



# URINETOWN!



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# We. Are. Woman.



Photo by Lindsay Hoppes

**\*THE BODIES IN THIS PHOTO HAVE NOT BEEN RETOUCHEd.** A group of Northern Lehigh ladies — with each class represented — gathered to love one another and celebrate empowerment on International Women’s Day, March 8. (Top row) Lauren Hoffman (senior), Giana Rosario (freshman), Ava Rosario (senior), Breanna Hoppes (junior); (bottom row) Chloe Hawk (junior), Aicha Salih (freshman), Sophia Lear (sophomore). Breanna Hoppes tackles the obstacles of ‘body image’ with personal input from these proud women — Page 3.

## Pandemic announced; virus continues spreading

‘Humanity has survived much worse,’ epidemiologist tells *The Slate* in exclusive interview

BY BRITTNEY DIEHL  
STAFF WRITER

“COVID-19, given the global impact it has had in such a short amount of time, is not to be ‘taken lightly.’ We all have a responsibility in doing our part to control the spread of the disease,” consultant epidemiologist Anita Ghatak, MPH, said in an exclusive interview with *The Slate*.

Picture this: millions of people in hazmat suits trying to treat an epidemic that is allegedly less dangerous than the flu. However, is such attire common when dealing with the



flu? Coronavirus, also known as COVID-19, was officially announced and named as a disease by the World Health Organization on Feb. 11, 2020. It was first detected in Wuhan

City, Hubei Province, China. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) states, “The first infections were linked to a live animal market, but the virus is now spreading from person to person.” Therefore, coronavirus is one of the few diseases that has made the transfer from animals to humans and back again — an extremely rare occurrence.

If someone would contract coronavirus, he or she would have the typical influenza symptoms — fever, cough and difficulty breathing. Despite this, there have been some cases with

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## INSIDE



‘Rooster.’ Enough said. The magic retires. Page 2.

Does Prom Court Need To Be De-Throned? This month’s feature opinion by Chloe Hawk, page 6.



## 'Slate' earns 2nd-place in three awards

The Student Keystone Media Awards contest, sponsored by the Pennsylvania Newspaper Association, recognizes high school and college journalism that provides relevance, integrity, and initiative in serving readers. Recent winners were announced for the 2020 season and Northern Lehigh High School's student newspaper, *The Slate*, has earned three second-place awards: **Personality Profile:** "Science Teacher Explores the World," by Jamie Knerr (from last year), **Cartoon/Graphic Illustration:** "Project Bulldawg! Homemade Heroes," by Chase Jones; **Layout and Design:** Front Page, October 2020, Ava Rosario and Mr. Barnes.

"I already believed in this paper, but this recognition validates every second we put into the pages," said senior Ava Rosario, editor in chief. "Though we may not have the same staff as bigger schools, I know our dedication shines through. It's wonderful to know the appreciation goes beyond our community. The whole team deserves to know that their voice means something. I'm beyond honored."



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# 30-plus years of 'sharing the magic' comes to an end

'Rooster' Valentini takes no stress from a stressful job into a well-earned retirement

BY AVA ROSARIO  
EDITOR IN CHIEF

Not all heroes wear capes — all this one needs is a toothpick. For more than 30 years, Russell "Rooster" Valentini has been helping homeless children and their families across the Lehigh Valley, keeping them in school and providing them with whatever possible so they can live a seemingly normal day.

Valentini, however, will finally be hanging up his metaphorical cape (along with the proverbial toothpick and year-round shorts) at the close of the 2019-20 school year.

Valentini's job entails working with homeless families — some from the Northern Lehigh area over the years — on a daily basis. He provides them with the supplies and products they wouldn't get otherwise. A majority of his job is dedicated to working with students — at least 600 every year — helping to enroll them in school and making sure they have transportation to attend.

When thinking about this line of work, stress seems inevitable, but Valentini says he doesn't even know what the word means.

"The only time I feel let down is when somebody lies to me. So I feel like everything is in the realm of possibilities," Valentini said. "As long as nobody promised me something *wouldn't* happen, it's hard to feel let down. It's just like going 'OK, we got this, now let's deal with it.'"

He understands that so much of our lives is out of our control, so he makes sure to control the little things — like keeping ice cubes in the freezer or doing the laundry. It's the things that might make others "lose it" if they weren't done.

Valentini, of Slatington, grew up in Tamaqua where his parents preached to believe that nobody is better than he is, and vice versa. "So, when I go to presentations and they say, 'This guy's an expert,' I say, no, I've just been doing this a long time."

Valentini says everybody was put on this earth for a purpose -- we all have talent to bring to the table. His work is about giving everyone the chance to do just that. "I do believe that everybody's

got some magic. And I feel that if it's possible, I want them to at least come to the table to present their magic. I would be devastated to think that I didn't put somebody in that position."

To deal with everything he encounters on the job, Valentini turns to poetry. He had practiced the craft in high school but put the pen down when starting this job.

"I pulled up to an intersection," he said, "looked up and saw one window



**Russell "Rooster" Valentini, having spent more than 30 years trying to help homeless teens and their families, will retire at the end of this school year.**

with no curtains, and another with a cartoon sheet, and I just went, 'Huh, bed sheets for curtains or no curtains at all?' and then next thing you know, the poem went."

"Rooster" understands that what he sees every day could be considered disturbing — things that he says he has not even seen in movies. His poems document the real details of his job and the families he works with.

"It doesn't make good dinner conversation and I had to let it out. It's so important for me to be ready for the folks because they need people at their best and they deserve people at their best."

Most NL students know Valentini

from the presentations he would give at the middle school, offering details on what these families are experiencing and how students could help. The most important thing Valentini wants students to understand is how brave these people are. "You don't know what a heroic effort it is for some children to come to school," he said.

Misconceptions plague society's perception of the homeless, deeming them as "dumb," and Valentini notes that some of that blame goes to the state. Certain programs require a literacy-based curriculum, even for the students who are already excelling. "Certainly, they don't have exposure like others, but many of these children need exposure to sports, to the arts, things like that. That's what shows their talent and the magic in them." Students need fun—they are more than tests and they shouldn't have to prove themselves when already struggling.

"Everybody should have dreams," Valentini said. When looking at generational poverty, he noticed that families start settling for less, pushing off college and possible careers. Parents might not want their children even thinking about college, but everyone should get that chance. Valentini wants these children to understand that they can have a future, and a good one. They just have to take that step into the great unknown.

"I'm willing to walk with that child through that door and say, 'Let's take a look around.'"

Currently, there is no word on who will be taking over full-time for Valentini. He hopes that they will have

a replacement by June.

When asked how he will spend his retirement, Valentini chuckled, "I think I'm going to work with some cats." He had been visiting Forgotten Felines and Fidos, of Germansville, and asked about a separate cage of cats; they were deemed "unadoptable." Seeing those cats made Valentini want to start volunteering for the shelter.

