

The Oracle

Volume 50 Issue 1

Student Newspaper Of Shaler Area High School

November 2023

Former PA Governor stays rooted in Shaler

by Matt Purucker

Did you know that Shaler Area is the home of a former Pennsylvania Governor? If you are old enough, you know that Tom Corbett was the 46th Governor of Pennsylvania from 2011 to 2015. But, if you are currently a high school student, you might not have that memory.

Corbett was born in Philadelphia in 1949 and moved to Shaler when he was six years old. In 1956, he moved to the house where he still lives today.

“One of the reasons I love it is that we had a pre-Civil War farmhouse. It’s not even on the records in Allegheny County. Two stories were built into a hillside, and then in 1870, they added a log cabin,” Corbett said. “When we remodeled, there was dirt underneath the floor. In that dirt we found a bottle containing a couple of buttons, a piece of ceramic, and two very petrified rats.”

When he renovated the house, Corbett left a mason jar filled with memorabilia he collected over the years, including items from his time in the Boy Scouts, insignias and ranks from his time in the National Guard, items from college and law school in San Antonio, and lacrosse equipment from his youth. He loves history and wanted to make a time capsule to pass onto the next generation.

Corbett went to St. Mary’s Catholic School on Middle Road up until ninth grade before transferring to Shaler where one of his claims to fame was being the Huskie mascot. After high school, he went to Lebanon Valley College.

“I got along with everybody. Little did I know that was the foundation of politics. I wasn’t a favorite of anybody, but I wasn’t ever hated,” Corbett said.

Corbett graduated from college in 1971. He was drafted into the Vietnam War during his junior year, but he was able to defer his service until he graduated. To fulfill his service requirement, he joined the Pennsylvania Army National Guard.

“Besides meeting my wife in college, it was the



Former PA Governor Tom Corbett

second best thing that ever happened to me because I learned discipline that I didn’t have,” Corbett said.

After getting out of the National Guard after serving 13 years, Corbett went to law school in San Antonio. During law school, he discovered his love for criminal law and decided to become a prosecutor. Following graduation, he returned back to his house and became an assistant district attorney. Still to this day, he remains a prosecutor at heart.

At the age of 30, Corbett tried a death penalty case, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania v. Stanton Story. Stanton Story had shot and killed a police officer. He was supposed to be second chair to the lead prosecutor in the case, but because the case was overturned on appeal and the lead prosecutor had an-

other trial, Corbett had to handle the case alone.

Corbett was successfully able to point out Story’s contradictions during cross examination and Story received a guilty verdict for murder. All 12 jurors came back with a guilty verdict for the death penalty, which wasn’t even the most dramatic part.

“The judge called him up to the bench to pronounce his sentence, and as he got up there, all the lights went off. All I saw were people moving. I bent over because I thought someone was going to start firing a gun,” Corbett said. “The judge had a staff member who was a former homicide cop. He ran into the judge’s chamber, drew his pistol, and saw

Cont on page 3

Graffiti butterfly created to help students' mental health

by Matt Purucker

Have you seen the giant 12-foot butterfly on the wall across from the activities office? If not, you should give it a look. On first glance, you see that butterfly. On closer inspection, you see “Your story matters” in a graffiti font and splashes of vibrant color.

In April of last year, the LIGHT Education Initiative hosted an end-of-year celebration and storytelling event at the high school. During that event, around 150 to 200 students worked on the mural, centering around positive mental health.

While mental health has gained more attention in recent years, LIGHT Education Initiative leader Mrs. Catlyn DiPasquale believes that including positive messaging on a mural that most people will see everyday will further promote mental health awareness in the high school.

“We’re always looking for ways to help beautify the school and ways to make it more inviting,” Mrs. Di-



Pasquale said.

The art piece itself is filled with many symbolic elements that add to the positive mental health aspect of the mural. In a lot of cultures, the butterfly is a symbol of hope and remembrance, and it is featured in the piece.

“The butterfly seemed like the right choice because hope is important when you are experiencing mental

health issues or going through something,” Mrs. DiPasquale said. “There is also a semicolon, which is inside the butterfly. It shows that the sentence could have ended, but it continued to go on.”

Having the semicolon as the body of the butterfly and the words “Your story matters” underneath signify that everyone’s story is not complete and

that everyone’s story is meaningful. These details aim to boost the mental health of students throughout the building.

Two professional artists, Shane Pilster and Max Gonzales, oversaw the mural station of the LIGHT event last April, teaching the students who worked on the art piece about the urban arts and about the techniques they should use in painting the mural. Once the students finished painting, Pilster and Gonzales added some finishing touches to help the butterfly and words stand out better; but other than that, it was all student made.

“It was everyone. The message was to come, grab a paint can, take a little corner, do a little piece here, try this technique,” Mrs. DiPasquale said. “As with any graffiti project, it got covered up a little bit here and there, and it turned into something new when the next person took part in it. Be on the lookout for a similar school-wide project or event to happen again in the spring.”

OPINIONS

It's time to start the school day later

by Jack Salego

In high school, every morning is slow and sluggish. As the day moves on, it is not hard to see the mood in students and staff change from first to last period. What is even easier to see is the envy Shaler Area students feel toward neighboring districts who have taken steps to address that issue by having school start times pushed back.

According to Start School Later, 33 school districts in Pennsylvania have moved to a later start time. This year Pittsburgh Public Schools pushed back start time to 7:40 a. m., 25 minutes later and Upper St. Clair high moved it start time back 30 minutes to 8 a.m.. In 2021, neighboring district Hampton moved it start time back 50 minutes to 8:20 a.m., an entire hour later than our start time.

For the betterment of students and staff all around, we need to start looking into a later start time here in Shaler Area.

If someone has a sports match far away on a Tuesday or Thursday night, those players do not get home until 10 p.m. or even later depending on the conditions of the game. Add in any homework that did not get done before, food, a shower, and actually



getting to sleep, it is not hard to see why so many students, especially athletes, go into their first period sluggish.

It is even easier to see the effects of a later start time when we look back at the pandemic. Shaler Area started an hour later on virtual instruction days. Students loved how this allowed them to sleep in, something that could be replicated through a later start time.

Over the years every teacher I have had has, at one point or another, said “Wake up” in one form or

another to the entire class due to low participation. The feedback is pretty unanimous when thinking about the start time changing. People would not complain, students and staff alike.

