
off the bluff
ALTERNATIVE PITTSBURGH
SPRING 2023
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Brains
Welcome Home
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Tomorrows
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LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

This semester we took a look at the stories and photos our writers and photographers worked diligently on the semester prior. Together we edited and transformed these stories to bring you a special edition of *Off the Bluff* that we've taken to calling *Alt The Bluff*, an alternative tour of Pittsburgh that you may not have gotten the opportunity to see. This was an amazing opportunity to learn and grow, and we are so excited by what we accomplished. As a photographer (Emily) and journalism student (Mary), we were able to bring the visual aspect to the storytelling process. Thank you and happy reading.•

LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER

It's conventional wisdom that Pittsburgh has evolved from a brawny industrial powerhouse to a modern city powered by eds and meds. But Pittsburgh – and Western Pennsylvania as a whole – has its unconventional side, too. We have the Steelers, Pens and Pirates, sure, but also the Roller Derby and mixed martial arts. World-class art, pop culture and history museums, but also delightfully weird under-the-radar institutions like Trundle Manor, home to a couple for whom Wednesday Addams would make an ideal girl next door. This edition of Off the Bluff focuses on the quirkier, quieter people, places and pursuits that fly under our civic radar. •

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Pick a Kard, Any Kard

Kards Unlimited is a unique one-stop shop for cards, magnets, maps, posters and more.

Photo by: Emily Brozeski

A Card Store with a Twist

Mackenzie Phillips

On a crisp fall Friday, it's clear that Kards Unlimited – your not-so-typical card and figurine store – contributes to the warmth on Shadyside's Walnut Street.

Kards Unlimited's sign hangs high on the front of the wooden paneled building, whose big front windows are stuffed with all the latest merchandise, whether it be for the upcoming Steelers games or quirky decorations for the impending holidays.

Inside, owner Amanda Blair is busy taking pictures of Pickles, a customer's dog, for their Instagram feed. She treads the creaky hardwood floors and makes conversation with customers about the odd sounds of old cars on the street.

Kards Unlimited is as far from "Hallmark-esque" as you can get. Adopting previous owner Kristen Kershner's eclectic vision for the store, Blair has owned the store since 2021 after being an employee for 17 years.

Hardcover books filled with horoscope definitions contrast with different LGBTQ+ flags lined along the walls as rows of pop culture novelties spread out along aisle after aisle.

The sound of an old-school cash register closing rings in the air as an employee handwrites all the products in the purchase. The technology remains out of date, and all inventory must be done by hand.

Customers gather in clusters, admiring the shelves lined with "Freud's Wash Fulfillment" soaps and canisters crammed with stickers that references every breed of dog, sexuality preference and Pittsburgh in general … all handpicked by Blair and her crew.

With their fun and out-there content, a tight-knit group is necessary to sell their unique merchandise. Blair credits Kershner for the family-like bond and continues to promote the same ideals with her current staff.

"We always described it as the Island of Misfit Toys from 'Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer,' all the kinda like broken toys end up here, and we all kind of like become a family. So it's important to me to create kind of a safe space for people, all people," Blair says with a grin.

Chris Ranallo, a longtime friend and unofficial employee, is stopping in to paint the new breakroom. Dressed in jeans and cleaning his work area, Ranallo laughs while reflecting on old store meetings revolving around beer and a pack of cigarettes.

"I've always kind of liked that. Just the freedom of the store. The independent nature of it has always been really cool," Ranallo says.

At its start in the 1960s, Kards Unlimited moved into what was originally Pittsburgh's famous Hollywood Social Club at 5522 Walnut Street. As the times have shifted from more conservative to progressive, so has its product.

Where the original store only had a tiny "dirty card" section hidden under a curtain, there are now oven mitts with slogans like "B**tch I AM the secret ingredient," and bars of "Soap for Stoners – Smells like Colorado," lining their shelves.

With this drastic change, it isn't uncommon for Blair to be questioned by older customers. The store tends to attract a younger audience and college students between classes or moms-off-duty wander around the store.

Blair's laugh rings around the store as she converses with her employees about mispriced items and whether a meme knickknack is even relevant to those under 30.

"I come to work, and just have the most fun. I just, I love my customers so much," said Blair. "It is literally my job to talk about all the things I love all day. People are coming here to buy things that I bought because I love them."

Customers wander through the aisles, seeking out their next Bob Ross self-painting mug (yes, it does change with heat) or a Queer Cocktails book. Avoiding "stereotype tropes," you cannot expect to find just your average Happy Birthday card or "Eat, Sleep, Drink Wine" t-shirts; Kards' uniqueness is its … well, calling card.

"You know, there's a billion candles out there. But it must have a hook," explained Blair.

"We're not just a store where you come to buy a candle, you come here to buy a candle that has a theme or a joke," said Blair.

With strong beliefs of loving all and embracing everyone, Pride novelties and "Seeing Gender," books can been seen displayed year-round in their store. In a part of town that hasn't always been so open-minded to differences, it is important to Blair to keep her views obvious.

"It has been very fulfilling for me to be a kind of an outspoken voice, in the community in this neighborhood, to have certain books in the window to have, you know, pride flags in the window to say, these are the views of this store." ●

Photo by: Emily Brozeski

Owner Amanda Blair stands among a backdrop of books.

"I come to work and just have the most fun, I just love my customers so much," Blair said.

She describes her beloved store as the "Island of Misfit Toys."

Crooner Johnny Angel Flies on the Wings of Nostalgia

Julia Allman

There was not an empty seat at the outdoor Star Lake amphitheater. A sea of people screamed as they sang along to the sweet sound of "My Girl." On stage, Johnny Angel was living his dream, singing with one of his biggest influences – The Temptations.

Temptations front man Otis Williams shared his fondness for his friend with the crowd. "You know this guy as Johnny Angel, we knew him as 'Little Red.'"

The concert happened years ago; however it is one of Angel's most treasured experiences as an artist. Johnny Angel, a.k.a. Jack Hunt, smiles jubilantly like he's on stage again as he relives the memory. "One of the best moments ever."

Walking through what Johnny Angel calls his "Ginchy Stuff" at his North Shore museum is like passing through a time portal. The first thing you see is a small room packed with records organized alphabetically on a large wooden table, spilling over onto nearby shelves.

From the Beatles to the Eagles, posters are scattered throughout the front. Button pins of The Ramones and Peace on Earth are in a small plastic bin at the front. Elvis Presley and Marilyn Monroe dolls line a shelf with a brightly colored "Banana Splits" cartoon behind it.

The museum preserves the era of silky R&B: A signed scarf from James Brown, a crystal vase from Eddie Holman, a blazer from The Marcels, the green dress worn in the movie "Since I Don't Have You," about dissension within the doo-wop group The Skyliners.

Bow ties, earrings, hats and blazers. For Johnny Angel, every item tells a story.

"Let me hear ya, let me hear ya, sayin' ball of confusion"

Johnny Angel came of age as a singer in the 1960s and says the era can be summed up through the Temptations' hit, "Ball of Confusion."

"That's what growing up in the 60s was really like." Music and concerts were becoming more casual. Performers went from neatly styled hair and crisp suits to bell bottoms and tie-dye.

Music wasn't just changing; it was doing what Angel refers to as "mishmashing." There were crossovers between rock and blues. What was once referred to as "the devil's music" became socially acceptable. And Pittsburgh was right in the thick of it, a sonic stew stirred by, among others, legendary DJ Porky Chedwick.

With a large jazz culture and numerous musicians, Pittsburgh is "one of the most underappreciated cities in music history," according to Angel.

Big names in jazz and rock like Tommy Hunt and George Benson were born in Pittsburgh's Hill District.

Born and raised on Pittsburgh's North Shore, young Jack Hunt was always drawn to music. But not the accordion music his parents forced on him.

His mom paid a music teacher $5 a week to come to their house and teach him how to play the accordion. "I saw the car parked in front of my house and thought 'Oh my God what am I gonna do?'"

His solution was to make himself sick so his mother would cancel the lesson. The lesson got canceled, and Angel considered that a win. So, he did it the following week. And the week after that.

His dad caught on the third week and gave his son "royal hell."

Nabbed, he attended lessons and played for a few months and venomously hated every minute of it. What he really wanted to do was play the drums. And sing. Without his parents' permission (or knowledge) Angel decided to take his musical career into his own hands.

He told his parents he had signed up to play the trumpet at school and was working weddings with a polka group on the weekends. Actually, he was playing the drums and performing in clubs as the lead singer with his band, The Cordells.

He occasionally sat in on drums with other bands, and every time he did, he collected a souvenir. Thus, Johnny Angel's collecton of "Ginchy Stuff" – and the eventual basis for his museum – was born.

Some collectibles in Angel's Museum are for sale. Big, bright colored books about the psychedelic era and the music that shaped a generation, along with band posters and old board games. ●

Photograph by: Andrew Cummings

Trundle Manor's Addams Family

Megan Trotter

There is a house in Swissvale with a yard of overgrown weeds and boarded up windows to keep the zombies out. Inside, two taxidermied squirrels perch on a display case. They wear matching bride and groom outfits, an homage to Anton and Rachel Miriello's first date.

Cutting up squirrels in the basement of a house might seem like an atypical first date, but for them it was love at "first slice."

To this artist couple, otherwise known as Mr. Arm and Velda Von Minx, living among animal testicles, devil masks, surgical equipment, pet leeches and general macabre is what makes them feel at home.

Their private collection, fondly named Trundle Manor, is an obscure roadside attraction containing cryptozoology, vintage taxidermy, and jarred specimens.

Together, Mr. Arm and Velda are truly Pittsburgh's very own Addams Family.

Throughout tours of the manor, Mr. Arm twirls his handlebar mustache, deep in thought.

"Everything that we do is if we think we need something to exist. Then we'll do it," he said, "It's a balance. It's an identity too, so it's not like it's a job. It's something to be proud of. Other people have hobbies. We have this."

Married six years ago, the couple has lived in the Pittsburgh area their whole lives. Mr. Arm's childhood home sits only a few blocks away in Edgewood.

Arm had two artist parents growing up and was encouraged to explore his creativity. His father, also a collector, taught him the art of display. Although, his parents do not share an interest in many of the weird and dark aspects of art that make their son tick.

"I have this philosophy that the difference between a hoarder and a collector is the ability to display," Arm said. "My mom and dad, they understand this place. They sort

of have the boiled down version of what my Nana says, 'Well, I guess it's not for everybody, but some people must like it."

Velda, on the other hand, gained a lot of her alternative interests through online friends. In high school, she spent a lot of time mostly talking to 40-year-olds who introduced her to the gothic and vintage lifestyle.

Each of Little Devil's organs were carefully taken out of his body, professionally freeze-dried and then placed back in to preserve him.

Upon entering the manor, one must be prepared to feel at least a little unsettled.

The house is filled with glass displays with blood red paint peeking through. There is a complete absence of outside light, and all modern electronics are hidden.

Several artifacts in the collection play tribute to Arm and Velda's love story. Items like Velda's wedding dress, the cage they placed their cat in as ring bearer for their wedding and Lego characters all illustrate scenes from throughout their married life.

The kitchen is accessible only by pulling a lever that opens a secret entryway. In the center of the room sits their kitchen island, a vintage abortion chair from an old sanatorium.

"By far our most upsetting piece of furniture," Velda said.

When not in use, they fold the chair down for more surface area and then brush any extra crumbs into the bedpan.

Where a ceiling fan should be hangs a giant "death ray" that emits a loud, steady and unsettling buzzing noise when turned on.

All of the electrical work is engineered by Arm. "I was always a curious child. I took apart a lot of things and learned how stuff works," Arm said.

He once welded a metal glove while wearing it so that the fingers would be able to move, another exhibit behind a glass display in the house.

In the heart of the manor is a six-foot photograph of their deceased cat, Little Devil. Next to the photo sits Little Devil himself inside of a glass case with a removable lid so that Arm and Velda can still pet him.

Each of Little Devil's organs were carefully taken out of his body, professionally freeze-dried and then placed back in to preserve him.

Despite being surrounded by animal remains and frequently practicing taxidermy themselves, the couple does not believe in killing anything.

At seven years old, Arm decided he wanted to collect baby frogs. He put them into a tiny jar and poured alcohol on top of them. Arm recalls watching them die and witnessing the single bubble of their last breath.

"Children are cruel," Arm said.

The frogs are the only spectacle in the entirety of the manor that Arm has killed himself and the jar now rests in a glass case in the family room of their home.

The rest of the objects in their collection were mostly donated, brought by visitors, or picked up decaying on the side of the road.

One time a mother brought her newborn baby to the house along with her placenta, hoping to find a way to preserve it as a symbol of her pregnancy.

"That was one of my most beautiful jarred things I've ever done. It was hung with fishing wire, and it became a very colorful tree," Mr. Arm said.

One of the more unique specimens they acquired is a benign uterine tumor from inside of their friend. Velda likes to joke that it "came from the belly of a belly dancer."

The tumor sits in a jar, covered in a velvet cloth. When revealed, the tumor begins to sing "I want my mommy." Its former host, Olivia, still frequents the manor to visit it.

The couple loves to drink and is known for hosting large extravagant Halloween parties. They frequently invite guests over for horror movie nights.

Velda shared that when imbibing, they love to feed their pet leeches drops of their blood. The leeches, she said, prefer Arm's blood over hers.

In the upstairs level of the house where tourists are not permitted is Arm's study. There, a little box can be found full of contracts signed with human blood.

Their favorite place to sit in the house, a pair of thrones in the family room are perhaps an indication of their status; the king and queen of anything odd, disturbing and weird. ●

Photo by Andrew Cummings

ONE AND ONLY RANDYLAND

Photos by: Emily Brozeski

Randyland: The Tao of Randy Gilson

Mackenzie Phillips

"My name is Randy. I have ADHD, OCD and Autism."

Randy Gilson is 65 but likes to emphasize, "and a half." He frequently pauses to say, "I can't do that," referring to the conditions that prevent him from doing everything he'd like to. In fact, he is far too modest.

Randy has owned Randyland on North Side's Arch Street since 1994. He purchased the corner property for $10,000 with a credit card and has transformed it into his own playground. Full of old children's toys and a re-purposed telephone booth from the landfill, Randyland swims in nostalgia.

Pittsburgh's Randyland, a bright yellow star in the heart of the North Side, brings not only happiness but light to dim streets once known for crime and gang violence.

After pulling up in his black pick-up truck with a coffee and take out, Randy makes sure to say hello to the neighboring little girls and crack a joke with the mailman. He addresses all of his visitors with a smile and a selfie.

Randy does not consider himself an artist; instead, he says he's just a person. Rather, a person who wants to do great things for his community.

Wearing a navy sweater and jeans covered in paint splotches in his vast art studio, he begins to paint his newest welcome sign.

"I just happen to be on a corner," Randy says. Right down from other museums. So, people found me, but I'm really just a normal fella. And I knew when I was a little guy, I knew that when I grow up, I just wanted to be a happy old man. I thought there's too many mean people. And I want to be a happy old man. So, I practice every second."

Randy flunked K-12 and often refers to himself as "Forrest Gump," and like that fictional character, he is quirky and resilient – traits reflecting his difficult upbringing.

With an abusive father, Randy was left with his mother and six siblings to fend for themselves in Homestead. Tears form in Randy's eyes as he reflects on how this time shaped him. Memories of washing dishes or mopping the floors flood back when asked about this time.

"Because I was taught that I was retarded, I just decided to copycat my mum," Randy says.

"And because I didn't know anything else, I was just helping people on the streets, and they taught me, the people taught me, my mother taught me, life taught me, the corners taught me. So, the whole idea is, if you think about it, the day that you were born, and the umbilical cord was cut you became your own person, but your brain is a sponge."

Speaking in metaphors and figures of speech he refers to as "Randyisms," Randy often compares life to buds and roots, or a roll of paper towels.

"Your heart has roots of your ancestry. So, we are the buds of the roots of the past right now. So, all of us are ready to, you know, harvest and be the best of our abilities," Randy explains.

Emily Honhart, previous editor at the *Northside Chronicle* and member of the Northside Leadership Conference, reflects fondly on time shared with Randy.

"I remember him being just quirky and kind and just very thoughtful and he selflessly wanted to create something for others to enjoy," Honhart says.

"In his small part of the Northside, he created this experience that can be open to anyone, without anyone even asking him to do it. Without anything in return, he just wanted folks to have this very cool artistic experience that anyone could come in and be a part of."

Referring to Pittsburgh as a pot of "Alphabet Soup," Randy reflects this ideal in his own backyard.

The largest international welcome wall in America, plaques

explaining his Randy-isms and trees decorated with fake fruit and rubber duckies span the property. Chandeliers decorated with toy cars dangle from hand-painted rafters and a plaque hangs on the wall of neighboring "Mac's House."

Randy and his partner, David "Mac" McDermott, started the museum from scratch. Picking up bricks from the street and any treasure from the side of the road, together they built a foundation for their home and love.

After 25 years together, Mac died of cancer in 2019. Randy recalls him fondly, referring to him as being "in heaven." His newest art projects combined with others that are in progress keep him occupied.

Randy's upcoming projects include a protest song with rapper Snoop Dogg – with a custom painted hat for Snoop. Another is his take on John Lennon's rose-colored glasses. Gathering supplies from the local bike shop, his vision will feature Randyland through Lennon's lenses.

His endless art studio rests on the first floor of the home. The walls are covered in pictures of his mother and Mac, as well as various works in progress. Hung on rods are vibrant clothes covered in intricate designs, and various knick-knacks of his finding are sprinkled all around. Chairs and painted canvases hang from the ceiling as a speaker playing feel-good music trinkles in from outside.

"So Randyland is a broken house on a broken corner and a broken hood in a broken world with broken things for broken people," he says. "Everyone is, in some way or another completely built a different way. We have different ingredients, different frequencies."

Jeremy Jones runs "Discover the Burgh," a popular Pittsburgh blog. Jones and his wife live two blocks from Randyland. Whether it be walking the dog or stopping by for a visit, Jones basks in Randy's constant warmth.

"It's almost impossible to describe Randy in a sentence or two, because he is very energetic and really out there and super happy to be like a really good ambassador for the Northside," Jones, says.

Randyland is free to all visitors and Randy plans to leave his property to the city as a therapy home.

Growing up lost in the "Alphabet Soup," Gilson has finally found himself and his passion among the nooks and crannies of the little corner home of 1501 Arch Street.

"I don't know anything about me, really. But once I got this building, then I became a painter. Yeah. Because, man, hot diggity dog. It's fun." •

Photo by: Emily Brozeski

Photos by: Peter Boettger

Derek Minto: Stand-Up Guy

Zach Petroff

Derek Minto is a storyteller.

Weaving in personal anecdotes, his vast knowledge of history and philosophy, and his appreciation for crude bodily functions, Minto embodies the Pittsburgh comedy scene.

"Stand-up is very much based in rhetoric and speaking philosophy in that you are an individual," Minto says. "You go with what you react to at first, and the easiest thing to get reactions out of people is to be vulgar and swear…and farts…farts are always funny."

The Duquesne University alum, who graduated with degrees in Journalism and Philosophy, has taken an unorthodox path to the stage. Before touring nationwide and opening for comedians such as Hannibal Buress and Todd Glass, Minto held a plethora of jobs including a window salesperson, customer service rep for a bank, adjunct professor at Pitt, an editorialist on broker pricing, and some non-profit endeavors.

As Minto jumped from job to job, he could not find his footing in the corporate world. "I don't get corporate culture. It just doesn't make any sense to me," he says. His natural curiosity coupled with an inability to keep a "real-person job" brought the Pittsburgh native to a natural decision: To tell jokes in front of a live audience.

"I could never figure out why I liked history, and then I was like 'oh history is just one big story right?'" Minto says. "I like Literature, but I never wanted to be that kind of writer. I've written a ton of stuff. I've written musicals, all kinds of weird [stuff]. I want to be able to emote what I write, and the only jobs you could do that is pretty much stand-up comedy or a professional speaker that goes to colleges and tells kids not to do drugs I guess."

There is a level of self-awareness in Minto's comedy. He is charmingly self-deprecating. He has an innate yet crude ability to take often simple premises and

break them down, exposing the absurd.

"The innovation of cutting a pie was so important, they made it into a chart. It's not called a cake chart," said Minto on his 2021 Comedy album, "Live from Lawrenceville's Finest Ham Themed Bar."

Minto opens his first comedy album by taking the audience on a trip to Old England and recreates the scene of a villager eating his first-ever pie.

It's hilarious. It's intelligent. It's weird. It's Derek Minto.

Behind his goofy charm there is a layer of genuine consideration and kindness which is not always apparent on the comedy scene. He is also adamant about showcasing others' talents.

Jaylen Lource, who is just starting his career in stand-up, appreciates Minto's sincerity. Minto has given Lource the most valuable commodity in the comedy world: Stage time.