Ultimately, "Rooster" Valentini wants everyone to understand that kindness can be life-changing. "People just want to know they exist. Sometimes a simple word can help somebody get through their day," he said, "You could be that difference." 🐾



# These women have not been retouched

NL ladies gather to speak out on confidence, body image, and society's senseless scrutiny



**“Behind every successful woman is a tribe of other successful women who have her back.”**

Lauren Hoffman, Giana Rosario, Chloe Hawk, Sophia Lear, Breanna Hoppes, Aicha Salih, Ava Rosario.

Photo by Lindsay Hoppes

BY BREANNA HOPPES  
STAFF WRITER

Outweighing society's expectations has been every woman's endeavor for centuries. A definition of beauty is a never-ending enigma for most.

From their youth, women are taught to exceed the expectations of those surrounding them. Girls are often nurtured with a mindset that in order to truly love oneself, they must meet society's standards. The truth behind most smiles is nearly all women have insecurities they struggle with.

Various beautiful Northern Lehigh women opened up about the confidence they originally struggled to discover. Sophomore Sophia Lear said, “I used to envy smaller teeth and wished I could have a better smile. I did not feel beautiful when I smiled and did not hold the confidence to fully embrace it. My smile is now one of my favorite things about myself and I am so proud of it. I have a big heart and am grateful to share with others my kindness through my big smile.”

Women are often pressured to appear perfect. Social media has developed a high expectation for their bodies. Images of models have caused females to draw unfair comparisons of themselves to others.

Hearing the harsh words of children growing up inevitably diminished self-esteem. Senior Ava Rosario spoke out about the effects of bullying and said, “I've been obsessed with body image since I was 8. Dozens of weight-loss attempts later, I am here -- 17 years old and still overweight. But now I can step back and appreciate what I wasn't seeing for so many years. I'm thankful for more

than my figure—my intellect, my creativity, my perseverance. I don't have to find validation in the number on the scale.”

From height to weight and everything in between, there is a fear of not fitting in. Freshman Giana Rosario, with a height models crave, said, “One thing that I have come to love about myself is my height. I used to be so embarrassed because I was different from most people, but I am fine with who I am now. It doesn't matter if you are 4'11" or 6'4"; you are still beautiful and valued.”

Our value is often determined by many things, yet the only individual who deserves to have an influence on our worth is ourselves. The perfect vision of beauty is in the eyes.

In the mind of freshman Aicha Salih, she finds beauty quite literally in her own eyes. “Throughout my youth, I've always had poor vision and I was always insecure about it after extensive surgery. I finally was able to see in that eye,” she said. “However, I had a scar in it. I was still insecure about it, but with time I've learned that my scar is beautiful and has changed me. The fact that it will always make me who I am is what I find to be the most interesting thing about myself.”

As for myself, for years, I believed it was necessary to impress everyone. Now, at 16, I finally believe where I am and who I've blossomed into is exactly where I belong.

At a young age, I developed an insecurity regarding nearly everything about

myself. From sitting in school to simply being alone, discomfort in my own skin consumed me. Questions of my self-worth arose, and I feared never fitting in.

I took each opportunity to express myself in a form of art offered. Each day I walked into school and faced the harsh reality of other teenage girls. Photography became my way of escaping bullies.

The words I heard had been carved into my mind. In the past year, I've developed and grown powerfully, and the

*“I rarely even acknowledge that there are things about me worth loving. I definitely deserve to give myself more credit for the woman I'm becoming.” - Chloe Hawk*

unconditional love from my family and friends has driven me to love every flaw that lives within me.

Each of us is entirely different in our own unique way, and self-expression comes in various forms. All emotions are portrayed differently, whether it is laughter, sadness, happiness, etc. One thing an individual does not deserve to feel ashamed of is his or her representation of happiness.

Senior Lauren Hoffman said, “I used to be very insecure of my laugh. Some people judged me because of it. However, some important people in my life assured me that my laugh made me unique and who I am. Because of those people, I learned to love it.” All ways of radiating happiness are truly beautiful.

Some women lack self-recognition.

Credit is often absent for all of the insurmountable things we have managed to overcome.

Junior Chloe Hawk said, “I rarely even acknowledge that there are things about me worth loving. I definitely deserve to give myself more credit for the woman I'm becoming. I love myself because even in the times where I feel empty, I still can look at things as an opportunity for things to grow and get better.”

Appreciating our accomplishments is something that truly becomes the foundation of our self-esteem.

Behind each and every cover, there's an entire story waiting. Each woman is crafted beautifully and uniquely. A glimpse into the minds of gorgeous souls surrounding us each and everyday is beyond important. Whether you cope with your own difficulties through writing, art, or photography like me, control your life and love the work of art you truly are. Look through the lens of your story to find the beauty and capture every moment.

Women all over the world have started a revolution even in countries where this seems nearly impossible. From Pakistani activist Malala Yousafzai, who literally took a bullet for women in Pakistan, to Swedish environmental activist Greta Thunberg, who strives to change our world for the better, women have started a revolution and refuse to be silenced any longer.

Inspirations are rising for us each and every day and the glimpse of the seven in this story is only the beginning. 🐾



## NL alumnus, leukemia survivor dances two nights away for THON



Photos courtesy of the Daily Collegian

Recently, NL alumnus and leukemia survivor Zach Long danced for 46 hours with Penn State's THON to raise money for the 4 Diamonds organization to help take on childhood cancer. The grand total for the PSU THON was \$11.6 million. Pictured: Parents Dennis and Shelly, with Zach and NL senior Tyler.



Photos courtesy of the Daily Collegian

Zach poses with Quinn Long, daughter of Mr. Derek Long — NL math teacher and Zach's uncle.

## Virus

From page 1

symptoms of gut infections, as found by the CDC.

However, in order to have symptoms, one must contract this extremely contagious illness that is said to spread through the air via a contaminated person's coughing and/or sneezing. Close personal contact or contact with infected objects also prove to put any individual at high risk for contracting the virus.

Additionally, fecal contamination and any contact with it has proven to have a high risk of contracting coronavirus. Scientists have proven that the virus was originally transferred through bat droppings accidentally released from a laboratory.

Coronavirus has proven its severity, yet there are still measures that can be taken to prevent from catching the devastating cold. For instance, basic sickness procedures, including washing your hands, covering your mouth when sneezing and/or coughing, and the like, are techniques that can be used to lower the chance of contraction. For instance, "The simplest act of washing one's hands is the single most effective method at prevention. If adults around the world cannot master this, there are more worrisome issues at play," said Ms. Ghatak.

Aside from many taking the necessary precautions, some U.S. citizens have already been infected with the disease (4,600 as of press time with 85 U.S. deaths) — a scary thought.

Dr. Kristen J. Mertz, a medical epidemiologist at Allegheny County Health, reported to the TribLive newspaper that, "I think that right now the estimation is about 15% of the cases are severe, but that might be an overestimate," Mertz said. "We'll know a lot more when testing is more widespread and they develop a serologic test to see who has antibodies to the disease. So, there's a lot of work

that needs to go into figuring out what the fatality rate is." Therefore, according to this media outlet, we have nothing to worry about — *yet*.

