker said.

The boys took on Kiski last Friday where they won 10-0. Then the boys faced off against Butler and beat them by the score of 8-3. The Titans followed that up with a 12-0 win vs. Penn Hills and a 9-4 win vs. Woodland Hills. But on Friday the boys took on Central Catholic in a game that went into extra innings in which the

boys fell 1-0 snapping their winning streak. Although it snapped their winning streak, it did not snap their confidence as they played Vencentian and beat them 11-1.

"We teach all players to act as if you are the best. We are looking for nine confident players at all times and I think we have that," Junker said.

Boys' tennis loses to Plum in playoffs

by Justin Jockel

The Shaler Area Boys' Tennis team had their season end earlier than they had hoped. Last week, Shaler was unable to overcome Plum. This match decided who would play Upper St. Clair in the first round of playoffs. Although the team lost, they are very proud of the season they had.

"I feel like we had a successful season for sure, as we had to work hard for a playoff spot. Even though we might not be the best team in our section, I know for a fact we had the most fun together," senior Chris Seifried said.

Before this season, the last time the team made playoffs was in 1997, which was 18 years ago. However, the team feels that with how talented they are, they knew that had an opportunity to make it.

"The team this year was closer than ever before. Knowing we had a shot at making the playoffs really brought us together to play as a team instead of playing individually," junior Sean Funfar said.

Funfar said another reason the team was able to make playoffs was because of the optimistic attitude the team had throughout the season.

"Our team always played with a positive mindset no matter who we faced. Every time we went into a match, there was always a chance to win," Funfar said.

Senior Nick Buckshaw said experience played a major role in making it to playoffs.

"Since most of our team is juniors and seniors, we have become more experienced and everyone of us has improved. Each match a different player stepped up to give us the best chance of winning," Buckshaw said.

Next year, the team is hoping to be right back in the playoff hunt and make it far. With the experience the team will have on its roster, there is no doubt in the minds of anyone on the team they can make it.

SPORTS

Boys' Lacrosse unable to clinch a playoff spot

by Justin Jockel

The Shaler Area Boys' Lacrosse team is set to wrap up its season, playing its final games on May 5th at home against North Hills, which is Senior Night, and against Bethel Park on May 6th. Junior Jared Panza said the team had a shot at making playoffs, but their chances were hurt with a loss against Quaker Valley, which made the team drop down to 3rd place in the section.

"Our only hope is for Quaker Valley and Mars to lose all their upcoming games, which is highly unlikely," Panza said.

Despite the team's incapability to make playoffs, Panza said he was overall content with how the season went as a whole, not including the outcome.

"It's tough to be satisfied when our playoff hopes are crushed, but as a team we have really come together and have proved ourselves as a top team," Panza said.

Junior Jimmy Schlieper says this year was sort of an "up-and-down" type of year.

"We are either on our game or we are off by a little bit, but we have been way more consistent than in previous years," Schlieper said.

Panza said the team had a very distinct strategy



Zach Weidner attempts to make a play (Lisa Montini)

when it came to playing in its games, which would eventually lead to success in those games.

"Our strategy was to take it one step at a time. We focused on winning that quarter, then we focused on the next one and, eventually, it would lead us to a win," Panza said.

Schlieper revealed other critical strategies that went into the team's gameplan.

"We always have numerous offenses and defenses to run. Also, some of our top players play on travelling teams with players on other teams. It

helps us know who the top dogs are on our opponent's team," Schlieper said.

When it came to the games the team lost, Panza said it was important for the team to regroup and fix its mistakes.

"After each game we would have a pretty long talk where the coaches and captains would list things we needed to improve on. The next day in practice we worked on fixing those issues," Panza said.

Panza said as the season went on, the team grew together and improved on their skills.

"We became more of a family throughout the season. We also dramatically improved our ball movement and ability to play well under more stressful situations," Panza said.

Schlieper named a few players that have set the example for the team this year.

"Jack Albright has been phenomenal. Also, Zach Romac has been playing very solid as well. Mostly everyone has played their part very well," Schlieper said.

The Titans will look towards next year to be in contention for a playoff spot and to put the outcome of this year in the rear-view mirror.

"We can't let the past dictate our future," Schlieper said.