"That's just who he is," says Lource, an-up and coming comedian from McKees Rock. "When you start doing comedy there's a lot of people that don't want to see you do well. It's a cutthroat and competitive business. Not with that guy. He actually wants comedians to do well. It's rare to see, man."

There is a semi-complex social hierarchy between newer comedians: "Open Mic'ers" vs. "Veterans."

"When I came on the scene, I thought it was very bad," Minto recalls.

"No one was really helping one another. Like [other comedians] would just be [jerks]. And I hated that. I think it makes the scene better when we have more, better comics. The better comics we have, the more people can see the scene, and be more visible. And if you're more visible you get more audience and you can have a better sense of who you are as a comic. Then you can grow. I do try to foster comedy."

Minto is currently teaching comedy at the Bottlerocket Social Hall.

Minto's good friend and owner of the Comedy Club, "Hambones," Jeffery Holt, unexpectedly passed away in Sept. 2020. Minto would be the last performer on his late friend's stage.

Holt, known for cultivating a great atmosphere for comedians, was a sort of mentor who allowed Minto to run his comedy show inside the club.

After the passing of his friend, Minto along with another comedian decided to open up what they describe as a "food truck for comedy" under the banner of "Burning Bridges Comedy." They wanted to create various rooms where comics can come and work on their material unimpeded.

"I think the scene has become a lot more friendly," Minto says. "It's not [just] Pittsburgh, comedy just naturally attract cis white males. There is nothing wrong with that, I'm just sick of hearing their stale premises. Like I want to hear just a different perspective from the room. Like I want to hear a different story." •


Photo by: Peter Boettger

Steel Smiling's Julius Boatright: A Study in Mindfulness

Isabella Abbott

When Julius Boatwright looks back on one of the most challenging events in his life – the suicide of a college friend almost a decade ago – he sees a moment that guided him to where he is right now: working to help members of the Black community accept the fact that it's okay to have a mental illness – a belief that for Julius, founder and CEO of Steel Smiling, starts on his yoga mat.

He says that remembering his friend and finding time to focus on his own mental health is what gives him a purpose to follow through with his mission of helping others deal with mental illness.

"That was a moment now that I can reflect on and have a different perspective on it," Julius says. "I am able to see that it taught me, it let me know that I am in the right place, and I am working in the right field. It also gave me a deeper level of fuel and motivation and purpose."

To motivate himself to maintain his own mental health, Julius incorporates methods of tranquility and mindfulness into his life.

"I am so in love with yoga right now … it's one of the things I was cre-

ated to do," Julius says. "I'm all about how to integrate rest into yoga."

By being able to find time to rest and relax in his day, Julius allows himself to be well enough to work with those who may be struggling more than he is. He says that to be able to work with those with mental health issues, he needs to be the best version of himself.

"If I am not grounded in my own personal self-care and mental health, I am of no good to my colleagues, to the community, to anyone really," Julius says. "So, my advice to anyone on track to be a mental health practitioner is to make sure you are well first. And that is a lifelong process."

Not only is he the best version of himself right now, but is also a gentle listener and joyous individual, according to colleagues like Robin Sheffey. She says her definition of a boss doesn't suit him; she sees him as a leader.

"When I think of a boss, I think in terms of someone who is rigid and title driven," Sheffey says. "I see Julius as, I'd say, a spiritual leader … I would see him as a confidant. And in terms of guidance, he's a leader that leads through others."

Outside of work, he's the same. Julius's friend, Laura Rock, says he's always willing to be there for others and will offer advice to those who need it.

"Julius is an extremely empathetic and present person," Rock says. "It's very easy to have a deep conversation with him about a number of things."

His career at Steel Smiling allows him to do exactly that. The Pittsburgh-based organization tries its best to bridge the gap between mental health awareness and Black people through different resources like education, awareness and advocacy.

"There just are not enough therapists to meet the need."

However, these resources are still scarce because of the discrimination that often prevents Black people from seeking treatment. Julius says there are not enough support groups and affordable therapists for Black people, an assertion supported by researchers like Dr. Sirry Alang, author of *Mental Health Care Among Blacks in America: Confronting racism and constructing solutions*.

Her research focuses on finding reasons for unmet mental health needs. In a sample of Black adults, and in her findings, she concludes that racism causes mistrust in many mental health service systems.

There are logistical obstacles as well.

"There just aren't enough therapists to meet the need," Julius says. "Therapists are overbooked and grossly underpaid, there aren't even enough peer-support groups, particularly for Black folks that have Black-centered subject matter."

Since its launch in 2015, the organization has referred dozens of community members to mental healthcare providers and provided hundreds of mental health practitioners and students with countless hours of education.

Along with helping people with mental illnesses, Steel Smiling has several different programs, one of which, "Beams to Bridges," focuses on training individuals to be able to serve as mental health advocates in their communities.

Julius says it allows people to easily access the support they need, which he compares to the structure of a bridge in a city that's full of them.

"It takes a strong foundation and strong beams to really create a bridge where in this city of bridges people can get across and get the treatment and support that they need," Julius says.

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, research shows that Black adults view mental health disorders as personal weaknesses, resulting in worry that they may be discriminated against.

Julius's ability to focus on self-care and happiness for himself while pushing past the discrimination shows that he's not only willing to help others but is willing to get better for those around him. He says that passion and purpose lead him through all his work.

"I'm passionate but I've learned that passion alone doesn't do it," Julius says. "So, for me, just knowing that this is part of my purpose, I can kind of reflect on all the events and lived experiences that I've gone through." ●

WESA's Katie Blackley Answers Your Questions

Mary Flavin

Who is Katie Blackley?

Good question.

If you ask her, she'll say she's a radio host, a voice that speaks to the people and their city. A postcard collector, her favorites are the postcards she receives from friends and family. And a runner, a way for Katie to both freely experience the city on foot and get moving. Although those may be the first things that come to mind for her, Katie is so much more.

Behind the scenes

Katie grew up in Ohio and loves to write. She attended Duquesne University and remains in contact with a core group of friends she met there; together they attend shows in the city, play tabletop games, and watch Game of Thrones. Recently she married Niven Sabherwal.

On the scene

Katie is a digital producer for WESA, Pittsburgh's NPR News Station, and has been there for a decade. She is involved in a variety of projects including her latest show, "Good Question."

Good Question gets to the heart of Pittsburgh – its history, people, and community. Katie goes out

into the city and answers the questions that she herself poses as well those posed by avid listeners. Questions such as: What's the origin of the Pittsburgh accent? What's the deal with the "Pittsburgh left?" And who was the first Black city councilwoman?

"What brings us together as Pittsburghers, what has divided us in the past, and what has gotten us to this point?" That's what interests Katie, who enjoys the opportunity to do long-form stories. "Another thing I love is that public radio isn't driven by sound bites, we try to tell you how we really got to this place," she says.

Although each story that Katie reports on is important to her, a few of her favorites include the dazzling Pittsburgh Steelerettes and the forgotten military fort of Stanton Heights.

In the '60s, the Steeler's marketing team was trying to figure out a way to attract a bigger crowd and what better way to do so than add cheerleaders to the gameday experience? About 60 female students from Robert Morris were asked to fill this role and they excitedly obliged. Between 1961 and 1969, the group wowed fans and cheered on the Steelers as they rose in popularity.

Fifty years later Katie met with a handful of the Steelerettes, who according to her were "wild women in their 50s and 60s with bedazzled t-shirts having the time of their life."

During the Civil War, when the Confederate Army invaded Gettysburg, Pittsburgh was worried the war might eventually come to the city. In preparation, the Union Army built a series of forts. Katie spoke with someone at the Soldiers and Sailors Museum in Oakland who told her there were Civil War Fortifications all around the city. There was a rumor of a fort located in Stanton Heights. She went over with a listener and took measurements and notes, and they reported their findings back to the expert.

They had found a new marker, a fresh discovery that had been lost to time.

What matters most

Circling back to the present day, Katie has done a significant amount of reporting on the LGBTQ+ community. As a member of this community, she feels it is important to seek out stories in Pittsburgh uncovering issues such as the social justice movements within Black and trans organizations, and the LGBTQ+ issues situated in the bigger beats of education, arts, development and transportation.

"I know these people and everybody in the alphabet mafia is different. I just felt comfortable, I took a look at what leadership looked like, who was being represented, and who was left out of the conversation," Katie says.

In her work, she finds that some of the most organic stories arise when something uplifting happens in the community, and although the members of the story may be a part of the LGBTQ+ community, she doesn't feel that needs to be the main theme of the story.

"Everybody needs a few basic things: food, shelter, love," Katie says. "We as the media have a microphone to uplift these voices. They just want a seat at the table and to be supported – that's getting down to the humanity of it."

Stories aren't just stories to her, they are reflections of people. They are vessels filled with experiences, voices that are a part of something bigger. Radio allows the listener to really hear the quirks of subjects and relate to them. They aren't words on a page, but living, breathing human beings.

There's a pattern, a shake, a rattle. An energy, a feeling, a conversation. ●

Photo by: Emily Brozeski

Larry Lagattuta Puts the Spice in the Strip District

Hannah Peters

Larry Lagattuta, owner of the Enrico Biscotti Company, has baked himself into the history of the Strip District, but the Strip is just as much baked into Larry's own history.

"I've been in the strip all my life, my father unloaded boxcars down on the platform when he got out of the Marine Corps," Larry remembers.

While he has followed the family tradition of making a living in the Strip, instead of unloading boxcars, he specializes in unloading biscotti into the hands of grateful customers.

In 1993, Larry walked away from an accounting job at AT&T that he hated and opened Enrico Biscotti.

It was a totally unexpected turn in his life's path. "Through a bunch of quirky, serendipitous circumstances, somebody asked me to make some biscotti and I did. And that was it."

He makes it sound uncomplicated but his business has grown from using 250 lbs. of flour a week to needing a ton-and-a-half of flour delivered every Monday. The Enrico Biscotti Company now boasts 32 different flavors of biscotti and distributes its products all the way from upstate New York to Chicago.

There's no mystery as to why his bakery has continued to grow over the years. The aroma of sweet Italian bread that radiates from the bakery makes it obvious. The smell is so lovely and warm that a couple walking past the storefront chants, "Hold your nose! Hold your nose!" in an effort to resist the tempting scent of baking biscotti. Another group decided to take a few minutes and just stand outside the door to enjoy the smell.

Strip visitors like Donny Stupka attest to the alluring aroma. "We ate down the street but we could smell it from all the way down there. So now we're here. And we smelled it the whole walk over here too," Stupka adds. "We got biscotti and one of them cherry pies. I had to come back for another pie."

The man behind the alluringly sweet aroma is bristly, direct and matter-of-fact. Not in a way that is off-putting but in a way that lets you know he is sure-footed and purposeful.

But the more you learn about Larry, the more he seems to

resemble his own biscotti. You may first expect that hard crunchy texture, but instead, each bite is greeted by a biscotti that is soft with only a slight, smooth crunch and just the right amount of sweet.

The moment he begins to share what makes him passionate about his long-standing Italian bakery, his initial tough-cookie demeanor almost completely disappears. He softens even more when children are on the scene.

"I've been handing out my cookies to the little kids that come in here since I started baking them. Those little kids grew up and started their own families. When they had kids, I gave them cookies. Now there's a new generation of little kids coming in here. It's just fun, ya know. They call me Uncle Enrico," Larry says.

With his generous and thoughtful family-oriented business style, it's not difficult to imagine the kind of father Larry is to his own children.

Following in his father's footsteps, Sam Lagattuta has become an integral part of the biscotti business. Surprisingly though, this is not what Larry originally had in mind for his son. Sam was attending Duquesne University as a member of the track team when, two years in, he decided he wanted to switch paths and become a part of the business full-time.

With the tone of a mildly annoyed but proud father Larry recounts his counsel to his son. "I told him 'Dude if you quit now, you're never gonna run again.' But he told me he just wanted to come work with me. At first, I was like 'I don't know man,' but he loves it, he's good at it. Better at running the company than I am," Larry said.

His son's eagerness to join the family business is a testament to the type of business that Larry runs. There's more to it than the biscotti. Rather, it is centered around people. "People forget how integral they are to the success of this business," Larry says. And it is about more than selling people biscotti, too.

For the past 10 years, the Enrico Biscotti Company has been hosting trips to Italy.

Several times a month, the Enrico Biscotti Company offers cooking classes focusing on everything from bread to pizza, to holiday cookies, to sauces and more. Larry teaches many of the classes himself where students will find that his knowledge of bread goes deeper than just the steps of the recipe.

"I love the history," Larry says. "When I'm trying to do a recipe, I just nerd into where it came from and I'll think, 'What! That's crazy!' The bread that you make your peanut butter sandwich with, man, that bread has capitalism, imperialism, American exceptionalism, racism, classism, sexism, all stuffed in that one loaf of bread. It's just absolutely amazing."

Larry also hosts dining experiences including "First Friday Dinner," "Big Italian Throwdown," and a Christmastime "Feast of the Seven Fishes Dinner."

If bread, history, and dinner are not enough, pack your bags because Larry takes the customer experience to another level … well, actually another country. For the past 10 years, the Enrico Biscotti Company has been hosting trips to Italy, where customers can travel alongside Larry to the birthplace of biscotti.

Even though Larry will tell you, "I am not Italian, I'm Sicilian," he speaks of his trips around Italy with great pride. "I'm an Italian speaker, nobody gets lost with me. I always tell people 'You wanna know about the agenda, talk to the tour guide. You need a deal on a pair of shoes, I'm your guy,'" Larry relays.

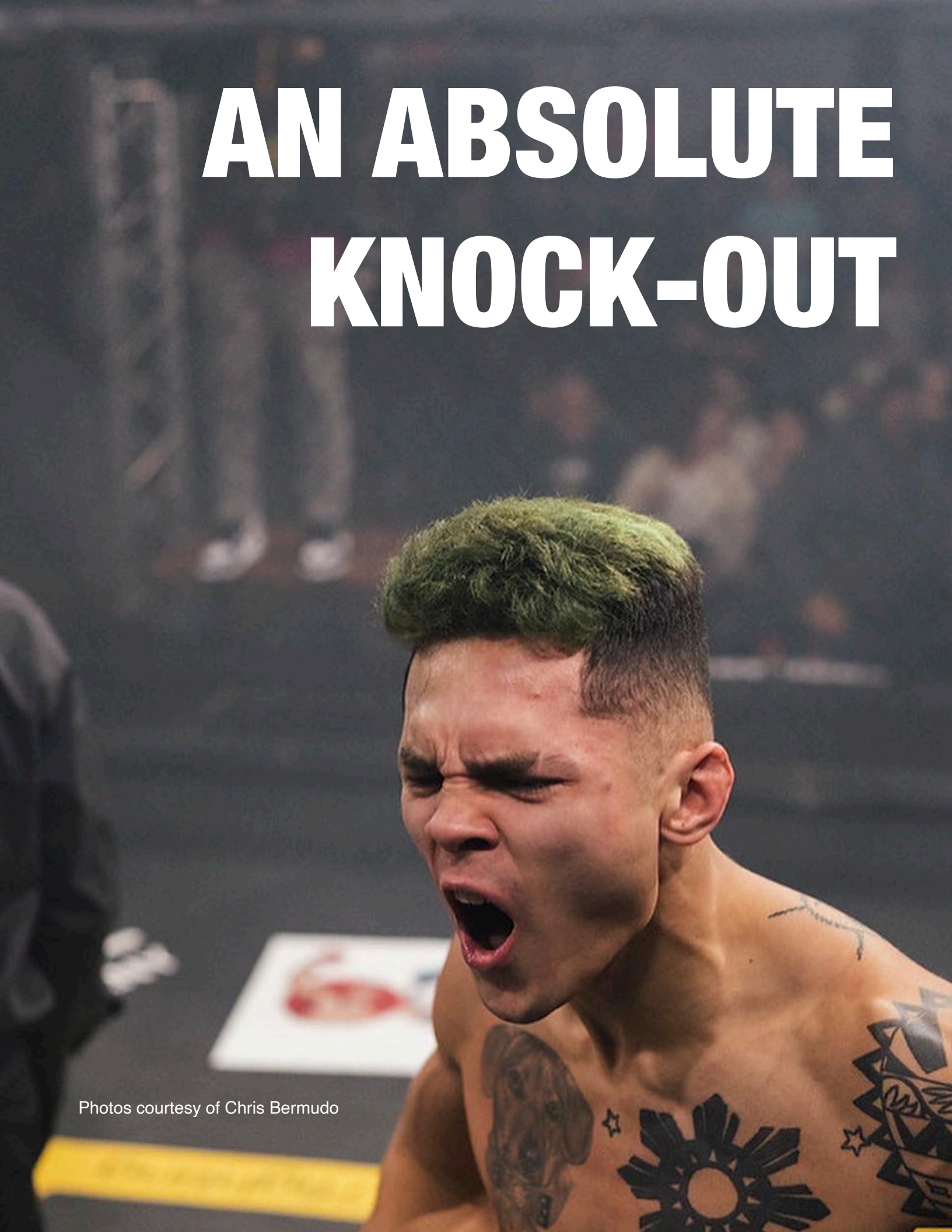
Closer to home, Larry stays as local as possible when sourcing ingredients. The butter, sugar, eggs, and flour are all locally sourced. In fact, the chocolate used in his tasty treats comes from Mon Aimee Chocolat right across the street.

"It's pretty common in The Strip -- we shop with each other whenever we can, we use our people. This is a neighborhood, ya know. Even though we all compete with each other – and we do– we're still a family," Larry says.

Employee Trisha Merlina says Enrico Biscotti is the beating heart of the Strip. "I think this place is integral to the Strip because people will come all the way here just for the biscotti," Merlina explains.

Roots and family are important to Larry – including his customers' families. "The thing that makes me the most happy is when people love the product and they take us to their weddings and to their funerals and parties. When they say 'We've been coming here forever' or 'Anytime we come to Pittsburgh it's our first stop,' it just makes me so happy." ●

AN ABSOLUTE KNOCK-OUT



Photos courtesy of Chris Bermudo

MMA Featherweight Punches Up

Spencer Thomas

Thursday, 7:15 p.m.

Miguel Francisco watches as his teammate ladles water onto the sauna's heater. With a hiss, it evaporates and amplifies the heat. Francisco emits a muted groan. Cramped inside the wooden box, he looks down at the timer on his phone.

Ten more minutes.

Forty-eight hours from now, he will be perched on the fence of an octagon, waving his arms around like a maniac, intoxicated by the thrill of victory. But for now, he bows his head and grits his teeth as the heat intensifies.

Francisco, from Washington, Pa., is an amateur mixed martial arts fighter. It's Thursday, two days before he is scheduled to fight at his hometown Meadows Casino. Currently weighing 152 pounds, Francisco needs to lose seven pounds in 24 hours before he weighs in on Friday afternoon.

For him, the toll on his body is worth it if it means getting to fight.

"You got to embrace the discomfort" he says. "I love being uncomfortable, that's why I sit in the sauna for 20 minutes."

If all goes to plan, Francisco will win on Saturday, fight again in December and then turn pro and move to California in 2023. He says he's excited for that, because then he'll be able to train full-time, and start making money from his fights.

At the very least, MMA can be considered as "alternate fitness." The risks for injury are huge, the physical demands are exhausting and the commitment is taxing.

But for Francisco, the adversity is just part of life.

"There are a lot of people that are going to tell you, especially when you're a teenager, 'you shouldn't be doing this, you're going to get brain damage.' But then they're sitting around smoking cigarettes …"

The 23-year-old Francisco says he had always had dreams of fighting. He tried other sports, but fighting was his one true love.

"I sucked at soccer," he said. "I was good at kicking people but not at kicking balls."

To hone that skillset, Francisco trained at karate through childhood, becoming a third-degree black belt in Tang Soo Do. He first discovered MMA as a child when he watched "The Ultimate Fighter" with his mom and dad. While boxing throughout high school Francisco also fought in jiu-jitsu and Muay Thai tournaments. Once he turned 18, he combined them and entered into the world of MMA.

All the while, he was supported by his family, with his mom and dad attending every one of his fights. Despite being the first member of his family to jump into the world of combat sports, he had their love and support from the beginning.

Jeff Morganti has been Francisco's boxing coach since he was 14 and says that Coni Francisco was one of few mothers who would show up to sparring sessions to watch their child get repeatedly punched in the face.

When he was 19, Francisco's mother died of breast cancer. Before she passed, Coni Francisco made Miguel promise that one day he would make it to the UFC. Immediately before and after every fight, he dons a breast cancer awareness shirt that reads, "I fight for my Mom."

"That's what gives me that drive to keep pushing forward," he says. "My mom's watching over me."

The needle in the sauna pushes past 120 degrees Fahrenheit. Only now does Miguel remove the body suit he wore to trap heat against his tattooed skin. Beads of sweat cover his back to the point where you can see your own reflection in the pools. He needs to sweat more if he wants to make the 145 featherweight limit.