The impact that Pennsylvania could receive is in accordance with the following factors: "(1) the limited availability and restricted access to testing kits (2) the public's cooperation in being careful and persistent with their efforts in following proper procedure to limit disease spread and (3) the public's ability to think calmly and rationally," according to Ms. Ghatak. It is noted that police officials and paramedics are said to be preparing for the outbreak. Pennsylvania hospitals are noted to be at-the-ready, regarding the virus.

Some members of society even take an approach to that of a disease as severe as the plague. Ms. Ghatak, however, takes a different stance on the severity of the Coronavirus. She believes that there is no justification for the "widespread panic that seems to be gaining momentum each day" and that there is "far too much hype and 'fake news' being circulated." The only individuals that should be worried are "those of advanced age and immunocompromised status." Basically, the elderly and those with bad immune systems are the prime targets for COVID-19.

From the various reports, the virus is obviously linked to the dropping of the economy. Therefore, this causes society to question whether or not history is repeating itself — is our country's economy going to downward spiral just as it did a little under a century ago? However, if this national event should occur, it should instill a significant, life-dependent question: Will we, the people, be able to survive this?

When asked this question, Ms. Ghatak has a short, to-the-point response, "Yes of course. Humanity has survived much worse." 🐾

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# Swift's 'The Man' pokes proper fun at male privilege

BY MR. CHRISTOPHER BARNES  
MANAGING ADVISER

My classroom's walls have a masculine, skull-laden swagger. Posters promote proudly the likes of Rambo, Rocky, Slayer, Megadeth, zombies, Dracula, a ton of Iron Maiden, and touch of Ed Poe.

So a confusing curveball was thrown down the pike recently when what to my thundering speakers did blare but... Taylor Swift?

It was neither April 1st, nor did I lose a bet. It was YouTube offering a suggestion of "videos I might like." Not only did I like it, but — *and please keep this to yourself* — it's absolutely fabulous.

Swift's latest music video for "The Man" dropped in late February and spends four strong minutes showing how the male gender receives more accolades, applause, and justification for questionable and inappropriate behaviors than their female counterparts.

In the video, Swift dons an elaborate male disguise — arrogantly appearing in an office room to chest-thumping cheers, lounging on the subway (man-spreading and choking other passengers with cigar smoke), strutting on the deck of a yacht with dancing bikini-clad company while screaming in a personal waiter's face, and flipping off a tennis judge — reminiscent of classic 1980s John McEnroe.

Typical manly hijinks that gets tossed aside as hijinks from typical men.

Seemingly, we are to believe that all these situations would be catastrophic if a woman lived out these roles. YouTube



Taylor Swift (middle) manned up in her latest music video that contradicted a lot of music posters in Mr. Barnes's classroom. Her message was worth telling, with confused Megadeth and Iron Maiden posters looking on.

threw me for a loop, but this was well worth the time.

I have always enjoyed sharing and teaching videos that "say" something — that offer a lingering message. Music videos from creative masterminds *OK GO*, and clips dealing with social cliques, plus the emotional "To This Day" spoken-word poem from Shane Koyczan have all transcended any curriculum to pose questions to a young mind.

What does "The Man" show them, besides depicting how Taylor Swift can be a gorgeous man (seriously)? It gets the conversation started regarding the levels of scrutinizing each gender receives. For instance, if men throw a tantrum between

tennis matches, smashing rackets on the ground, they are allowed to rage, while women doing the same are chastised for their lack of grace and professionalism.

In a recent journalism class (available next year... consider it!) we discussed the effects and aftermath of public shaming. Anyone can criticize someone else (anonymously) and, most notably, students discussed how it affected Monica Lewinsky and her worldly-infamous affair as a White House intern in the 1990s. (Those who recognize her name do so for only one reason).

She has been spending many years trying to clean up a very tarnished image that, yes, she partly caused, but it took

two to do the *Oval Office Tango*. Yet, former President Bill Clinton never seemed to suffer the same ordeal and is revered as one of the most popular U.S. leaders. Perhaps things would have been different had Hillary chose *not* to stand by her man.

This is the conversation Miss Swift started that can be continued on any scale. Do we hold anyone accountable for their actions and attitudes or do we first judge by gender?

I will never admit that the song was stuck in my head for hours, though. Want to judge me? Let the shaming games begin, if that's your method of self-assurance. 🐾

# 'Parasite' infects the economic divide of social classes

BY NIA NICHOLSON  
STAFF WRITER

The economy is a common topic of debate, especially as the 2020 election looms ahead. Bong Joon-ho's 2019 film "Parasite" tackles the great divide among social classes. The feature follows a poor family who initially lives in a half-basement as they each begin working for a wealthy family.

They attain these positions through manipulating the naive, rich family, who have no reason not to be naive. "Rich people are naive. No resentments. No creases on them," notes the patriarch of the poor family.

While they were gloating about their embedded positions within the wealthy family, they came to the harsh realization of exactly what the rich thought of them. "Parasite" won three Oscars: Best Picture, Best Original Screenplay, and Best International Feature Film.

These, paired with the multitude of other nominations, prove how the topics of this film resonate throughout the world. Despite being portrayed in South Korea, this economic divide is reflected in every country. Even in the United States, it seems the rich get richer while middle and lower classes wade through debt.

A charity group, Oxfam, reports that,

as of 2018, the 62 richest people on earth had about the same net worth as the poorest half of the population. That means just 62 ultra-rich people hold the same amount of money as around 3.8

Throughout history, there have been many attempts at rectifying this economic problem. Very few are successful, however. A village in Spain named Marinale-da has functioned as a self-declared

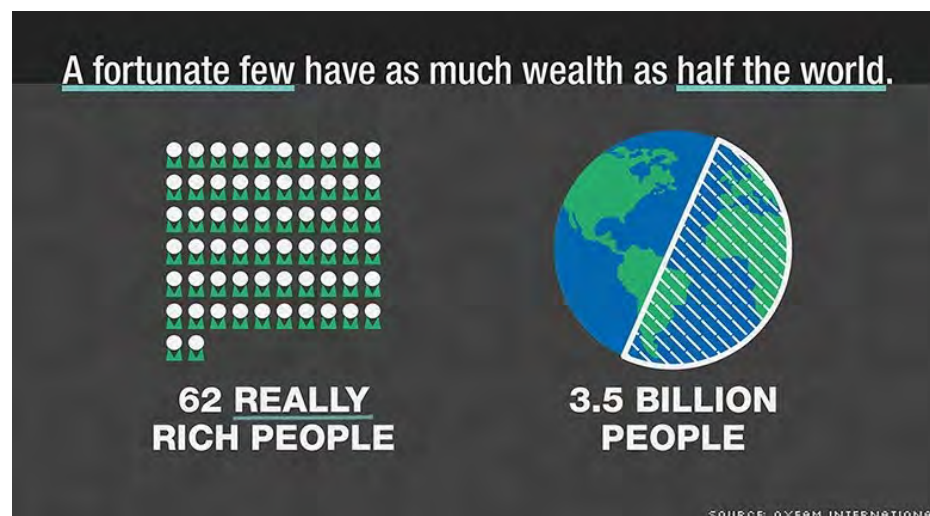
in "Parasite" is not something that should be ignored. Many people are sleeping on the streets, while some, like Jeff Bezos, can lose half of their fortune in a divorce and still come out the richest alive.

