



Reconnecting with history. Page 19



Mask-erade 2021

Ready for retirement

Longtime NL teachers prepare for travel, family after school

BY MADDY MACK
SLATE STAFF WRITER

After their many years of appreciated hard work, three Northern Lehigh High School teachers are retiring this year. Mr. David Oertner, Mrs. Theresa Cinicola, and Mrs. Alice Lieberman all dedicated many years of their lives to the school. Even though they will miss the students, faculty, and school environment immensely, they are extremely grateful and excited for the future retirement holds for them.

Mr. Oertner, a teacher in the science department, has taught a variety of classes and age groups. He spent 19 years teaching in the now-middle school building and 20 years in the high school. These classes include basic, academic, honors, and AP Biology and basic, academic, and honors Integrated Science. Over his many years of service, he

See Retirees, page 3



COVID canceled and altered many things but this year's senior prom was able to occur with some adjustments. Dancing was prohibited and table seating was limited but fun was still encouraged on the field and under the party tent.

(Above) Aidan Williams, Nick Miller, Alexia Mankos, Elijah Jackovitz, and Michael Adams.

(Right) Justyn Sandt and Joey Abidelli.

See more photos on pages 9, 21, 23.



A new type of 'cubism'

Library club enters contest to create murals of the Rubik's toys

BY SUSAN GILSBACH
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Many try to solve it, but few can make a mural out of a Rubik's Cube. One of the bold groups daring enough to try is Northern Lehigh's very own library club. I sat down with the library club adviser, Mrs. Krystle Tiedeman, to find out what this was all about.

"A few years ago, I saw this cool thing where you can take a Rubik's Cube, and you can put the colored squares in a certain order, and it looks like a mosaic," Mrs. Tiedeman said. This concept is not new. It has been seen all over *Instagram*, and can be very time-consuming. Some of the most famous creators of this type of content do it as a job, but the

See Cubism, page 2

H2-Oh Yeah: The importance of hydration

Northern Lehigh schools to be outfitted with filtered-water filling stations

BY DELANEY SZWAST
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

As Leonardo da Vinci once said, “Water is the driving force of all nature.” After all, the human body needs it in order to survive.

Water plays a crucial role in the function of the body. It regulates body temperature, keeps joints lubricated, prevents infections, delivers nutrients to cells, helps organs function properly, and excretes waste. According to the article *The importance of hydration by the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health*, drinking water also improves sleep quality, cognition, and mood.

Unfortunately, a person’s daily schedule does not always allow them to easily obtain enough water to stay hydrated. For students, school is a challenging place to hydrate. In the past, there were restrictions on carrying water bottles, and students had to leave class in order to go to a water fountain. This made it challenging for them to drink enough water without frequently missing parts of class.

This year, the challenges have continued. Water fountains were closed to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus, and students had to leave class so they could take off their masks to drink water.

However, next year it should be easier for students to hydrate during the school day. At the Jan. 11 school board meeting, the board approved the installation of touchless bottle filling stations for the school buildings. These filling stations will provide students with filtered water for their water bottles.



However, the installation of touchless bottle filling stations will not help students hydrate if they do not take the initiative to keep themselves hydrated. Many people are aware that it is important to be well hydrated, but not all drink enough water for their bodies. In a study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, seven percent of adults reported no daily consumption of water and 36 percent reported drinking only one to three cups.

While it is generally recommended for an individual to drink six to eight cups each day, the actual amount of water that a person needs depends on their health, activity, and the environment that they live in. For example, a person that lives in an area with hot weather will need to drink more than a person that lives in

a cooler climate. Because of this, eight cups may be enough for some people but not enough for others. According to the article *Water: How much should you drink every day?* by Mayo Clinic Staff, the U.S. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine determined that an adequate daily fluid intake is about 15.5 cups of fluids a day for men and about 11.5 cups of fluids a day for women.

Failure to consume enough water each day will result in a condition called dehydration. When someone is dehydrated, their body does not have enough water to function properly. Common signs of dehydration include headaches, fatigue, slow bowel function, less frequent urination, dull skin, and extreme thirst.

Dehydration can have many negative

effects on the body. According to the article *Water: How much should you drink every day?* by Mayo Clinic Staff, mild dehydration can drain an individual’s energy and make them feel tired. Severe dehydration can result in complications including seizures, kidney failure, and swelling in the brain, according to healthline.com’s article, *Why Is Water Important? 16 Reasons to Drink Up.*

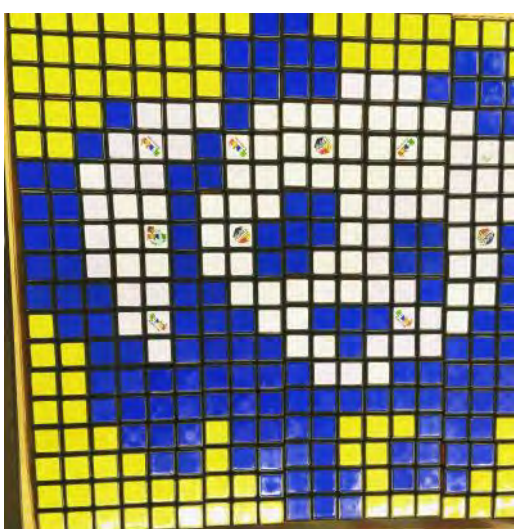
Not all people have the same risk of dehydration. Those who exercise intensely have a higher risk of dehydration than those who do not because their bodies lose water when they sweat. The same is true for people living in environments with hot weather. Individuals who are sick can also easily become dehydrated because their body is losing fluids if they have a fever or are vomiting.

In order to prevent dehydration, a person can consume water and beverages that are mostly composed of water such as milk, juice, herbal tea, and coconut water.

It is best to not drink sugary drinks when hydrating because they contain unnecessary calories. Eating food with a high water content, like many fruits and vegetables, can also help a person meet their fluid needs. Watermelon, cucumbers, and spinach are some of the many foods that contain a lot of water.

With the summer weather approaching, now is the time to start practicing good hydration. Make it a priority to drink a few glasses of water each day and not live with the consequences of dehydration. 🐾

Rubik’s Cubes twist their way into artistic murals in library



Cubism, from page 1

library club was just sticking to a few cubes for now.

Club members were given a package of 36 Rubik’s Cubes in a trial mural pack. That may not sound like a lot, but it’s a lot of hard work to make an image out of these colorful toys. Then, the library club sent out a poll asking what we, the students and faculty, would like to see made out of them. Some of the options were: Super Mario, a blue bulldog pawprint, a

Pac-Man ghost, and the Animal Crossing: New Horizons leaf. A few days after the poll went out, Mrs. Tiedeman announced, “It was a close one... but Pac-Man ghost wins!”

Soon after the first mural was finished (which looked great, by the way), the library club started thinking about what else they could do with the cubes. Mrs. Tiedeman sent out another email: “We’re going to see how many more we can complete before we send the ‘You CAN Do the Rubik’s cube’ free trial pack back

at the end of this year.” So, the library club has a goal in mind and are set on achieving it. They want to do as many murals as they can by the end of the year, and I don’t think anything is going to stop them.

“Having community involvement would make a lot of sense, because, technically, each person could have one cube, and you can figure out your cube and put your piece into the larger picture,” Mrs. Tiedeman responded very positively to community involvement when asked

about it, and has some exciting plans for the future of this project in the library. She has expressed excitement in competing in a Rubik’s Cube mural competition soon, which means the club would have to make a full-sized mural.

The library club will be continuing to create murals until they have to send the trial pack back at the end of the year. Email Mrs. Tiedeman or stop by the library to find out more. 🐾

NL veteran teachers retire off into the sunset

Retirees, from page 1

has enjoyed seeing students progress through school and interacting with many different students. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic affected his retirement decision. "It has made it more difficult to establish personal relationships with students and has raised frustration levels for both teachers and students. It has certainly made teaching less enjoyable and impersonal. I believe next year will be a difficult adjustment for many people when schools go back to full-time instruction within the classroom," he said.

Mr. Oertner has many retirement plans already lined up to fill his schedule. "My retirement plans include making a lot of home improvements, traveling more, taking up some new hobbies, spending more time with my children and grandchildren, and doing whatever happens to tickle my fancy at any particular moment," he said. While he is excited about retirement, he will greatly miss the many great people he can interact with daily. "I feel fortunate to have spent my entire teaching and coaching career at Northern Lehigh. While I look forward to retirement, I will miss the many good people here, and I wish everyone associated with the school the best of luck in the future," Oertner said.