With him in the chamber are a pair of fellow fighters: Lucas Seibert, a former wrestler at West Virginia University, and Mason Deless, the top ranked flyweight fighter in Pennsylvania. The trio engages in brief conversation. They talk about the major UFC event that takes place on Saturday. Francisco says he won't be paying any attention to it. All of his focus will be on his fight.

They also talk about the difficulties in their own weight cuts. Siebert needs to lose 11 pounds in 24 hours, despite having already been fasting for days. Francesco empathizes.

"I've just been sucking on Jolly

Ranchers," he says, "since I can't be drinking water."

They also talk about the first thing they'll eat after making weight on Friday. A hamburger, pasta, anything sounds good for them. After reaching 145 on Friday, Francisco expects to gain around 10 pounds before the fight as he rehydrates and replenishes.

Francisco says that a niche community like MMA draws him closer to the people around him. It's simple to befriend someone, even after they just kicked your butt on the mat. "It's kind of like a brotherhood," he says. "That's the best way to make friends in my opinion, because there is no bad blood, no testosterone."

Even getting to the sauna itself isn't a given for most fighters. Francisco funds his endeavor with a day job at a computer help desk, a sponsor at a local restaurant, and a GoFundMe on his Instagram supported by those close to him. He's also enlisted in the National Guard, with whom he just got back from training in Denmark.

"If I'm not busy, I'll go crazy," he said. "If I'm just sitting around and not doing anything… I feel like I'm wasting [life]. You got one life, might as well keep it busy."

The army provides its own source of adversity for Francisco. While in training in 2019, he was sidelined from fighting and required surgery after dislocating his shoulder and tearing his labrum and bicep tendon.

Less than two years later, he threw an overhand punch that broke his left wrist, forcing him to get yet another surgery. Recently, he got the chance to travel to California and train with some professional fighters. In one of their sessions, he took a flying knee to the face and broke his nose. Francisco was back in training the next day.

Why he keeps coming back to the sport that pushes him over and over again, he's not totally sure.

"I don't know, I'm just f---ed up in the head. I like getting hit, it's fun to me. It's like a video game, I treat it like it's a boss battle."

Saturday, 8 p.m.

After a little more sweating, Francisco makes weight on Friday. He says goodbye to his abs and puts some pounds back on. As he walks towards the cage with hair having been freshly dyed green, the Spanish remix of "Narcos," by Migos, blasts over the arena sound system. Francisco doesn't take these stylistic choices

too seriously; both were chosen by a poll he posted on Instagram.

Francisco steps into the octagon, and the announcer belts out his introduction. He says that there's nothing in his head as he walks towards the fight; he is just ready to prove himself.

Deless says that Francisco is dangerous and will take people by surprise. "He's got a bright future. He's better than what his record indicates."

He tries not to get caught up overthinking in the anticipation.

"I get nervous until I see my opponent," Francisco says. "You're always thinking it's some 8-foot tall, big creature then you see him and it's just some dude and you're not nervous anymore."

In the first round, Francisco is on his back. He wraps his legs around his opponent, Awstin Martinez, before putting him in an armbar. Martinez taps out, sending Francisco into a jubilant celebration, while Martinez keels over in pain.

Moments later, the referee is raising Francisco's arm, and Miguel points to the pink ribbon on his shirt. As a show of respect, Martinez lifts up Francisco and embraces the man who seconds earlier was prepared to break his arm.

"It humbles you," Francisco said, "I feel like the world would be more peaceful if everyone did jiu-jitsu, because then you could just roll instead of shooting each other," he says. "It keeps you a lot calmer. It's the martial art mindset."

"[Francisco] is spiritual," Morganti says. "He's the fighter that still touches gloves before every match, no matter how much crap-talking the other guy is doing."

Monday, 11:00 a.m.

Two days after the win, Francisco is back to work, waking up and going on a three-mile run. "His discipline is second to none," Morganti says. "Almost to a fault." ●

Courtesy of Mary Martin

Mary Martin: The Cool Teacher in the Basement

Jelisa Lyde

Who is Mary Martin? If you ask her, she is a woman who "wears many hijabs."

Mary is a teacher. An artist. A wife. A mom. A Winchester Thurston alum. A woman of faith.

Any time a group of students sees her, you can hear them sing, "Mrs. Martin!"

It does not matter if it is lunchtime, class time, community time, or after school; you can always find people stopping by Mrs. Martin's room. Even on Fridays after school.

"Whether it was Friday after school or Monday during lunch, I was always in her room because it created a space for us," Tyler Perry, class of 2019, says.

Before becoming "Mrs. Martin," Mary Martin was in the same place as the students she teaches now. Mary attended WT for high school, where she fell in love with art and imagining possibilities. With encouragement and a push from her high school art teacher, Mary pursued art as a career choice.

Mary went to the Rhode Island School of Design, where she studied architecture "because that sounded cool." Though she quickly realized that architecture wasn't for her, she is still a kind of architect. As a teacher and an artist, she continually works to create a space for students to feel important and supported.

"That's where architecture comes in," Mary says. "Okay, I am not designing skyscrapers and buildings, but I try to design or create space for community and for people to thrive."

Despite Mary's classroom being across the street from most of the students she teaches and tucked away in the back corner of

the basement, her room is rarely empty.

People stop by to chat with her at lunchtime, during a free period, or Friday after school.

"I come in at least once a day," Anthony, a first-year student, says.

"Let's make it four times next week rather than five." Mrs. Martin jokes to Anthony, reminding him they have a four-day week coming soon.

Despite her hesitation to return to WT to teach, Mary couldn't imagine what her art would look like if she weren't a teacher.

For Mary, the two jobs fuel each other. Her art is inspired and created based on her experiences as a teacher, and being a teacher is inspired by her willingness to continue to learn and place herself in the role of the students.

"Instead of always being the teacher on the other end, I like to take classes to have fresh ideas, network with people, and be around other folks," she says.

As an artist, she constantly creates art and works with students while creating art. As a teacher, she is also continually learning and focusing on the history of various art techniques and styles. Mary teaches courses in Public Art, East Asian Pottery, and African Art.

"What I teach is based on the things I love to do," she says.

In that vein, being a mom has the most significant impact on her as a teacher and artist.

"I was surrounded by Black women who were mothers, providers, educators, and artists."

Mary and her husband have three children: Jafar, Asmau -- both WT alums – and Nur, who is a senior at WT. They have been her biggest inspiration and motivators.

When Mrs. Martin looks back on the art she has created, she holds the work about her kids closer to her heart because of how special it is.

"It's like that cliché; some people have asked what your best piece of art is. And it is my kids."

Mary never doubted her ability to balance being a mother, teacher, and artist because of Women of Vision, a group of black female artists. When Mary was a recent college graduate, she joined a group of women who were mothers, providers, educators, and artists. She has relied upon and worked with these women over the years.

"I was surrounded by Black women who were mothers, providers, educators, and artists," she says. "I didn't think twice about it because if they could do it, I could."

Mary constantly discusses what's next for her, her art, and her teaching journey. She is continually creating and recreating what her classes will look like, what her art will look like, and what her role at WT is.

Currently, she has the roles of alum, parent, and teacher, but once her daughter graduates in the fall, she will no longer have the role of a parent at WT.

"I've always had a child connected with me with my job here. It's crazy, but it motivated me to overcome the challenges."

Outside of having kids, Mrs. Martin's most significant accomplishment was when she and other women exhibited their art in the Carnegie Art Museum this past summer and had pieces displayed in the Mattress Factory Gallery.

But her most impactful creation is "Mrs. Martin."

"When I was a student, I always told other students to take at least one class with Mrs. Martin." Katie Slaymaker, class of 2020, said. "I still stand by it. She is awesome."

Or, as Mary puts it: "I am a pinch pot with lots of holes. I've been around a long time, so I'd be a bit weathered or a patient chameleon." ●

Photo courtesy of Carey Harris

Carey Harris: The Education of an Advocate

Ethan George

Carey Harris is the CEO of Literacy Pittsburgh, an organization that helps give adults in the city the education they may have missed out on as kids. Whether they missed out because of health issues, money problems, or a lack of resources, Harris and her team at Literacy Pittsburgh are there to help.

"My job is worrying about the future and planning for it," Carey says, laughing about the stress of her position. "That's probably what most CEOs do or want to be doing; lead the team that thinks about the future."

Harris speaks with a sense of authority and levity that is reminiscent of the cool English teacher you may have had in middle school. Her positive demeanor and way of speaking would indicate years of experience as a CEO, but Carey has only held the position since 2018.

"This is my first time actually delivering the education," Harris says, explaining that her previous roles in similar, education-based organizations, were more intermediary.

"Everything I learned about education, I learned at the Mayor's Commission and at A+ Schools," said Harris, who had been involved in community development in the Southside shortly before she began her career in education.

Harris was initially recruited by former Mayor Tom Murphy to work on the Mayor's Commission on Education. The task force was created in 2003 to address issues within the Pittsburgh school systems.

"I was recruited, I think, because I had that neighborhood perspective," said Harris, who was pregnant with her second daughter and living in the Southside Slopes at the time of the commission's creation.

Carey is a longtime resident of the Southside neighborhood, having moved there in 1999 while working as the Executive Director of the Southside Local Development Company. One of the main reasons she was chosen to represent the neighborhood on the Mayor's Commission is because of her previous experience in the area.

Though she may come across as a lifelong academic, Harris did not get her career start in education. Having joined the Southside Local Development Company in 1997, she spent most of her time on community planning and helping develop real estate in the area. It was there that she first saw the issues with the education system.

"We found that public schools were kind of a barrier to the development of the community," Harris said while running a hand through thick curly hair that has begun to turn a bit gray.

Carey realized that the Southside was having a problem attracting parents to the area, an issue that would lead her into a career in education. "We were having a hard time attracting people with kids, mainly because of the schools."

The budget for the 2022 school year for public schools in the city was $668.3 million. At the moment, Pittsburgh has a total of 56 public schools in its district, with a ratio of 11 students for every one teacher.

Pittsburgh is among the bottom 50% of all school districts in the state and has average reading and math proficiency scores below 50%. Despite these setbacks, Pittsburgh public high schools have seen a jump in graduation rates, rising from 74% to 80% over the last five years.

The state of Pennsylvania has a high school graduation rate of 92.4%, while the statewide literacy rate sits at 87.4%. These statistics seem fine, but this leaves the remaining 13% of adults in Pennsylvania lacking basic literacy skills.

Nationwide, around 21% of adults in the country read below a 5th grade level and 21 million can't read at all.

Shortly after her job with the Southside community, Carey got involved with the Mayor's Commission and then was quickly recruited by A+ Schools to act as their Executive Director.

Having seen the best and worst of what the city has to offer, Carey has an in-depth perspective that a lot of others in her field tend to overlook.

"I think equity is about giving people what they need and not giving everybody the same thing," Harris explained from one of the white-walled classrooms at Literacy Pittsburgh. Carey believes creating academic equity is about "creating conditions where people have what they need to succeed."

Michelle Figlar, a friend and colleague of Carey's as well as the Executive Director at the Birmingham Foundation, first met Carey while their sons attended the same kindergarten.

"I was just in awe of her and her warmth," Figlar said about the first time she met Harris. "I really admired her passion for education."

Harris' interest in local communities and schools in the Pittsburgh area is admirable to many that have worked with her. When she speaks about the city and its issues, Carey speaks from experience that comes just as much from her knowledge as a mother whose children have attended schools in Pittsburgh as from her professional experience in both community development and education.

Having an in-depth understanding of the issues that the Pittsburgh education system faces, Carey knows what changes need to be made.

"I think education is going to have to change because everything around it is changing," Harris said with the authority of a person who has been ingrained in this battle for years now. "I hope that education takes the opportunity to get a little more student focused."

Former colleague and current CEO of Catalyst Academy Charter School, Brian Smith, first met Carey while he was working on the board for Pittsburgh Public Schools, and was struck by her dedication to creating a more equitable educational system.

"She's an extremely smart and driven person. A definite leader," said Smith, adding that Harris has a natural ability to "quickly understand and address issues, she's very solution oriented."

Those solutions are not easy to come up with, and far harder to execute, but Carey has an idea of where to start.

"We have not embraced charter schools in the way that other regions have." Carey mentions how a lack of change from the "industrial model" of education has resulted in stunted literacy rates and a general decline in quality of education.

This, in addition to the gap in education many younger students faced during the quarantine, is the reason that Carey and the people at Literacy Pittsburgh are so passionate about providing adults and families with a proper education.

Though many challenges stand in the way of nation-wide, equitable education, Carey remains hopeful, knowing that Pittsburgh has the resources it needs to start making the education system more impactful.

"I think Pittsburgh is blessed," says Harris, "we have a lot of resources and a really generous community of people and organizations that want nothing more than to help." ●


YAMAHA


FASHION
ANTIQUE


PITTSBURGH STEELERS
HERE WE GO!
HERE WE GO!

MONTAGE

If all the world's a stage, Pittsburgh has some of the quirkiest set designers and character actors to be found anywhere. This section opens the curtain on the intriguing spaces that serve as the city's cultural intersections.

MARKET SQUARE: A GEOMETRY OF RANDOMNESS

Spencer Thomas

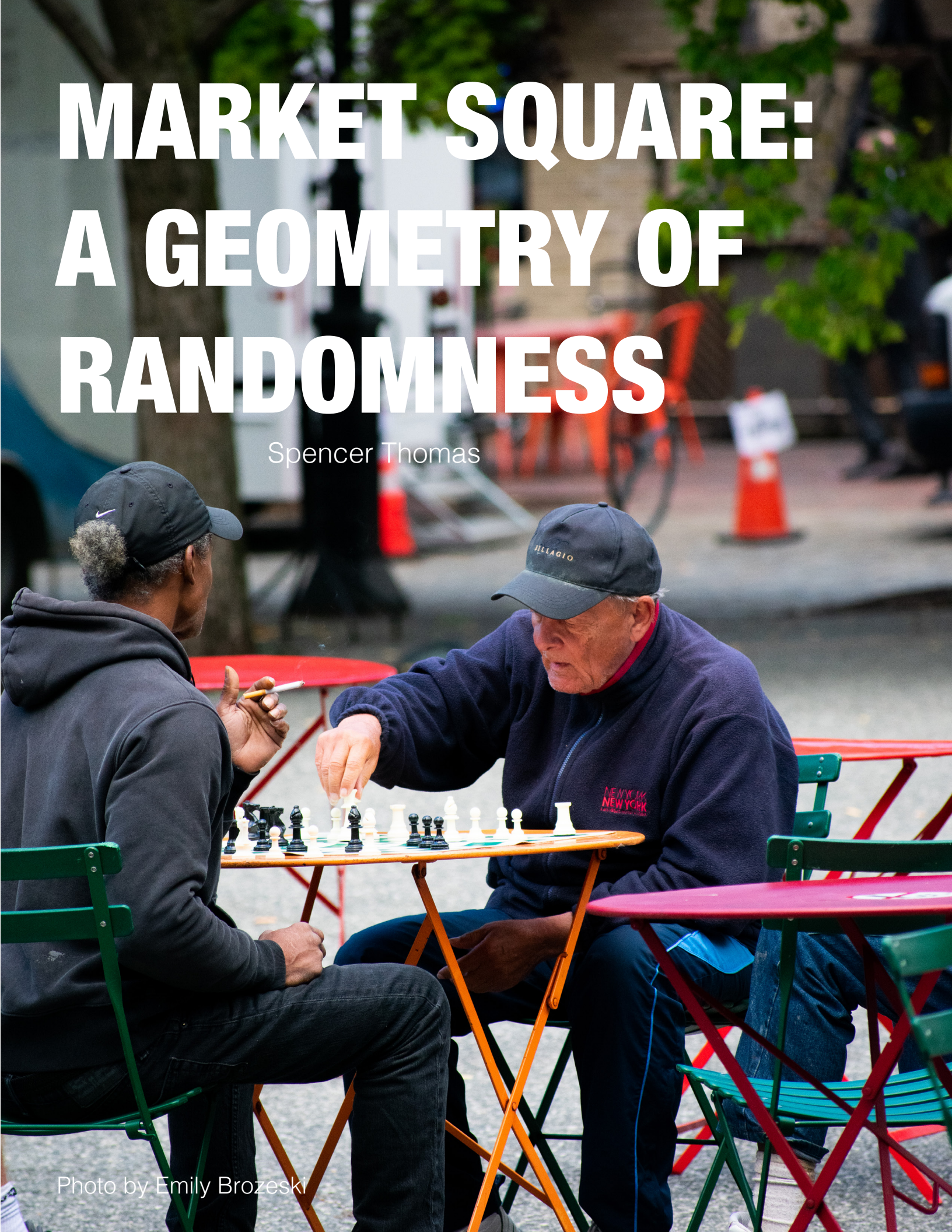


Photo by Emily Brozeski

It's public spaces like Market Square that accommodate every walk of life. Only there can you smoke a joint in plain view, blast music from a personal speaker and break for lunch from your nine-to-five job in the same place. Just make sure you don't walk through the Ethan Coen film being shot 15 yards to your left.

Office workers descend from their corner offices to hustle through in suits, but on a chilly Monday afternoon, those who are out and about are those who don't subscribe to the traditional order of work and domesticity.

"People can have musical productions and different types of artistic talents that they can perform in the square."

The square is truly a compound of randomness. Walking toward a coffee shop one can overhear a woman on the phone: "... to cross federal lines with thousands of Xanax!"

Once that odd snippet can be mentally processed, enter the doors of Nicholas Coffee and Tea. The shop is 122 years old, has been run by five generations of the same family and has been located in Market Square for over 60 years.

Manger Kathy Marsico, describes how the square evolved from a bus route to a public arena. "People can have musical productions and different types of artistic talents that they can perform in the square. They really try to make it a more creative area."

The music that blasts across the square runs the gamut of R&B hits through the years, to Krayzie Bone to Usher. Nearby is a chess table being run by a couple of pals passing round a flask and trying to light a joint. The friends reflect the diversity of the square.

They range from an older man with worn clothes and a patchy beard to a kid no more than 23 with a clean outfit and freshly styled hair. "It's almost like two people from completely different worlds colliding," Marsico says. "And you're in a safe spot, in the square."

The square is a patchwork of different parts of the city. There are Italian, Greek, and Mexican restaurants, local businesses, and large chains. That diversity can also be seen in the people who greet you as you cross the cobblestone streets.

"It speaks to what Pittsburgh is all about," says Marsico, and she talks about how her customers range from bigwig attorneys to old folks who want something to feed to the pigeons.

At the entrance to the square are a couple of Jehovah's Witnesses: A husband, wearing a clean suit, and a wife wearing a dress with a jacket. On a Monday afternoon, foot traffic isn't as high as it normally is, but that does not lessen the impact they believe they can have on lost souls.

The wife begins to read to strangers from the bible, highlighting Psalm 37:29, which reads, "Wrongdoers will be completely destroyed; the offspring of the wicked will perish. The righteous will inherit the land and dwell in it forever."

Those who deviate from their norm will find their place in Market Square.

For now, those who inherit the land of Market Square may or may not be righteous, but they're performing their lives in the heart of Pittsburgh.

The square can feel like a stage for humanity to act upon. Sometimes it's an arena, like in August 2021, when it hosted a national pogo-jumping competition, or on a recent Saturday night, when live entertainment captured the soul of a festival.

Sometimes it is literally a stage, because on this day a large corner of the square is off-limits and filled with equipment trucks and production managers. Ethan Coen of the famed Coen Brothers directing team was filming his first ever solo film, a road trip comedy.

He's just further demonstrating that those who deviate from their norm will find their place in Market Square. ●

Photo by Emily Brozeski

Cork and Bubble: A Moveable Feast

Hannah Peters

The 1973 Piaggio Ape known as the 'Cork and Bubble Machine' stood among the pine trees of a small backyard ready to serve a Sunday morning after-wedding brunch with French 75's, prosecco and mixed berry Truly on tap.

Renovated to be a mobile bar, this vintage Italian vehicle serves guests over the age of 21 from its four-tap system capable of pouring prosecco, craft beer, fine wine and batch cocktails.

Pronounced *a pay*, the "Ape" in its name translates to "bee" in Italian, a tribute to the compact size of this vintage vehicle that has an overall length of less than 10 feet– small enough to fit through a set of double doors.

And truly, the only thing you can think of when you see it in person is just how cute and tiny it is.

Commonly used as a delivery van, the Piaggio Ape is still used to maneuver through the cramped streets of Italy and Thailand today.

Think Vespa meets tractor-trailer. The classic, antenna-like circular side mirrors, round headlights, and three white-walled tires maintain the vintage Italian feel while the surprisingly spacious trailer provides functionality.

The cab is just big enough to seat two people.