Track looks toward WPIALs, states

by Taylor Laffey

Track season is coming to a close, and the athletes have been making big improvements. Recent meets for the teams include invitationals at Baldwin and Pine Richland, which will be eventually followed by WPIAL qualifiers, finals, and the PIAA championship.

In mid April, athletes from the boys and girls teams traveled to Butler to compete in the Butler Invitational. Overall, both teams had success, but senior javelin thrower, Nicole Pilewski really made her mark.

Pilewski has been training as a javelin thrower for the past three years, but has recently taken on the long jump. Coach Eskra wanted to see how far she could jump at a practice and immediately saw potential.

After only three practices long jumping, Pilewski competed at Butler. She had little experience with the event, but still managed to jump straight to the podium stand. Of her three jumps, her farthest was 17' 1 1/2" which is an extremely far distance, let alone for someone who never jumped before.

This distance not only qualified her for WPIAL qualifiers, but it put her in a great position to qualify for the PIAA championships as well. Pilewski earned fourth place in the long jump out of long jumpers from 45 other teams.

Nicole's success did not end at long jump. Shortly after competing "just for fun" in long jump, her primary event, javelin started. Nicole was in the top 10 in Shaler Area history of javelin throws with a personal record of 106'4". As her three throws progressed, Pilewski continued to shatter records.

Her second throw soared far above the rest of the competitors'. She threw a new personal record of 123' 11". Nicole was already quali-

fied for WPIAL's for javelin but this throw earned her a spot as the best javelin thrower in Shaler history so far. Pilewski beat out every other javelin thrower for the title of Butler Invitational Champion.

"Standing up on the first place podium was one of the greatest accomplishments in my athletic career. It was truly something that will never be forgotten. It was so nice to see the people supporting me on my team as well. They were all right there cheering me on!" Pilewski said.

At the 42nd Baldwin Invitational (the biggest track meet in all of Western Pennsylvania with 72 teams competing for titles) and an invitational held at Pine Richland (which is where WPIAL qualifiers take place) held on the same day, Shaler had many successful athletes.

At Baldwin, seniors Cody Greygor and Nicole Pilewski came home with medals. Cody placed third in long jump and Nicole came in fourth for long jump and seventh for javelin.

Shaler was well represented at Pine Richland as well. Senior Sydney Funtal earned a fifth place medal in pole vault and freshman Claire Shreiber earned two medals. She received a fourth place medal for triple jump and sixth in long jump. Also, first year discus thrower Julia Shane earned a spot in WPIAL qualifiers. She threw multiple feet over the qualifying distance of 90 feet and will be heading to the meet on May 1st.

Next up for the track and field athletes is the WPIAL qualifier meet. From there, the top 8 at that meet will move onto WPIAL championships the next week. Shortly following the WPIAL championships the best athletes will move on to compete at the PIAA States competition.

Softball team prepares for the postseason

by Jared Panza

With a WPIAL championship already under its belt, the Lady Titans Softball team is looking to repeat. After only graduating two seniors last year, Lady Titans are returning with the majority of their starting roster.

"Mostly everyone who started last year is back this year. Obviously something worked last year, so it has a lot of potential to work this year," senior Mia Sipple said.

The girls are playing strong as they continue to battle to win a WPIAL championship. The Lady Titans are currently tied for second place in the section with Seneca Valley at 10-3. The girls lost to Seneca early in the season but recently cruised to an easy 13-2 win to split their games.

The team is behind North Allegheny in the section; a team the girls recently lost to 7-2. Overall, the girls are 0-2 against NA this year, but know they have the ability to beat them and win a WPIAL championship.

"Overall, we are really confident in our ability to make it back to the WPIAL championship game," said junior first baseman Amanda Sartori.

With the playoffs games ahead, the girls look at what they can improve on.

"Right now the main thing we need to work on is the mental aspect of our game. As a team, we have the athletic ability and we have the talent, but mentally we occasionally falter. When we make an error or have a poor at bat we can't let it affect the rest of the game," junior outfielder Jacey Schott said.

The girls will rely heavily on their junior pitcher Brianna Dobson. Last year, Dobson was 17-4 with a 1.32 ERA and 92 strikeouts. Dobson also hit .514 with nine home runs and 29 RBI's.