Mr. David Oertner and Mrs. Theresa Cinicola



Mrs. Alice Lieberman

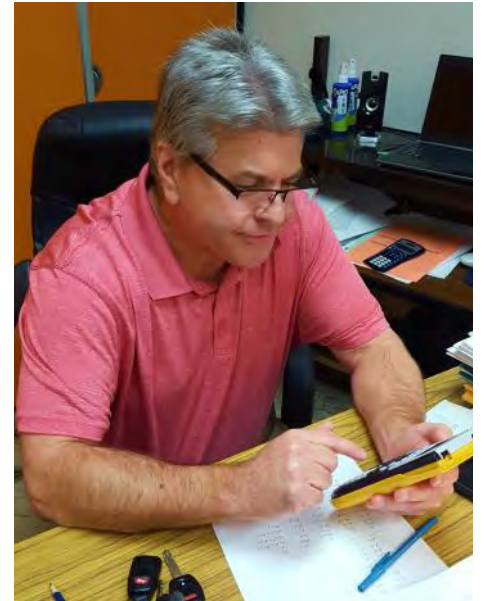
Mrs. Cinicola has also spent her career in the science department teaching Ecology and the Environment, Ecology and Cell Processes, and Biology 1. She has many memorable experiences from Northern Lehigh, including interacting with students during labs and activities. She enjoyed her time helping with both the Ski and Science Club and also liked being a class adviser.

She is very proud of the Lehigh County Envirothon Team she advised for twenty-five years, and in 2016 and 2017 they were awarded third place. In 2018 they were awarded second place. Even though not every team won, she had amazing students on every team she took to the competition.

Mrs. Cinicola decided to retire before the COVID-19 pandemic. She is excited about the future but will also miss her friends and colleagues at the school. "I will miss the staff here at the high school and awesome teachers, many of whom I am lucky to call friends. I have taught some amazing students and will miss the energy of the classroom when students are interacting in a lab activity," she said. After retirement, she is looking forward to seeing her son get married in July and vacationing with them to Florida later in the summer. She will truly miss her bulldog family and wishes a relaxing summer and a safe and productive school year in the fall.

Mrs. Lieberman has spent her time at Northern Lehigh as an ESL teacher from kindergarten to twelfth grade. She teaches many students the English language and how to improve what they already know. "It is a very good feeling to help an English-speaking student become literate in English and to see them succeed in school," she said. In addition to that, she is the Gifted Adviser for grades seven through twelve. She established goals to challenge students in their academic classes. "In ESL, it is a great feeling when a student is no longer translating in their head from their native language to English. I could see the expression on their faces when they realized they were understanding and answering in English," Lieberman said.

Mrs. Lieberman has many favorite memories of her time at Northern Lehigh. Seeing her students' interests



(Special Note: Veteran math teacher Eric DeAntonis is also retiring; however, The Slate learned of this too late for detailed inclusion in this article. We apologize for the oversight but wish him well anyway).

change from wanting to be a rock star to a mechanical engineer between seventh and twelfth grade over the years amazed her. She will also miss being the Academic Challenge Eighth Adviser. She worked with a different team of students each year and took them to compete in the academic challenge. Her students always made her proud, whether they won or not. "I will miss everything about NLSD: the students, the challenges of my teaching roles, the faculty and staff, being in all four buildings every day, and the constant demand to learn more to do my job," Lieberman said.

Although Mrs. Lieberman will miss everyone, she looks forward to retirement plans coming up. These include home projects, gardening, volunteering at the Whitehall Historical Preservation Society and the Whitehall Food Pantry, reading, and seeing family and friends more often. She is also excited to go camping and travel, which will include a three-week vacation to Alaska with her husband.

Unfortunately, as seen with many teachers, the pandemic has played a part in her decision to retire. Although she is grateful she was able to learn many new skills while teaching virtually, it did not always come easy to her. However, she persevered while following the CDC guidelines to ensure maximum safety and that both she and her students were never afraid to come to school in person.

Mrs. Lieberman has enjoyed her time at Northern Lehigh, and hopes for the student's and staff continued success. "Northern Lehigh is a great place to work and a great place to go to school. I wish NLSD success in continuing to provide quality education to all their students and to the teachers who care about their students," Lieberman said.

Mr. Oertner, Mrs. Cinicola, and Mrs. Lieberman will all miss Northern Lehigh after they retire, and the students and staff will miss them as well. 🐾

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JOIN US!

June Artist of the Month: That Slate Comic Guy

BY HAVEN MOORE
SLATE STAFF WRITER

Art can be an outlet for many people in this troubling world. It can help release internal struggles onto paper and result in a breath-taking masterpiece.

When shared with others, these artistic representations can promote a positive change in the world. The Artist of The Month is a newly-formed concept. It is a fun way to encourage and highlight the artistic talent of the students at this school. This month's official and last winner of the school year is none other than Chase Jones. Congratulations, Chase!

Chase is an 11th grader at Northern Lehigh whose specialty is drawing, sketching, digital illustration, and using Photoshop. When he is making his art, he will most likely be found embracing his inner morality and interests as he designs his work (which are typically fictitious heroes).

Chase is familiar with creating art with a combination of pencils and inks, or pencils and digital illustrations. Recently, he has experimented with outside mediums to broaden his artistic horizon, particularly while having Mr. Shuey for class. For instance, Chase has been utilizing the properties that acrylic paint can offer to his work lately and has been thoroughly enjoying the new taste of medium.

Chase was gracious enough to provide

us with three of his original works of art, featured in this article.

As you can see, Chase has created three artworks portraying the American flag, a faceless vigilante detective from DC Comics known as The Question, and his dog with an American flag bandana. The American flag picture was made by using acrylic paint to create the contrasting values, highlights, and shadows of the folded material.

The fictitious character he created was used by drawing mediums to create a realistic-appearing figure, and convey a mysterious and anonymous mood in the image. Lastly, Chase made a friendly replica on canvas of his smiling dog wearing an American flag bandana. This piece was created by using acrylic paints that Chase has been experimenting with lately, and would cause any viewer to experience a happy-go-lucky sensation.

Chase has showcased his incredible work in this newspaper many times previously, but the meaning behind his ambitions to do so is uplifting and truly wonderful. He has always been notorious for his obsession with fictitious heroes, and portraying himself in their position in his works (this is his form of self-projection... not narcissism!).

He loves heroes not just because of their strength, power, widespread fame, and tight spandex attire... but also because of their mental and moral influence on him. One's set of morals can be quite

tricky to set down, and stick to. For someone like Chase who immersed himself in the morals of the fictitious hero universe for so long, and has grown to understand the importance of right versus wrong, good versus evil, and the ability to ignore irrelevant imperfections, he has them figured out to a "T".

He has always expressed these values throughout his artwork, commonly featuring strong-willed advocates for justice. He received criticism in the past for drawing himself in the traditional hero attire, and not the actual hero. Some may say it's a form of narcissism, he disagrees. He terms it as "self-projection."

Chase uses this form of expression as a form of therapy for himself. If that is not a beneficial reason to explore the world of artistic creation, what's the point?

His decision to put himself out in the world in this manner is a way to experience adventure, glory, and excitement without going the full distance. Chase believes that he is putting himself in not someone else's best light, but rather in his own, which rids him of self-doubt, provides an escape from the modern world's chaos, and most importantly, serves as a way to accept himself the way he is.

Fictitious heroes convey the importance of serving, respecting, and having loyalty to one's homeland as well. Just take Captain America for example! If it has not occurred to some, Chase not only

works with designing characters from heroic ideas but also features strong patriotism in his work.

Growing up in a patriotic household, and being raised to believe in all that the American flag stood for, heavily influenced his work. You can see this influence in the way his dog looks so happy wearing his patriotic bandana, as well as the folded American flag Mr. Shuey incorporated into his original works. But of course, nothing is ever as perfect as it seems, and nothing lasts forever.

As one grows older, the world seems less of what they once had believed it to be. It can be difficult to hold onto those ideas and manage to stay content with the

See Art, page 23



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What a year it's been

This year has been like no other — affecting everyone greatly, especially students and teachers. There are some pros and cons with what came out of the past school year, but how does everyone else feel about it? For the final Free Barking of this year's Slate season, I asked some students and teachers, "How did you feel about this past school year with all the new changes? Are you just happy to have less time in school, or has this made your school experience much worse?"