"The main enemy of the open society, I believe, is no longer the communist but the capitalist threat" said George Soros, a Hungarian-American billionaire investor.

Although the poor family in "Parasite," the Kims, are portrayed as extremely impoverished, it is believable that they could have been in the middle class at some point. In Korea, stocks and economics are extremely unpredictable and people often lose their once dependable jobs as a result. Despite this, they are treated as though they have made no effort to transcend their financial state.

In the U.S., many spend time predicting the inflations of the stock market and investing. However, new innovations come up so rapidly today. Modern jobs are often replaced by machines. Politicians like Andrew Yang, have proposed automation taxes for companies that replace jobs with machinery.

People cannot expect the government to completely fix the unfair advantage of "old money," though. The 1% is what funds the lobbyists, who in turn, dictate



billion people. In the United States alone, there are around 607 known billionaires. This may seem like a small amount in comparison to the estimated 330,313,408 people living in the U.S., but the money stays in the family and those billions are not likely to be redistributed through the country. The amount of taxes paid by the fourth income tax bracket, or the middle to upper-middle class, surpasses that of the highest earners, the top 1%.

"communist utopia" for decades, as reported by *The New York Times* and *The Guardian*.

Communism or socialism are not viable ideas for countries as large as South Korea or the United States. Citizens still need freedoms and a reason to work, as many people in capitalistic societies are motivated by the vision of enhancing their status and wealth.

However, the class divide highlighted

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# OPINIONS

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## Editorial

### A springboard, even for the shy, to shine

'Urinetown' was a perfect choice for NL's musical stage 

Theatre folk are athletes of the stage.

It is unfathomable what goes into a production that humorously graced NL's stage in March. "Urinetown" opened on March 6 and told the satirical tale of a small town in need of funds so its rebellious citizens start charging a tax to pee. [We are sorry the second weekend had to be postponed due to school closings].

Behind the dirt and grime, there was a clan of dedicated cast and crew that spent (literally) countless hours learning the scripts, rehearsing the lines, fine-tuning the songs, building the set, and creating a small town from scratch.



Cydney Krause as Penelope Pennywise

When theater season begins and the musical is chosen, these dedicated young adults' lives suddenly have different priority. A full day of school turns into full evenings and nights of ever-revolving exhaustion. The time given to "Urinetown" was worth the wait. Simply put — Northern Lehigh Theater Troupe chose the ideal setting for its musical stage. Cast perfectly, "Urinetown" was wet-your-pants funny as the "musical for those who don't like musicals." (Imagine its impact for those that *do*).

Though the jokes land in almost any age group, the themes were timely and meaningful, tackling the chaos of water shortages and tyrannical business. The humor was almost a highlight to the already compelling story, and the talent behind it only made it that much better. The cast's dedication shined through powerful vocals, spot-on comedic timing, and pure connection with the audience. It was something to be seen again and again — a truly golden 50th.

## Should the crown be taken away from prom court?

*The tradition, some say, is an outdated popularity contest. Agree?*

BY CHLOE HAWK  
STAFF WRITER

It's prom night and she has spent months preparing — wanting nothing more than to look like a princess and feel beautiful. She has one night, one chance, and on top of that, she's fighting for the crown: validation for that endless preparation.

A day meant for magic, however, is turned into a dance full of tears.

From a young age, girls have grown up watching fairy tales. Engraved in these stories is an idea of what it truly feels like to be a princess and prom is a night where teenage girls hope to experience a taste of royalty. What if, for just one night, *all* girls had the chance to feel like a queen? It's not possible, due to the facile tradition.

This is the reality of prom court's consequences. It lowers the self-esteem of those with insecurities and inflates the egos of students already in the spotlight. It's just a big popularity contest crowning the high school monarchy.

Realistically, not much would change if there was no prom court. It does more damage than good. Without a prom court, it could feel like more of a celebration of the whole class.

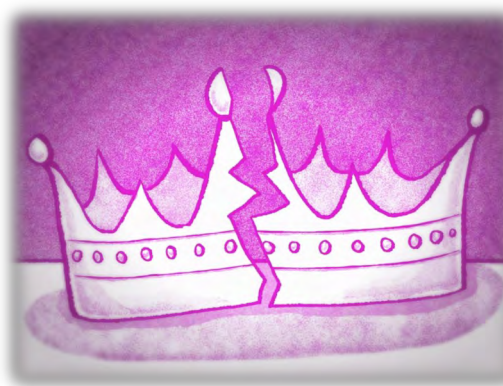
At the end of the day, being prom queen or king isn't going to help you in the real world. It will not help you get into a good college or get a good job. It is just a shallow tradition. There are people who deserve to be celebrated but are typically ignored.

I know how hard it is to feel inadequate, especially in high school. Most of us lack confidence and we deserve to feel better about ourselves. The reality is that many walk into prom not feeling like they are enough for various reasons, such as not having enough money to splurge on a tux or dress.

If prom court was inclusive and celebrated everyone, the entire class would benefit as a unified community — not just as a select few.

To share as much perspective on this topic as possible, I emailed all Northern Lehigh juniors and seniors (230 students) to gain a bit of insight on others' opinions on prom court. Printed here are the only responses we received. Thank you to those who shared their thoughts.

**Aurora McGovern, senior:** "Prom court is fun in theory but it is just one big popularity contest. All the *popular kids* get voted on and then halfway through prom we find out who wins. It honestly wastes 20 minutes that I could have spent dancing with my friends and having fun."



**Austin Rudolph, senior:** "Personally, I don't think prom court would be damaging. Realistically, it is just a popularity contest. It's pretty easy to predict who will get into the court, but it adds a sense of fun to the prom, and why steer away from the tradition?"

**Brianna Kuntz, junior:** "I don't see the point in prom court. One girl is made to feel like she is more special than any other girl in her grade. Not only does it lower every other girl's self-esteem but it is something that can easily get to your head and make you feel like you are better than everyone else."

**Caitlyn Michael, senior:** "I believe prom court is a good thing. We, as students, choose people we want to see win and I understand how some people may be disappointed that they didn't get on court but it's still nice seeing the people walk out at prom. On court or not, at the end of the day

it's still prom, so just enjoy your night and have fun."

**Robert Kerr, senior:** "I think prom court can very well be damaging because it can make other students feel upset that they were not applicable. Frankly, we don't need a prom court to have a successful prom."

**Breanna Hoppes, junior:** "Prom court is a way that popularity shines through. Something that should be awarded to someone who really influences those around them in a positive way is sometimes given to those who are more popular. This causes the self-esteem of those who try to care for others to be diminished."

**Alissa Melendez, senior:** "I think prom court has just become a popularity contest at this point. It can hurt someone's self-esteem that everyone that gets on looks the same and can encourage a harmful stereotype."

**Brooke Bower, junior:** "I feel everyone deserves a crown because all of the girls would feel equal. People on prom court get too big of an ego and it makes people feel bad about themselves. Guys could all get a crown too so it would be a good night for everyone."