“What’s been happening is that districts just push schools back by 15 to 30 minutes, which wouldn’t change much in my life. It would feel great. No one would ever complain about 15 to 30 extra minutes of sleep, but on the scale of students’ brains needing the extra sleep, that small amount of time doesn’t change too much,” physics teacher Mr. Brian Davis said.

What holds us back with this issue is, unfortunately, us.

“We talked a little bit about this last year. We’ve always considered it. There’s a few factors that have played into us not making that decision,” Superintendent Dr. Sean Aiken said.

Of course any change will have hurdles to jump through. A lack of effort and a lack of extra thought is stopping the topic from making real headway.

There is no perfect solution, but if districts like Hampton and Upper St. Clair can find ways to make it work, why can’t Shaler Area?

SAHS assemblies should become more frequent

by Will Emmons

On September 20th, 2023, an exciting event unfolded at Shaler Area High School, called the No Hate Tour. This tour is a dynamic group of competitive BMX bikers who travel the country, visiting schools to impart crucial messages of love and anti-bullying.

While the stunts and adrenaline-pumping bike tricks undoubtedly stole the spotlight, it’s important to reflect on the impact that assemblies can have on our school community.

The answer, from students and faculty alike, is a resounding “yes.” Attendees of the assembly almost unanimously agree that it was a very enjoyable experience, expressing their enthusiasm for future events of a similar nature.

More assemblies in the building will create a happier and more positive education environment, and while it’s true that such assemblies may momentarily take away from precious class time, it is essential to remember that high school is not just about academics; it’s also about creating cherished memories and nurturing a positive, vibrant atmosphere.



Many of us can fondly recall the elementary school assemblies that featured encounters with exotic animals or magic shows, so why should the tradition of fun and engaging assemblies be limited to

younger students?

Unless there are compelling reasons to resist the idea of incorporating periodic bursts of excitement into our school days, there is every justification to infuse our school day with assemblies.

Moreover, the United States Department of State has emphasized the benefits of injecting fun into education. Not only does it elevate morale, but it also encourages students to step out of their comfort zones and actively participate. In this post-COVID era, where the dynamics of education have evolved, the inclusion of school-wide or class-wide activities from third-party sources could be precisely what our dedicated teachers need to rekindle the spirit of learning and collaboration.

The No Hate Tour’s visit was not merely a random group of people doing flips on bikes; it was a reminder of the benefit that comes from assemblies. As we look to the future, we need to enthusiastically embrace the idea of more assemblies that not only entertain but also inspire, making a school environment where academic excellence and memorable experiences go hand in hand.



The Oracle

Student Newspaper of Shaler Area High School

Follow us on Twitter and Instagram



@ShalerOracle



visit our website -- ShalerOracle.com

The Oracle

Staff --- Joey Duty, Will Emmons, Brady McGuire, Matt Purucker, Jack Salego, Eddie Schmidt, Sanghun Yeu

Faculty Advisor: Mr. Eric Schott

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@shalerarea.org.

The Oracle reserves the right to condense or omit any letters or articles unfit for publication.

School lockers: popularity keeps plummeting

by Eddie Schmidt

Lockers have been a staple of any high school for decades, but this seemingly essential part of student life is now facing a considerable decline in popularity. Fewer and fewer students each year are using their lockers, opting instead to just bring their backpack everywhere to class. This has plummeted locker usage, leading many to question their purpose. So that begs the question: Why are students not using their lockers?

The leading cause for many students can be traced to impracticality. When a homeroom is given the option to get their locker registered, they are always in specific locations that leave little room for flexibility. The classrooms at the high school are spread out around the three-story building, and with similar classes often in proximity with one another, it is impossible for a locker to be always accessible. If I have English on the third floor, and I need my textbook for History the next hallway over, but my locker is on the first floor, am I really going to take that entire extra route for the book when I can instead just wear a backpack that holds everything I need throughout the day? At that point, it just becomes an inconvenience.

“I’ve never used mine. They are too far out of my way; it’s just impractical,” stated senior Michael Ulery.

The most common issue amongst students is the ease of forgetting about their lockers. Whether it is their combination, lock number, or both, it is difficult to remember information about something that is never used, which ultimately limits usage even more. This issue is most prominent for the homerooms that require locker registration, which has been thinning over the years, but is still a relatively common occurrence.

“I don’t use it. I don’t know where it is, or my



locker number, or my lock combination,” said freshman Elizabeth Dunlevy.

Not everybody has cast their lockers aside, though. While the number of students who actively use lockers are dwindling, there is a select group who have been using it consistently for years and have no intention of stopping. These students appreciate the utility that a personal locker provides, and do not find the location of their locker to be a hindrance. However, after interviewing nearly 5 dozen students, I was unable to find anybody who actually uses their locker, so take this point with a grain of salt.

Contrary to the high school populace, middle school students actually use their lockers consistently. They are all assigned a locker like several of the high school homeroom groups, but the difference lies in location. The lockers there are considerably more accessible to the students, and with the more condensed building overall, it is not as much of a hassle to take a quick stop and swap out supplies.

“Yes, I use my locker. We’re supposed to, and it helps keep all my stuff safe,” said eighth grader Ryan Benedict.

Shaler students are not the only ones who hold an opinion on lockers. GATE Teacher Mrs. Christina Palladino has been a longtime supporter of the lockers here at the high school, and assigns lockers to her GATE homeroom each year, even with their consistency of forgetting them.

“Usually it’s after holiday breaks like Winter Break, Christmas Break, and Spring Break when students come to us because they can’t remember their combinations, even if they put something in it since they just do it infrequently. By the end of the year, when we’re collecting locks, usually everyone is looking for their combination again,” Mrs. Palladino said.

Mrs. Palladino herself used her locker every day during her high school years, and still uses one for the classes she teaches.

While GATE does assign lockers to all of their freshmen and sophomore members, they are not forced to use it by any means. She noted that only 8-10 of the roughly 34 underclassmen GATE students actively use their locker, but it really helps those few.

While she acknowledges the relative decline in locker usage, their complete removal by the school is an unlikely concept. Mrs. Palladino thinks more can be done to help encourage her students as an alternative.

“It would take a lot to remove all the lockers. I think that is probably not going to happen, so incentivizing it may be a better idea, or finding out from students why they aren’t using it. If you could come up with a reason to use it, then promote that through teachers or homeroom,” she explained. “Maybe also ask ‘is it the location,’ if they’d rather have it be a certain part of the school building, that would help them use it more.”

Former PA Governor stays rooted in Shaler — from page 1

somebody moving. He was just about to shoot when the cleaning lady turned the lights back on.”