The girls know it will be a difficult road but have the confidence they can make it.

"We definitely have the potential to win WPIAL's again as long as the whole team shows up to play. If we all show up ready to win, no team can stop us," says Sartori.

The girls prepare for their first playoff game on May 11th.

Q&A

Actress Daina Griffith

by Kim Yurasits



Daina Griffith is an actress who is a graduate of Point Park University. She has worked on stage in the Pittsburgh area as well New York City. She was named 2013 Post-Gazette Performer of the Year. She also had a role in several movies including "The Dark Knight Rises".

What is a typical day for you?

If I'm in rehearsal, like I am now, I start the day by going to the gym then come home, work on my script, answer emails and get ready for my evening rehearsal. It's also possible that I will have a private acting coaching with one of my fine students. If I'm rehearsing during the day, I usually go to yoga at night and then work on my script before bed.

What kind of problems do you deal with?

Rejection. Actors audition constantly, and often times don't book the job. It's hard to convince yourself that you didn't get the job not because of who you are as a person on the inside and out, but that you just weren't right for the role and one day you will be right for what they are looking for.

What brought you into acting?

I always wanted to be an actor but didn't have an outlet in my hometown of Fairfield, Ohio. It was hard break-

ing into the drama club at my high school, cause I'm a pretty shy person and the drama kids had been friends and doing shows together for years. Finally I got the guts and auditioned for a play my senior year. The rest is history.

How did you "break into" the industry?

When I still lived in Ohio (I lived there till I was 20) I had an agent in Cincinnati that sent me in for auditions and I would book occasional print work. After moving to Pittsburgh to train in Point Park's Conservatory program, I got an agent here as well and started auditioning for everything I could. Before I graduated college I had worked professionally with most of my professors in shows around Pittsburgh, joined 2 acting unions and shot a couple commercials. I made many friends here before moving to NYC, so I would return to Pittsburgh once or twice a year for work. Connections (and being genuinely nice to people) are key.

Q&A

podcaster Dan Carlin



by Kyle Donovan

Dan Carlin is a political commentator, veteran journalist, and amateur historian who hosts two podcasts: Common Sense, commentary on current events, and Hardcore History, a cinematic telling of stories from history. The Oracle recently spoke to him about his career and his opinions on history and education.

How did you get into journalism?

I actually got started in high school, so I've been doing journalism as long as you've been doing journalism, or as far back. I went to college and was a history major, and when I got out of college I wasn't sure what I was going to do, and I ended up working at a news station in Los Angeles, and the history degree actually came in handy for working in journalism, there's that old line that 'journalism is the first draft of history,' and a lot of the news people that I worked with and that I really respected had been history majors. You know it's funny, sometimes you get on these life paths, and you start going down them and it wasn't anything I thought when I was a little kid that this is what I wanted to do, but you turn around and you've been there 10 years on this certain path, and that's sort of how I got into journalism, and other opportunities sort of sprung up from there.

Why did you make the switch from broadcasts to podcasts?

Well for years people in the audience I'd spoken to suggested that we get out of radio. Radio had changed a lot over the last 15 or so years and it wasn't quite as fun or as interesting as when I got into it. Luckily, a high tech guy during the high tech boom in the 1990s said he was going to invent a way to do my show on the internet, so I joined his company and we started working on lots of stuff.

Each of these Q&As are excerpts. There's more to each one. Read all of the complete Q&A segments on our website

<http://usatodayhss.com/market/shaler-hs-pa>

Q&A with Paul McGill

by Kayla Snyder

Paul McGill is the son of high school teacher Mrs. Shari McGill. From flying across the stage as Spider-Man to now designing his own dance moves on Broadway, McGill has accomplished so many of his dreams at a young age. He made his Broadway debut when he was only 17 years old.

What inspired you to pursue your dreams?

I don't know that there was any other way for me. When I'm uninspired is when I'm not doing well in life, so I'd rather live.

How did you get involved in the performing world?

I was junior. My dance teacher called and said they were auditioning for this show and that I should go and audition for it. My dad took me and they hired me on the spot. They said you start on Saturday, it was a Monday and I skipped school. I came back to Northgate and told them I was moving. I started cyber school and went to the performing arts high school in New York while I was doing the show.