Prom is an unforgettable night for most who attend. It's something we've spent years looking forward to. It should be an experience that is nothing but positive and uplifting. We don't pay for prom court. We pay to have an amazing time with our friends and a chance to feel like we are in one of those fairytales we used to fantasize about as children.

High school can be a very brutal time for us. An event like prom could be used to commemorate all of our hard work.

Instead, a boy and a girl who had their names circled on a paper the most get *crowned*, made to feel like the best of the best. It leaves other students feeling like even more of an outcast. I hope one day the tradition could be turned into something more encouraging and bring the student body together as a whole. 🐾



# OPINIONS

## Abuse can be an invisible enemy

*Scars and memories linger but hope will be rewarded*

BY CODY GRABARITS  
STAFF WRITER

Talking about abuse is almost the same as talking about getting teeth pulled. It hurts, it's uncomfortable, and no one enjoys it happening to them. But both seem to be rather common, which is tragically heartbreaking.

People have tried to pinpoint why people abuse others, but no one has found one specific answer.

Some things that are labeled as "abusive" don't always come across as such. Its proper definition is "treating a person or animal with violence or cruelty, especially regularly or repeatedly." So abuse takes many shapes other than physical — verbal, mental, sexual, emotional.

Abuse is nothing to downplay. Some people use humor to cope — I happen to be them — but beyond that, there is nothing funny about it. It causes people to crumble, to second-guess who they are and how they do things.

It can cause various mental illnesses, like depression, paranoia, and dissociative identity disorder, and can even lead people to contemplate suicide as an escape.

I have been in abusive relationships, more than just romantic ones. It took a couple years to actually acknowledge that I was being abused because I just thought that that was how people treated one another. I thought that's how it was supposed to be, so when I ended up in the hospital and got counseling for the first time, it was shocking to hear that I'd been abused for a long time by not only my friends, but my family, too.

You could imagine my face when told I had been emotionally and mentally abused for a long, long time and that my past relationships hadn't been healthy at

all. I spent my whole life watching abuse happen all around me, and yet never realized it.

A close friend told me about her past experience with abuse, saying she abused by her significant other for almost a year. "I still have a scar on my arm from when he threw a tree branch at me out of anger," she said. She was abused regularly in a handful of ways — ways she wished me not to share because her PTSD spikes because of it.

However, she did say life is really hard for her to live. Her current significant other has been very understanding, but the lingering effect causes her to believe he might one day do the same thing as her last partner.

She wanted me to specifically include that "if you have to question whether or not your relationship is healthy, it probably isn't and you need to take care of yourself."

Flynn, a friend of mine who wanted me to share his story, said, "I never really considered much of anything toward me as abuse because it was what I was familiar with. It never crossed my mind because it was normal to me."

He said when he talked to a counselor about it for the first time, *she* started to cry because she couldn't believe the kind of abuse he had experienced for so long, and because of this abuse, he now suffers from anxiety, depression, paranoia, and PTSD.

Aaryn, another friend of mine, said his family was very abusive. He can't handle people swinging their arms and coming up behind him because he thinks he's going to get hurt. Also, when people yell, he cries because it brings back those memories. They created self-hate. His exes were verbally abusive and sometimes



he would receive messages that were harassing and threatening. Now, he has paranoia and a very hard time sleeping at night.

People have to be aware of other people's triggers. Granted, you cannot be aware of everyone's triggers, but if you have friends that have been abused, learn them. For me, it's hard to hear certain words, and I cannot stand yelling. I get scared when people touch me. Things like that.

Understand that everyone's abuse is

different and how he or she copes is different. Just Be aware that you do not know everyone's story.

If you or anyone is being abused, there are ways to get help. You are not alone. The abuse hotline is 717-545-6400, but there are other hotlines you can use if you're feeling depressed or suicidal. The National Suicide Hotline is 1-800-273-8255. There are chats available online 24/7 that you can use. You're never alone. I want to reiterate that. There is always someone willing to listen to you. 🐾

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## Parasite

From page 5

to the politicians laws. These laws, such as the income tax laws, continue to benefit the ultra-rich.

Even to run for office, one must have the fortune necessary for campaigning and gaining name recognition and backing. There is very little action we as regular citizens can take, just as the family in "Parasite" had minimal control over their own situation.

"Parasite" may not start a revolution or change

everyone's perspective; however, it is important in this day in age. From a socioeconomic standpoint, it highlights the negative connotations of poverty.

The members of the wealthy Park family plug their noses to avoid the "subway" smell from impoverished people. They criticize their workers for disturbing them. They live in their own bubble, depending on the poor to sustain their relaxed lifestyle. The poor Kim family lives in a harsh reality, depending on the wealthy to earn the money they need to live. Both families have questionable morals, as is reflected in real life. Money means everything in our world, but one must stay self-aware to survive. 🐾



# URINETOWN THE MUSICAL



(Clockwise from top-left) Lily Wanamaker; Dylan Miller and Trent Herman; Paige Craddock and Parker Musselman; Emily Hunsicker; Alex Feifel, Trent Herman, Elizabeth Binder, Bianca Carrion, Kaitlyn Hausman; Musselman with Caleb Hankee. (Lower-left) Cydney Krause.

[jodichandlerphotography.com](http://jodichandlerphotography.com)



Photos By **Jodi Chandler**





(Above) Cole Cheesbrough; (Top-left) Alex Feifel and Trent Herman; (clockwise) Parker Musselman, Owen Levan-Uhler, Cydney Krause; Seth Adams and Diego Festermaker; Hailey Evans, Kristen Guelcher, Emily Hunsicker, Natalie Keller, Julia Wanamaker; stage manager Madison Hoffman and Gianna Vought.

Photos by The Slate





# SPORTS



## Longtime ref Dennis Rehrig discusses decline

BY BRIANNA SCHUCK  
SPORTS EDITOR

With this drastic decline in referees, you must also account for those who are retiring. To get a personal account, I interviewed Dennis Rehrig, who was a PIAA football official for 35 years before retiring after the 2019 football season. Mr. Rehrig says as a football official, “You could be out \$400 to \$500 before you even step on the field. It’s a lot of money you have to put upfront for clearances, chapter dues, and equipment (shoes, pants, short sleeve shirts, long sleeve shirts, a rain shirt, bean bags, flags, whistles, etc.). So do guys really want to start doing that and invest that much money right away to only get a couple of games their first year and never see their investment recouped in a short period of time?”

Yes, he has a point, but he also reflects on officiating as being much more than just the money: “Doing it for 35

years, I enjoyed it and met a lot of new people and made a lot of new friendships between coaches, athletic directors, and fellow officials. I think it comes down to all the time you put into it, learning the rules, the on-field mechanics. It is very important for younger officials to group up with a veteran official so they can really get a feel for the mechanics.”

Officiating is a commitment. You need to make sure that you are bettering yourself and making those connections that you might not need your whole career, rather you will want them and remain friends with fellow officials for a lifetime.

When Mr. Rehrig first started in 1985, he recalls, “Only getting to officiate a varsity game after four or five years; now guys are getting to officiate within their first year or two due to the shortage.”