Later, Corbett moved down to the United States Attorney’s Office and in one of his cases helped to convict a heroin smuggling ring. However, it was not until after he went into private practice that he started getting into politics.

Corbett joined the Republican Committee of Shaler Township and its leaders asked him if he wanted to run for township commissioner. According to them, Corbett was not given much of a chance to win, but he did not let that deter him. During three weekends in October of 1988, he knocked on 1,200 doors and ended up beating the incumbent Democrat by 100 votes.

“Don’t tell me I can’t win. If I can’t win, I’m still going to try. In those days, you had to leave something behind. I left a pen with my name on it and a flier. I had people years later tell me they still had my pen,” Corbett said.

Around the same time he was asked to help with the George H. W. Bush Presidential campaign in Allegheny County and Western Pennsylvania. Bush ended up winning Pennsylvania on his way to being elected President. Corbett served as the United States Attorney for Western Pennsylvania from 1989 to 1993 in the George H. W. Bush administration.

Between 1995 and 1997, Corbett

was appointed Attorney General of Pennsylvania by then Governor Tom Ridge. He promised not to run again in 1996, which was common practice.

After another stint in private practice, Corbett campaigned for PA Attorney General in 2004.

“I put 113,000 miles on my car in about 15 months driving all over Pennsylvania. If you want to get somewhere in Pennsylvania, call me,” Corbett said. “My security detail [when I was governor] would be going down some street following GPS and I would tell them to go another way because I had driven it during my campaign for attorney general and knew it was faster.”

The Associated Press had called the race for Jim Eisenhower, his opponent, but as votes came in late that evening, Corbett overtook Eisenhower to win. In 2008, he was re-elected with the largest vote total by a Republican in Pennsylvania history.

During his second term as AG, he investigated Jerry Sandusky and helped to create the child predator unit. That helped Corbett build the support base and encouragement he needed to run for Governor.

“If the Attorney General position wasn’t limited to two terms, I would never have run for Governor. I really liked it,” Corbett said.

Corbett won the 2010 election for governor, and throughout his term, he was often scrutinized and criticized by

the media and had to manage public opinion.

“Anybody that tells you they don’t pay attention to public opinion is lying to you, but you come into office having reached decision points on policy. For example, I am totally against the legalization of [recreational] marijuana. I believe it is a gateway drug, but public opinion has been growing in a different direction,” Corbett said. “I have stood by my opinion because across all the drug cases I have done in my career, almost all of the individuals involved started out on marijuana. However, I did agree to legalize medical marijuana because of a correlation saying that it actually helped individuals.”

Despite the pressure of the position, Corbett got to enjoy some perks as governor. He went to every opening day for the Pirates and was on the team plane when the Steelers went to Super Bowl XLV. He went to Rome in 2014 with the archbishop of Philadelphia to invite the Pope to the World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia. Also, he was able to attend numerous local events across Pennsylvania’s 67 counties.

Corbett enjoyed being governor and wanted to finish out his political career with a second term. However, he lost to Tom Wolf in his re-election bid. If given a second term, Corbett said he would have focused on transportation and natural gas infrastructure.

While he did not get that chance,

he also did not have to deal with one of the biggest changes he has noticed since leaving the Governor’s mansion.

“The number one thing that has changed since I was Governor is the cell phone and social media. Social media is upsetting the natural balance of trust. Every time you read something you have to ask if it’s true. That is the biggest problem your generation will have to face is controlling that bad part of social media,” Corbett said.

Corbett has since returned to Harrisburg for the inaugurations of Governor Wolf and Governor Shapiro. While Wolf and Corbett did not talk, current Governor Shapiro was more than willing to talk with him.

“We went to get a cup of coffee and we started talking. And this is how politics should work. I don’t agree with half of what he says and he doesn’t agree with half of what I say, but we could talk and agree on some things,” Corbett said. “We drew up a friendship, and on big issues, we sometimes talk because he also became governor after being Attorney General.”

For those interested in getting into politics, Corbett recommends volunteering at a campaign. According to him, the ability to experience politics in its purest form comes through participating in it at the local level. Holding true to his prosecutor roots, Corbett currently teaches at Duquesne Law School.

One Weekend in June: Three

After a blowout to win the WPIAL, the Titans pulled off an unbelievable comeback to win the PIAA championship



Coach Junker and the Titans celebrate after winning the PIAA championship. (JJ LaBella)

by Matt Purucker and Eddie Schmidt

This past spring season, the baseball, softball, and boys volleyball teams reached the state championship game. It was an accomplishment unprecedented in PIAA history. At the front of the headlines was the baseball team, winning both the WPIAL and state championships in a season for the ages.

Forty-three years ago, the Shaler Area Titan baseball team won the 1980 state championship under legendary coach Jerry Matulevic. Ever since his hiring, current Shaler Area baseball head coach Brian Junker had aspired to do the same. He knew it would not be easy. Not every team can win a state championship, and to do so, it would take a lot of work.

“This was my 14th year, and I always tell the kids, my family, and my campers at camp that we failed 13 times. I grew up and went to Shaler, and for 39 years I was hearing about the 1980 state championship team, which I love to hear about; I know every story,” Coach Junker said.

Led by Tribune Review and Post-Gazette Player of the Year Miguel Hugas, the Titans finished the season with a 23-4 record, but it was not just one player that was critical to the team’s success. Everyone played a part in the championship runs, even a player who graduated the previous year.

“It wasn’t all about Miguel. Honesty, it kind of started before him with Brian Rincon. We had this kid, Brian Rincon, and to me, he was one of the best players that I’ve ever seen,” Coach Junker said. “And then, to have him have the work ethic like he did, I thought all the players saw that, and they decided they had to work a lot harder. Sure, Miguel was a big part of that, but ultimately it came down to the 18 to 20 guys that we had on that run.”

That run was special, but it was not without its setbacks. The Titans lost a few key junior players to injury during the season. Outfielder and pitcher Chase Beran, third baseman Alex Venezia, and short-stop Brady McGuire all went down with injuries, but the team did not let that derail its season.

“We didn’t want those setbacks, but adversity only makes you stronger. We went down to West Virginia and played a team that we should have been

competitive against. We lost 9-0. After that, we won 11 straight games. That’s how champions respond,” Coach Junker said.

That response by the Titans helped carry them all the way to the WPIAL championship game against two-time defending state champions Bethel Park. They had beaten the Blackhawks earlier in the season 5-2, but there is always that extra pressure to win a championship. Because, as much as you could tell yourself otherwise, it is not like any other game.