Outfitted with layers of shelves to hold any alcohol, cups, ingredients, or decorations it may need, this mobile bar easily becomes a focal point of any event it serves.

On this particular Sunday, wedding host Kathy Balouris sees that it is laden with festive, fall-colored flowers and pink ceramic pumpkins to complement the crisp October air.

"Everyone was so excited to see it," Kathy says. "Now, given it was the morning after the wedding, people weren't necessarily like 'Yay! More alcohol!' but people were just blown away by how cute it looks. Of course, everyone had at least a mimosa or a Bloody Mary."

Behind the operation of this

mobile bar are two sisters, Kimberly Marquette and Samantha Dingus.

They had dreamed of starting a business together ever since they were children.

"We had always kicked ideas around but nothing really ever stuck," Samantha says.

Finally, in 2019 at a street festival in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, this began to change.

While walking through the festival with her husband, Dingus found a vintage camper renovated into a clothing boutique and inspiration struck.

Their original idea was to use a horse trailer or a vintage camper for the bar, an idea already replicated by two other mobile bar businesses in Pittsburgh.

"I'm so glad we didn't. Don't get me wrong, I love the horse trailers but we have so many more options with this vehicle because it doesn't have to be attached to anything. Once we get it to our destination, we can drive it all over the place," Kimberly says.

Don't expect to see them on the road though. Unfortunately, the Piaggio Ape is not street-legal. Perhaps to make up for this disappointing fact, the engine of the vehicle has been replaced with an electric one.

Samantha speaks of their appreciation of this feature.

"It's super eco-friendly, doesn't make any noise, and doesn't have any gas fumes. We can do indoor events without worrying about gassing out the guests."

The renovations and design of the mobile bar were done by a UK based company called Tokxi which, according to its website, is "the leading Piaggio Ape conversion specialists and dealers."

The sisters worked with the company throughout each part of the process and were able to bring their specific vision to life despite the company's typical 'cookie-cutter' renovation process.

There was just one issue – the expected delivery date of their mobile bar was in March of 2020.

"We had been waiting and waiting to start our business and then when we finally got the Piaggio, no one was doing social events anymore," Kimberly says.

Despite the pandemic's attempt to sabotage the start of their business, the sisters are able to look on the bright side.

"We had a lot of roadblocks and obstacles but I think with any business you start, you're gonna have a slow start. Ours was definitely more so than normal but it wasn't necessarily a bad thing," Kimberly says. "Sam and I didn't really know what we were getting into – the setup is very complex and there was no one to teach us how to do it... having a slow start helped us figure it all out."

Now that things have been returning to normal, they can serve just about any event: weddings, corporate gatherings, golf outings, tailgates, birthday parties and more.

The two sisters work hard to create an experience out of grabbing a drink at a party.

Event hosts will find that they are full-service in terms of preparation for the bar — all alcohol, ingredients, cups and decorations needed for an event are taken care of by the sisters.

Additionally, besides any wine, beer, or seltzer the host may want, all drinks are hand-made and pre-batched by the duo.

On top of that, the sisters strive to ensure that even the small details don't go overlooked. For instance, frozen berries are added to the cups of Truly seltzer, making them pink and much more fun.

The two sisters work hard to create an experience out of grabbing a drink at a party — guests will not be quick to forget the Cork and Bubble Machine.

Balouris attests to this, ready to invite the sisters and their mobile bar back to her home: "I would do it again in a heartbeat. It added such a unique touch to all the festivities." •

Photos by Andrew Cummings

Zenith: Blink and You'll Miss It!

Jelisa Lyde

Blink, and you will miss it. Drive by, you might miss it. Walk by, and you cannot ignore the bright red door with the mint green-and-yellow sign reading "The Zenith" fastened above it.

You may overlook this hidden gem because you are not sure what to look for, but for many vegans and vegetarians, this Southside gem tucked away behind East Carson Street along South 26th Street is the place to be.

What makes Zenith unique is not just the eclectic interior design, the antique shop, or the all-vegan menu. Instead, it is the community built within.

Elaine Smith, the owner, wants it to be a place for all people.

And it has been since the '80s, when Mary Kay Morrow and David Goldstein started Zenith as an antique shop, adding a restaurant in 1997. In 2003, after a couple of deals fell through, Elaine "just decided to buy it" from her friends Morrow and Goldstein.

Even though she didn't know much about owning a restaurant, she had worked in the industry for years. Her focus was not on making Zenith critically acclaimed, well-known, or super famous.

"Even before I bought it, Zenith was never about being important or up front; it's about making things that people like and creating a space for all," says Elaine.

Her ambition to create a home away from home for everyone is scrumptiously clear in the delicious vegan takes on classic dishes; it is the environment and space she and her staff have also created.

Not only does the interior design make it feel like a home, but the way the staff interacts with each other.

That's what Lila Ost, a college student, loves best. "Even though I am not that far from home or [a] vegan, I like this place where you can get a good vegan meal that feels home cooked," she says.

When first walking in, guests are met with the delicious scent of food and an eclectic interior design. Zenith sells local art, vintage clothes, beautiful jewelry and lots of books, but it also has some of the most incredible furniture and layout of decorative items.

"Who wouldn't love this place? You can get books, vintage clothes, jewelry and cool pictures, while getting a really good vegan meal," Akillian Bray says while describing why she would come back after her first visit.

Not only does the interior design make it feel like a home, but the way the staff interacts with each other, and the customers, makes it seem as though they are friends and family catching up during a dinner.

While sitting on the big comfy red couch, you can see everything that goes on in the kitchen, overhearing conversations about various things like what concerts staff members have been to, what the traffic may look like, their favorite shows or their inside jokes.

"Do you know when 'The Amazing Race' is over?" a server asks.

"No, did you ask Robert?" Elaine replies.

"I did. He didn't know," the server says.

"That's surprising. He usually knows everything," Elaine jokes.

Even through the pandemic, and having to do take out, every week since 2003 Elaine has created a new menu based on recipes that she has created.

Her first focus had been on making "home-style vegan versions of the foods" her vegetarian and vegan children missed the most.

Now, she creates menus based on the customer's favorites, her favorites, and what is available in the face of shortages and supply chain issues.

Even though Elaine and Zenith have been in the South Side for a long time, Elaine describes herself and the restaurant as "outsiders," which can speak to the fact that they aren't on East Carson Street or that there are no restaurants like this one in Pittsburgh.

Do not blink and miss out on this hidden gem; even if you aren't vegan, try something new, and see what Zenith is about. •

Barcadia Offers a Play on the Past

Mary Flavin

You're a kid at heart with a couple of quarters and nothing to lose. As you ascend the staircase to the second floor of the Market Exchange, game characters adorn the walls.

When you arrive, the bartender is hidden behind a crowd that's flocked to various pinball, fighting and driving games that make the place feel like a '90s fever dream.

The DJ blasts a mix of throw-back and EDM-style tunes.

"We're always chasing our past, to be confronted with it in a good way. I mean hell, if that's heaven sign me up," Jozie Davis, an employee at the Market Exchange, says.

Welcome to Barcadia.

Barcadia is one of the newer additions to Market Square. It is a combination bar and arcade that offers a range of vintage games complemented by 90s-themed drinks that come in fishbowls. Signature cocktails include Zelda's Lullaby, Piranha Plant and staff favorite Brewster's Roost.

Davis, who has worked in the service industry for 15 years, describes Barcadia as a diamond in the rough that has an authentic feeling. Barcadia offers a chance to escape into a childhood memory.

Colorful lights and games like Space Invaders, Mortal Kombat, SnoCross, Stranger Things and Ghostbusters-themed pinball certainly do the job of bringing out the kid in all of us.

What separates Barcadia from its competitors is the way the customers engage with the space. Barcadia is set up with a main floor that holds the games, a bar tucked into the right-hand side of the room and a balcony that opens up the space to allow people to step away from the commotion and take in a view of Market Square.

Adam Trainer, a bartender for Barcadia, has worked at the Market Exchange for 10 months and bartends on the most frequented nights, Friday and Saturday. Barca-

dia comes to life and is most packed between the hours of 9 p.m. and 1 a.m. Trainer is responsible for the creation of Barcadia's drink menu and pre-mixes batches of specialty cocktails for ease of serving during the weekend rush.

"Dave and Busters has stimulation every molecule all over the place and you can't remove yourself from it obviously because they want to keep you engaged as much as possible," Trainer says. "Here you can come in with a pocket full of your own quarters, play games for a while and head out with no obligation to get food or booze."

He recommends that any customer looking to make the most out of their experience should order food from Slider Vibes, a sister location in Market Square. Another option is to scan the QR codes located at the bar and order food from the Market Exchange.

Adrianna Lindsay, director of downtown operations and overseer of The Yard, Market Square, Slider Vibes, Market Exchange, The Speakeasy, and Barcadia says that Barcadia was a hit from the start despite the nerves surrounding a new business.

"We opened them all early. We finally got up here and set up and we just got so many people at once. We had been working on a balloon arch all morning on the outside and it ended up being cold that day," Lindsay says. "It was a fun day, a long day but a fun day."

Market Square lacked an event space, but Lindsay saw an opportunity to reel people in and allow customers to engage in a fun activity for the night.

According to Lindsay, prior to the pandemic, the businesses that she oversaw were thriving as well as other shops in Market Square. Over the past two years things have died out due to the effects of the pandemic, and only recently has she seen a steady increase in activity around the square.

Barcadia had one of its most crowded nights on Sept 24, 2022. The arcade was packed with people lining the bar and the terrace. You'd almost have to fight for space and throw an elbow or two in order to make your way to your favorite game. Among the crowd, neon lights and drinks, friends An Sekaran and Robin Prasad reflected on their night as well as the nostalgia Barcadia offers.

"It's a retro experience, feels a lot like it did when I was growing up as a kid myself. This was a form of entertainment, playing at an arcade. This is how you would hang out," Prasad says.

Sekaran and Prasad agree that Barcadia evokes their childhood and offers a unique atmosphere that you can't quite find anywhere else.

So, if you've got a couple of quarters and nothing to lose, lose yourself in a 90s-themed arcade. Play a few games, say hello to the bartender and take a view of Market Square at night. Tonight you've got no worries but achieving the newest high score on the board and having fun with friends. Tonight, nostalgia reigns king. ●

Four Strings Make a Party at the Banjo Club

Hannah Peters

It is a Wednesday night at the Elk Lodge of North Shore. The sounds of lively conversation, laughter, and tuning banjos fill the large conference-like room. A crowd has gathered around the bar while others are playing cards or enjoying food and drinks on the long tables that stretch the length of the room.

For the Banjo Club, this is routine.

"Alright ladies and germs," Norm Azinger calls into the microphone as he clutches his banjo, "here we go."

The director of the Banjo Club then motions to the musicians, and moments later the upbeat sound of banjos, trumpets and a bass guitar fill the room. A lilting but confident voice carries over the speakers as a lady steps up to the microphone to deliver the accompanying words.

Even if you don't recognize the old-time sing-along music emanating from the stage, it sounds like you have been suddenly transported to another era.

They invite you to join them – lyrics to songs like "Toot Toot Tootsie," "Yankee Doodle Dandy," and "When the red, red robin (Comes bob, bob bobbin' along, along)," can be found in the sing-a-long sheets gracing each table.

Specializing in songs that hail from the '20s and '30s, polka and Dixieland music, the Banjo Club has been blessing the ears of Pittsburgh for many years.

It began with Frank and his seven disciples. Or at least, that's what Norm called them.

In 1988, Frank Rossi consulted with some of his banjo-playing friends, including long-time friend Norm, about beginning a club. His hope was to preserve the 4-string banjo and inspire new players.

Thirty-four years later and the 4-string banjo collective is still strumming banjos for all to hear.

Rossi remained director of the club until his death in 2019, memorializing him as a local banjo-playing legend. He is remembered as a great

musician, leader and friend by many.

Norm Azinger has since taken over his role and is the acting director and showman of the Banjo Club. You'll find him and his fellow musicians in the Alleghany Room of the Elk Lodge every Wednesday night at 8 p.m.

"It's like a home for us," Azinger says.

And he's not kidding. The club has sat on its stage every Wednesday possible for the past 18 years.

"It's great because we've been able to help the Elks too. They're mostly a community organization but the community isn't here anymore for the Elks," Norm says, "We made it free to come and the drinks are cheap so they started getting crowds and crowds."

Technically though, their performances on Wednesday nights are not a show – rather it's the club's rehearsal.

Norm explains that this has been the premise of the club since its founding.

"It's meant to be a fun time for people to get together. Nobody pays attention to us," he notes matter of factly. "It's not a concert. We play background music."

However, it is clear that Norm is downplaying their effect on the Pittsburgh community.

They have played at just about every venue, event, and fair possible in Pittsburgh-Carnegie Science Center, Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council, Three Rivers Arts Festival, PPG Place, Carnegie Music Hall, Heinz Hall, and Three Rivers Stadium are just some that make their long list.

Their impressive history also includes a feature in the ABC sitcom "Downward Dog" where fans and Elk Lodge employees acted as extras in the show.

Unfortunately, the pandemic and dwindling numbers have made it difficult to continue playing large events.

"We don't really have a big club anymore. Sometimes it's only 7 or 8 members playing. One time in the 90's we'd have 35 players up on stage," Norm explains. "Plus, a lot of the people that knew about us are retired. We've gotta wait for the new batch of entertainment people to catch on."

However, this has not discouraged Norm, who, when asked about the Banjo Club's legacy, replied, "I don't know if we'll have a legacy or not. Hopefully, we'll just keep going on and on forever."

Regardless of numbers, they continue to bring their fun-loving energy to the stage every week and in doing so have provided something more than just music – community.

Foo Connor, a Pittsburgh journalist, calls the Banjo Club rehearsals "Pittsburgh's after-hours city council meeting." He points to several men in the room who hold status in the community.

"I've known people, including myself, who have come to banjo night because we know certain people will be here. It's a place to voice our concerns and complaints too," Conner says.

It would seem that the Banjo Club is skilled at gathering well-known names around Pittsburgh. One of its own banjo-playing members is Chris Fennimore, a popular figure on Pittsburgh's WQED public television who hosts a cooking show.

Norm himself is even deserving of some celebrity status – for many years he played bass for The Dixie Travelers, a bluegrass band which was led by Mac Martin and was featured in two episodes of "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood."

His dedication to the banjo and his community is admirable – according to Norm, he has racked up around 1,900 performances/rehearsals with the Banjo Club alone. And if that stat isn't impressive enough, the number of banjos he owns reaches 80. Who knew one could even own that many banjos?

He claims that he was "bit by the banjo bug" at the early age of 14 and has not looked back since.

Now 84, Norm warns Pittsburgh of the Banjo Club's intentions.

"We're gonna play some happy-ass music whether you like it or not." ●

Photo by Andrew Cummings

Girasole: A Perennial Favorite in Shadyside

Julia Allman

Down a set of stairs on Copeland Street in Shadyside there is a cozy (some may say cramped) Italian restaurant sitting below a set of concrete stairs.

"Girasole," Italian for "sunflower," is a family-owned restaurant that is as much about the experience as it is about the food.

Around 60 percent of new restaurants fail within their first year, and almost 80 percent don't make it past their fifth anniversary according to CNBC Make It.

Jimmy and Patti Gerasole (their name varies slightly from the restaurant's) have been running this quaint eatery for over two decades.

"There isn't any place like this. It's an old-school place with great food, great atmosphere," Jimmy says.

Patti attributes their many years in business to the atmosphere they've cultivated in the restaurant.

"We treat people as if they are coming into our own home," Patti says.

Beautiful wooden doors with massive metal sunflowers protruding from either doorknob guide you inside.

The thick, gray stone walls give away the fact that the restaurant was once a cellar. Art pieces, Sophia Loren photographs and family photos line the stone walls of the small restaurant– all alongside an extremely detailed painted portrait of the Gerasole family that Jimmy proudly says, "did everybody to a T."

A framed newspaper article is next to the family portrait with a feature story about the restaurant's opening.

Jimmy, wearing either a blue velour tracksuit or a suit and tie – a glass of wine in hand – seats customers personally.

Instead of a stiff "good evening, how many are dining tonight?" Visitors receive a, "Hey come in, come in! How ya doin? Good to see you folks tonight."

He greets all customers as if they're long-time friends, and some of them are. A substantial number of regulars dine there weekly.

Many new faces frequent the restaurant, but they also get regulars who come for generations.

Young couples who came for their first date and had Girasole cater their wedding now come in to dine with their children.

Whether you go every Tuesday or have never been, Girasole and the staff treat all customers like family.

The intimate familiarity makes it so popular. Tables are jammed together and the music – usually, but not always Italian – is loud.

Three days a week that loud music is replaced with live performances. A man sits at the front with his guitar as guests stand up to dance and sing like they're gathered around the campfire.

The servers dance, too – a very different dance than customers. The tables are so close together that it seems impossible to swiftly move throughout the small room.

However, the servers twist and turn as though they have been walking the tight aisles for their whole lives, dodging flaring limbs and sharp table corners.

There's no other way Jimmy would want it. He loves the atmosphere provided by the small space, with the tables almost on top of each other and music blaring from the speakers.

"There is not any other place like this."

Jimmy says that's what differentiates his restaurant from others. He notes, however, that "this place isn't for everybody. I'm not gonna say it is. It's very loud and the tables are close."

An important part of the culture cultivated at Girasole is the ability to make their customers feel at home. It is natural to treat people like family when there is a great appreciation for your own. And this family-owned restaurant was built on those values.

Jimmy and Patti opened the restaurant with their son Gino and now daughter-in-law Jennifer.

Jennifer is the chef who created many of the Girasole's recipies – they were also inspired by Sunday dinners Patti once cooked for the whole family.

Sons Gino and Vito Gerasole are also heavily involved in the restaurant. Both work on "wine dinners" where they choose a region of Italy and handpick wines from that area.

The dinner has five courses, and each comes with a handpicked wine to match the flavors.

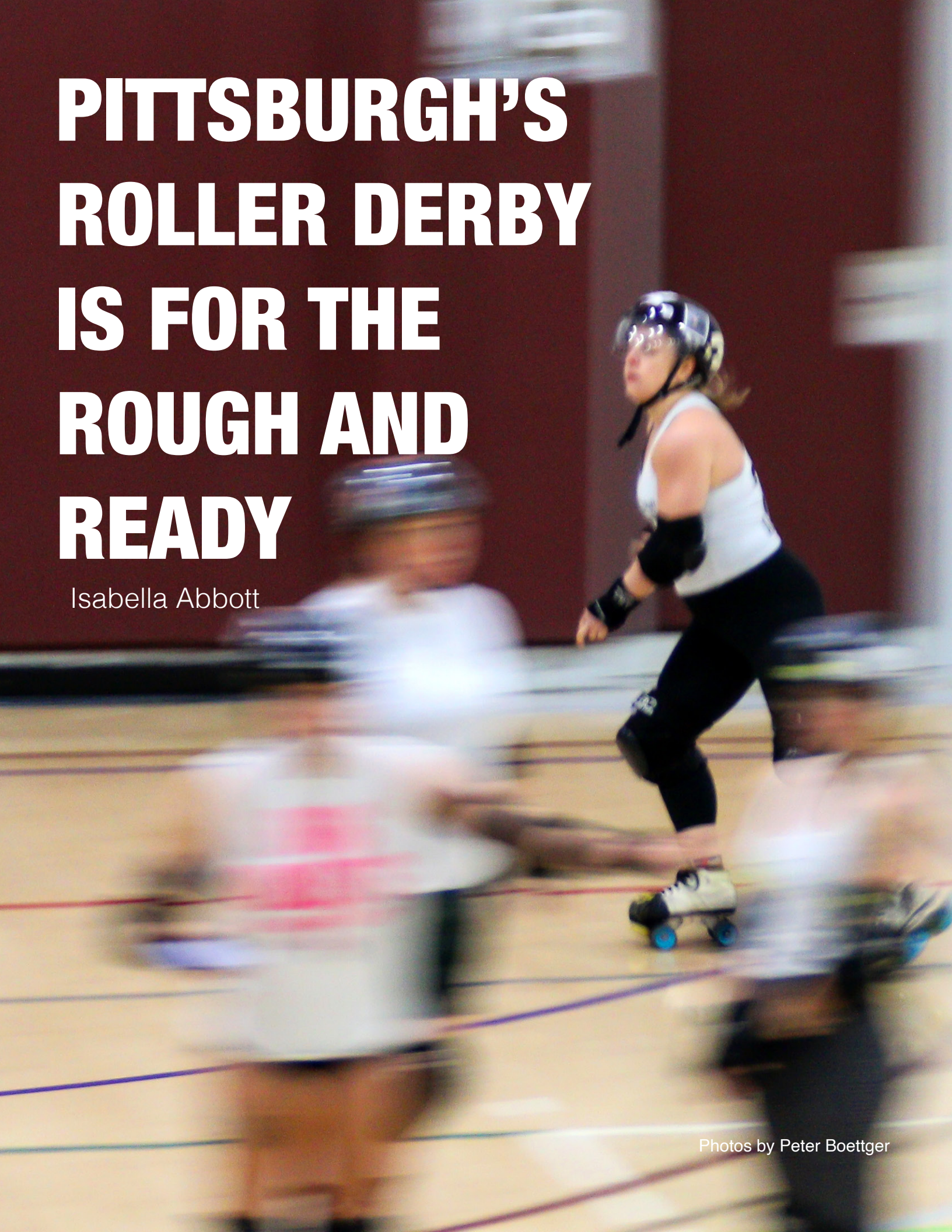
Unique features like this are one reason Patti believes Girasole has thrived for more than two decades. There is a passion for the business that runs in the family.