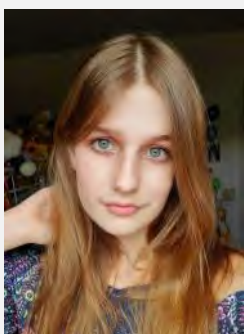


"The school year in my opinion for all seniors was extremely chaotic. Kids who were usually straight A or B students even ended up struggling to make ends meet. Overall, it was stressful, and it put a lot of pressure on us when we knew we were graduating during this pandemic."

BRAD HORN, 12TH GRADE

"It was strange. I had no friends to begin with, and when I came back from being fully virtual, it was like I was even more isolated."

NELLIANNI RAMOS, 11TH GRADE



"This past year has been quite the rollercoaster, but through the ups and downs, we maintained grace."

ZOE HAINES, 11TH GRADE

"It was kind of easy, but at the same time I feel like the teachers were overcompensating and were not getting paid enough."

NIA NICHOLSON, 11TH GRADE



"I feel that the positive was that we all gained technology skills and proved that we are adaptable. The negative would be that I missed seeing all students together in one setting and working together."

MS. ELIZABETH HANNON, HISTORY TEACHER

"I feel it was difficult for students as well as staff. I truly hope we are back next year with full five days, in person, and without the virtual option."

**MS. VONDA LORSON,
FUTURE READY SKILLS TEACHER**



Want to park your prints in Free Barking?
Let us know in the fall!

I will help you with a hacksaw, but I'm not your 'honey'

BY LILY GROOVER
SLATE STAFF WRITER

In the 21st century, one would think that prejudice against women would be close to nothing, right? Wrong. Every single day, women are still being belittled and compared to their male counterpart all because of their sex, when in reality, they are equal.

I work at a very conservative gun shop and hardware store. Hundreds of individuals from the Lehigh Valley and beyond visit every day. Working there feels like a world of stereotypes.

Quiet old ladies to families of six to young high school students flow in and out of the front door.

However, the bulk of the people I see are older, white, stick-in-the-mud patriots. Nearly all of them look as though they spend most of their time sitting on their front porch with either a cigarette, beer can, or a shotgun. Yes, stereotypical, but the overall persona of these men gives me the same feeling of patriarchy and uneasiness.

I am the only female (excluding the owners' wives) who works there. From a customer's perspective, coming up to the counter of an old hardware store and seeing a 16-year-old girl may be odd. Stereotypically, females like me should not be working in that type of environment, but that is not an invitation to immediately judge my own ability to work there.

I grew up with parents who advocated independence and self-worth. I may not be a certified plumber or an electrician, but mostly know what I'm talking about when it comes to simple hardware.

I also, safely, grew up around guns and hunting. My father made sure to teach me the basics of how everything works and all of the safety precautions.

So, when working, 75 percent of the time, I can answer a customer's firearm question.

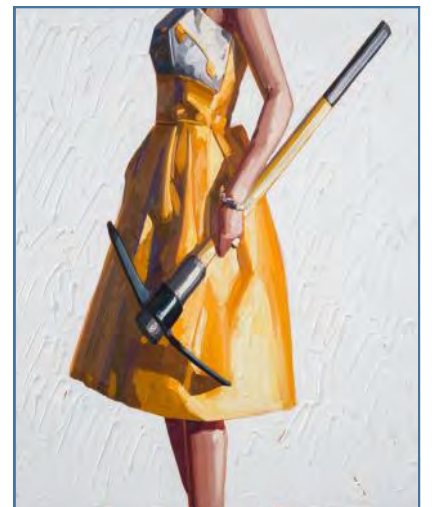
However, it is impossible to know someone's backstory with just a glance. So consequently, I become the second choice when it comes to giving assistance.

The sentence "this may not be something you can help me with," indicating that I am incapable of assisting someone based on my gender, has been said numerous times. Even worse, many male customers request I fetch my coworkers to help them instead of myself. The preconceived notion that I, and many women, are inferior when it comes to "manly" topics is an absurd view. Comments like these only make women more prone to educate themselves about so-called "male" topics in order to put small-minded people in their place.

Regularly, I get many unnecessary comments about my appearance, weight, height, and even shoe size. I get compared to my male coworkers based on appearance only. "Do you need help carrying that?" and "I saw a step stool over there" are the most common forms of judgments, when in reality, I can carry heavy things, and no step stool is needed. The need for a feeling of superiority over women in environments where they are not typically in charge is astronomical.

What a lot of men fail to understand is that names like "honey," "sweetheart," and "darling" make many women uncomfortable. Understandably, they are just trying to be nice; however, it shouldn't be at the cost of the woman's comfortability. Last week, I was called "babe" by what looked like a 50-year-old man, and I visibly cringed. But listening to the conversation my coworkers have throughout the day, I hear nothing but "sir" and "man" as names given. The level of respect certain males give off fluctuates between the gender that is in front of them.

The thought that women are the weaker gender is, quite frankly, ridiculous. Any woman is just as capable of completing a task that a man can do. Break the stereotype. 🐾



OPINIONS

Our View

Enjoy the coffee. Savor that sushi. Return to the moment.

Years ago, a familiar and consistent refrain was “If I only had a camera.”

For that elusive double rainbow, a bald eagle surprisingly perched on the backyard shed, or a chance meeting with an old friend, we wished for a way to permanently capture and eventually share those special moments.”

But it was also a time where we merely longed for the accessible technology and the convenience of having film, a tripod, or even a camcorder to capture movement in all its blurry, crackly-sounded glory.

Instead, we had to just enjoy the moments. Take them all in. The world had pauseable possibilities.

This is a tired topic, but now that this pandemic is (hopefully, please, oh, please) edging toward its demise — although it still needs much more cooperation — now more than ever, we need a return to those little stoppages of time to smell the roses, find a cardinal, stare at the rainbows, and just keep the phone powered off and away. (Or, at the very least, on silent).

It sounds almost impossible. Keep the phone away? Unheard of, right?

So, when you get that Starbucks (which includes 15 demands in the order), smell the coffee. Taste the coffee. Enjoy the dang coffee. No one needs to see the cup posing in front of your steering wheel.

Got sushi? Fantastic. Couldn't be happier. But take in the experience — leave the Instagram community out of the situation.

At the gym? Boss. Go conquer those lats and traps and prep for leg day, you muscle-maiden. But leave those full-length mirrors for your own pride and confidence. There is no law that says the public must see

your treadmill stats or a sweaty mirror selfie. Enjoy the burn alone.

In a year and a half where we have lost so many moments of all magnitudes, we need to return to those pauses of time. No longer do we ever have to wish, “if only I had a camera.” We have cameras attached to us all the time, everywhere we go. But there is no obligation to use them.

Experience the world again with your own lens — not that of an iPhone. 🐾



THE SLATE
 ALL YOUR BULLDOG NEWS..

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Closing Time: Leaving memory lane in our rearview

BY BREANNA HOPPE
EDITOR IN CHIEF

As the days dwindle down to the very end for seniors, nostalgia consumes nearly all of us. On the day freshmen orientation took place for the class of 2021, the seniors at the time continuously said to enjoy our years here, as they go by quickly.

At this point in time, our only desire was to graduate and depart high school. Now, as the end is just around the corner, it is almost incomprehensible to believe that our years at Northern Lehigh are coming to an end.

Many of us have been together since we were toddlers, eager for show and tell days at preschool. For the past 12 years, each summer has ended on a “see you next school year” note. This time, things are drastically different. After graduation, once we arrive back at our homes and close the door, we are closing an important and large chapter in our lives.

For many of us, we are all that we have known for the last twelve years of our lives. Many seniors began their journey at Peters Elementary and are now graduating from Northern Lehigh High School.

As I look back on my time spent in this district, it truly is difficult to believe that this journey is coming to an end. Within the next few months, some friends who have been near to my heart since the beginning of this adventure will move hours away, some will even travel states away to further their educations



and move on to the next chapter of their lives. Regardless of how much time has passed, I am still able to vividly remember the way we all were in the very early stages of our time together.

I can clearly remember Trent Herman always wearing a Disney related t-shirt in elementary school. I remember Shaina Mazzocca being the best girl at kickball during recess, and I remember hopping on my family’s golf cart and happily taking every single friend of mine down to my nana’s house since she always had the best candy and I thought my nana was the coolest person around. Within just a few minutes of meeting her and seeing the candy basket she had, they quickly became certain she was definitely the coolest.

Now, years have passed, and my friends and I have grown, my nana is no longer here, and we are no longer filling the golf cart basket to the brim with goodies from her. There are many days where I sit filled with sorrow pondering

why we wanted life to pass us by so fast.