“I get chills just thinking about it because it’s not like the WPIAL was any easier than the states. We had to go up against a defending state champion, and to be honest, nobody thought we could beat them except the guys in our dugout,” Coach Junker said. “So to go in there and to be clicking on all cylinders, it was almost an out of body experience for some of the players.”

In an absolutely out-of-this-world performance by the Titans, they secured their first WPIAL title since 2019. They clobbered Bethel Park 10-1 in a showing for the ages at Wild Things Park in Washington, PA. That complete win left the team with an even greater goal in mind: winning the state championship.

The WPIAL and state playoffs saw several players step up. Miguel Hugas showed why he was recruited to play baseball at Alabama, and others played their best when the stakes were highest.

“We’ve seen people step up like Luke Jarzynka in [the WPIAL Championship] game who were playing way better than they ever have before. And, that’s not easy, especially on the biggest stage. It was like they needed the big stage to break through. Connor Hamrick hit like .700 in the WPIAL playoffs and then continued that into states,” Coach Junker said.

The state playoffs went relatively smoothly. While the team took some dominant victories on their way to Penn State, there was nothing quite like the pressure of playing for your season every game. It all culminated in one of the most thrilling state championship games in PIAA history.

“I rewatched that game a couple of times since, and you almost don’t even remember because you’re so locked in how poorly we played the first five in-

nings,” Coach Junker said.

It was quite the struggle for this Titans team, but they did not blink. Staring down a five-run deficit, some would say it was impossible to come back. Despite that, the dugout never thought they were out of it. They were right.

In the bottom of the sixth inning, Shaler Area was down 8-3 to Strath Haven. Luke Jarzynka got on base and was caught stealing second, but that did not faze Miguel Hugas.

“And what happened next was pretty amazing. I remember thinking to myself, one out in the sixth and we’re down five,” Coach Junker said. “I look in and Miguel’s at the plate, and he jokingly flashes a bunt sign at me like, ‘Coach, should I bunt?’ I just sort of laughed at him, and he winked and he laughed. And then, he hit the next pitch out of the ballpark and the bench went crazy.”

Hugas’ second towering home run of the game made the score 8-4 and started the Titans’ rally in the bottom of the sixth inning.

“I felt really good because we were losing and I felt like it gave us more energy to win that game,” senior pitcher and outfielder Miguel Hugas said.

Following Hugas’ home run, Max Saban, Derek Leas, and Ben Yeckel reached base, Connor Hamrick hit a two-run single, and Brady Alexander hit a clutch two-run triple to tie the game at 8-8.

“It felt amazing, especially coming back from a big deficit and seeing everyone pumped up and going crazy,” junior outfielder Brady Alexander said.

Following a dramatic, yet scoreless seventh inning, Leas returned to pitch after Colby Weber relieved him to send the state championship to extras.

Then, Leas led off the bottom of the eighth with a single and Logan Bauer replaced Leas as a courtesy runner. A passed ball allowed Bauer to move to second, and Strath Haven intentionally walked Ben Yeckel. Following that, Hamrick stepped up to the plate and delivered an at-bat that almost everyone dreams of as a little kid. With runners on first and second and no outs, Hamrick singled up the middle to drive home the winning run and immortalize himself as a Shaler Area legend. He went four for five with four RBIs in a 9-8 Titan victory. For the first time in 43 years, the Shaler Area baseball team was a state champion.

The support from the other state finalists was a major inspiration for the team’s pursuit of the state title. The three were all very involved with each other and made the effort to be there for their fellow players.

“If I knew that there was a big game coming up for volleyball, I would schedule the practice so they wouldn’t be at the same time, because I know a lot of our baseball players wanted to go support the volleyball team. And then also the same thing with softball. I do know on many occasions that right after practice the guys were jumping in their cars and going to support those other teams,” Coach Junker said.

Following the achievements of the three teams was a parade at the high school that garnered local media attention and put an exclamation point on all the teams’ successes, but it especially showcased the baseball team, having won both the WPIAL and state championships.

“I remember being up at the field and I even walked to the end of the Matulevic fence to see if there were any people down there because, you know, we’re human. What if nobody shows up? It’d be pretty weird. But, Shaler never disappoints. The community is always even better than you think. And then when we went through there, the crowd was amazing and much bigger than I ever expected. It sort of just shows you how tight this community is.”

Titan teams made PIAA history

WPIAL disappointment did not keep the softball team from PIAA title game



The team celebrates a home run in the state championship game. (J M Weber Photography)

by Brady McGuire and Will Emmons

The day is Tuesday, June 20, 2023. A parade is about to begin at Shaler Area High School to celebrate the Baseball, Softball, and Boys Volleyball teams all making it to the PIAA State Finals. The odds of having one team in a state championship is very rare for a school district, but having three teams in the same sports-season is unheard of — until this past spring when Shaler Area became the first school in PIAA history to achieve that.

“Our expectations going into any season are always high, but we soon realized that this team had the potential to do some great things. Our motto was ‘Be better than yesterday.’ We knew that if we continued to improve each day, we would be a tough team to beat,” assistant coach Mr. Kevin Keenan said.

One thing that may have led to those expectations was the way the team came together as a group which created great team chemistry.

“The seniors let us in: the sophomores, juniors, and the freshmen. We all kind of formed a bond. We all got along because we all fit the same category characteristics and we all wanted to be there,” freshman pitcher Bria Bosiljevac said. “After every strikeout I had, after every play that my defense made behind me, we would just celebrate. And it wasn’t like a celebration that made us cocky. It was a celebration that showed that we are proud of ourselves and we would all come together as a group and we would celebrate.”

This team chemistry combined with hard work played a huge role in an undefeated regular season and which included a section title.

“You would probably think that we’d be pretty high (throughout the season), but we actually stayed really humble. No matter what the score of the game, at practice the day after, we would work just as hard, if not harder,” Bosiljevac said.

The Titans entered the WPIAL Playoffs as one of the most feared teams in class 5A. Even though they did not lose a game, the Titans were still looking to prove some people wrong after being given the #2 seed.

“Playoff seedings are not something we can control, but they can definitely be used as motivation,” Keenan said.

The Titans started strong in the WPIAL playoffs winning their first two games against Bethel Park and Franklin Regional. The Titans faced the Trinity Hillers for a spot in the WPIAL Finals. Unfortunately, the Titans suffered their first loss of the year to the Hillers by the score of 5-4 in extra innings.