Over the last 35 years, he recalls travels being one of the biggest components. On a Friday night, he says, “I remember

leaving my house at 2:20 because it took two hours to get to the playoff game, and I didn’t get home until quarter to 12. I did it all for \$80 or \$85.”

The travel time and money shown for it doesn’t seem to add up, but Mr. Rehrig says the money isn’t the reasoning behind

***You don’t do it for the money; you have to do it because you like the sport and for the comradery with fellow officials.***

the career. “You don’t do it for the money, you have to do it because you like the sport and for the comradery with fellow officials. With the crews we work, you are with primarily the same four to five guys every week.”

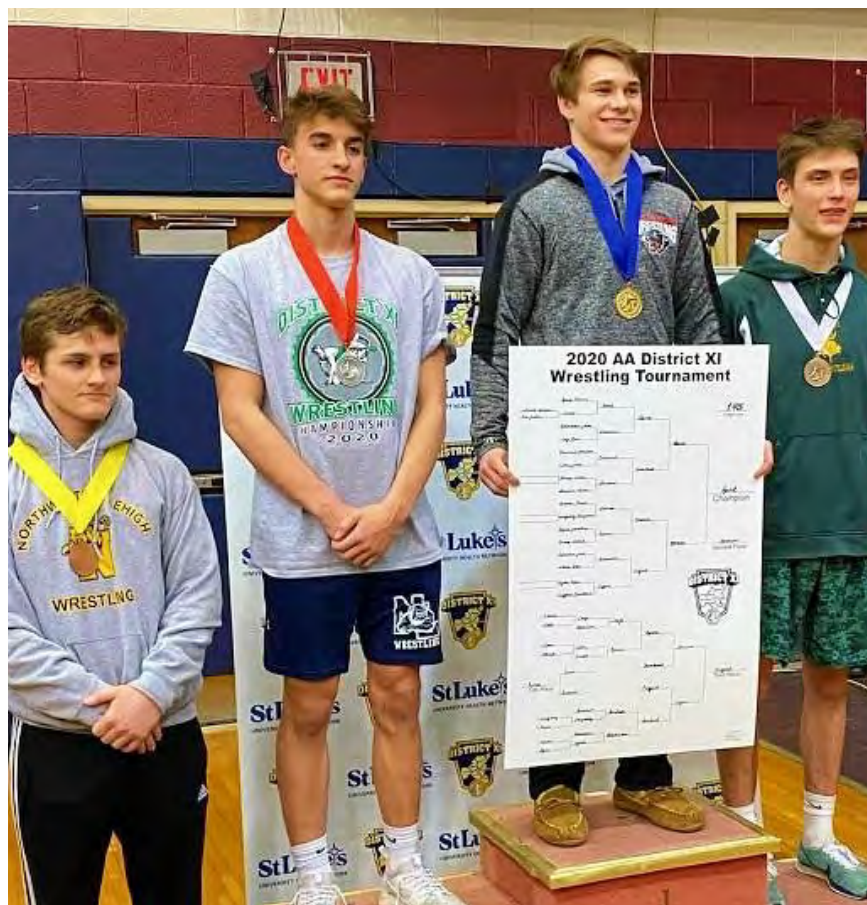
To put into perspective how many officials are needed on a regular basis for football alone, Mr. Rehrig breaks down

the schedule: “Monday nights are double headers, a freshmen game at 4 and then the JV game will follow right after that. Wednesdays and Thursdays are usually the middle school games, and Fridays and Saturdays are varsity games.”

He also likes to reflect on key highlights, like the crowd getting involved and discussions with the coaches. “As a younger official, having a coach and fans scream at you while you’re on the sideline could be very intimidating. But as a veteran official, it’s all just part of the routine. Fan noise and coaches, you know, you’ve been around it long enough, and I always tell people that you can only ever be 50% right. You make a call for one team, so that team likes it but the other team hates it. But you can never make a call based on your opinion... it has to be based on mechanics.”

**See Officials, page 13**

### AA District XI Wrestling



At the Southeast Regional Tournament at Freedom High School in late February, Trevor Amorim (145 lbs) placed second and qualified for the Regional Meet; Jason Schaffer (285 lbs) placed second and qualified for the Regional Meet. Brendan Smay (106 lbs) placed sixth.



# Through My Lens

By Brooke Bower



Nothing will hold you back more than your insecurities. Painting a mask over your face can seem like the only option. You may think you're too weird, too annoying, or anything else that pops in your head. So being quiet is the best thing to do, right? Not at all. You have four years in high school, so it's what you make out of it. Don't force yourself to be someone you're not. Be different.

Everyone cares about what other people think of them. But, if you're surrounded by the right people and by the ones who make you feel alive, there should be no problem unleashing the differ-

ent side of you.

If someone is putting you down for being a little weird or more outgoing, they don't need to be in your life. You don't have to please everyone. The world is a scary place, and we need a break once in a while. Make the joke you always wanted to but never could. Take off the makeup and go natural for a day.

Do something outside your comfort zone just once. Now instead of painting a mask that's dull and hides who you are, paint one that shows each aspect of what makes you, you. 🐾

# Surprise limbs may sprout from your family tree

*A little swab could be all that is needed to find a long-lost uncle or great-grandfather*

BY LILY GROOVER  
STAFF WRITER

Your spit at home just might be able to find a long-lost relative.

Have you ever wondered what part of the world your ancestors come from? About 26 million other people have wondered that too. Those people have taken DNA tests from one of the four major consumer genetic companies.

Ancestry, 23AndMe, MyHeritage, and Gene by Gene have all contributed to offering the curious consumers their genetic background.

For all of the companies, the user must spit in a tube, lock the tube to activate the stabilizing fluid into the saliva, and then shake the tube for about 10 seconds.

The spit goes to their factory, which splits the spit into immune system cells and cheek cells. They run it through numerous tests, although on each official website, the tests were not completely listed.



Most companies like these tend to keep their algorithms secret other than using scientific words to market their product. The DNA is measured to about 700,000 locations to generate raw DNA data. The scientists then compare that data to 350-plus regions around the world. They run the comparison 40 times to get an accurate reading based on current research. Then, six to eight weeks later, the customer receives his or her results. With current technology, each test has an average accuracy rate of 99%.

Not only can technology tell people where their ancestors came from, but it can also pinpoint where their ancestors migrated. Using thousands of different DNA samples from people in a similar area, it can pinpoint where they lived. Since people tend to marry within the same religious or ethnic group, it makes them genetically distinct to where they reside.

Technology connects those people to immigrants with the same DNA and then creates a summary of who those people are and lists it along with the customers' DNA results.

As for myself, I feel the results were disturbingly accurate. My

**See Ancestors, page 14**

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# All they demanded was to ‘pee 4 free’



Photo by Jodi Chandler Photography

‘Urinetown’ had a strong run in early March but was victim to the closures of coronavirus. Many sacrifices are being made both in the Northern Lehigh area and across the globe. We at The Slate hope the world spins on its axis soon for all who read this.