When we were innocently swinging back and forth on the playground at recess, with little to no responsibilities, we dreamt of the days where we would become adults. Now that the time has quickly come, I find myself wishing I could relive one more day as a young child, without a care in the world, jumping as my parents held my hand and swung their arms.

When we were younger, we wanted nothing more than to grow up. At a young age, we wished we could become adults overnight and begin our lives, sure enough, that’s how it feels right now. It seems as though just yesterday, we frantically rushed to strap our velcro shoes and hop on the bus for our very first day of kindergarten. Now, more than a decade later, we are preparing for the final moments of such a big part of our lives. The curtain’s finally closing and the credits are beginning to roll.

I still remember when my nana and

pap put me on the bus in elementary school and nearly every day, pap would make an egg in a nest sandwich. I truly believe that things can be made with love, since that was a very plain, yet the best sandwich. Whenever I had a game, my dad would make sure to leave work early, and he’d show up in his work clothes just to watch me play. He was just that devoted as a father.

As for my mom, I can still feel the mossy rocks on my toes as we caught tadpoles at the Trexler Game Preserve. Sometimes, my mom would forget to wear proper water shoes and she would spend more time slipping on the rocks and falling into the water than she would spend catching tadpoles.

As I advance into adulthood, I think of all the euphoric and love-filled moments the beginning of my life has experienced. As I look back on the past, my heart is filled with great joy and endless happiness. I wish I was a tad more patient and not so eager to grow up. Growing up means losing loved ones, gaining responsibilities, and facing struggles as we grow into who we will become for the rest of our lives. Hang onto your childhood as long as you can. As you grow, those around you will grow up as well. As we age, our parents are aging as well, and so are grandparents and childhood pets. Cherish the current moments you’re living in. One day these will be the good old days.

Signing off,
Breanna 🐾

Stepping over to the bright side for a little while

BY BRITTNEY DIEHL
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Life is dedicated to the ongoing change it causes. We as humans do not stop moving, running, leaping to our next opportunity and chance to make some sort of difference. But sometimes those goals are unattainable, but how? Why can I not receive what I truly want—what I deserve?

The law of attraction seems to dominate this idea. We attract what we fear because what we fear is what we think of most. By constantly thinking about such an idea or concept, we inherently bring it closer to us, rather than the intended avoidance that is originally thought.

This could be some sort of inhuman, dark side of humanity that is bent on self-destruction. It could be our nature that designs us and pushes us to do this sort of self-loathing in everyday routine.

However, why can I not have it? What is stopping me from reaching this sort of long-awaited goal, this so-desired

prize? Some say it has to do with divine timing, what is meant to be will be, and all the comforting mojo that is meant to bring peace of mind to those truly weeded deep into depressive thinking.



Not getting what we desire is rooted in the fact that we put too much pressure on these particular goals. Will earning the title of being the CEO of corporate America really bring you joy or will it just cause you to keep wanting more, achiev-

ing more, searching for *more*?

More is not always the answer to our problems. Why can I not get what I want? Because it is not meant for you or it is not yours to attain- *yet*.

Personally, I’ve spent that last few months fighting for something, trying to fix something, trying to be something for others. I have pushed myself to my limit. I kept trying and trying and trying to reach my goals- to get what I want. But still, it has not been reached. I cannot get this idea, this material item, or this person simply because I want to will it into existence. I did not receive it because it was not meant for me. Some may think they deserve it, but what is really true is that they deserve more or different. People are constantly trying to aim for the moon when their perfect star is waiting for them.

Despite this, this is not a message to stop going for what you truly want. Strive to go to Harvard, strive to be the top chef of some New York City five-star restau-

rant, strive to get that last degree, strive for more. But sometimes, the “more” that you want is not always the “more” you need.

Take comfort in the fact that life is insane, unprofessional, unpredictable, and raw. No matter what path you take, there is no right or wrong but rather a different perspective. Our world is built upon the concept of different perspectives — a bright side.

A lot of people tend to take pride in being a pessimist or a realist. Looking at things with a supposed “realistic” view. However, despite previously priding myself on this view of the world, I have taken on a new idea into my own hands—optimism.

I have constantly told my close friends and those who need to hear the words — “there is always a bright side.” Once, someone told me that if you have to look for it, then it’s not so bright. But, just because you cannot see the light at the end of the tunnel does not mean that it is not there and shining just as bright. 🐾

Falling behind in pride

BY OWEN LEVAN-UHLER
SLATE STAFF WRITER

Readers of *The Slate* have likely seen a fair number of articles written about LGBTQ-related topics. This subject rears its controversial head yet again in this body of work because 2021 is slated to be the most dangerous year for queer people in recent American history.

The United States has always *prided* itself on being a world leader in peace, justice, and service for its citizens, and a role model for such philosophies for the rest of the world. So, it is a shame to say that the idea of a prosperous and peaceful America seems self-indulgent. There are an abundance of social, civil, racial, environmental and infrastructural issues that need to be tackled head-on in order to ensure not just the prosperity of its citizens, but also the citizens of the world, especially if so many Americans wish to tout that their country is “the greatest.” Sure, the U.S. is great... for those who aren’t (among a myriad of other things) queer.

Queerphobia, much like racism and misogyny, is deeply rooted in American society and law. Fortunately, most people are able recognize that queer people are just that: *people*. But many U.S. lawmakers see this differently.

According to hrc.org, “more than 250 anti-LGBTQ bills have been introduced in state legislatures across the country in 2021, and additional bills may be filed before the end of the legislative sessions.” As of writing, eight of these bills have already been signed into law, while 10 more are on governors’ desks; 115 of these more-than-250 bills are specifically aimed at trans people (mainly youth), reflecting the anti-trans precedent being laid out in many state governments.

Politicians clearly are not in touch with the voters they are serving, as the majority of voters on *both* sides of the political aisle are in general support of the LGBTQ community. For example, a recent PBS/NPR/Marist poll states: “At least 60% of Trump voters across each of the 10 swing states say transgender people should be able to live freely and openly.

At least 87% of [swing state] respondents say transgender people should have equal access to medical care, with many states breaking 90% support. When respondents were asked about how they prioritized the importance of banning transgender people from participating in sports as compared to other policy issues, the issue came in dead last.”

Even though there are still millions of Americans not in solidarity with the LGBTQ (which could be addressed with proper education) most Americans show good conscience and basic logic and decency. So what reasons are there for anti-LGBTQ sentiment on the floors of Congress?

Many lawmakers disguise their actions as heroic, saying they are “saving” the members of the community, most notably youth. The kids of the LGBTQ community are already at higher

risk of self-harm, suicide, and being hate-crimed. It has been proven by numerous studies that allowing trans kids to get treatments like hormone therapy and surgeries significantly lowers their risk of self-harm and suicide, as well as other mental disorders. So, prohibiting children to receive healthcare to aid in their

journeys to find themselves is not only condemnable and unconstitutional, it is literally deadly. Perhaps the biggest reason for anti-LGBTQ

sentiment is on the basis of “religious freedom.” What matters more: someone’s religious freedom, or someone’s *life*? Any basis of discrimination of the LGBTQ community is unconstitutional and wrong, so why should religion be given an exception, one that allows it to squander the life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness of queer people?

For many, it comes down to pure ignorance and evil: Mississippi Governor Tate Reeves stated that allowing students to play sports based on their chosen gender-identity is “crazy.” He said this after signing the state’s first youth trans-sports ban.

Most politicians don’t outline clear reasons for this legislation and mindset, and the excuses of those who do are shaky at best. These bills have been presented as “solutions” by conservative lawmakers, yet they address no clear or demonstrated problems.

In America, one of the only things that talks is money, so if legislators are not going to listen to their citizens, maybe they will have a higher chance of responding to wasted economic potential: “The National Collegiate Athletic Association came out against the Idaho [anti-trans] bill and others like it and subsequently moved planned tournament games out of Idaho. The Associated Press projected that the North Carolina bathroom bill could have cost the state \$3.76 billion over 10 years. During a fight over an anti-transgender bathroom bill in 2017, the Texas Association of Business estimated \$8.5 billion in economic losses, risking 185,000 jobs in the process.”

There is a difference between not understanding the complexities of the LGBTQ community, and being queerphobic (whether internally or externally.) Not understanding is a normal thing, and even those of us *in* the community are still learning new things about ourselves and how to better aid in our struggles every day. But if you are queerphobic, it is imperative to look inside yourself, determine why you are queerphobic, and overcome that.