“Our loss to Trinity was definitely difficult because it was such a good game and our only loss up to that point. However, we quickly realized that it was the only playoff game a team could afford to lose since there was a third place consolation game. Our players regrouped over the next couple days, knowing the state playoffs were still within reach,” Keenan said.

The loss to Trinity set up the third-place game against South Fayette. If the Titans won, they would make the PIAA playoffs. If not, their season was over. The Titans pulled out a 2-1 victory to keep their season alive. Their reward was to take on District 6 Champion Central Mountain at its home field.

“We had about a three-hour bus ride. We looked forward to it—that’s a part of the experience of playing in the state playoffs. As far as the game, we tried to find out all we could on our opponent. We discovered they had a very good pitcher who gave up very few runs all season and had tons of strikeouts, so we prepared for a low scoring, defensive struggle, which is exactly what happened,” Keenan said.

With a strong defensive showing and a clutch home run by sophomore

Cont. on page 6

The Titans made team history with first section & WPIAL championships



Shaler Area volleyball team and fans celebrate the WPIAL championship.

by Jack Salego and Joey Duty

For years, the boys volleyball banner in the gym was blank, not one section title to remember. In 2020 there was hope that one of the most skilled teams the program ever had could change that until the COVID pandemic halted and eventually ended the season. Many were disappointed, but others knew this was just the beginning and the future was bright for the program.

Three years later, the Titans entered the season ranked as the ninth best team in the nation by USA Today.

“I knew the group I had and I knew the potential that we had to compete at a high level,” head coach Mr. Paul Stadelman said.

The 2023 team was a tightly knit group who had been playing together since middle school, and some longer than that. This level of chemistry helped the team hit the ground running.

“But no matter how disciplined we say we actually are, we still have fun in practice. Each of these practices adds to our team building chemistry, and it makes it feel like less of a job and more of an opportunity to be able to play for the school. Things get hard but we still have fun because of the group we have,” junior Zac Wurzer said.

After going 13-1 and earning the first seed for playoffs, the Titans defeated Upper St. Clair, Canon-McMillan, and North Allegheny for the third time in the WPIAL championship game to gain the program’s first WPIAL title.

“We had like 200 kids there, 200 of our friends cheering. It was just a great feeling. Then on the way home, we got our own police escort. We carried our trophy home and there’s these fire trucks there and it was just a great feeling,” Wurzer said.

The turnout that Shaler Area brought to the first PIAA playoff game was one for the ages. Once people saw that the Titans were playing at home, they knew that there was no reason not

to be there. The crowd showed up and so did the boys, beating Warwick 3-0.

“That was a special thing for me with the amount of people that were there and seeing fifth and sixth graders sitting in the front row with seventh and eighth graders who are watching all of this and soaking it in. From a program standpoint, seeing the young kids looking up to the high school players as role models and almost like superstars, that’s pretty cool,” Mr. Stadelman said.

After beating Warwick, the boys beat Canon-McMillan again, but it was not easy. The Titans lost the first two sets before rallying to win the final three. They then beat Central York to advance to the state championship.

The team traveled to Penn State to battle the Parkland Trojans on June 17. After a long bus ride, the boys stepped out onto the court and heard cheering from fans young and old.

“Going to Penn State and looking out and seeing my entire class of 2014 in shirts they had in 2014, because they all made an effort get back together and go there, that was really exciting,” Mr. Stadelman said.

The Titans battled hard, but ultimately fell to the Trojans 0-3.

On June 20, sirens were blaring. Fire trucks and police cars were gathered in front of Shaler Area High School. If you were at home you might have thought something was wrong, but that could not have been further from the truth. The school’s boys volleyball, baseball, and softball teams each made it to their respective state championship, something that had never been done before by any school. History was made, and it was time to celebrate and even look ahead.

“We made history with the other teams, but our goal was to win the state championship, so we still didn’t complete our goal, despite how good this season we had. I feel like everybody is going to be playing with a chip on their shoulder next year,” Wurzer said.

School makes changes to try to get students more access to college reps

by Joey Duty

In an effort to get more kids to attend college informational visits, the visits were moved to the cafeteria during lunch periods.

Under the previous set of rules students would have to sign up ahead of time in order to meet with colleges visiting the high school. Oftentimes students would have to miss class time to look into a college they have interest in. The new system aims to rectify these issues.

“We’re trying to get the college reps two times a day during all lunch periods. So someone from Slippery Rock would be at a table during periods Five, Six, and Seven,” counselor Mrs. Shauna Hunt said.

The change was made in an effort to increase the outreach of the colleges who visit. Under the old system, the majority of the students were unaware of the opportunity to visit with college reps during school.

“We had declining attendance for the past five years. Sometimes meetings were getting canceled because no one showed up,” Mrs. Hunt said.

Additionally, the old rule that you could only visit five schools in a year has now been abolished.

“Now you will no longer be limited to five schools because you’re not missing class time,” Hunt said.

Due to different colleges being set up at the cafeteria, the military recruiters will now have to take a backseat.

“We’re asking the military not to come more than one time a month. So it might be a Navy and a college or maybe two colleges, but we’re trying to avoid having two services at the same time,” she said.

Despite the optimism surrounding the new change, there have been some growing pains.

“Most of the colleges don’t even stay until the end of the period which defeats the whole purpose. It’s just awkward trying to find a point in the beginning of the period to check things out when you are waiting to be called up for lunch,” senior Jack Salego said.

For the teachers who work near the cafeteria, the solution lies in being more clear about how long these colleges will actually be staying at the cafeteria.

“I think counseling did a good job with the new system. I have noticed there may need to be more clarity regarding the messaging. Sometimes colleges are here for all three lunch periods, but sometimes colleges are only at the cafeteria for an hour so we just need some consistency,” GATE teacher Christina Paladino said.

Despite that, the new program has been seen as a step in the right direction.

“I think it is going well so far. The colleges are certainly exposed to a larger amount of students. The students are able to see as many schools as they want this way and it does not have to be scheduled or come at the cost of missing class.” Mrs. Hunt said.

Softball from page 5

Emily Spears, the Titans pulled an upset, 2-1. The victory set up a rematch of the WPIAL semi-finals against Trinity.

“We were very happy to get another shot at Trinity. The first game was so exciting, but we felt we did not play our best against them. The second time around, we made a couple changes to our lineup, which I think affected Trinity’s game plans,” Keenan said.