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# 'Every year we get older, but the kids don't'

Officials, from page 10

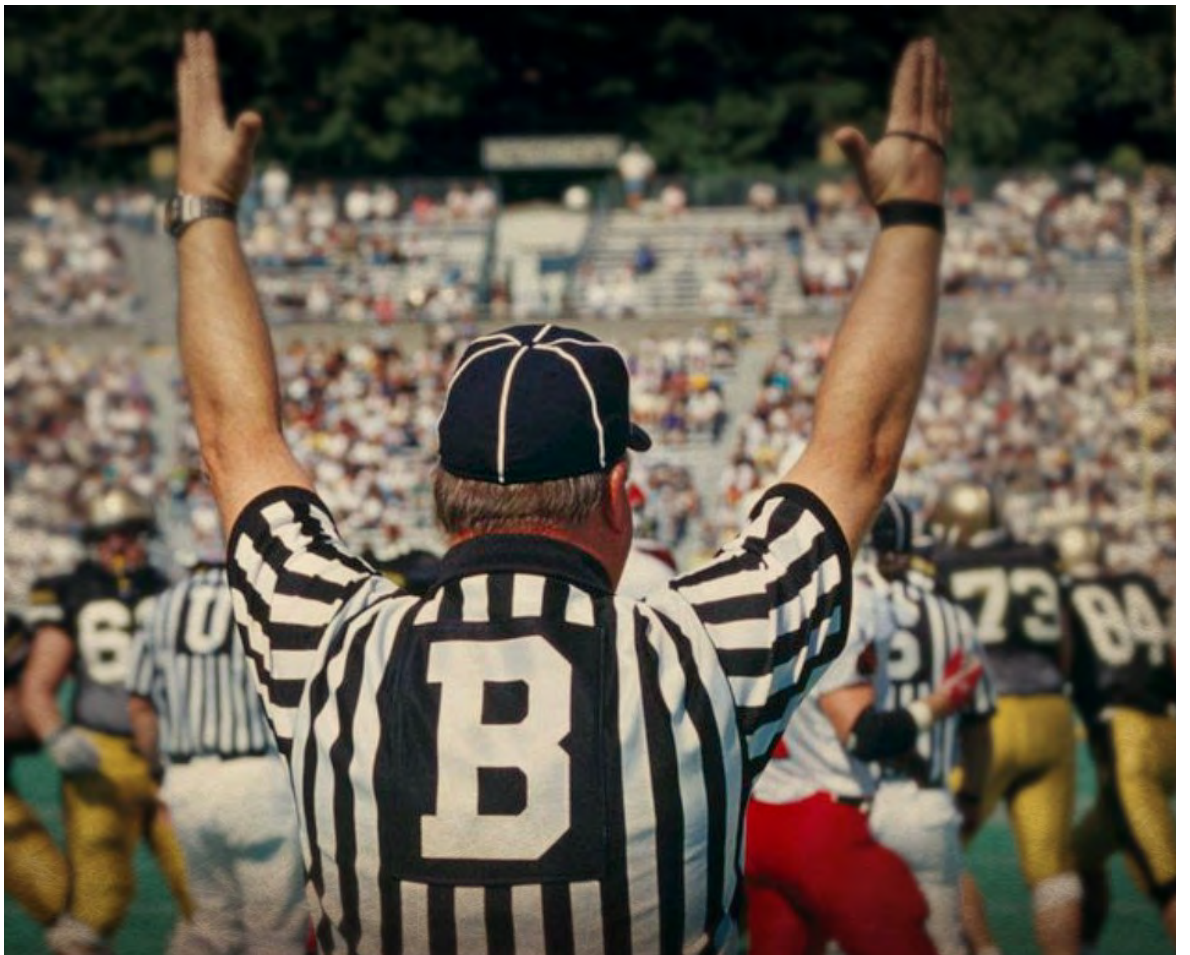
One major takeaway Mr. Rehrig always says is, "Every year we get a year older, but the kids don't. They're always 15-, 16-, 17-, 18-year-old kids in high school. We try to keep up with the young kids and the truth is, we can't. The game has gotten so much faster and it definitely has changed over the years, but the officials also grow with the game. Sure, there are a lot of officials 50 to 70 years old, but those are the officials who can handle the "big games." They always try to put veteran officials on those crews.

The truth about many football officials is there are quite a few that move on to officiate at the collegiate level, and those are all officials that no longer become available on Fridays and Saturdays. The younger officials also have jobs that go until 4 or 5 p.m., but that makes it nearly impossible for them to make it to a 5 p.m. start because officials have to be on-site an hour and a half before kickoff for the regular season and two hours for playoffs.

One big thing people do not realize is that referees are doing it for the love of the game; they are not throwing flags to intentionally penalize a team. They are not spending their time to be yelled at by people who do not know the different rules between high school and college, and then even college and the NFL.

The number-one rule Mr. Rehrig wants people to know is that as an official, they always try to make a foul beneficial for one team. If the potential penalty was not involved in the initial contact of the play, then is it really worth penalizing the kids? The answer is always *no*. He also wants to make a point that the officials on the field are widely out-numbered and they cannot watch every player on the field.

While sports are always on an up-rise, referees need to be as well. It is so hard to be competitive when there are not enough referees to officiate the games. Next time you complain about a call, try to think about whether or not the umpire or the official is making the call against *you* or against the *nature and mechanics* of the game. 🐾



If you have interest in becoming a PIAA official for local sports, visit:



[piaa.org/officials](http://piaa.org/officials)



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# Ancestors

From page 11

grandparents have always said I am English and German, and those ethnicities were the bulk of my outcome. The curiously-disturbing part is where the technology estimated where my ancestors came from and immigrated to. It pinpointed my mother's side of the family in eastern Pennsylvania and my father's side in western Pennsylvania and eastern Ohio.

Even odder, it had a small pin in Florida where my grandpa was born and grew up. It also connected my DNA to other relatives who also took the test with the same company -- from my mother's uncle to 562 other fourth cousins or closer.

Now, companies like these are not making their money off of people from foreign countries. People in Italy know they are mostly Italian. People in China know they are mostly Chinese. People in Nicaragua know they are mostly Nicaraguan. But people in America are from a multitude of locations. Citizens who are fourth-, fifth-, or sixth-generation Americans have always been just American.

They know their heritage only by word-of-mouth. They could have been participating in traditions that were only a small percentage of where they came from. The urge to identify with an ethnicity sometimes overpowers the truth to where a person's ancestors were from.

This may be because they find that culture most interesting, or they have just been misinformed about who they are. Using one of these DNA tests can easily give people correct information to stop rumors and misassumptions toward family backgrounds. 🐾

# Bulldogs morph into Eagles

NL students achieve highest achievable honor in Scouts

BY DYLAN KUNTZ  
STAFF WRITER

The Eagle Scout rank is the highest achievable honor a Boy Scout can receive. It takes years of dedication in order to attain such an honor, and the trail to Eagle is all but easy.

Only about 6% of all eligible scouts actually earn this rank, and that is the highest it has ever been. Many great American figures throughout history are fellow Eagles. Some of the most influential people, past and present, in our nation are Eagle Scouts.