The push of anti-LGBTQ legislation in this country is not only unconstitutional, heartbreaking, and sinisterly characteristic of the U.S., it is also a blatant attempt at making people of the LGBTQ community second-class citizens. Until lawmakers and public figures, like the President, take active strides to prevent and combat this obvious discrimination, the government has failed not just the LGBTQ community, but America as a whole. 🍌

Even those of us *in* the community are learning new things about ourselves and how to better aid in our struggles every day.



Senior Prom



Riley Griffith, Shaina Mazzocca, Madison Seier, Breanna Hoppes.



Makayla Gangaway, Paige Johannsmeier.



Justin Ruiz-Nagy.



Katelyn Verba and Corinne Verba.



Bielman Perez, Brenton Kremasky, Ryan Hammond, Brenden Smay, DeSean Smith, Mike Chirico, Charles Wilk III, Evan Horninger.




(Left) Natalie Keller, (above) Maggie Reitz.

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MONUMENTAL MOMENTS IN HISTORY



What stories live behind Memorial Day?

BY CALLUM BRYCE ZIMMERMAN
THE SLATE HISTORIAN

Memorial Day is an American holiday, observed on the last Monday of May. This is not just a three-day-weekend and reason for grilling with family and friends, Memorial Day is dedicated to honoring the men and women who died while serving in the U.S. military.

Originally known as Decoration Day, Memorial Day began in the years following the Civil War, becoming an official federal holiday much later in 1971. Many Americans observe Memorial Day by visiting cemeteries or memorials, holding family gatherings and participating in parades. Unofficially, Memorial Day marks the beginning of the summer season.

Early Observances of Memorial Day

The Civil War, which ended in the spring of 1865, claimed more lives than any conflict in U.S. history and required the establishment of the country's first national cemeteries. By the late 1860s, Americans in various towns and cities had begun holding springtime tributes to

these countless fallen soldiers, decorating their graves with flowers and reciting prayers.

It is unclear where this tradition exactly originated from because numerous communities may have independently initiated the memorial gatherings. Some records show that one of the earliest Memorial Day commemorations was organized by a group of freed slaves in Charleston, South Carolina less than a month after the Confederacy surrendered in 1865. Nevertheless, in 1966 the federal government declared Waterloo, New York, the official birthplace of Memorial Day. Waterloo—which first celebrated the day on May 5, 1866—was chosen because it hosted an annual, community-wide event, during which businesses closed and residents decorated the graves of soldiers with flowers and flags.

History of Memorial Day

Memorial Day, as Decoration Day gradually came to be known, originally honored only those lost while fighting in the Civil War. But during World War I, the United States found itself embroiled in another major conflict, and the holiday evolved to commemorate American

military personnel who died in all wars, including World War II, The Vietnam War, The Korean War and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

For decades, Memorial Day continued to be observed on May 30, the date selected for the first Decoration Day. But in 1968 Congress passed the Uniform Monday Holiday Act, which established Memorial Day as the last Monday in May in order to create a three-day weekend for federal employees; the change went into effect in 1971. The same law also declared Memorial Day a federal holiday.

Memorial Day Traditions

Cities and towns across the United States host Memorial Day parades each year, often incorporating military personnel and members of veterans' organizations. Some of the largest parades take place in Chicago, New York and Washington, D.C. Americans also observe Memorial Day by visiting cemeteries and memorials. Some people wear a red poppy in remembrance of those fallen in war—a tradition that began with a World War I poem titled "In Flanders Field" by John McCrae:

*In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.*

*We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie,
In Flanders fields.*

*Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.*

Did you know? Each year on Memorial Day a national moment of remembrance takes place at 3 p.m. local time.

So hopefully you spent the holiday weekend with family and friends, celebrating the beginning of summer, giving pause and thanks for those who gave their all so that you have the freedom to do so. 🐾



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Kendall Heiney and Jared Thomason.



Christian Davila, Gabe Diaz, Brianna Kuhns, Ryan Lynch, Chase Jones, Jared Thomason. (Right) Brianna Ojeda, Paige Craddock.



PHOTOS BY
CAITLIN KIRK
FOR THE SLATE



Class advisers Mrs. Jess Frew and Mrs. Kate Farber.



(Above, left to right) Chase Jones. Chase Jones. Chase Jones. And more Chase Jones.

SPORTS



Game over but memories remain for sports seniors

BY ALEXIS TRAUGHER
SLATE SPORTS WRITER

Sports; a term we use on a daily basis and a term that has shaped so many lives throughout the world.

The common denominator connecting so many individuals with different backgrounds and challenges. However, after every athlete has completed their career, they have formed bonds, life-long friendships, and gained knowledge not only about themselves but others.

In the world of Northern Lehigh spring sports, there are multiple senior athletes. Many have fought unbelievable odds, cherished every moment, celebrated wins and dealt with many losses.

To every athlete out there, someone has influenced them and made them who they are today. To Caleb Hankee, senior hurdler, that person was coach Pristash. "The biggest influence on me as an athlete has to be my coach, Drake Pristash. Not only do I credit him with giving me all



the motivation I needed to get where I am as an athlete, but he's a true homie. If I had a different coach, I would not be as eager to hit the track as I am every day now. I'm super proud to be able to say I worked as closely as I did with him," said Hankee.

On the other side of spring sports, Ryan Hammond, senior baseball center fielder and pitcher, was most influenced

by someone close to home. Hammond said, "My dad is the person who had the biggest influence and impact on me as an athlete. He has taught me everything I know and I couldn't have done it without him."

Undoubtedly, accomplishments and positive experiences will stick with these individuals as they continue to age. But there is always something more clear or memorable than the rest. For Hammond, it was being named "Colonial League Academic All-Star," a title given to one male and female athlete from each school that has excelled in their sport, academics, volunteered in their community, and showed outstanding citizenship.

For Hankee, it was being able to play senior year rather than let his past win. "Honestly, my biggest accomplishment is being able to end my senior year as a part of this team. I've been on the track since eighth grade, and the whole reason I joined in the first place was to prove my

doctors wrong," said Hankee.

As these athletes begin to depart with the NL community, we start to wonder where they will flourish in the future. Hankee will be attending LCCC and may continue his athletic career. "LCCC does not have a track and field team. I will probably not be getting back right away. Although, if the opportunity arises, I would definitely give it another go when I transfer. Hopefully the future allows me to make my triumphant return."

Hammond, on the other hand, does not plan to continue participating on a college team. "I do not plan on playing an actual sport in college. I plan on continuing my athletics in clubs and intramurals," he said.

Ultimately, high school sports help to shape young individuals into adults to face the future. No matter how hard or easy the obstacle may be, past experiences will pave the way to success. 🐾

There is always ice cream at the end of the tunnel

A season that ended with a record of 7-14 was salvaged by soft-serve



Was it a special season for NL softball? According to head coach Kate Farber, "How do you measure the success of anything you do in life? Being able to look back and know without a single doubt that you put in the hard work, the 110% effort, and the relentless determination to be better — then you've succeeded. Sometimes that includes hard work and sometimes you have to look deeper. Sports and life are one in the same to me. The bar was high, and this team rose to that challenge instead of settling to be what people run their mouth about. They faced adversity and took it head on, overcoming obstacles we don't typically face. No complaints, no excuses, they just kept grinding. We are better today than we were yesterday - that's success." See more photos on pages 13, 14.

SPORTS



Heart & Hustle



All was not lost on a hard-fought softball season this year. The Slate was very thankful to have amazing photos contributed generously by Mr. EJH.

(Above, clockwise) Hayley Thoder, Haylie Fenstermaker, Arabella Heintzelman, Kaitlyn Stock.

SPORTS

Softball soldiers, minus seniors, will return next year



Kendall Heiney.



Cadence Peters.



Julia Wanamaker.



Haylie Fenstermaker.

Making tracks on the fields



Hailey Evans: bronze medal in the discus at PIAA District XI Track and Field Championship.



Jared Thomason: bronze medal in 1600 run.



Hunter Zehner: bronze medal in 300 meter hurdles.



Emily Moyer: silver medal in pole vault.



Kenneth Dyer: bronze medal in the 110 hurdles.



Kristen Guelcher: 4th place medal in the 100 dash.