Shaler jumped out to an early 5-0 lead and never looked back. The Titans would go on to win the game by a score of 5-1 to advance to the PIAA semi-finals against the team that got #1 seed in the WPIAL Playoffs, the Armstrong Riverhawks.

“My favorite part of the playoff run was beating Armstrong. They were a team that got a lot of attention for scoring a lot of runs and were the #1 seed going into the WPIAL playoffs. They were a good team, but I always felt that we were better,” Keenan said.

The 8-5 victory over Armstrong clinched the Titans a spot in the PIAA championship game against the Northern York Polar Bears.

The game was one of the closest games of the year for the Titans. The game ended up going into the 9th inning tied 2-2. Northern York came up with a clutch hit in the 9th inning which brought home the game winning run. Despite the disappointing outcome, this game was not going to define a season where the girls only lost two games.

“What I will remember most of all was the team. The effort our players gave throughout the season led to this one game. Although we fell one run short, our Titans did not disappoint,” Keenan said.

“Having the volleyball, baseball, and softball teams all making these incredible runs at the same time was amazing. Each team was experiencing the same emotions as the others. At one point, I remember our players being almost more interested in what was happening in the baseball game while sitting in the dugout as our own game was being played,” Keenan said.

The whole “Week at Happy Valley” came to a conclusion with a celebration for all three teams at the high school. The celebration started with a parade and finished with a ceremony where each team talked about their seasons and introduced every player.

“The Parade of Champions held at the high school was really cool because it was a chance for people who may have only followed one team to show their support for all three,” Keenan said.

Check out our
FALL SPORTS
season recaps



THE GRID		What is the best chicken sandwich?	What is the most overrated movie?	What is the best Halloween costume you've ever worn?	What is the most annoying song?	What is the best TV show theme song?
Freshman Peter Luft		Spicy Chick Fil A	Casper	Link from Legend of Zelda	The Gummy Bear song	Phineas and Ferb
Sophomore Owen Yarnot		Regular Chick Fil A	Avatar	Perry the Platypus	Banana Boat	The Addams Family
Junior Roni Miller		Sheetz	Sharknado	Pearl	Dance Monkey	The Walking Dead
Senior Kara Yarnot		Chick Fil A	Happy Gilmore	Pink Power Ranger	Carol of the Bells	Friends "Ill be there for you"
Faculty Mr. Karscig		From a food truck called The Brinery	Avengers: Endgame	Universal Classic Vampire	Walk by Pantera	Miami Vice

Shaler Area hosts SF 49ers practice



by Matt Purucker

On Saturday, September 9, numerous black buses and SUVs arrived at Titan Stadium with a police escort. However, the scene resembling something out of an action movie was not as it seemed. In those buses and SUVs were players from one of the best teams in the NFL, the San Francisco 49ers.

The 49ers had a problem. They needed to find a venue for one final practice before their week one game against the Pittsburgh Steelers the following day.

They did not like the field they originally planned to use which left them looking to find a more suitable location to practice. They called Shaler Area Athletic Director Mr. Clint Rauscher, who was more than happy to help.

“It was very last minute. They were scheduled to go to Central. They saw the facility and said it wasn’t private enough,” Mr. Rauscher said. “They called Thursday afternoon [the 7th] and came out Friday afternoon [the 8th]. It was kind of a whirlwind thing and they were really pleased. When they come back again, they’ll call us first.”

Hosting the 49ers was great, but there were a couple of problems that came from having to host an NFL team. First, the field and facilities had to be cleaned and prepared for their use because the Shaler Area football team played at Titan Stadium the night before, giving the custodial staff and the police officers around 14 hours to prepare for the 49ers.

Additionally, there were a couple of minor scheduling conflicts. The JV football team was returning from their Saturday morning game and were met with quite a surprise about 15 minutes away from the middle school.

“We were told that we weren’t going to be allowed to go in the locker room right away because the 49ers were coming to practice at our stadium,” junior football player Mark Povich said. “They were unloading when we got there, and I saw Deebo Samuel and George Kittle getting off the bus. The team was all running to the front of the bus, pulling out their phones, and hitting record. It was such a cool experience seeing players we all knew.”

At the same time, the boys volleyball team was hosting a car wash at the middle school and got a great view of the 49ers pulling into the parking lot.

“Whenever you hear all these sirens and county sheriffs coming in with six tour buses and a couple of blacked out window SUVs, you begin to wonder what is going on here. So, we walked up towards the field and looked,” boys volleyball head coach Mr. Paul Stadelman said. “The county sheriff was pretty tight lipped, but we figured that after a little watching that it was the 49ers getting off the bus. We were hoping that they were going to stop at the car wash, but I think they were on a pretty tight schedule.”

The JV football team and the boys volleyball team were grateful to happen to be in the right place at the right time to catch a glimpse of a professional football team. Logistically speaking, it made sense that a team like the 49ers would want to use Titan Stadium. The stadium has great privacy, yet it is easily accessible from downtown Pittsburgh.

“I thought it was really neat that they picked our stadium for the privacy that it offers. There isn’t really anything higher than it nearby, you can’t see the field from the street, and there’s nothing on the other side of it with the cliff that goes down to Butler Plank,” Mr. Stadelman said.

The stadium’s proximity to the city and its seclusion were a perfect match for 49ers Head Coach Kyle Shanahan and General Manager John Lynch, who were so impressed with their visit that they recommended it to another NFL team that will be visiting Pittsburgh later in the season.

“I’m sure the rumors will get out there at some point, but Monday (after the Steelers 49ers game) another NFL team called us and said that they heard the 49ers really enjoyed their experience here and they’d like to consider using our stadium for a walk through the day before their game,” Shaler Area School District Superintendent Dr. Sean Aiken said.

Dr. Aiken was proud that Shaler Area was able to work with the 49ers and help them out.

“It was a great experience and they really appreciated it,” Dr. Aiken said.

School adds two new AED devices

by Will Emmons

In response to a recent incident that highlighted the need for faster access of life saving equipment, school nurses took a proactive step to prevent any incident where a student is left without needed equipment to save lives by adding two new AEDs.

There are now four in total Automated External Defibrillators, also known as AEDs, that have been strategically placed around the school, ensuring rapid response in critical situations. There were two placed in the front entrance and weight room, but with the addition of the two new AEDs, they were rearranged to be in gym B, near the library, in the health office, and near attendance last May.

The catalyst for this was an incident in the school where the need for an AED became apparent, prompting a reflective decision from the nursing staff. While the AED was ultimately unnecessary, the valuable minutes spent getting the AED caused a realization that more of these devices were needed.