It sounds like a movie, but everything leading up to that was hard work and dedication. I was like a horse with blinders on, then I was given an opportunity and I just had the courage. It was opportunity

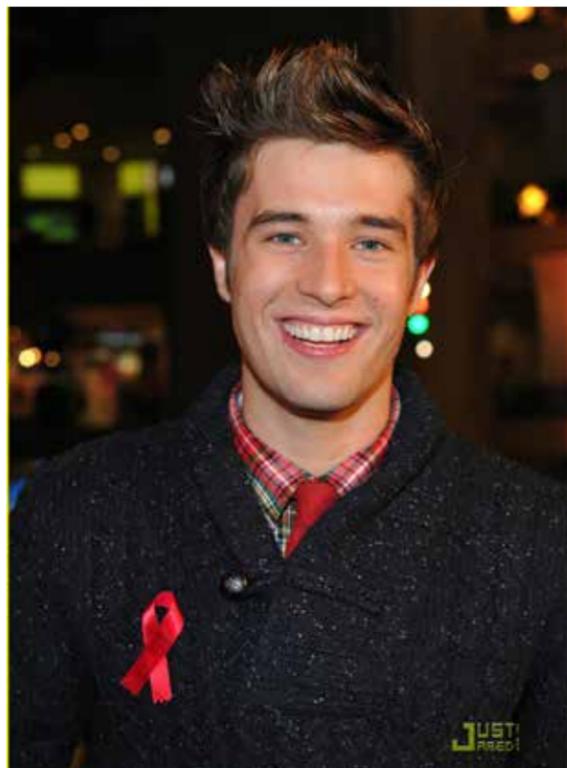
meets courage, meets talent, meets preparation, and it fell into place.

What productions have you been apart of?

My first show was La Cage aux Folles, then I was in A Chorus Line, I did the movie Fame, I did a movie called Man on Wire, which won an Oscar, I did a horror film called House Hunting. I did a musical called Memphis. I did Spiderman Turn of the Dark, I was in a Woody Allen show called Bullets Over Broadway, and now I work at Hedwig on Broadway.

What was your favorite and why?

I think my favorite was A Chorus Line because it depicts what we go through as performing artists,



and really anyone who does what they love. I did that for 2 and a half years and it really taught me a lot about myself. I consider it my "college"

How is life living in New York City?

Well, to me, it's normal. Compared to Pittsburgh, it's really fast paced and everyone is on their way somewhere. The little times to sit down and breathe are really cherished and it's also inspiring. Everyone is doing something interesting. That inspires me to want to do something interesting. It's a fueled city and I love it.

At what age did you realize that performing was what you wanted?

I can't say. I think that for me, I started dancing when I was 3. I started singing and acting when I was 10. It was all just interest. I think there was no other choice.

Q&A with dancer and Shaler Area grad Leah Maurizio

By Adriana Imhof

Leah Maurizio is a 2011 Shaler Area graduate pursuing a dance career. She is a full time student at Point Park University, which she juggles with her dancing career.

When did you start dancing?

I started dancing when I was in second grade.

Did you start out as a hip hop dancer?

I did not. I started out as an acro, tap, and jazz dancer, which lasted two years. Hip Hop took over when I was entering fourth grade.

When did you know hip hop was what you wanted to pursue?

I knew when I felt it for the first time. That may sound naïve, but I honestly did. Nothing could top that feeling. I knew it would be my number one passion for the rest of my life.

Who are some of your biggest influences in your life (In general and dance wise)?

My biggest influences include my parents, my sisters, my coaches/bosses, and my incredibly supportive girlfriend.

What role does your relationship play in your dance life?

It plays a huge role. Melanie keeps me going. When I am at my lowest, she pulls me out of the darkness, and when I am at my best, she is always there to watch me “shine.”

What do you think about the Pittsburgh dance community? Has it provided you with sufficient training to pursue a dance career?



The Pittsburgh dance community is scarce, yet it is growing tremendously. I am fortunate enough to have experienced such a fruitful dance life in this city, but this is very rare. My training is a continuous process, for I train myself and I train under others. I do believe my past training aided my dance career, but Pittsburgh does not provide what I wish I could have had.

Do you think it matters where you live?