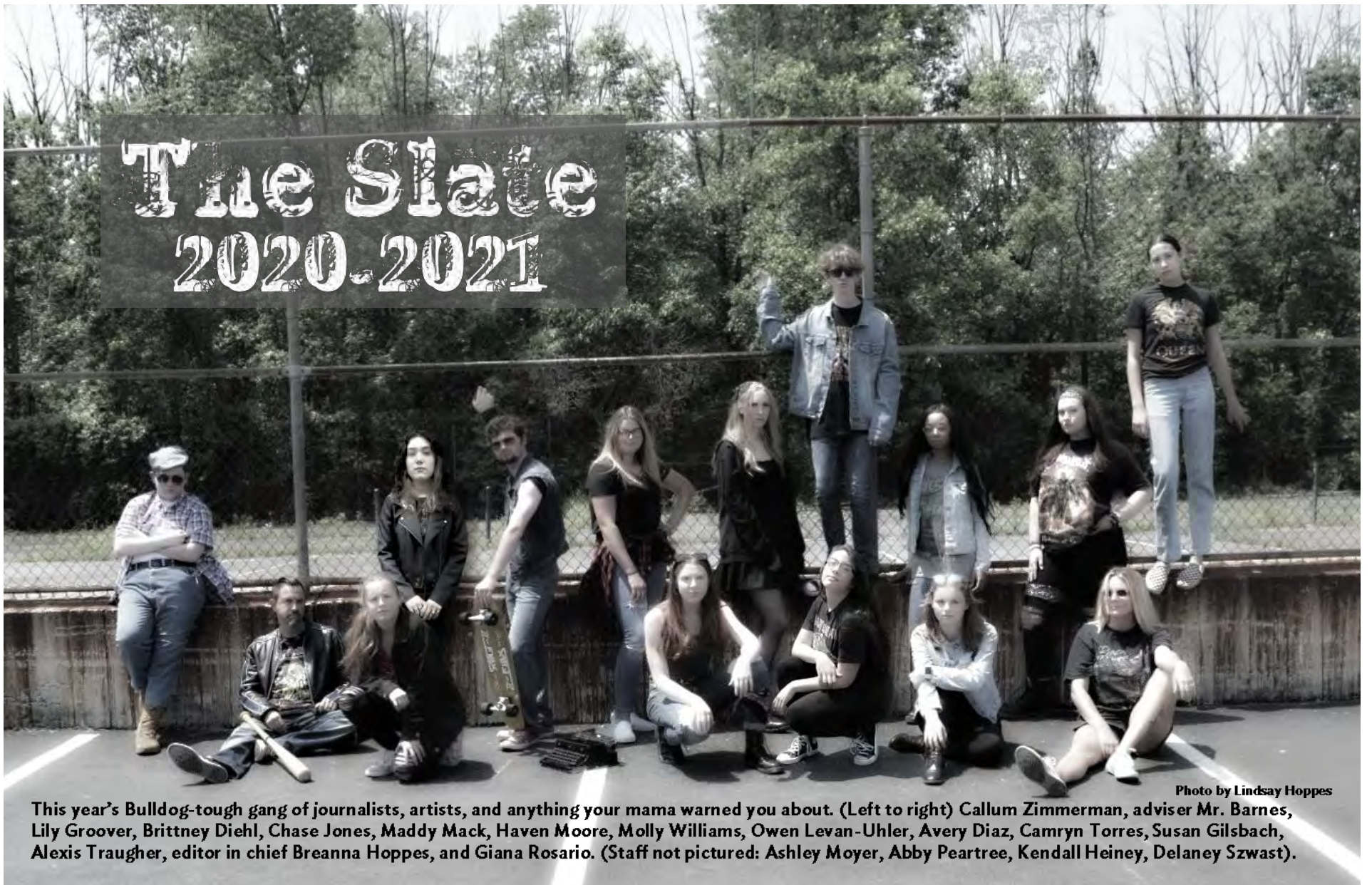


Photo by Lindsay Hoppes

This year's Bulldog-tough gang of journalists, artists, and anything your mama warned you about. (Left to right) Callum Zimmerman, adviser Mr. Barnes, Lily Groover, Brittney Diehl, Chase Jones, Maddy Mack, Haven Moore, Molly Williams, Owen Levan-Uhler, Avery Diaz, Camryn Torres, Susan Gilsbach, Alexis Traugher, editor in chief Breanna Hoppes, and Giana Rosario. (Staff not pictured: Ashley Moyer, Abby Peartree, Kendall Heiney, Delaney Szwast).

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Bulldogs of baseball strive through rough season



Nick Buskirk.



Ryan Hammond.



Jack Tosh.



Josh Kistler.



Cole Hausman.



Ryan Hammond.

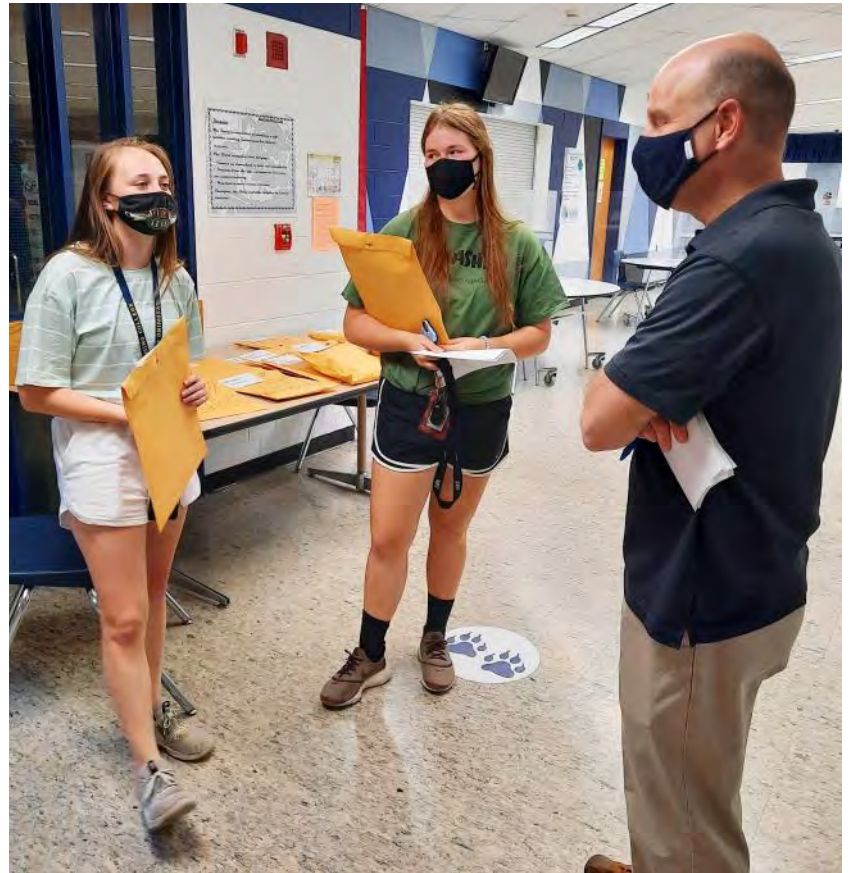


Brett Misera.



Tyler Fenstermaker.

UNEARTHING A CAPSULE OF 7TH-GRADE HISTORY



Mr. Jason Graver, Old World Cultures teacher at Northern Lehigh Middle School, reconnects with seniors each spring to return their seventh-grade time capsule. The project that begins five years earlier sees students collecting photos of friends, letters from teachers, notes from parents, and any other special mementos they then open in 12th grade. (Left) Brianna Storm helps Mr. Graver electronically chat with Justyn Sandt and Joey Abidelli. (Above) Riley Griffith and Hailey Evans tell their former teacher about post-graduation plans.

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The silver screen rolls again this summer

Sequels, prequels, maybe something new finally emerge as pandemic diminishes

BY GIANA ROSARIO
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

This past year has been tough on all of us. It is nice to get a break from all the chaos that is going on around us once in a while. Since we are all stuck inside every day, many of us watch movies to pass the time. Thankfully, we will be getting some new and exciting films to watch this summer. Hopefully we can go out to theaters to watch them soon.

Dozens of movies will be released this coming summer. Some of them were pushed back to later dates, but we will be able to watch them soon. One of the most awaited movies that is finally being released is Marvel's *Black Widow*. It stars Scarlett Johansson, Florence Pugh, David Harbour and more talented actors and actresses. This film was actually supposed to come out last year, but it was postponed three times. It should officially be out on July 9, 2021, for all Marvel fans to watch and enjoy.

A Quiet Place 2 was also a film that was pushed back. This movie was written and directed by the well-known actor John Krasinski. To celebrate its release, John has been surprising fans all over the country. He was showing up at the premieres to meet the fans. It was supposed to be released over a year ago on March 8, 2020, but COVID-19 got in the way. This sequel is considered one of the most anticipated horror movies of the year.