“In our debrief of the incident we reflected on the time it takes to send someone to get the device, and that those precious minutes could be saved by having quicker access to a machine,” Mrs. Darcy Lutz, our school nurse said.

There was also a similar but unrelated event concerning NFL player, Damar Hamlin. Hamlin went into cardiac arrest on the field during a game and his story brought a lot of attention to the matter. Though this event did not cause the school to get new AEDs, it spread a lot of awareness around the need for education about CPR and AEDs.

From to the nurse’s perspective, every citizen should be trained in these life-saving skills, as one can never predict when they might become the first responder.

Health class has a unit that focuses on CPR and the use of AEDs.

Some teachers have expressed fears over using this life saving equipment but it’s crucial to understand that these devices are designed to deliver shocks only when necessary. Education plays a pivotal role in alleviating fears. Additionally, Good Samaritan Laws provide legal protection to bystanders who attempt to help in good faith.

“If we encourage and educate our staff hopefully they will have the desire to get trained. I think all students should get trained as well,” Lutz said.

LA ROCHE UNIVERSITY

Admissions Sneak Peek

Monday, Dec. 4 | 6-8 p.m.

- Take a campus tour
- Learn about high-demand and creative majors
- Hear from current students and staff
- Meet our admissions counselors and ask questions
- Find out how to apply and pay for college

Get a glimpse of Redhawk life.

REGISTER AT:
laroche.edu/sneakpeek

HUNTINGTON TUTORING GETS RESULTS!

OUR PROGRAM OFFERS:

- Free consultation
- Comprehensive academic evaluation
- Personalized tutoring
- Highly qualified teachers
- Flexible payment options for all budgets

TUTORING:

- Reading
- Writing
- Math
- Spelling
- Study Skills
- Vocabulary
- Phonics
- ADHD
- Algebra
- Geometry
- Trigonometry
- Sciences

TEST PREP:

- SAT
- ACT
- PSAT/NMSQT
- Advanced Placement (AP)
- State Tests

1-800 CAN LEARN

HuntingtonHelps.com

SAVE \$75* ON AN ACADEMIC EVALUATION

NORTH HILLS • 4721 McKnight Road • 412-367-7787

ON AVERAGE, HUNTINGTON STUDENTS RECEIVED OVER \$71,149.00 EACH IN SCHOLARSHIP OFFERS

AVERAGE TEST INCREASES**

- SAT: +229 points
- ACT: +5.4 points

Huntington LEARNING CENTER

©2020 Huntington Mark, LLC. Independently Owned and Operated. SAT and Advanced Placement (AP) are registered trademarks of the College Board. PSAT/NMSQT is a registered trademark of the College Board and the National Merit Scholarship Corporation. ACT is a registered trademark of ACT, Inc. None of these entities were involved in the production of, and do not endorse, this program. *Offer valid on Academic Evaluation. Not valid with any other offers. **Results are based on surveys of 3,289 Huntington students graduating in 2019, using their initial Huntington Academic Evaluation and final SAT/ACT test scores.

The Search for Bigfoot at the Albatwitch Day Festival

by Joey Duty & Will Emmons

It was a dreary day on the banks of the Susquehanna river, yet hundreds of people flocked to the quaint river-side town of Columbia, Pennsylvania for just one reason: The 10th annual Albatwitch Day festival. Complete with lectures, live music, haunted trolley rides, and Albatwitch hunting, this Bigfoot festival had a little something for everyone.

The festival is centered around the Albatwitch, a staple of folklore dating back to the Native Americans who called Columbia home. The name Albatwitch comes from the Dutch word for Apple snitch, as it was said the Albatwitch would jump down from a tree and steal apples from unsuspecting picnickers (Columbia Historical Preservation Society). This isn't your grandma's bigfoot, however. Think less yeti and more little apple gremlin.

"It's a smaller 4 to 5 foot tall hair covered creature. I've seen some artistic renditions around here that are kinda scary. If I ran into one I'd probably hit it with a bat and run. But then there are these depictions of little kind peaceful troll-ish type creatures that eat apples and are kinda harmless as they're just little tricksters. I'd like to think that's more of what we're dealing with," Sean Forker, Albatwitch Day lecturer and host of the Sasquatch Experience podcast, said.

As Bigfoot, Moth Man, and other cryptid creatures become increasingly popular thanks to numerous internet videos and conspiracy theories, more and more believers are coming to the forefront. Don't believe in paranormals such as the Albatwitch? You're more in the minority than you may think.