Yes! For most dancers a dance career cannot prosper in random areas. A dance career can be enjoyed anywhere, but that depends on the level at which the dancer wishes to succeed. Commercially, dancing is better elsewhere. Los Angeles, New York, and Vegas are destinations that provide the most. Other cities and states are approaching a higher offering level, but the aforementioned take the cake.

What advice would you give to young kids trying to take up dance?

Never limit yourself, learn every single day, you are only as great as you want to be, travel, don't be afraid to face your biggest fears, be well-rounded, if you are waiting for the right time...IT IS NOW!

When do you do your best dancing?

I believe I do my best dancing when I am performing for large crowds.

What type of mood makes your dancing shine the most?

My dancing seems to shine when I am hungry for happiness. When my soul is telling me that I need to dance, I shine the most.

What atmosphere do you dance best in?

I love funny people that are willing to let go. I dance best in an atmosphere of people that like to laugh and cheer for one another. I do not like competitive atmospheres, though it does drive me. I prefer exchanging good vibes through dance, which usually takes place in an intimate studio space with some really awesome, talented individuals.

Do you prefer dancing solo or with a group?

Weirdly, I just recently performed my first solo of my dance career. I loved the feeling, yet nothing compares to sharing passion with others on the floor

Is the professional dance world comparable to the harshness of the professional modeling world?

Not as harsh, but definitely harsh enough.

How big of a role do looks play in your life?

In general, I like to look put together even if I don't have makeup on and am in sweats (the usual). Body image is hard for me. Although I am fortunate to be naturally athletic, I still have intense periods of training in order to look my best.

There's more! See the rest of this Q&A on our website -- <http://usatodayhss.com/market/shaler-hs-pa>



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Della Valle reflects after improbable Penn St. career

By Jared Panza

As children, many young boys dream of making it to the big leagues, playing for the best with the best. Unfortunately, very few dreams become reality. But, for Shaler Area graduate Jesse Della Valle, those childhood dreams came true.

Playing football since the fifth grade, Della Valle always dreamed of playing Division I football.

"It was always kind of a dream of mine; something I set out to do and had a goal in mind," Della Valle said.

Once Della Valle reached high school, he was a superstar. During his senior year he had 1,600 all purpose yards, and was named to second team AAAA all-state, named to Pittsburgh Post Gazette's Fabulous 22, and to the Pittsburgh Tribune Review Terrific 25.

Being such a powerhouse player, Della Valle left big impressions on coaches from other high schools as well. Jack McCurry, North Hills coach of 30 years, told the Shaler Area football coaching staff that Jesse Della Valle was one of the best high school players he had ever faced.

"When I talk about my football career and memories, I always want to talk about my Shaler days. That's just what I find myself talking about because it's like those are some of the best days, when you're playing with your buddies that you grew up with, your best friends for Shaler," Della Valle said.

Della Valle's old assistant coach at Shaler Area, John Ehrentraut, spoke to the Centre Daily Times and spoke very highly of Della Valle.

"His senior year, I think he was the best player in the [WPIAL] Quad-A," Ehrentraut said.

But even with a long list of achievements and a solid reputation as one of the best players in western Pennsylvania, Division I college coaches were wary to recruit Della Valle. Worried about his speed, many Division I schools did not offer scholarships to Della Valle.

"I had some scholarship offers from [Division] I AA schools, some smaller schools like Robert Morris, then I had the chance to walk on at Penn State," Della Valle said.

Being a preferred walk-on at Penn State, Della Valle decided to give it a shot.

"I just said I'm going to give it my best shot and see how it plays out, and I think it worked out for me," Della Valle said.

Once he made the Penn State football team, Della Valle started playing in his second academic year as a red-shirt freshman.

But before Della Valle could play in his first college game, there was a major setback to all of Penn State football. In November 2011, Jerry Sandusky, former assistant coach at Penn State, was accused of sexually assaulting 26 young men.

Sandusky coached at Penn State from 1969-1999, with the alleged abuse starting in 1994, while he was a coach at Penn State. Penn State officials and staff were have said to have known about the abuse. Those who knew about the scandal were soon fired, including coaching legend Joe Paterno.

With the whole university coming under intense media pressure, no one was safe, not even the players.

"They would knock on our apartment doors and try and get in and I don't know anything about it. The only thing I know is what I'm seeing on the TV," Della Valle said.