Fortunately, people will not have to wait much longer as it is set to be officially released to the public at the end of May. *Fast and Furious 9* is set to be in theaters for people to watch on June 25. The sequel to the hit movie *Space Jam* will be introduced to people this summer. This new movie is called *Space Jam: A New Legacy*. This sequel will come out on July 16th, 2021. Another sequel that will be releasing on the same date is *Escape Room 2*. This horror film will pick up where the original movie left off, continuing the ominous story.

A lot of these movies were pushed back so people were not able to watch them when they were originally supposed to be released. They were set to come out a long time ago, but the pandemic hit and companies decided to wait for a better time to release them. Since they waited until recently to publish them, more people can now go to see them in person.

Some of these movies are conveniently being released on certain streaming platforms so you can watch them from the comfort of your own home. Theaters are also finally opening their doors for people to enjoy these long awaited films. It will be great to have new movies to stream during this pandemic when we have a lot of time on our hands. Now that life is going back to normal somewhat, we can go out to see these movies. 🐾



As the masks continue to get lifted, the summer blockbuster season might make Netflix, Amazon, and HBO Max a bit nervous as theaters reopen to in-person showings.

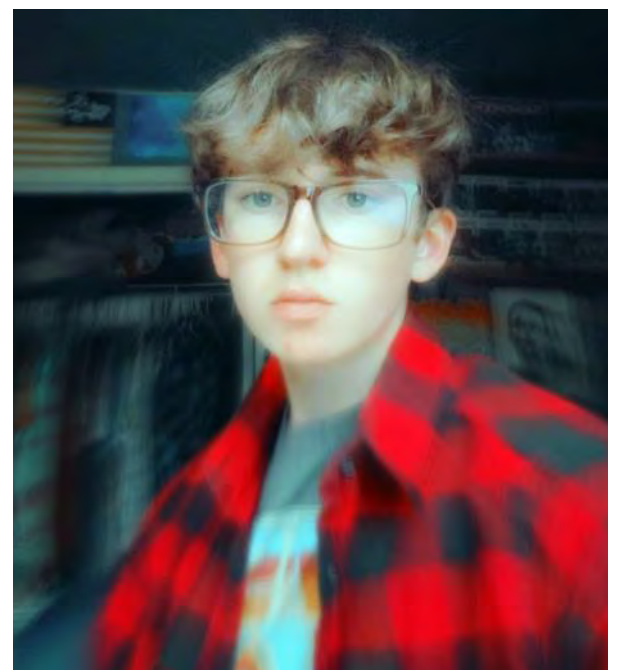
Student Council was out for blood



Members of NL Student Council helped organize a community blood drive in late April at Bulldog Stadium. (L to R) Aidan Williams, Kamryn Fink, Susan Gilsbach, Carly Mikulski, and Brittney Diehl.

New Slate regime ready for 2021-22

Owen Levan-Uhler, who was a writer for the middle school's Bulldog Bark, and a Slate staff writer for three years at the high school, will finish his senior year as editor in chief. Congratulations on earning this top-tier position. Assisting Owen on the editorial staff will be Brittney Diehl (senior associate editor), Lily Groover (associate editor), Avery Diaz (copy editor), and Alexis Traugher (sports editor).



A DIFFERENT SIDE TO A SENIOR PROM



Josh Sandholm, Hailie Krasenics, and Elye Albert.



Brenton Kremasky eventually dunked the Big Dawg.



Courtney Gimbar, Brianna Kuntz, Diandray Rivera-Barreto, Elizabeth Eckert.

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Bulldogs help Rotary Club with community project



Seven NL students participated in the Rotary Club of Slatington community service project at Walnutport Playground. Rotary donated \$1,100 for the replacement of the batting cage net. The Interact youth helped install it as part of the Camp Neidig project.

Photo generously contributed by EJJH



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Climate-damaging events spell bad news

BY ASHLEY MOYER
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Japan has just announced that they plan to dump more than 1 million cubic meters of contaminated water from the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster into the Pacific Ocean.

The dump would meet global guidelines, however, if the radionuclides in the water bioaccumulate, it could cause cellular and genetic impairment in marine ecosystems. Now let's talk about how this all started.

In 2011, Fukushima Daiichi, a nuclear power plant in Japan, suffered from a nuclear disaster that was caused by a 14-meter-high tsunami and the 9.1 magnitude Tohoku earthquake.

The tsunami waters flooded emergency generators used to pump cooling water into the nuclear reactor. This caused the generators to disable and cause three reactor meltdowns and hydrogen explosions. This is comparable to the 1986 Chernobyl disaster. Eventually, the radionuclides, atoms that emit radiation, were found in Pacific waters and put into storage tanks. These tanks hold over 50 radionuclides. This is where the problem lies. These tanks are predicted to be completely full by mid-2022 and the area for building more of these tanks is scarce. Essentially, the power plant has nowhere to put the water; which is where the dump comes in.

Dumping practices like these are unfortunately, very common, and with reducing some of the radionuclides, it would meet global guidelines. However, the wastewater contains significant amounts of radioactive Carbon-14, which is known to bio-accumulate in marine ecosystems and cause cellular and genetic impairment. C-14 has a half-life of 5,730 years.

This is a serious concern between China, neighboring South Korea, and local fishermen, as this can contaminate marine

seafood. Not to mention, there are already elevated amounts of radioactive C-14 in the oceans from nuclear weapons tests from the last century. This can be found in organisms living in the Marianas Trench. TEPCO, the company in charge of Fukushima, says that the water has been treated and is OK to release, but other reports say that the treatment system is substandard and not up to the job. This, and along with other dumping practices, should not be allowed. It endangers not only us, but our marine life as well. This is not OK.

I would also like to bring your attention to another nuclear water crisis, the Marshall Islands. The U.S. Congress has also come to this problem and demanded an investigation on a concrete dome on the Marshall Islands. This dome is full of nuclear waste from the nuclear weapons tests of the 1940s and 1960s. The US bombed these islands over 60 times, and it's said that the islands are more radioactive than Chernobyl and Fukushima.

One of the bomb craters was so radioactive, that they had to put a concrete dome over it to keep the waste from seeping out. Because of global warming and rising waters, Congress believes this concrete dome may begin to crack and start seeping the radioactive waste into the ocean, which will cause an ecological disaster if we don't deal with it properly. The Department of Energy released a statement, saying that the worry of radioactive waste seeping out was not likely, however, it did little to ease the concerns of Marshallese leaders and many other climate activists.

These, and many other climate-damaging events concern many people who care for our planet. We cannot change our past leaders' mistakes, however we must live and deal with their outcomes. These problems should be dealt with properly, without damaging our planet and future any more. This is not okay. 🌱

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Need more Chase Jones? Who doesn't? Turn the page.

Art, from page 2

trials and tribulations of modern day society. Chase has faced these challenges like many others and was particularly hurt after losing one of his most influential patriotic figures, Captain America. After the fall of Captain America, Chase came to the realization that the internal troubles that heroes have faced are still

relevant and apparent in modern-day reality. Chase continues to struggle with having the same morals and ideals today but by featuring patriotic and American nostalgia in his art, he has a creative outlet and escape.

A positive outlet like this provides a way to allow Chase to value his current beliefs as well as still have a feeling of self-recognition and identity. Chase's cur-

rent morals which were mentioned earlier, are what he solely and firmly believes that this country stands for. He deems that America is about high standards of morality and justice, and seizing the opportunity to become something greater.

These morals are what Chase lives by, and gives him hope for the future of himself, and the world. Well said Chase, and thanks for sharing your thoughts, and

talent with your peers.

If anyone has any interest or questions about The Artist of The Month, please don't hesitate to reach out to Mr. Shuey via email, or visit him in the Art Room. Thank you to everyone who has chosen to participate in this year's monthly contests. 🐾

FEAR AND LOATHING IN FRESHMAN YEAR

An account of a time forgotten in the wake of a 'new normal'

BY CHASE JONES
SLATE COMIC GUY

To this day, I remember the way the cool basement of the old Pesesko farmhouse felt. It smelled like it had just rained and the air was consistently damp. This place had become our own laboratory of sorts, for just days before we were assigned the most outrageous and memorable of projects by our science teacher, a man by the name of Mr. David L. Oertner.

He assigned us the Rube Goldberg Machine project, an assignment where one must build his own insane contraption, which completed a task of some kind. The task that was to be completed by this amalgamation of mouse traps, erector set, and Iron Man DVDs was up to us, and us alone. Our machine in all of its Frankenstein-like glory, would complete the most important of tasks through the most absurd means. It would give me a puff of my trusty inhaler — Big Blue, I called him.