"It's a natural passion," she says.

From the fantastic food to the intimate atmosphere, Girasole cultivates an experience that is "not like coming into an American restaurant," Jimmy says. "There is not any other place like this." ●

PITTSBURGH'S ROLLER DERBY IS FOR THE ROUGH AND READY

Isabella Abbott



Photos by Peter Boettger

The women fly around, bright-colored hair flowing out of glittery gold and silver helmets, as the smell of burning rubber from green, blue and pink wheels wafts over the rink. Tattoo-covered bodies slam onto the floor every couple of seconds.

In a city full of sports teams, sometimes the lesser-known ones are among the most entertaining, competitive and dangerous. Exhibit A? The Steel City Roller Derby league.

There are more than 200 teams worldwide, but the Pittsburghers compete against teams like St. Louis's Arch Rival squad and Detroit Roller Derby.

Steel City skater Monica McElwain – a.k.a. Frida Killah, a riff on artist Frida Kahlo – loves the aspect of teamwork and the overall supportiveness of teammates.

"The beauty of derby is you have all ages, you have all sizes, you have people from all walks of life, and different jobs ... it's all over the place," McElwain says. "It's definitely a place that everybody is very supportive and wants to see you get better and helps you out."

Although most women have children and careers, they still find time to practice every Tuesday and Thursday night, as well as Saturday mornings. Some even bring their little ones to the late-night scrimmages and drills due to the busyness of their lives outside of the derby.

At a recent practice, five children could be seen running around with an abundance of toys, trying their best not to drop any of them on the practice track. One mother even tells her son to stay quiet during a drill.

And even with the chaos of life, these women find time to keep the roller derby alive, as it's a nonprofit organization.

Each player has a different task, with some working on social media, some coaching and some in public relations.

"Everybody kind of has a role," Monica says.

Many women join because of the community aspect, but also because it's a way to interact with other competitive and working women. Player Jenna Boyles, who goes by the name Circuit Breaker, says she joined to stay active doing something she loves.

"I started in February. I'm not new to skating but it's definitely something I'm passionate about," Boyles says. "So, this seems like the right sport."

Roller derby allows women to be more competitive than most other sports. When it first appeared in the 1930s, it broke traditional stereotypes for women and femininity.

At a time when participating in sports was considered "immoral" for women, roller derby became a home for the LGBTQ+ community and a safe haven for women to express themselves.

Someone who can relate to this aspect of derby is player Beth Lewis – a.k.a. Towanda Woman – who came out in 2016 and wanted to join a female-acceptance sport. Roller derby seemed to be just the fit for her.

"It's hard to find combat sports for women," Lewis says. "It's such a female empowerment and open community since it welcomes all walks of life and gender-expression."

Along with expressing themselves on the track, women are able to pick their own derby names, which can vary from more serious to more playful alter egos. Some of them, like Frida, even have special reasons for what number they wear on their sleeves. Her number, 223, represents her kids' birthdays, along with the number three because there are three of them.

She says she picked her name because she resembles the artist Frida Kahlo who was known for her colorful self-portraits and succeeded despite many serious medical issues. Just as Frida always wore flowers on her head, McElwain's helmet is doused with an abundance of similarly colored blooms.

"I'm an art teacher, she's an artist," Monica says. "Her as a woman and women artists being very empowered, what she went through, I thought she was a pretty amazing person

to have been dealt some bad cards and kept pushing herself, making it as good as she could."

After having sustained two broken feet throughout her roller derby career, Monica knows what it's like to deal with tough times, which is another reason why she went with a twist on the famous artist's name.

"I guess I'm living up to the name because I'm breaking myself all the time," Monica says.

Other derby names relate to professions, inner spirits, or fun thought-up names like Slam Shady, Yinzy Lohan, Buffet The Vampire Slayer and Dolly Fartin'.

These names are so embedded into their game that some don't even know each other's real names, just their pseudonyms. When a visitor asks if Monica McElwain is around, a teammate answers "who's Monica?"

Boyles chose Circuit Breaker as her derby name because of the connection to her work.

"I teach art and electronics, so I was looking for something that was going to bring that element into it," Jenna says.

Don't be fooled by some of the silly and or fun nicknames, though: these women push through each other and slam one another onto the ground like no one's business, which is why concussion tests are done each and every year.

In a sport that celebrates bruises and knock-downs, equipment like elbow guards, knee guards and helmets are necessary. Monica says some women don't realize how dangerous it is until they get into practice.

"Even if you've seen it and you're really interested in it," Monica says, "I don't think you really realize until you actually start practicing, the intensity and physicality of it."

But that is what roller derby is all about. ●

How the game works:

The game consists of "jams," which are two-minute intervals, each starting with five players on each team. Those players can be jammers, who wear a star on their helmets, or blockers. Each team has three blockers and one jammer.

During the game, the jammer tries to exit the pack first and then races ahead to pass the pack again. Each person passed gives the jammer one point, and the team with the most points at the end of the 40-minute game wins.

Photos Courtesy of Slacker

Slacker: Good Vibes Under 10 Bucks

Zion Harris

Need a new bag? Maybe a poster or some pants? Looking for a new board game to play or a book to read? Slacker is the place.

Stepping into Slacker on Carson Street is like stepping into a time portal. For instance, look up and you'll see board games and toys from the past. Look down and you'll find stacks of books, comic books, novels and magazines.

Next to the books, you'll find candles and incense. Above those are jackets and coats, and in the middle of the store is a long rack of pants and shirts, stretching to the back of the store.

If you make it to the back before finding something you like, you'll find bags, posters, hats, rings, trippy paintings and classic beer cans nestled under the watchful eye of an Elvis poster. No matter what catches your eye, it can be purchased for $10 or less.

The shop is owned by a tall man with blonde hair named Steve McClain. He's a mild-mannered guy who saunters over to greet whoever comes into the store.

"Over the course of time, I realized I love doing this," Steve says. "But there's really nothing else I could imagine myself even liking to do every day. I kind of lucked into it with some respect, even

though I've been doing this for over 30 years."

Steve bought the store in 2005. At the time, the people who worked at his store ordered things targeting college students and "shady high school kids." An article he read made him ask what happens to that target audience when it grows up. "As you get older and your taste changes, do you change the store? Or continue to stay in the same market?"

Those questions gave him a different mindset toward the store.

"We can afford to keep a low price on the thrift stuff, it's just a different business model than it used to be, so I guess I changed that with my taste," Steve says.

He also feels the store is always in a "state of flux," but for the past two years the store has taken "a pretty hard steer into what it is now, high volume thrift with a decent mix of new stuff."

"All the random things I had seen just from the open door caught me by surprise, I felt like I had to walk in just to see everything."

Customers can tell the store has a good vibe, which Steve thinks is a cliché, but he understands what they're saying. He wants guests to have a relaxing experience when they come in.

"All the clothing is ten bucks, all the rings are seven bucks, there's no guesswork on the costumer's part," Steve says. He doesn't do much advertising either. He wants people to be at ease just coming in.

"You almost have to be a curious passerby to stop in for the first time, so I like people to have fun when they're here."

Oakland resident Sheridan McHenry was one of those curious passersby. One day he was walking along with a few friends when he was stopped by the look of the shop.

"All the random things I had seen just from the open door caught me by surprise, I felt like I had to walk in just to see everything."

"By the time I was done looking around, I left with about 10 different things."

He came back looking for some new stickers to put on his PlayStation.

His close friend Juwane Dunn was with him at the time and can confirm all the things he bought. "Half of the things he grabbed were so random, but I don't blame him because everything is so cheap. I feel like we were in there longer than we should have been," Dunn says with a slight chuckle.

If you find yourself walking on the Southside, take a look inside, you might find something that you need... or don't need. Either way Steve will be happy to help and glad that you came to visit. ●

Photos by Peter Boettger

Expect the Unexpected at Steel City Improv

Ethan George

Located – some may even say hidden – on Ellsworth Avenue, Steel City Improv can be found by any who are willing to seek it out.

A ramp that leads up to the bright blue archway with posters promoting future shows and classes marks the entrance to this modest neighborhood theatre. Inside, a community of local comedy enthusiasts convene to watch and participate in the night's show. Steel City has built its own comedy community within the neighborhood of Shadyside.

Comedian Justin Borak is in charge of teaching students at the beginner and intermediate levels and believes that Steel City's out-of-the-way location adds to its charm. "It's always had this speakeasy energy to me," Justin says, speaking rapidly with a large smile that illustrates his passion for improv and comedy.

Justin specifically teaches long form improv at Steel City, which according to him, is the best art form in the world. "There's long form (improv) and there's short form. Short form's like, "Whose Line is it Anyway," Justin explained. "Long form is like telling a story; there's big long scenes."

Each Friday and Saturday night, groups like "Zoup Soup," and "Unsound Advice," will ask audience members for prompts that they quickly spin into creatively absurd narratives. Each member works with one another selflessly, a trait one would not think to find in a theater filled with performers.

When an idea begins to drag on, one team member may come in and tag the other out in order to start a new idea. There is no ego here, only the drive to put on a good show.

For instance, the team

referred to as "Zoup Soup," asked the audience for a singular word and – after a brief and slightly awkward moment of silence – was given the prompt, "retainer," which they quickly turned into a sketch about the various tools in a dentist's office. The members each took on the identity of a different inanimate object and riffed on their corresponding personalities clashing with one another.

As the dentist's office bit begins to get stale and ideas for the bit begin to run dry, the members who are on stage slow down a bit. This prompts another member to run on from backstage, tag his other group members out, and present a new idea for a bit about kids at a karate dojo. This act of tagging members in and out repeats itself each time an idea begins to fizzle.

The actor who runs on to stage begins to reenact a karate lesson to hint at what the new bit is about. His teammates quickly pick up on this and begin to build on top of it. After a few moments, the rest of the group has joined back in seamlessly and are playing their parts in this new narrative.

This continues for about 30 minutes. Ideas are presented, are played out until the bit begins to lull, and then exchanged for a new one. Each sketch revolves around the prompt or something that happened in a previous bit.

"Why is this water green?!" one team member shouts as he pretends to panic and look down into the toilet in a school bathroom. "Well, isn't that the color you wanted?" another responds as she feigns mixing chemicals together in hopes of pleasing her science teacher.

The show plays out much like a game of telephone; where an original idea is presented and then slowly turned into something different as each performer presents their own ideas inspired by previous moments in the show.

The actual theatre is a small stage with an 'x' taped in the middle. To either side are windows and doorways that lead to backstage, where performers wait to begin the show. Five rows of chairs sit before the stage and three smaller rows sit on either side.

The team named "Unsound Advice" – a troupe of older men, two of whom are balder and shorter and taller versions of their teammates – are the second group for the next half of the two-part show.

"Its not always about being funny, it's more about creating a relationship."

This group is given the suggestion "ants in the pants," which slowly evolves into a sketch about a restaurant with a squirrel infestation caused by a character's idea to combat the ants in his pants with squirrels. This team opts to stick a lot closer to the original prompt, using ants as a catalyst for pretty much every obstacle the characters face.

Steel City specializes in long form improv, which means that improv teams have to work together, think alike, and have good chemistry with one another. All of these requirements help to build the small community of comedy enthusiasts that Steel City has grown into since its beginning back in 2010.

"It's not always about being funny, it's more about creating a relationship," says Justin, pointing out how the theatre has helped connect people who are passionate about comedy and are looking for an outlet for creative expression.

A sense of community becomes apparent when inside the modest theater. The front desk, the lighting and most other off-stage jobs are all operated by students and performers. Students also get to view shows for free and make use of that privilege often.

By 7:45 p.m. on a Friday night, the waiting room – a hallway with blue walls and various pictures of previous classes and shows – is filled with a large crowd of friends, couples and singles who all have some level of interest in comedy.

Groups spend time exchanging notes for new ideas, talking about past shows or

lessons they attended as they wait for the doors to open.

Sarah Schultz, Steel City's education assistant, sees the theater as a place for people to come together and connect over mutual interests.

"There's a community here that's really nice and great to be a part of," says Schultz, who also was a student at Steel City. "After shows we'll go up to Urban Tap and get food and hangout," Schultz states, reflecting on her own experiences performing and taking lessons at Steel City.

"We have a lot of space to do our own stuff or try new ideas."

New ideas are always welcome at Steel City, especially forms of improv that deviate from the standard. Dustin, a student and performer who also works the front desk some nights for Steel City, spoke about his new idea for a Dungeons and Dragons themed show.

"It's cool, we have a lot of space to do our own stuff or try new ideas," Dustin said. "We have these big inflatable dice for the audience to roll and stuff like that." Dustin explained how the show works, saying that actors play a character from the game and act out scenes based on audience participation – like location prompts – dice rolls, and general character decisions.

The theater offers classes that take students through five levels of improv training. Although most of Steel City's students mostly come for the fun of performing improv, it can also be a great first step into comedy for those who are looking to pursue an actual career.

Steel City Improv has become a small staple in the Shadyside community over the past 12 years, offering something to anyone with an interest in comedy, performing and acting.

There's something for everyone at the small performance theatre under the bridge. As Justin Borak said,

"The cool thing about this place is that, if you wanna be a comedian or just like to laugh, and you're living in Pittsburgh, Steel City Improv has something for you." ●

ROW HOUSE CINEMA:
LIGHTS, CAMERA, INTERACTION

Zach Petroff

Photos by Peter Boettger

The lights of The Row House Cinema's marquee shine on the corner of Butler Street as if to capture a moment of time on the sidewalk. The illumination recalls a time when the silver screen was the central part of entertainment. Old-style movie posters and the aroma of popcorn invite a glimpse into a majestic yesteryear.

The laughter of a young couple interrupts the typical street chatter often heard on a Saturday night in Lawrenceville. William and Danielle Pertican are getting ready to share yet another evening with the Row House Cinema. Their weekly date nights often revolve around what the 84-seat single screen theater is playing that weekend.

"Are we late or are we early?" Danielle asks in between giggles as they enter the movie theater. Their fleeting concern about punctuality is understandable; it is not unusual to see a long line of customers spanning the thin hallway, spilling onto the street.

"We just moved here last year, and we found this awesome spot. We both really enjoy movies and even when we don't plan it, we somehow find ourselves here," said William, as he nods his head in the direction of Bierport, the connected bottle shop and taproom. "And if it's a movie that she likes and I don't, I just grab an extra beer."

Once a Star Discount Store, the retro-cinema opened in Lawrenceville in 2014. Owner Brian Mendelssohn describes it as "an old-fashioned neighborhood theater" that gives people a social alternative to staying at home and watching streaming services by offering a film-lover's décor and a unique weekly theme.

Tonight's crowd is attending a midnight interactive showing of "Monty Python And The Holy Grail" with help from local sketch comedy group The Harvey Wallbangers. Audience members are given a prop bag filled with plastic coconuts, bubbles and various noisemakers to use throughout the show.

As audience members take their seats, the room's atmosphere feels more like a rock concert than a screening for an almost half-century old British comedy. The troupe members are sloppily dressed in white robes that don't really cover their street clothes in a comedic effort to resemble the characters in the movie. They take visible enjoyment in selecting reluctant crowd members to participate in random trivia about the movie.

Winners are given sword balloons; losers are booed by the audience members.

With a loosened-up crowd, the Harvey Wallbangers instruct the audience on how to use the items in the bag: coconuts are to be clapped when horses are on the screen, the blowing of bubbles accompanies "intimate" scenes and the pull-string confetti poppers are to be deployed for action scenes.

Katerina Sarandou, a manger since 2018, says a major draw of the Row House Theater is the showing of new and old films while infusing creative themes. "Last month we did a *Lord of the Rings* film festival, and we showed all the extended editions. We also did a fan edit compilation version of *The Hobbit* to wrap up the events," Sarandou says.

In 2021 there was a week with nothing but Nicholas

Cage films, where movie-goers were encouraged to dress up like their favorite versions of the action star. There was a Tight Pants Week, that celebrated male leads that wore "ironically tight pants."

"Chinese Food on Christmas is always fun. Every Christmas, with like all our showings, we offer Chinese food from Zen Asian diner up the street...And we always do *Die Hard* on Christmas," Sarandou says. October is always a big hit, because we put on the 'Row house of horrors' and we always have really good [movies] lined up."

Row House Cinema offers a pleasant respite by providing a much more intimate experience to movie-goers.

The month-long ode to the horror genre includes cult classic films such as *Cujo*, *An American Werewolf in London* and the 2018 Iranian vampire western, *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night*.

The theater offers a wide variety of movies ranging from low-budget B-horror movies to foreign classics that emphasizes various aspects of the art of filmmaking. The appreciation of all types of movies gives audience members the opportunity to enjoy masterpieces that may never return to major commercial silver screens.

"We showed a new restoration of a David Lynch film, *Inland Empire*, a couple of months ago and we had people come in from all over because not a lot of theaters got it," Sarandou says.

"It feels like when I was a kid."

In a time when the movie experience is saturated with in-home options, super-hero movies and the commercialism of major theaters, Row House Cinema offers a pleasant respite by providing a much more intimate experience to movie-goers.

"It feels like when I was a kid," said Raymond Sterner, a lifelong resident of Pittsburgh. "I had a lot of good memories going to the movies. Mom and Dad used to take us kids growing up. I took my sweetheart when I was in high school. Coming here, especially when there's a movie I grew up with playing, reminds me of those times." ●

Photos by Emily Brozeski

Church Brew Works: Where Beer Meets Prayer

Megan Trotter

"On the 8th day man created beer."

This slogan greets dinner guests as they enter the doors of Church Brew Works on Liberty Avenue. Inside the building, a collection of draft beers on tap stands in for the expected sip of wine during mass.

The former St. John the Baptist Church, bought in 1994 by Pittsburgher Sean Casey, was among the first in a wave of church-to-restaurant conversions that swept the U.S. and the world.

According to pew.org, church attendance has declined over the past few years. Because of this the trend of turning holy places into bars has erupted across several countries. Its influence stretches all the way from Elysian Bar in New Orleans to The Church in Dublin.

With seating available everywhere, dinner guests have the opportunity to get a view of every angle of the church. If lucky, they may be seated on actual pews from the church's original form.

Despite the old-fashioned arches and colorful stained-glass windows depicting religious figures and stories, most of the building features neutral shades of white and brown. The high ceilings muffle the diners' voices into a steady hum. The faint aroma of beer wafts through the air.

From behind the bar, Taylor Stoops slides pilsner glasses full of beer to a customer. He jokingly tells one of the other bartenders a story about breaking the tap earlier in the night and continuously chats with the few couples seated at the bar.

"This job has some of the best people ever, as far as freedom of life," Taylor, who has tended bar here for seven years, says.

The repurposing of the building created some uneasiness from the public as many people believed it unethical to brew among religious objects.

Serving up to 300 people on any given night, the Church Brew Works has been short-staffed

since the pandemic. However, there is no sense of urgency or stress from the staff; they all appear to work as a team. Taylor exchanges a motivating high-five with one of the other female bartenders and jokes, "What, are you working hard or something?"

Over the remains of the altar is the Latin phrase, "I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and handed himself over for me," from St. Paul's letter to the Galatians. Beneath the sign, though, instead of religious iconography, are the towering fermentation vessels used to brew the beer.

During renovation and restoration many aspects of the original church were recycled to create other parts of the brewery. Bricks removed from one of the confessionals were reused for the pillars on the outdoor sign, the pews were shortened, and the extra wood was then used to create the bar.

According to a case study from Carnegie Mellon University, the repurposing of the building created some uneasiness from the public as many people believed it unethical to brew among religious objects. However, The Diocese of Pittsburgh reassured people that due to the Canon Law, last revised in 1983, all the sacred items would be removed before the sale of the church, a process known as desanctification.

The diocese also formed an informal partnership with Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation to help with the reuse of religious buildings.

General Manager, Kevin McCullogh has been working at

Church Brew Works for over 25 years and has seen the progression of public opinion on the beer church.