Of the 535 members of Congress, about 80, (or 15%) are Eagle Scouts. Gerald Ford, our 38th President, is also among the ranks. The point is, there are many famous and important people that were set up for the success they achieved through their dedication to Scouting.

Through this tradition, there are six ranks that precede Eagle -- Scout, Tenderfoot, Second Class, First Class, Star, and Life. Each rank has a certain standard list of requirements, and some are much harder than others. From memorizing codes, oaths, and laws to demonstrating first-aid, knot skills, and more, it takes years of dedication to advance through the ranks.

Once a scout reaches Life rank,

however, his journey is far from over. Eagle demands much more than preceding ranks. All the demands are meant to weed out those who are and are not willing to go the distance and put in the work, and the rank of Life is where many scouts end their journey.

The main requirements for Eagle include a minimum

See Eagles, page 15



Present for the ceremony: Nate Green, Matt Peters, Seamus O'Connor, Jason Check, Declan O'Connor, Ben Lehman, Tyler Sherman, Kendall Heiney, Nathaniel, Cameron Kuntz, Zach Lehman, Dylan Kuntz.



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# 'The journey helped me understand my own abilities'



Nate Green and Ben Lehman — from Bulldogs to Eagles.

## Eagles, from page 14

number of merit badges (including certain specific or required ones), completion of all other ranks, commitment to the troop, as well as holding leadership positions within it, and an Eagle project that benefits a community, school, church, etc. The road has its many hills and valleys, but everything is worth it in the end.

This year, there have been quite a few Northern Lehigh seniors who have attained the rank of Eagle. Jason Check, Ben Lehman, Nate Green, Tyler Sherman and myself are some of the most recent students to have achieved this prestigious award. The biggest part of this, of course, would be the project completed by each scout.

Their projects varied as to what they did, but they were all benefitting the surrounding community in one way or another. No matter the outcome, each of these projects is a way to show what scouts are capable of, as well as each individual's dedication to the community and organization.

Now that these Bulldogs have become Eagles, they had some input for others about the rank and their experience. The journey is the most poignant of their experience.

"The journey helped me better understand my own abilities in leadership and helped me connect with nature and friends more than I ever had before," said Nate Green.

Ben Lehman, who took this journey with Nate, had a similar viewpoint. "The leaders were great, and I didn't start working on rank for the first few years. When my house burned down, I had trouble finding out what advancements I did and didn't have and how to figure things out again. Nate was ahead of me with rank and everything too. I read through the scout book and got back on track and started to really work on advancing."

Jason Check shares his view of what it means to be an Eagle, and why it is truly worth doing. "In the current world full of turmoil and entitlement, being an Eagle Scout separates me from everyone else. I am a leader. I am a warrior. Being an Eagle Scout allows me to show others that I am among the small percentage of people that cares about others more than they care about themselves. Eagle Scouts can change the world one step at a time.

Being an Eagle Scout for me means committing myself to the community, my peers, and my troop. Ever since joining Boy Scouts, Troop 58 has encouraged me to become inventive and take initiative. They have taught me everything I needed to learn and understand how to become a leader. I am beyond grateful that I took advantage of Boy Scouts, and I am proud to call myself an Eagle Scout."

One benefit of earning the Eagle rank lies ahead in college and in a future job or jobs. Colleges are known to look for Eagle scouts to admit and to even award scholarships. They realize the work the Eagle Scout has put in to get as far as they did, so it is safe to assume they will continue to put in more than ample amount of work in their studies.

Mark Reed, my grandfather, was a manager for different Air Products plants across America (and even in Hong Kong for a while). He served in Vietnam as a Seabee and now resides in Virginia. Before retirement, his job as a plant manager included hiring workers for different plants.

"Every position had close to 300 applications. Things I would look for in most applicants was technical ability, but it was not needed since experience was scarce," he said. "But if I saw 'Eagle Scout' on the application, it immediately put them to the top of that list. They were rare, and the cream of the crop. Eagle told you they could be trusted and would put in the same work as they did for their Eagle. They usually would even go above and beyond."

This is proof that in the workforce, there is a certain weight that this award carries. Employers want someone who is dependable and someone willing to go beyond instead of only working to meet minimum standards.

Scouting is an organization that turns out many *prepared* young men, regardless of rank. However, those that journey to the top, those that take their experience in Scouting to the very best it can possibly be, would agree that the Rank of Eagle is worth every second of dedication they put into it. Younger scouts should take into consideration everything that can result from going to the top, and how it can change the outcome of the near future. The trail to Eagle is never easy, nor should it be. It takes courage and discipline, but if a scout decides to put the work in, his future is limitless. 🐾

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**FROM THE MIND OF CHASE JONES...  
COMES THE REMARKABLE REBOOT OF WHAT WAS ONCE...**

# PROJECT BULLDAWG



## BOURBON THE BULLDOG

Ms. Allegiance was once a young, Olympic-level gymnast by the name of Rosie Bridger. She was only 16, about to go to the 1940s Olympics, until they were inevitably cancelled. Rosie continued to practice gymnastics; however, she was now able to relax and have a normal teenager's life. She found friends, a boyfriend, and by the time she was 18, she was engaged, all the while working toward making her Olympic debut. This is a dream that would never become a reality, for after the strike on Pearl Harbor, Rosie's fiancé was drafted into the Army and killed in action only six months later. Feeling lost and scared, Rosie joins the armed forces and becomes a frontline nurse, despite her parents' wishes. Then, one day when she was going to restock one of the medical tents, and she found some old USO costumes, which gave her the idea and materials needed to become the world's first superhero. Using her gymnast training, newly learned firearms capabilities, and her brand new, spangly outfit, Rosie took to the frontlines as *Ms. Allegiance*, the only woman thought to be more patriotic than Rosie the Riveter herself.

## Ms. ALLEGIANCE

Bourbon was once an ordinary bulldog who did ordinary bulldog things. He was the Secretary of Defense's pet and he did not do much other than sleep or eat. Despite Bourbon's typical dog-like tendencies, there was always something very human about his personality. Little did everyone know, Bourbon has always had far more complex thoughts than they were aware. One spontaneous day in 1942, he accompanied his owner to Area 51, where the secretary was being sent to inspect a recently uncovered UFO. The engineers thought it was an advanced Japanese air vehicle, due to the recent attack on Pearl Harbor. However, they would come to find that it in fact was an alien spacecraft. Within the craft they discovered that the pilot had been long dead and that the ship had come from farther across the galaxy than they had previously estimated. Having seen the alien pilot's skeleton lying on the examination table, Bourbon began to crave a nice bone. So, while no one was looking, he stole one from the table and when he chomped down on it, everything changed. Bourbon ingested an odd blue liquid from the center of the alien bone, which would unlock parts of his brain that had prevented him from doing things like speaking. The viscous blue fluid would also alter his genetic makeup, which gave him super strength and made his fur stronger than steel, yet it was still soft to the touch. Within near minutes, Bourbon had gone from the Secretary of Defense's pet bulldog, to the U.S.'s new secret weapon and a symbol for hope in such a devastating time.



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