My best friend and publicist, Aiden Pesesko, and I had partnered with a man by the name of Zach Chamberlain, an anti-social baseball player who consistently ignored his friends out of some kind of self amusement — though we did not know this at the time. By that same token however, we did have some good times with Zach. A few of our most hilarious antics took place within his presence and most of the time when I describe him in this condescending way, it is simply to bust his chops.

As Aiden and I worked on the machine amongst ourselves within the confines of our dampened basement laboratory, we attempted to work vigorously, and yet our own insanity continually got in the way. Every bad idea we had turned into its own side endeavor, using our tools and resources for everything but what they were meant for, effectively creating hilarity-driven antics never to be topped. Wheelchairs on trampolines, blow torches and hand sanitizer, leaf blowers and tree swings, all involved and all putting us in danger of some kind, or another.

To those who would not have been aware of our personalities and somewhat abstract way of thinking, our actions may have seemed as though they were the result of a NyQuil binge, but to us it was normalcy.

One instance I vividly remember is the time we were cornered by an infesta-

tion of spider crickets. They came toward us in a swarm like a platoon of Viet Cong guerrillas in 1971, Saigon, but Zach, who showed up only minutes earlier, poured a bottle of the previously mentioned hand sanitizer on the floor before them. The part-arachnid, part-insect half-breeds inevitably were slowed as they entered the viscous liquid. Aiden, using his quick wit

search of something that would have enough weight to set off Big Blue in a single, hard-hitting strike. That was when I saw the hammer... the hammer we had been using for everything but building the project. We had mainly been using the well weighted construction device for smashing the mortal enemies we had found in the guerilla cricket spiders. After

lack thereof, we returned to our basement hideaway and immediately put a hole through the hammer, then bolting it to the machine. It was only moments later that his father entered our self-proclaimed laboratory and saw what we had done to his nailing device. The shock on his face was indescribable and I think tears actually filled his eyes.

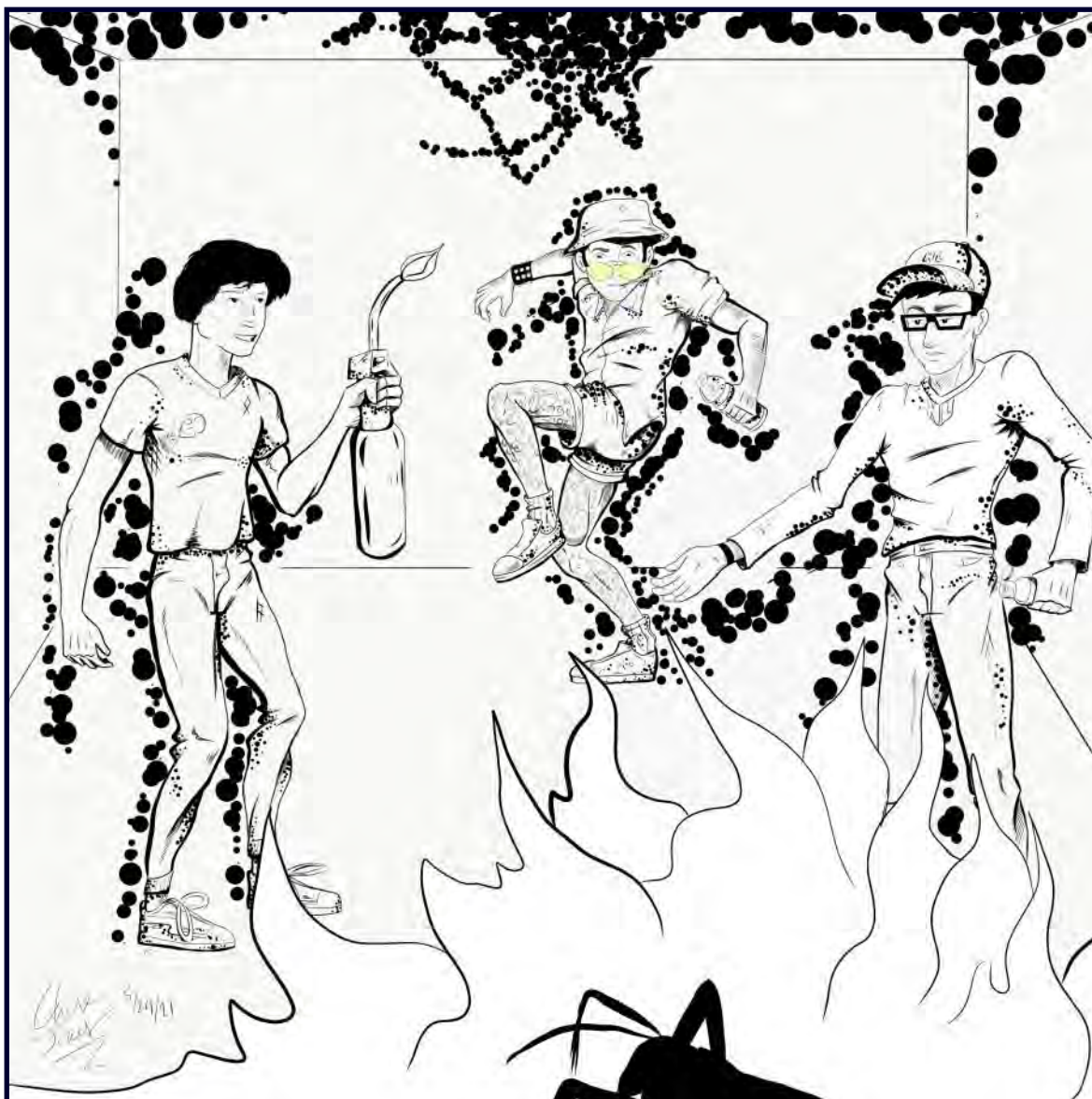
I leaned toward Aiden, who looked to be in distress, and whispered snarkily, "Good god, man, he's actually crying."

After making this remark I saw a bit of a smirk come to his face, a smirk that faded in almost an instant when his father decided to speak an actual English sentence, yelling, "NOOOOOOO! THAT WAS MY HAMMER!" in an echoing, high pitched voice. In frustration, and perhaps a bit of embarrassment about his reaction to what Aiden and I had done, his father stormed out of the basement. Aiden and I looked at each other, baffled, and could do nothing but continue to add to our complex contraption.

It was merely days later that we would finish the machine and place Big Blue in his rightful place, directly beneath the cricket killing hammer. We slapped some paint on it, drew a cracked out Fred Flintstone, added an Iron Man DVD, for the flair of course, and dubbed it *The Inhalerinator 3000*. As I recall, the three of us did very well and the machine performed perfectly on its first run through in front of the class, giving me my daily dose of "lung juice" in the most entertaining way possible.

After reflecting upon our time working on the Inhalerinator 3000 in the spring semester of freshman year, I have come to realize just how much our lives have changed and just how much the three of us have changed as people.

However, in spite of all of the fear and loathing we have experienced in the last year, due to the changes we have all been forced to deal with and the events we have been forced to watch unfold on the 24-hour news cycle, I do not resent it. Someday, perhaps, I will realize that without living through all of this chaos I would not have become the best of the Chase Joneses out there. That is my hope anyway, not just for myself, but for the entire youth of America. 🐾



and cunning intellect, then grabbed the blow torch and lit the alcohol-ridden fluid, sending the creepy crawly guerrillas up into flames and saving the three of us from being consumed by the vile creatures.

At the sight of the bonfire of cricket legged arachnids I had nothing to say but, "Anyone else want a S'more?"

As the weeks passed, the project dragged on, and very little progress was made, due to our continuous side endeavors. On one of those unproductive days, the cycle of procrastination broke and we began to seriously question how we were going to finish out the machine's inhaler-activating mechanism.

Aiden said something like, "We need something to smack it real hard, so that your lung juice comes out, ya know?"

I scoured the room with my eyes in

having spotted the hickory-handled, rust-spotted hammer, I blurted out, "Over there, man, the cricket killer!"

Aiden liked the thought and grabbed it almost instantly. He grabbed the bright yellow DeWalt drill and pressed the brass bit to the lower handle of the cricket-killing device. As he was about to pull the trigger, I stopped him.

I said, "Wait, man! That's your dad's nailing device, we should ask him if we can use it, so he doesn't cry when he sees it bolted to our monstrosity."

Aiden sighed and we headed upstairs as quick as bunnies to ask his father if we could use the hammer. When the question was posed he simply grumbled and made a few sounds reminiscent of an adult living in the world of Charlie Brown and the Peanuts gang.

Discombobulated by his response, or