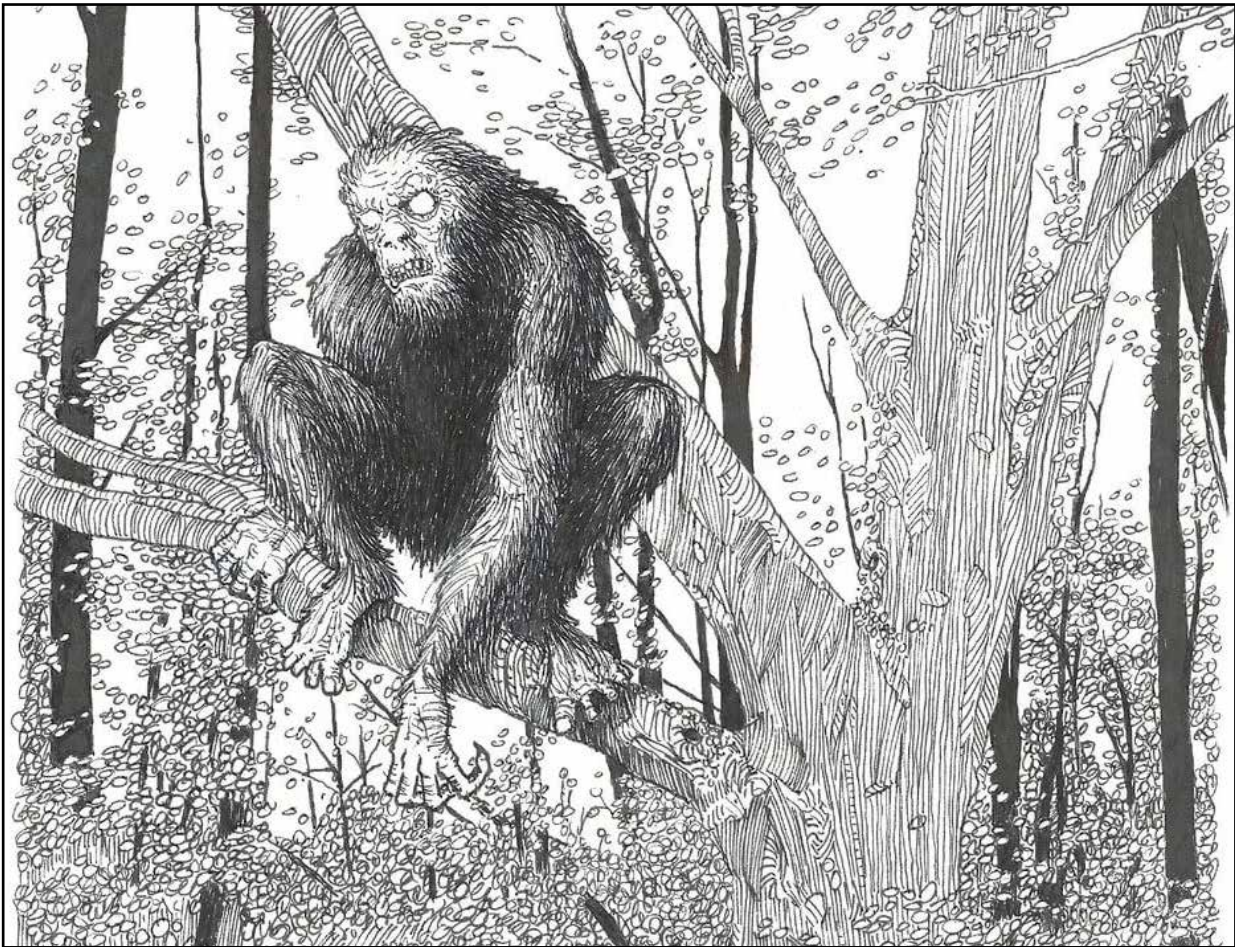
"My feeling is that most people believe there is more than what we see in life. It's not considered something that is okay to talk about because some people say you're crazy, there's no such thing as ghosts, or you're crazy, there aren't cryptids. There are thousands and thousands of people. In fact, according to the New York Times, 55% of people admit to having had a supernatural or paranormal experience that they cannot explain."Albatwitch Day lecturer, and tea leaf reader, Rissa Miller, said.

The people that see Bigfoot aren't always who you would expect.

"They're not just Cletus and Tammy out in the backwoods at their shack that have had these encounters. More respected people such as doctors and law enforcement talk about it. These days people are more willing to come forward and share their story," Forker said.

When you enter the main hall of Albatwitch Day festival, there is a room full of eager men and women who are all sitting down and listening to the festival's extensive lecture circuit. The topics ranged from the history of witchcraft in Pennsylvania to the government's encounters with aliens and of course, the extensive history of Bigfoot sightings in Pennsylvania. Power-Points and all, it felt as though you were attending a corporate seminar for paranormal sightings.

With all this new information being disseminated to the crowd, it's important to note that even the lecturers themselves will tell you that they are not the final authority on all things Bigfoot. In their eyes, they view themselves as well-researched paranormal



A depiction of an albatwitch by author and artist Timothy Renner

enthusiasts.

"No one is an expert in Bigfoot because we don't even know if he really exists. There have been sightings, I've had an encounter, but there are no experts. Anyone that tells you he's a Bigfoot expert is just an idiot. They're lying to you," Forker said.

Though no one is an expert on Bigfoot, everybody has a theory on what Bigfoot looks like.

"Harry and the Hendersons, even though it's goofy, is probably the most realistic adaptation of what Bigfoot is probably like. Put it in your home and it'll do some damage, but really in the woods they are harmless," Forker said.

In a festival based on a controversial topic, one thing that isn't up for debate is the economic benefit that this festival brings for the town of Columbia.

"The Albatwitch Festival is important to the community because it puts this community on the map and brings tourists here and that helps keep these stores and restaurants alive. People do come from all over the country to festivals like this," Miller said.

One vendor in particular, Walter Bausch, has been a regular at the festival for 10 years, selling homemade Albatwitch hunter hats to raise money for disabled veterans. He too believes that the impact

of putting Columbia on the map is profound economically and for the community.

"It's great even though there's a rain storm. You know there's still a crowd of people. We really appreciate it," Bausch said.

Thankfully this large crowd was well fed because the Albatwitch festival has a variety of local vendors selling food all along the riverfront. Pennsylvania favorites such as whoopie pies and barbeque were being served along with more out there meals such as Cambodian egg rolls and Hemp pretzels. To wash it all down, you could buy coffee or the fan favorite,

Bigfoot hard cider.

Food wasn't the only thing being sold at the festival however. Candles, tarot cards, dream-catchers, crystals, witch balls, and more Bigfoot merch than you could shake a stick at were all being sold. It was a one-stop shop for anyone who wanted to have an encounter with the paranormal.

To our traveling team of writers, the highlight of the festival had to be the haunted trolley ride. Old-time jazz music played as the tour guide showed the haunted side of Columbia, pointing out ghost stories as the trolley traveled at a lively pace.

Along with the haunted tales, the trolley ride served as a comprehensive guide to all the town of Columbia had to offer. Tour guide Christopher Vera showcased the lesser known attractions of the town, such as its 250 foot train sets, museum of clocks, and certain houses which at one time played an integral role in the Underground Railroad.

The tour culminated in the trolley climbing up the hill onto Chickey's Rock. Here, apples are thrown down into the nature reserve in an effort to feed the Albatwitches so they will be able to hibernate for the winter and return in greater numbers in the spring.

Throughout the festival there was a constant soundtrack of the best music southern Pennsylvania had to offer. To begin the day, Albatwitch enthusiasts were met with the folksy sounds of the band Dillweed, and as the late morning progressed into afternoon the music took a turn as well. By lunchtime the guitar licks of the band Sound Method were reverberating throughout the building, and for the final hour of the festival, things got hard core as Tang Moon was bringing the heat with their heavy metal riffs.

The evidence about the Albatwitch has been so convincing that even the band is getting in on the action.

"100% I believe the Albatwitch is real, how could they not be. I mean the native Americans knew about them, the locals here know about them, and maybe they're not alive anymore but 100 years ago they definitely existed," Keith Wiser, bassist for Sound Method said.

Looking to get involved in the hunt? If you want to visit this festival, Albatwitch Day generally takes place on the afternoon of the second Saturday of October. Trust us, it's worth the trip.