Not only was the media trying to contact the players, but since players had the opportunity to leave, many colleges were contacting players offering scholarships to transfer schools. Many players contemplated leaving anyways to escape the harsh sanctions put in place by the NCAA.

"When the sanctions hit, schools started coming



Jesse Della Valle returns a punt against Eastern Michigan

in and just throw the offers out to pretty much everyone on the team because you were allowed to leave if you wanted to leave, so I got offers from different schools at the time and at the time I was still a walk-on, but I really didn't want to leave this place," Della Valle said.

In addition to the social and academic points that made Della Valle stay, he also says his teammates were what kept him anchored to the Penn State football program.

"We all had that 'us-against-the-world' mentality. I had a lot of really close friends and teammates that, even if we weren't playing for a bowl game or Big Ten championship, those are the guys that I was best friends with," Della Valle said.

That same commitment and dedication to his team helped Della Valle solidify his reputation on the Penn State football team as one of the hardest, and toughest workers; proving himself to be a playmaker.

From the end of his sophomore season, Della Valle was the primary punt returner as well as getting several career starts in the secondary.

In his junior season, in which he played every game, Della Valle led the team, averaging 7.6 yards per return and was in third place in the Big Ten. He led his team in average kick return, averaging 25.2 yards. He received Academic All-Big Ten honors.

Senior season, Della Valle played his second consecutive season playing every game. He averaged 8.7 yards per return, and made 21 tackles. He played a large role in many important games. In the Ohio State game he had a career high nine tackles.

Before his fifth season, Della Valle was honored with being named special teams captain.

"To start your career as a walk-on and end as a captain... it was something that really hit home for me. It's just kind of saying my work paid off. To be voted special teams captain by my coaches and teammates was just something really special and something I will cherish forever," Della Valle said.

Della Valle's fifth-year senior season was one that was not short of extraordinary. Once again, he was the primary punt returner for Penn State, and got several starts in the Nittany Lions' secondary, making what is considered one of the best interceptions of 2014.

With Penn State win-

ning 30-13 in the fourth quarter against Temple, Temple's QB PJ Walker lobs a pass downfield. Della Valle jumped, caught the ball, was hit in mid-air, and somehow managed to get a hand in bounds.

Not only was the catch hailed as one of the best interceptions, but Della Valle found his way on to SportsCenter Top 10 Best Plays.

"It was my first time getting on SportsCenter, so needless to say it was pretty cool," Della Valle said.

As his final season was coming to an end, Penn State qualified to play in the New Era Pinstripe Bowl in New York, their first bowl game since the sanctions were dropped. A game, which at one point could have been against state rival, Pitt Panthers, was to be a fitting end for such a storied career for a hometown hero from Shaler Area.

"It was kind of a storybook ending for me; it was kind of like 'go out on the right note.' It was an awesome game. We got a good win, so it was a good ending to my career," said Della Valle.

But with his football career coming to an end, Della Valle reflects on his days at Penn State.

"I was able to do some really special things while I was at Penn State, as well as making a name for myself. I was able to help with the Special Olympics and other stuff through the community. I really wasn't even a big name up there either, but just being a Penn State football player, you just put such a smile on those kids' faces," said Della Valle.

Della Valle and the other Penn State football players also helps out with THON, which benefits kids with pediatric cancer.

"Just to see the smile on the kids' face is so rewarding. It doesn't matter who you are, the kids just love that," said Della Valle.

With such success in college Della Valle takes time to look back on his high school days, and has some advice for other high school athletes.

"I always said I wish I would have played more sports. I wish I would have played baseball or lacrosse or anything I could have. Because when I got to college I realized it was more of a job. I was doing stuff for football 30+ hours a week, almost a full time job, but in high school it was fun. Just don't be scared to play a new sport or try something different, just try it, just go out and have fun. Like I said I wish I would have done more, but I was blessed to play football and basketball here," said Della Valle.

After years of playing football, Jesse Della Valle says it's time to hang it up:

"I just think it's time for me to move on and maybe get into coaching. Just go on with my life. I'm really happy with the things I accomplished, but I think everything has just got to come to an end eventually and my college career is something I'm really proud of and something I will always cherish."

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