"I think when we first opened there was minor pushback from some people. There were some nuns that were unhappy, but then they quickly came around and saw it wasn't a nuisance bar or anything," Kevin said. "I think they kept the feel of a church enough though there's brewing equipment on the altar."

Kevin shared that since the desanctification many members of the former congregation have let go of their previous reservations. They now stop by to enjoy the beer.

In the years since Church Brew Works opened, the diocese has been more aggressive about the desanctification process. This means they will not allow any religious artifacts to remain in the buildings despite the possible damage the items could endure during the removal process. That means the brewery is now one of the only churches converted for other use that still maintains the original stained-glass windows.

Kevin shared that since the desanctification many members of the former congregation have let go of their previous reservations. They now stop by to enjoy the beer. Some of which have religious inspired names such as a pint of Heavenly Hefeweizen or a mini keg of Pious Monk Dunkel.

The sense of pride in dining at the brewery is obvious, as a large group of individuals gathered to take a photo together on the stairs in front of the brewing tanks. The subjects of the photograph laughed as they attempted to get into clean lines within the camera's frame.

The logo of the brewery is featured on every tap, every glass, every coaster and several flags throughout the establishment. Towards the front of the building on either side of the aisle t-shirts and other merchandise are on display.

For true beer enthusiasts, Church Brew offers four-packs and six-packs in cans and draft beers to go in 32-ounce squealers or sixty-four-ounce growlers. On the back wall where outside seating is offered during the warmer months, hops plants, a flavoring and stability agent for the beer, grows along a wire.

The kitchen links to the dining room through the former confessional. Head chef Jason Marrone prides himself on creating a menu as "diverse as Pittsburgh itself."

"We've done a lot of crazy things over the years with exotic meats, and we've tried to experiment with things," Kevin said.

Most of the Casey family worked at the brewery in its earlier years and despite Sean's now frequent travels, his influence in the business remains intact.

What makes Church Brew Work's beer unique was Sean's idea to add meteorites into the brewing process. The company tested the idea in 2016 by heating the smaller space rocks overnight and then dipping them into the brew. Asteroid Ale has been a staple of the brewery ever since.

Sean's love of the out-of-this-world touch expands beyond just the beer. A five-billion-year-old meteorite is available for dinner guests to take photos of and rub for good luck. The space rock is the largest one located in Western Pennsylvania.

Amen for Asteroid Ale. ●

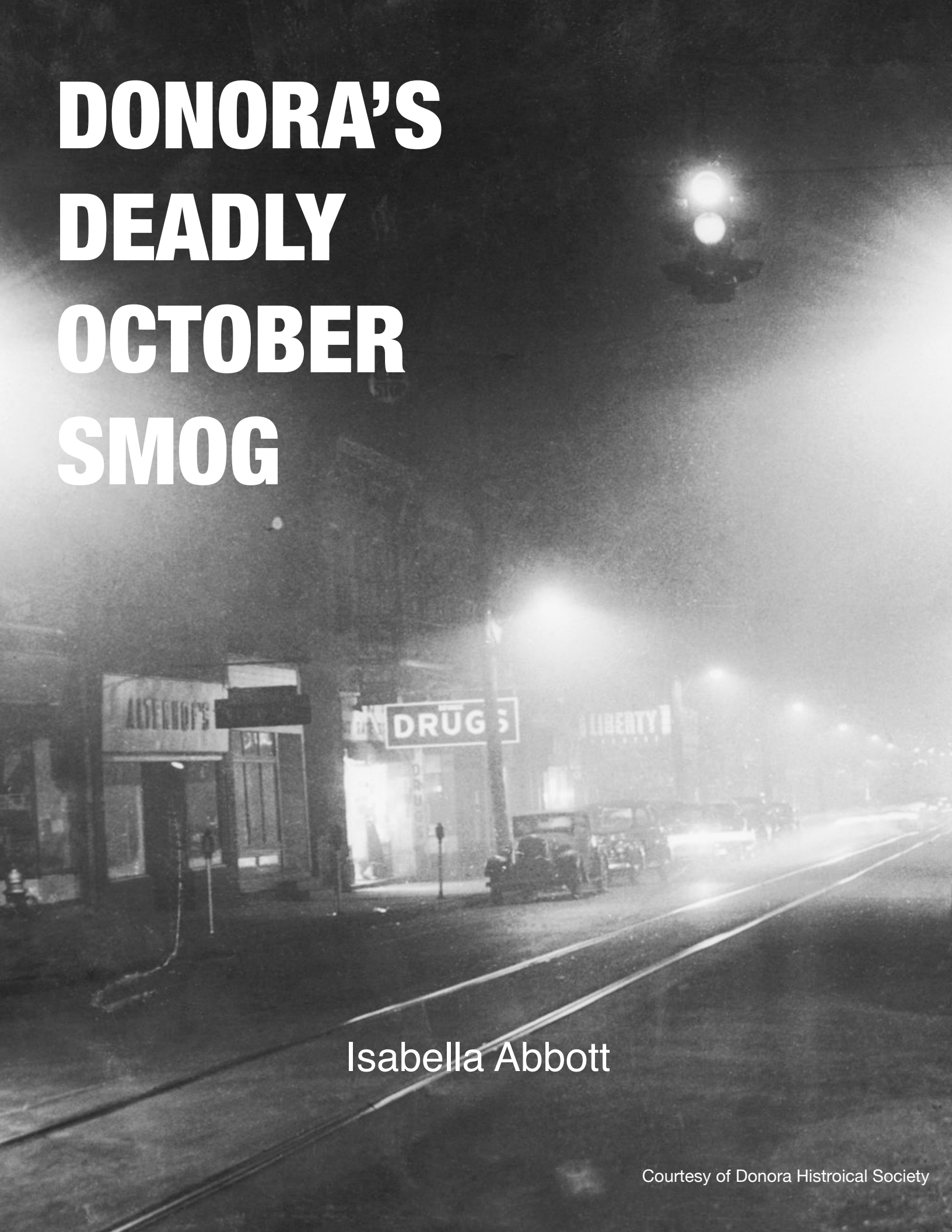
Chruch Brew Works' famous mereorite fragment.


"A BUD." 2.
Copyright 1901. By Otto Saxony

HISTORY HAPPENED HERE

In this section we explore Pittsburgh's hidden history: The good, the bad and the avant-garde.

DONORA'S DEADLY OCTOBER SMOG



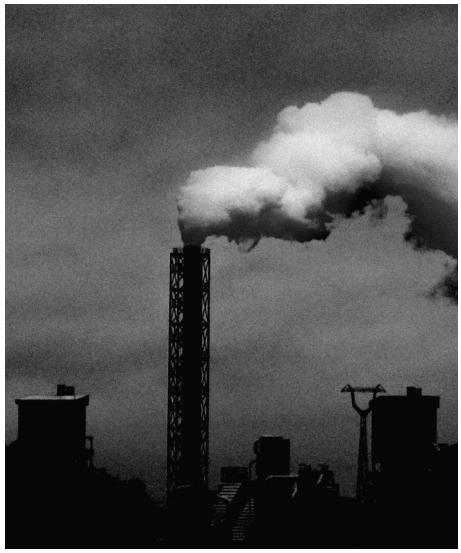
Isabella Abbott

Courtesy of Donora Histroical Society

It's a quiet October night in Donora, 1948, until a thick yellow fog starts rolling in. Soon, streets normally filled with Halloween parades and trick-or-treaters are filled with people gasping for air and begging for a doctor.

By the time Halloween rolls around, 20 people are dead, making the smog the worst air pollution disaster in U.S. history, one that made residents beg for rain and clear skies.

On October 27, 1948, smog from the Donora Zinc Works rose into the atmosphere, causing a dense, heavy fog – one residents believed to be normal. Normal until the death toll rose, that is.



The plant that provided a livelihood for so many residents was now choking – and killing – them due to a temperature inversion that trapped warm air mixed with emissions from the plant over the valley. Of the town's 14,000 people, more than half fell ill before finally being directed to evacuate.

By the time residents were told to leave by the head of the local Board of Health, Dr. William Rongaus, almost a dozen were already dead, with the first death on October 30.

"Clean air started here," Pawelec says. "Pollution wasn't a normal thing in the north."

It wasn't until the day of Halloween that Zinc Works shut down temporarily – which didn't stop the fog. A rainfall a couple hours after was the cure.

Donora Historical Society and Smog Museum volunteer Mark Pawelec said the smog event made the world more aware of the dangers of unchecked pollution. He says that even though it was a problem well before the 1920s, this event was the first disaster that helped make pollution a mainstream problem.

"Clean air started here," Pawelec says. "Pollution wasn't a normal thing in the north and nobody died up here until 1948."

Although Donora Zinc Works didn't close until 1957, because of the national attention the smog disaster received, in 1955, the Air Pollution Control Act was formed, declaring that pollution was a public health danger. Then in 1970, President Nixon created the Environmental Protection Agency while Congress created a more extensive Clean Air Act. ●

The North Shore Roots of Gertrude Stein

Ethan George

Though the time she spent in the area was short, the legacy of Gertrude Stein lives on in the city of Pittsburgh.

Born to a family in the clothing manufacturing business, Gertrude Stein only lived in Pittsburgh for the first six months of her life before her family relocated to France and then to Oakland, California when she was 6 years old. Despite that, a bronze plaque marks the site of her childhood home at 850 Beech Ave, located on Pittsburgh's North Shore.

Stein spent most of her childhood and teenage years in Oakland. She studied at Radcliffe College, which for a time was called "The Society for the Collegiate Instruction of Women," and earned her degree in 1898. According to Britannica.com, Stein moved to Paris with her brother, Leo in 1903.

A few years later, Stein moved in with her lifelong companion, Alice B. Toklas. One of Stein's own published novels, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, contains Toklas's own, first-person account of Stein's life.

Stein quickly established herself in Europe as a friend and critic among prolific expat novelists such as Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald, as well as working with artists and painters like Pablo Picasso and Salvador Dalí.

"Stein was one of the first modernist writers, and in the early 20th century incorporated the innova-

tions of psychology, film, and Cubist painting into literature," says Dr. Greg Barnhisel, an English professor at Duquesne University.

Stein is credited by most authors of her time as being an important figure in the writings of the "lost generation," that flourished after World War I. Her own writing – although only gaining traction posthumously – is considered to be a pioneering achievement for the feminist movement and is still studied today.

The plaque on the front of her home in the North Side is small and almost unnoticeable. It features her birthdate, the names of her parents and her place as the "catalyst" for the development of modern art and literature. All of which is followed by a quote from the poet, author, and playwright herself about what makes America the country that it is: "In the United States there is more space where nobody is than where anybody is. This is what makes America what it is."

When she was born, Stein's neighborhood was known simply as "Allegheny," and was a separate entity from the city of Pittsburgh. In 1880, it became its own city, separate from Pittsburgh entirely. The area was then absorbed in 1907 to become what is known as today as Pittsburgh's North Side.

Only a few blocks away from the Mexican War Streets, the Gertrude Stein home is one of the many historical landmarks in the North Side and is open to the public through Allegheny West's walking tours. •

"Everybody gets so much information all day long that they lose their common sense."

– Gertrude Stein

THE PITTSBURG PRESS

MRS. KATE SOFFEL DIES ALONE AT THE WEST PENN HOSPITAL

THE LATE MRS. KATE SOFFEL.

Woman Who Helped Biddle Brothers to Escape a Victim of Typhoid

Mrs. Kate Soffel is dead

The tragic life of the woman who helped the Biddle boys escape from the Allegheny county jail, while she was the warden's wife, came to an end yesterday morning at 10 o'clock in the West Penn Hospital after eight days' illness with typhoid fever.

She died alone. No sorrowing relatives were at her bedside, and none had visited her from the day she was carried, dying even then, through the doors of the big institution.

Mrs. Soffel was entered at the hospital under the name of Mrs. Katherine Miller, and only a few of the officials knew her identity. When it became certain that she could not survive she was questioned as to her relatives, and yesterday, when she died, C. H. Dietrich, of No. 22 Southern avenue, was notified. Mr. Dietrich directed that the body be removed to his home, where funeral services will be held this evening at 8 o'clock. Tomorrow her remains will be laid to rest in the Smithfield cemetery.

Mrs. Soffel assumed the name of "Mrs. Katherine Miller" after her release from the penitentiary, and under that name conducted a dressmaking establishment at No. 903 Federal street, and is said to have had a flourishing business.

FLED WITH MURDERER.

Mrs. Soffel gained national notoriety in February, 1902, when she deserted her husband, Peter K. Soffel, warden of the Allegheny county jail, and her four children, and fled with the Biddle boys, Jack and Edward, the burglars and murderers whom she had aided in escaping from their cells.

The trio made a sensational dash for freedom toward Butler in a cutter, but were finally brought to bay by a posse of detectives and deputies. In the fight which followed the Biddle boys were fatally shot to death. Mrs. Soffel was also severely wounded, but soon recovered. She was sent to the Western Penitentiary for two years for her share in the escape, but, by good conduct, earned commutation of a few months. After her discharge from prison Mrs. Soffel went on the stage as the star in a sensational melodrama depicting the scenes of the Biddle boy's escape, but her theatrical venture proved disastrous, and she then took up dressmaking as a livelihood. Mrs. Soffel was 42 years of age.

She had evidently been sick for some time before she gave up the fight, for when examined at the hospital by Dr. R. Schildecker, he found her in a critical condition from which she never rallied.

Peter Soffel secured a divorce from Mrs. Soffel and a couple of years after was married to Mrs. Margaret Taggart of Mt. Washington, and is now living happily at No. 73 Maple Terrace, Mt. Washington.

Love Gone Wrong: The Saga of Mrs. Soffel

Hannah Peters

Some labeled it a scandal. Others called it a dark, twisted fairytale. But it's likely Mrs. Soffel would've just called it love.

It all started when Jack and Ed Biddle arrived at Allegheny County Jail in April of 1901 as convicted murderers sentenced to death, according to the Heinz History Center. But despite the justice system's best efforts, their life of crime had not quite come to an end.

The catalyst for their undoing was named Kate Dietrich Soffel, a mother of four and the wife of the warden of the jail, Peter Soffel. Under the authority of her husband, she would minister to the prisoners of the county jail, including the likes of Jack and Ed Biddle.

Perhaps the other residents of the jail just figured the Biddles needed extra saving, for Mrs. Soffel was soon spending more time than usual ministering to the brothers. In reality, her ministering efforts were no match for the charming Ed Biddle – the prison warden's wife had become smitten with Ed. So much so that she became involved in their escape plan, using her supposed religious endeavors and petticoats to deliver tools for the upcoming jailbreak.

On the morning of Jan. 30, 1902 the brothers began their escape and broke through their pre-sawed iron bars. Armed with one of the warden's guns, courtesy of Mrs. Soffel, they made their way out of the jail, overtaking two guards and shooting another in the process. They then met up with Kate and hopped on the northbound trolley to West View.

Upon reaching the end of the line, they stole a horse and sleigh and rode the snow-covered roads until the January chill prompted them to stop at the Stevenson Hotel. During the four ill-fated hours the trio spent at the hotel, their escape had been detected and a posse was rounded up to hunt down the criminals.

The escapees managed to travel nine more miles before Detective Buck McGovern and his crew finally discovered them making a pit stop at the Graham family farm. Their escape had failed; a brutal shootout between the two groups commenced and Jack and Ed Biddle were fatally wounded.

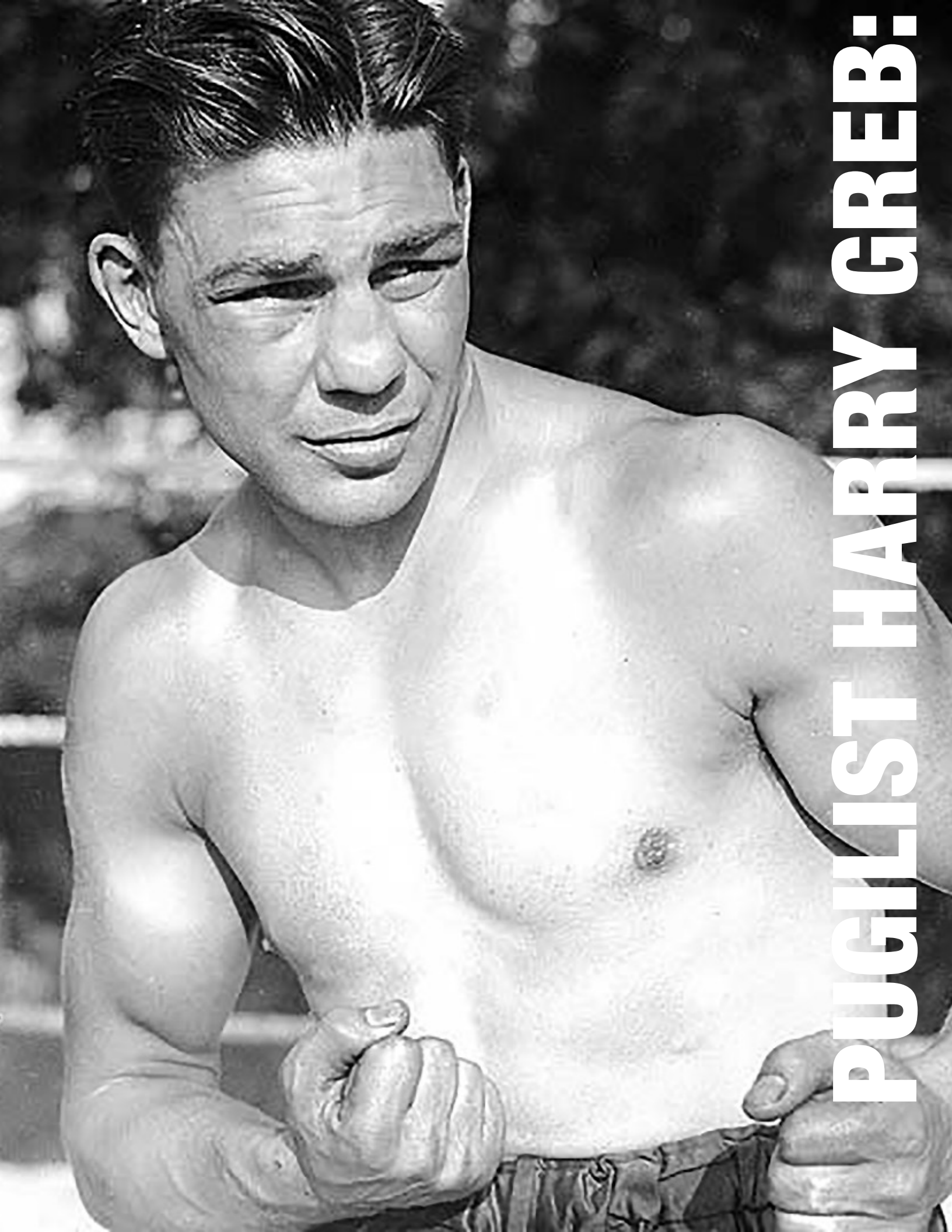
Survivor Kate Soffel returned to Pittsburgh, was put on trial, and sentenced to two years of jail time.

"It was a national scandal," says Duquesne University archivist Elisa Astorino. "People all over the country were talking about it. I mean she was the wife of the warden, she was carrying on with a prisoner… it was a terrible scandal."

And so, denounced by her husband and society, she took residence in the North Shore of Pittsburgh and worked as a seamstress following her release .

Her role as accomplice and lover of Ed Biddle had not quite come to end, however. In a traveling Vaudeville-era show entitled, "The Biddle Boys," Mrs. Soffel opted to play a role she knew better than anybody else – herself.

This wasn't the only time the theatrics of her prison love affair captivated audiences. The tale made its way to movie screens in the 1984 film *Mrs. Soffel*, starring Diane Keaton and Mel Gibson. ●



PUGILIST HARRY GREB:

THE PITTSBURGH WINDMILL

Courtesy Library of Congress

Spencer Thomas

Windmills are usually not something to be wary of. But imagine if a windmill could move, hunt you down, swing upon you with its nonstop power – for blow after blow after blow?

That was Harry Greb, a Steel City native and boxing champion whose image embodies what Pittsburgh represents. His ability to throw punches without rest led him to be remembered by his nickname, "The Pittsburgh Windmill."

In a career that spanned from 1913 to 1926, Greb amassed an unofficial record of 262 wins, 18 losses, and 18 draws. Greb held title belts in both the light heavyweight and middleweight classes and had a four-year stint as the world middleweight champion.

"He was the greatest," said Douglas Cavanaugh, a freelance writer who has extensively covered boxing and Pittsburgh's sports history. "He and Honus Wagner were considered Pittsburgh's greatest sporting heroes at the time."

Beginning his career fighting out of The Willow Club in Butler, north of the city, Greb earned his nickname for a relentless style of fighting that was innovative and unmatched.

"He was impossible to figure out, he was awkward. He had a style that you just couldn't fathom," Cavanaugh said. "He was always bouncing, like a ping pong ball."

His brand of fighting drew the praise of other fighting greats of his time, including heavyweight champion Gene Tunney, who compared his bout with Greb to "fighting an octopus."

Greb was physically molded by the city he came from. Even Pittsburgh's industrial pollution strengthened him.

"[He was] training in this atmospheric soup that surrounded the city," Cavanaugh said. "You either got pneumonia or you developed lungs of steel.

"Harry developed lungs of steel. He never got tired ... Greb could punch nonstop for 20 rounds, and he did."

After gaining superstardom and drawing the attention of promoters in boxing mecca New York, Greb refused to abandon the city he came from.

"He'd fight once in New York; he'd fight five times in Pittsburgh", Cavanaugh said. "He was just more of a Pittsburgh guy, and he wouldn't become a 'New York fighter.'"

For Greb, that meant rejecting the gangsters and the East Coast media that were deeply involved in boxing.

"They hated him," Cavanaugh said.

"He wouldn't kowtow to them and lay down and be their boy. And he beat their boys in their own backyard".

Greb held his own in a brutal environment, always representing the city that made him a champion. ●

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Condors Close Fine First Year

The Condors, a Junior boys club, ended its first year of activities at the Y with a party on Sunday, May 23rd. The group was organized in late November of 1953, and have been meeting regularly on Sunday afternoons since then.

During the year the group planned and participated in quite a variety of activities. The Condors had a treasure hunt; a trip to the planetarium; a bowling party; a pingpong tournament; cooked fudge; went on a fishing trip; held a swimming meet; played softball and participated in various kinds of active games. This group will be returning to the Y in September for another year of activities.

The members this year included; Paul Herman, Jerry Surloff, Arthur Sales, Billy Becker, Steven Sapir, Myron Berg, Gary Braunstein, Harvey Feldman, Sheldon Levine, Fred Cohen, James Wechner, Billy Lederer, Richard Lovine, Marvey Weiss and Stanley Klein. Harold Weissman was the group's leader.

Next year other boys' clubs will be forming at the Y—if you are interested in joining call Room 12 and leave your name which will be placed on a waiting list.

Health Club Weekend

(Continued from Page 1)

men can be accommodated, we suggest you register immediately. Registrations will close on Tuesday, June 15. The fee for the three-day weekend is $23.00. Sign up in the Health Club or send in your check to the Y.

Use The Gym All Summer

The Pittsburgh Pipers: Forgotten Steel City Champs

Zion Harris

Pittsburgh is known as the city of champions, but one champion is usually left out. Back in 1967, the Pittsburgh Pipers became the first champions of the upstart American Basketball Association.

With the best record in the league – 54-24 – the Pipers were led by ABA MVP and Hall-of-Famer Connie Hawkins, who led the fledgling league in scoring at 26.8 points per game. The Pipers swept through the ABA playoffs and beat the New Orleans Buccaneers in Game 7 to win the ABA title. The ABA title is Pittsburgh's only pro basketball championship.

In 1967, Pittsburgh's more recognizable teams weren't so hot. The Steelers had the third-worst record in the NFL, going 2-11-1, while the Pirates finished in sixth place with a record of 81-81; the Penguins missed the playoffs by two points.

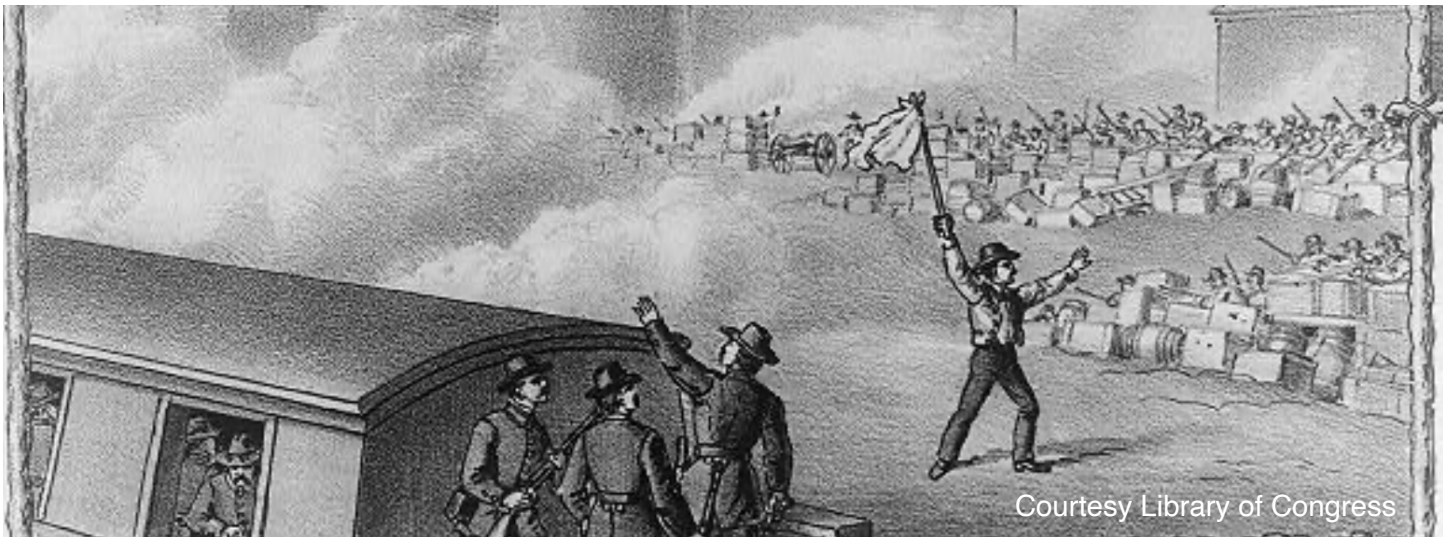
Pittsburgh boxing figure Bob Healy was a fan of the franchise, attending almost every game. He was glad to see a new franchise in Pittsburgh. The Pipers moved to Minneapolis for the 1968-69 season and returned to Pittsburgh the following year, without Hawkins – who had left for the NBA. In 1971, they were renamed the Condors.

"The Condors, or Pipers at the time they won, brought a lot of people in the city together," Healy said. "They did the best that first season out of all the Pittsburgh teams. The city went crazy and everybody talked about it, but there weren't any parades or celebrations. The players left the city right after the last game. I thought that was pretty sad."

After returning to Pittsburgh, they played mainly in front of empty bleachers as fans resented the defection to Minneapolis. The franchise folded for good in 1972.

"When the team returned there was strong hate coming from the people in Pittsburgh," Healy said.

"There were promotions for the team but that didn't do much. I still went to the games and the difference in the crowd was beyond noticeable." ●



Historic Painting Captured the Homestead Steel Strike

Zach Petroff

Homestead is the site of one of the bloodiest and most iconic labor disputes in American history. On July 6, 1982, The Carnegie Steel Company, aided by the Pinkerton National Detective Agency, engaged striking workers in a violent affair that left 12 dead and hundreds injured.

According to the article "A Working-Class Image of the Battle" by Rina Younger, capturing the battle was Edwin Rowe, an immigrant artist from Wales. He captured the events in his painting, "The Great Battle of Homestead; Defeat and Capture of the Pinkerton Invaders – July 6, 1892." The portrait would be copyrighted in Washington, D.C. on October 11, 1892. It was lithographed by Kurz and Allison Art Studio in Chicago.

While little is known about the artist, there is a historical consensus that Rowe garnered his inspiration from his son, Edwin Rowe Jr, a factory worker in the Homestead Works during this time.

It is reasonable to believe that he had witnessed first-hand the rising tensions between the steel workers and their employer.

The 22x28 inch black-and-white portrait portrays six scenes depicting the events. The center image and focal point of the work is an aerial view of the Homestead plant as smoke bellows from the oncoming Pinkerton ships.

The five other scenes are glorified depictions of the strikers participating in battle.

Ultimately the efforts of the union would be deemed a failure, the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel workers would collapse, Hugh Dempsey, leader of the local Knights of Labor would serve 7-years in prison, and steel mills around the country would rapidly deunionize.

Copies of Rowe's painting could be found on the walls of homes, taverns and the Homestead Union Hall.

"The real story is the difference between the three years under the union contract and what happened immediately after, which was an incredible breaking and crushing of any workers rights on the job," said Charles McCollester, director of the Pennsylvania Center for the Study of Labor Relations at Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

Rowe's work symbolized more than just a historical event. It represented an optimistically naive notion that the common man could unite for the greater good.

Each frame glorified the actions of the strikers as they stood on the battlefield, challenging a wealthy elite.

The original painting was given to the Rivers of Steel center and is currently being displayed on the ground floor of the Bost building in Homestead. ●

NATIONAL NEGRO OPERA HOUSE STRIVES FOR AN ENCORE

Mary Cardwell Dawson (left), and the deteriorating National Negro Opera House in Homewood.

Jelisa Lyde

At first glance, 7101 Apple St. in Homewood may not seem like a place with much history, but it was once home to the National Negro Opera House.

Mary Cardwell Dawson founded the National Negro Opera House in 1941 to create opportunities for Black opera singers.

While attending school at the New England Conservatory of Music and Chicago Musical College and trying to pursue her dreams of being an opera singer, Cardwell Dawson realized that the world of opera was not going to make space for her or any African American singers. It was only a few years earlier when world-famous singer Marian Anderson could not sing at Constitution Hall because of her race.

Luckily, Cardwell Dawson did not let these experiences stop her. If they would not open the door for her, she would open the doors for herself and many more.

For 14 years, Cardwell Dawson trained and taught many black Pittsburghers to be opera singers with the Cardwell Dawson School of Music and the Cardwell Dawson Choir.

After a presentation of the opera *Aida* at the National Association of Negro Musicians Conventions, Cardwell Dawson launched the National Negro Opera Company later that year with a performance at Pittsburgh's Syria Mosque.

Cardwell Dawson and the NNOC were committed to bringing opera singing to African Americans across the nation. They started opera guilds in Baltimore, Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, Washington, D.C., Newark, and New York that trained hundreds of African Americans.

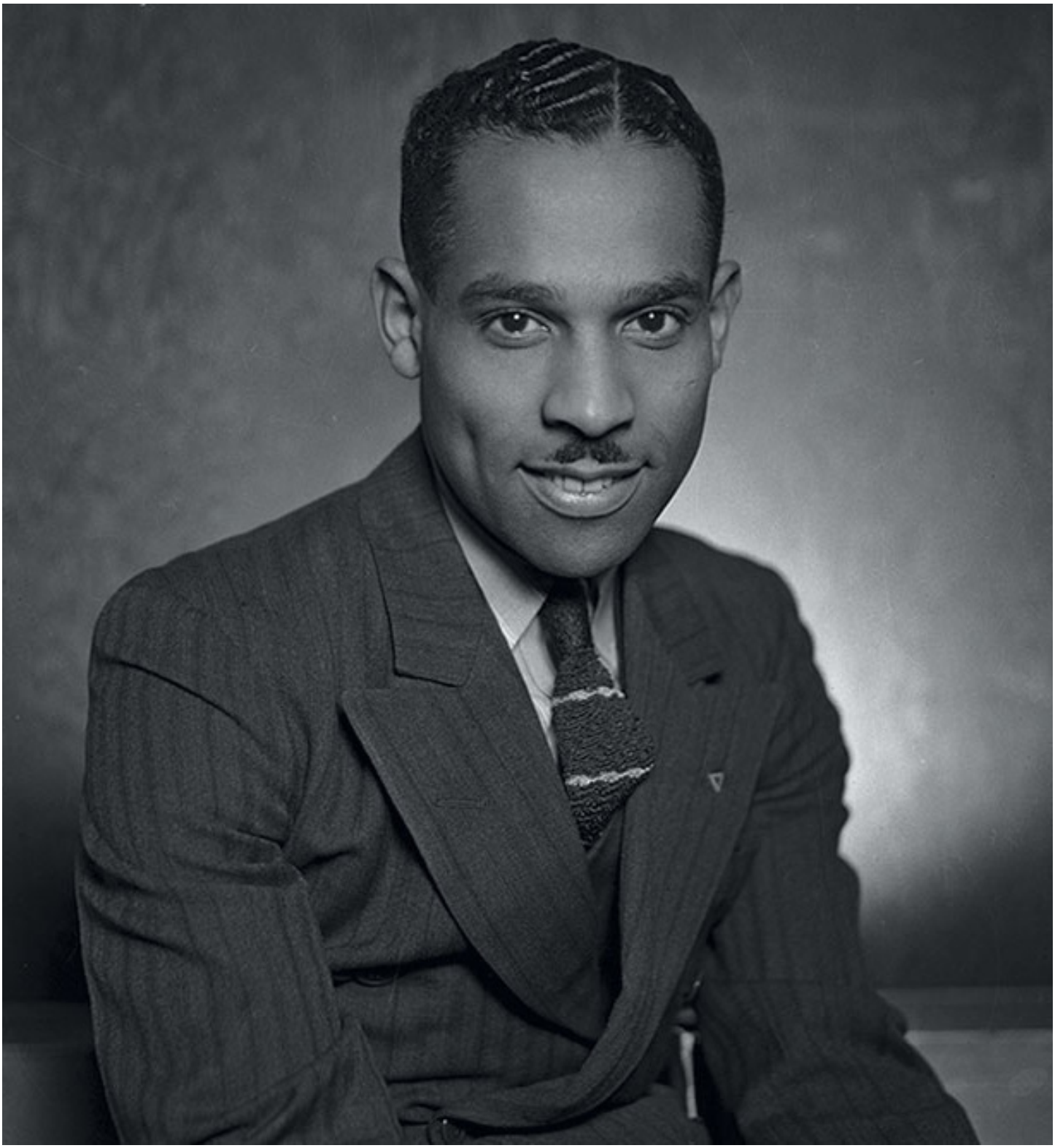
For 20 years, 7101 Apple Street was the home to the National Negro Opera House and the founding guild of the National Negro Opera Company. This opened the door for many opera singers like Lillian Evanti, Carol Brice, Minto Cato, Robert McFerrin and La Julia Rhea.

"It has a rich history but as long as I can remember, it has not been in use, and I'm 78," says Glen Ward, a native of Pittsburgh.

Despite its rich history, the house was overlooked and left in a deteriorating state until Jonnet Solomon and Miriam White bought it. They began their fight to restore the home and to honor its history while returning it to its status as a crucial cultural part of Homewood. ●

One-Shot: The Legendary Lens of Teenie Harris

Megan Trotter



Charles "Teenie" Harris, the photographer who captured the experience of the black community and urban life in Pittsburgh's city for over 40 years, continues to educate today.

Born in 1908, and a lifelong resident of The Hill District, Harris tailored his artistic focus to his community.

Receiving his first camera at only 3, Harris became one of the leading visual chroniclers of the Black community during the mid-20th century.

Taking photos on Centre Avenue out of his private photography studio, Harris documented the period's fashions and portraits of famous people through his freelance work.

The list of celebrities featured in this collection includes a range of Black Americans, each a symbol of the civil rights movement.

Some of his more notable portrait subjects include Jackie Robinson, Martin Luther King Jr., Ella Fitzgerald, and Muhammad Ali.

Prof. James Vota, Duquesne UniversityMedia Department Chair, includes many of these photos in his classroom lectures.

"He was capturing moments that were more environmental and documentary-based, even when he was conducting a portrait," Vota said.

"He showed the audience the integrity, sophistication, intellect and emotion of a population that really wasn't seen as having those things."

Harris' career as a photographer for the *Pittsburgh Courier*, one of the most influential Black newspapers at the time, lasted over four decades and made a considerable impact on the Black community. Harris' work at the *Courier* contained the spirit of the community, despite requiring him to pay for all his own equipment.

Birthday parties, baseball games, church events, black businesses, games of checkers – all captured by the lens of Harris' camera.

Harris' unique ability to snap the perfect photo on the first take led Pittsburgh Mayor David L. Lawrence to nickname him "One Shot." He was known for rarely requiring his subjects to sit for a second take.

Vota said that he believes that Harris should've felt proud of the title.

"Whether it was intended to be funny or if there was something behind it that was not positive does not matter. It's pretty hard to do something in one shot," Vota said.

Despite racial injustice and discrimination, much of Harris's work records the vibrancy of the Black community during this era.

"He was representing the Black community in a way that went against what the larger society believed about the Black community," Vota said.

The Carnegie Museum of Art holds over 80,000 images taken by Harris. Purchased in 2001, these negatives have since been preserved in the Tennie Harris Archive as one of the most detailed chronicles of the Black urban experience.

Many of Harris's photos document cultural moments that resonated locally at the time and were felt heavily across the nation preceding his death in 1998.

The collection continues to pay homage to the issues of the time and provides students and scholars a uniquely in-depth look at the highs and lows of urban living during the mid-20th century. ●

Photo by
Teenie Harris

Photos courtesy Library of Congress

Evelyn Nesbit: The Girl on the Red Velvet Swing

Mary Flavin

Bang, he's dead.

Jealous and enraged, Harry Kendall Thaw, son of a Pittsburgh millionaire, lowers his gun after shooting Stanford White, the former seducer of actress Evelyn Nesbit, Thaw's wife. It is June 25, 1906, and the crowd that has gathered atop the Madison Square Garden theater remains in a frenzy as the scene comes to a close.

They have just witnessed the scandal of the century.

The 22-year-old Nesbit, born in 1884, began her career as a model and actress at the age of 14 when she performed in various theaters throughout Philadelphia and New York. In 1901, Nesbit caught the eye of New York architect, socialite and libertine Stanford White.

White had a reputation for seducing and debauching young girls. Sixteen-year-old Nesbit was no exception and she fell prey to his charm just like the others. He went so far as to install a red velvet swing and large parasol in a room of his house which was devoted to personal entanglements. The swing became so well known that it served as the title of the 1955 movie dedicated to Evelyn Nesbit's love-triangle, *The Girl on the Red Velvet Swing*.

White wasn't the only man in Nesbit's life. Harry Thaw was the heir of a $40 million-dollar fortune and remained rooted in Pittsburgh, where he was born. Nesbit was hesitant at first and declined his courtship. Eventually she later gave in and married Thaw in April of 1905.

"Evelyn wound up marrying Thaw. At an early age, Evelyn learned to get what she wanted from men," Elisa M. Arstorino, archives researcher at the Gumberg Library.

Due to an raging drug habit, Thaw was prone to fits of rage, many of which ended with him lashing out at Nesbit. This same rage consumed him when he caught wind of White's abuse of the teenaged Nesbit, which occurred years before the two wed.

Obsessed with the idea of White mistreating his wife, Thaw drew his pistol and shot White on that fateful June day in 1906. The first trial began in 1907.

"The trial was sensational," Astorino said. "Nesbit played the grieving widow. There are pictures of her dress and her sitting at the trial, hair up under her hat. As a result, women wondered where to get the dress."

Thaw was eventually judged insane and was sent away to the Mattawan State Hospital for the Criminally Insane in New York. Evelyn Nesbit divorced him in 1915 and went on to a career in Vaudeville, nightclubs and burlesque. She died in 1956. ●

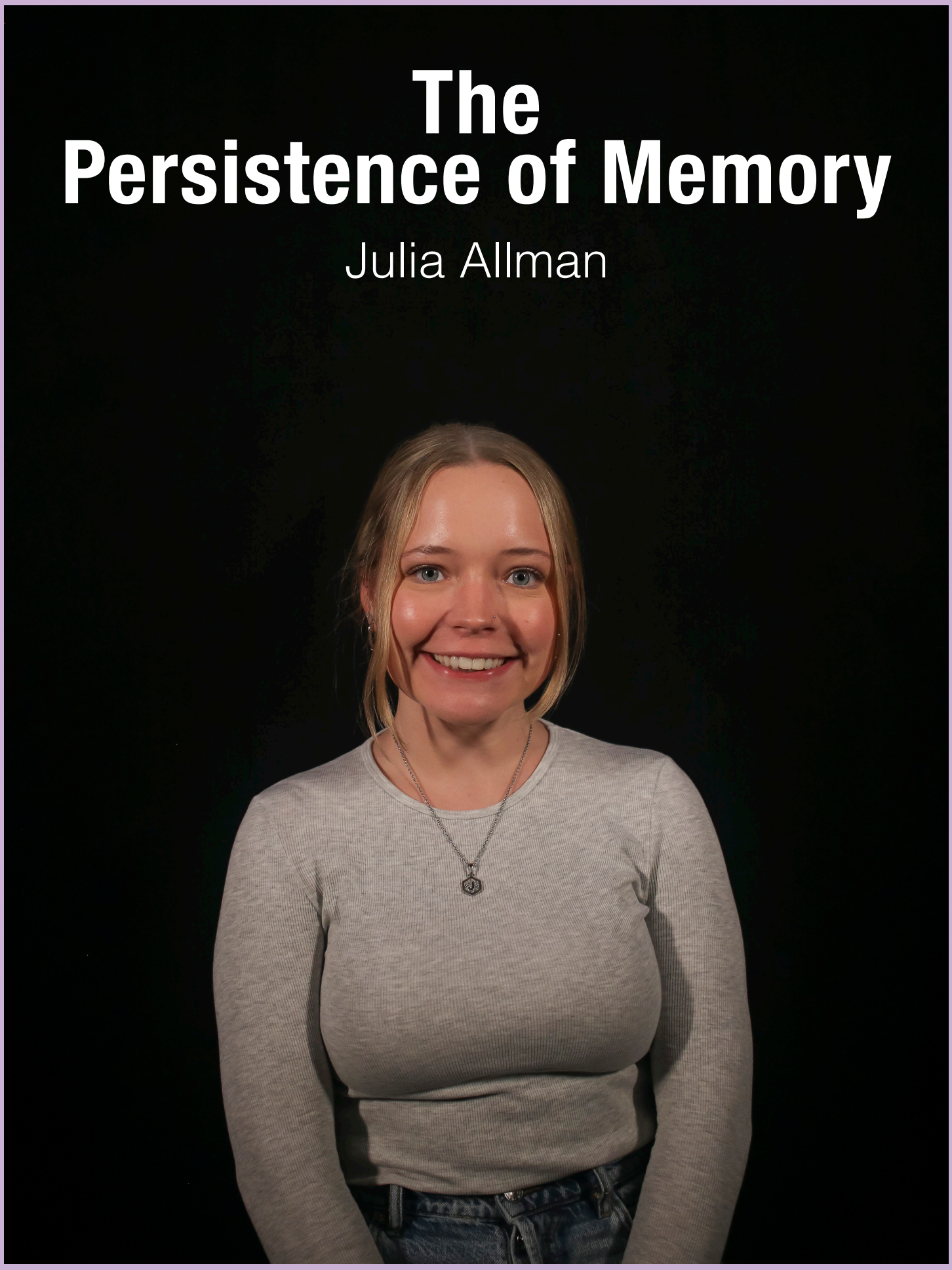
Dr. Dillon's Magazine Journalism class with Duquesne alum Katie Blackley.

COLUMNS

Off the Bluff writers share insights on moments in their lives when things began to pivot.

The Persistence of Memory

Julia Allman



True happiness has always been my goal. To look back on my life when I am older and die happy. That goal came from my grandmother, Darla. But it isn't just a goal, it's a gift.

The older I got the more I saw how truly happy she was with her life. Darla, or "Gumma" as she is called by her grandkids, was never seen without a smile on her face or a laugh exiting her mouth.

"You can't take life so serious Jules," she'd always tell me.

Every year I spent with her came with a new lesson. And I've been learning for the past 20 years. From cooking to crocheting, she had a wealth of knowledge. And I was eager to learn.

At 86, Darla Herr can still find the bright side of any situation.

And now she is teaching me a new lesson. A lesson about watching as the person you love slowly disappears before your eyes. It's a lesson that has been almost a year in the making.

April

It was Sunday afternoon, and my grandparents came over after church for brunch. Everyone was gathered around the table eating pancakes and laughing.

"I just need to grab something from my purse," Gumma said as she got up from the table. A few moments went by, and she came back telling everyone she couldn't find it.

We went and looked in the car and around the house, with no luck.

"I swear I had it," Gumma said as her frustration grew.

"Did you leave it at church?" My mom asked.

She did leave her purse at church, on the ground next to the pew she sits in every week. It was in the exact spot she left her cane last week.

And the exact same spot she left her purse a few weeks prior.

These circumstances are not as uncommon as they may seem. They're events people deal with every day. According to Alzheimer's Disease International, there are over 10 million new cases of dementia every year. That's a new case every 3.2 seconds.

August

My phone sat vibrating on my desk for a few seconds before I grabbed it and answered the call.

"Hi Gumma, how are you?"

"Hi Jenna, just calling to see how you're doing. How's school?" A few moments of silence followed as I contemplated the question.

"It's Jules actually, but school is going well," I said with a chuckle.

"Your mom said you've been taking photos for the soccer games," I could hear the joy in her voice, a stark contrast to the sinking feeling in my stomach.

"Gumma it's Jules, but yeah Jenna has been taking pictures for the soccer games. I think she likes it," I said.

"Oh, oh Jules oh my gosh. I'm getting old huh? How's school going?"

The conversation was brief after that. I couldn't get rid of that feeling in my stomach and the worry that was eating away at me.

November

"She argued with me about Thanksgiving last year," Aunt Dana said. "I called her about having it at Aunt Terry's and she insisted that wasn't right because she hosted last year."

That dread I had been feeling here and there came back stronger than ever.

"She never hosted Thanksgiving. She never has," I said.

"Right. I hate to argue with her, but she was insisting she was going to have it this year like she always does. But she never has. And she definitely didn't last year," my aunt said.

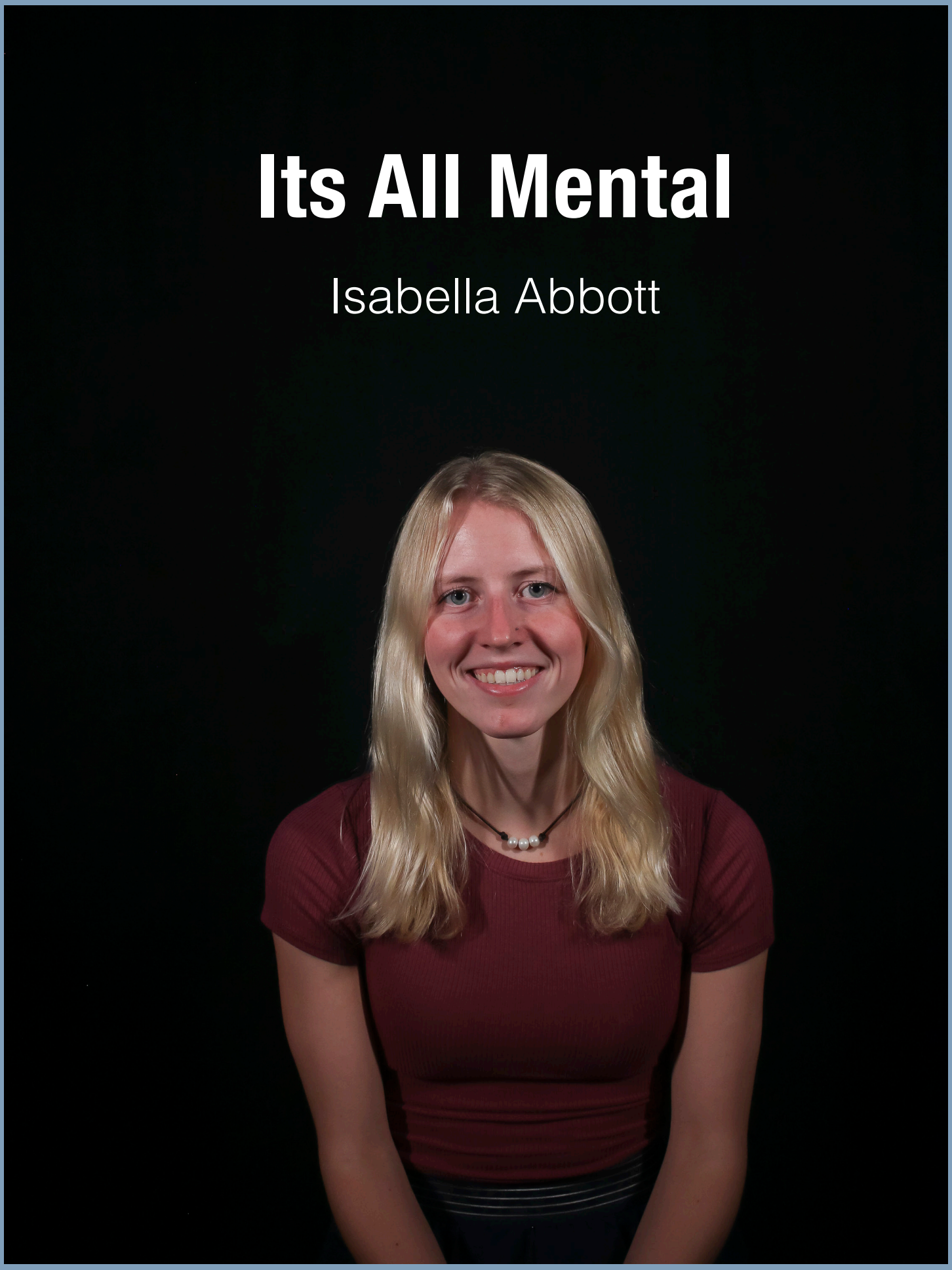
As the holidays get closer, the reminder of Gumma and her age becomes more apparent. It was one thing when it was forgetting glasses or purses at different places. But now, she's forgetting whom she calls on the phone and what we did for the holidays.

It was a sudden reminder. A lot can happen in a year. A myriad of lessons.

"It's so odd," Gumma said to my mom one day when they were together. "I was talking to your father, and I realized I can't remember anything about high school, or about my childhood. I just don't remember... I don't remember any of it." ●

Its All Mental

Isabella Abbott



It's 4:40 in the morning. The sun isn't going to rise and shine for another hour or two, but I'm woken by a relentless blaring alarm. Practice starts in 20 minutes. The last thing I want to do is get dressed and be out the door in five minutes for a 5 a.m. outdoor row in darkness on the cold Allegheny River, where my teammates and I will need lanterns to guide us.

But you'd think by doing this so often, I would have gotten used to it, the lack of sleep, that is. If I go to bed at nine, I'll get eight hours of sleep. But that's not possible. I had too much homework due the next day, and I couldn't save it for another day. 11 p.m. it is.

Does this lack of sleep keep me awake for my 10 a.m. class? No, but coffee will help.

But then again, will the coffee keep me up for my busy and overwhelming day of activities, work and studies? I doubt it.

Why do I do this, you may ask? I love the sport, the feeling of being in a boat with my friends, and racing. The smiles when our boat has a good pace or even a stroke, for that matter. The free exercise to stay fit in college. All reasons why any college athlete would stick with a sport in college.

But at what cost?

My sanity?

My mental health?

I must be happy, too, getting a scholarship after high school to row in college, let alone at a D1 university. But maybe I just do a good job of hiding it, like most athletes feel they should. Sometimes it's overwhelming.

When is it too much when you're constantly told to get better, do better, and succeed?

Many people believe athletes can do it all. We can go to four, maybe even six hours of classes a day along with two practices, and have enough time to sleep, eat, hang out with friends and do homework. Some of us are lucky if we even have time to eat or take a break between those classes and practices.

This is an ongoing issue too. It's continuously affecting college athletes everywhere, D1 or not. An NCAA report from 2022 showed 30% of surveyed athletes felt extremely overwhelmed, with almost 25% feeling mentally exhausted.

It hasn't changed either, at least since 2020, during the pandemic. At a time when morale was at an all-time low, and practices and games were limited, mental health wasn't the first priority for many.

And even though most student-athletes know where to go to get mental health help at their universities, many don't reach out to the services offered.

So why do we continue? Why don't we just quit if it's too much?

Because for some of us, quitting isn't an option. We either love the sport so much or can't afford college without it.

We just keep going, keep competing and keep pretending everything is alright.

I've had weeks where tests, papers, and news stories have taken up my free time. By the time it hits Thursday, I'm falling asleep on the van ride to practice, exhausted from a night full of studying. A five-minute nap should fix things, right?

No.

I've had days where I've been asked to hang out or even study with others late at night, everyone else's prime time to do all of that. But the answer was always, "sorry, I have practice tomorrow."

No one wants to feel left out, though, especially me. So, I'd cry, wondering how I could get up the next morning and row. No one would even notice I cried the night before. "She's just tired," they'd say from the looks of my puffy eyes.

It's 4:40 in the morning. The sun isn't going to rise and shine for another hour or two, but I'm woken up by a relentless blaring alarm. •

Hanging the Rugs

Ethan George

Each year I feel as though I've finally become an adult. I wake up one day and look at my life and say "wow, I really am a man," before quickly being hit by a tidal wave of new responsibilities and tasks that make me once again feel like a child in his father's oversized suit.

More to do all the time and very little of it consists of stuff we enjoy doing. We grow older, more independent, and lose most of our spare time. The days can feel like they are slipping by quicker and quicker, like some sick joke is being played on us for not appreciating that freedom we had when we were younger.

What I'm getting at is that it can be easy to slip into a very pessimistic state of mind in adulthood. We find that life isn't about being happy all the time; that we can't just wake up and do what we love; that it's a privilege to have a job you genuinely enjoy and even then, that job is still work. "Life's a b**** and then you die," as Nas would say.

But what comes after that? I mean in the famous song off of his album, *Illmatic*? What's next is Nas' salty solution, which I can't quote here and would prefer to interpret in my own words.

Enjoy the little things.

Yeah, it's as simple as that. Feeling kinda cheated? Did you think I was going to give you better advice. It's corny but it's true, just learn to look at life in more detail and you'll find your satisfaction.

For instance: I used to work in this antique rug shop in Shadyside. The stuff there was old, expensive, and pretty damn heavy. My job was to run the showroom, sell rugs, and pick up ones the store bought.

The display window was my archnemesis. A huge storefront window that looked out onto the street for all the passersby to see. It was the big drawing point of the shop and a new, large, intricately detailed rug had to be hung up in that window every other week to show the variety of Azerbaijan's and Bidjar's the store offered.

It took so long that most of my morning was consumed by this task. Sorting through what seemed like endless rolls of heavy rugs to find the best one – somehow always larger than the last – and having to take the new one to the middle of the showroom and roll it out. Then the most important part that, if done wrong, could take upwards of 30 minutes tacked on to the process.

If the rug is facing the wrong way and the clips go on and the rug goes up, guess what comes next? The whole thing comes down and gets done again, this time the right way.

I made this mistake more times than I'd like to admit. The first few weeks were spent going up and down a ladder incessantly as I cursed under my breath that I would only ever live in a carpeted house.

It was maddening. I had no patience for the process and no interest in taking my time. I was racing to get to nowhere, and all it did was put more stress on myself and, ironically, wasted more time.

After weeks of mistake after mistake I finally learned. I took more time in selecting a rug, really looked at it when I rolled it out and felt both sides to see which one was correct – a trick my boss had taught me after my third or fourth time messing up.

Now, on the first try, I managed to get that ridiculously expensive rug up and facing the right way. I went outside and stood in the sun, looking into the small shop that I had spent so many hours in.

It was a small victory over an inanimate object, but a victory, nonetheless. You try to do anything and fail at it every time for long enough and it really puts the idea of success into a different perspective.

I found that, although I would still have to work and do the things I didn't want to do, I can choose to appreciate the process of things. There is a fine line between fun and boring, but a rather large gray area begins to present itself when you see the detail in these things. Yes, it is a boring process. The reward, however, is looking back on that work once it's complete.

Having people come in and compliment the piece hanging in the window and getting to say, "Yeah that was me, I did that all on my own," has this sort of childlike feeling of accomplishment to it. Like when you learn how to cross the road on your own or tie a shoelace, it's not a very big feat but it feels like you've conquered the world.

Life is filled with boring stuff we don't want to do, but maybe, sometimes, we can trick ourselves into enjoying those things – or the results of those things – in a way that brings a larger image of what life is about aside from finding some kind of eternal bliss. ●

Music Made it Happen

Mary Flavin

This is the story of how I found my place at Duquesne.

During my first week here I seemed to gravitate toward a particular group of people. We all shared a common thread, which was a love for music. As a media major, it was just my luck that I found myself among a group of music-ed majors.

But that's not really the moment it happened.

Flash forward to senior year, I'm sitting in the music school auditorium for an Open Mic Nite that a few students were hosting. In a laid-back manner, a rotation of about 20 students would hop on stage one after the other and play whatever song came to mind. There were duets, quintets, solos – a true mix of talent.

The show came to a close but the music didn't. The audience dispersed to socialize, the musicians began to pack up and put their instruments away. But a few went back to the stage and started up a final song. I joined in.

I almost didn't do it. There was a small part of me that said I wasn't ready. I didn't listen.

It happened in a flash – Matt was on the keys, I hopped on the bench beside him and got right into it – freestyling a jazz tune, flying by the seat of my pants. Jonah was on trumpet sounding like Miles Davis, Zack was on guitar keeping a smooth rhythm with a bit of flare. It was like walking into a dream, it felt like the apex of a coming-of-age film where the main character has a breakthrough moment.

Who knew that playing on a whim, taking a chance and being thrown into the deep end would result in something amazing? Who would have thought that five minutes could feel like a whole lifetime all in one go? Time has a funny way of doing that, it's a neat party trick when things tend to slow down.

On that stage I wasn't a former athlete or teammate, I wasn't a camera person or a writer, I wasn't a randomly assigned partner in a group project – I was a musician just like them. Home was at the keys and it took root in a melody that was shared with listeners and performers alike. The feeling was infectious.

I've been a part of various organizations and athletics throughout my four years here but there was something in that moment that other moments couldn't compete with. Sometimes when you find yourself a part of many things, you don't quite have one group to call your own.

You feel like the odd man out, a jack-of-all-trades but a master of none.

There comes a point in everyone's life when they are trying to find where they belong. Whether it's high school, college, or out in the real world we all just want a group to call our own. People that fit together like the puzzle pieces we didn't know fell under the kitchen table.

In life, we keep finding where we belong and where we are meant to be. I didn't know this instance would occur, it sort-of happened all at once. The same can be said for any one memory, point in time or significant event. We all find our place in the end though, perhaps its just a song away. ●

The Natural Beauty of Pittsburgh

Zach Petroff

The streets of Pittsburgh are empty.

There is an eerie beauty to the vacantness.

Though my time in this city has been limited, I'm conscience of the budding romance I've started to develop with my new home. The shuffling of people, the historic buildings that kiss the sky, the countless bridges and the tunnels – all of it seems like a gigantic playground that I've only begun to explore.

And, at 3 a.m., I have the city to myself.

That is until ...

BAM!

I slam on breaks and any feeling of Zen-like calmness evaporates – replaced with immediate terror. It was as if a U.F.O had just dropped a family of deer off in the middle of Hobart Street.

After I recover from my heart-attack, I'm able to fully assess the situation. What appears to be a doe and her two fawns are enjoying a midnight stroll. They're beautiful and have a sense of grace mixed with awkwardness. Their brown color coats shimmer through the darkness.

They are not in a hurry. They stroll across the road as if they were imitating the many pedestrians who nonchalantly make their way across a busy crosswalk. The only difference is that these deer are not looking left and right.

These are magnificent creatures. They bring a sense of tranquility as I find myself marveling at this unexpected visit from nature. I found myself just sitting in my vehicle, in the middle of the road just watching these animals exist.

Then it struck me.

How are there deer in Pittsburgh?

I am from Northeastern Ohio. Many of the schools have off on the first day of hunting season. There is a joke that there might be more deer than people in my hometown. It would not be unusual to see a large buck in a backyard.

However, I never thought that a city, even one as small as Pittsburgh, sustained this type of wildlife. It's loud here and filled with vehicles and people; not an ideal landing spot for the Cervidae.

My bewilderment does not seem to be shared with residents. My curiosity about the deer is often met with a shrug, as if it's just a part of Pittsburgh life. Deer are just here. They're like a real-life version of a leprechaun except if you catch one, you don't get a pot of gold – you get fender damage.

It seems that these majestic, yet clumsy creatures can be a harmful nuisance to the developed world.

In Allegheny County alone, 1,376 deer-related crashes were reported from 2016 through 2020, with one person dying and 361 reporting injuries, according to Pennsylvania Department of Transportation.

This begs the questions; how do we co-exist with nature?

Often referred to as the Steel City, Pittsburgh is often associated with a blue-collar work ethic and industrialization. There was a time when smog and smoked blanketed the city so much that steel workers would have to change shirts after their shifts.

Currently the American Lung Association ranks the Pittsburgh Metro area as the 14th worse in the nation for "year-round fine particle pollution" and 22nd-worst for short-term fine particle pollution.

Yet, as unwelcoming as Pittsburgh is to the environment, Mother Nature cannot help but find herself trying to reclaim the land.

Or at least share it.

There is a mystifying and beautiful world around us. We are missing miracles as we divert our attention to the screens in our lives. Breathtaking art is being crafted right in front of us, but we are too busy to notice.

It may be wise to remember that this is not our earth. While we may be the dominant species, we are sharing this space with essential and breathtaking wonders that keep us alive. Whether it's plants, bacteria, insects etc. – everything plays a vital role in our fragile ecosystem.

We have been irresponsible and ungrateful tenants to a gracious host.

And like many tenants that don't shape up, we could find ourselves evicted. ●

Hyper-fixation: A Mixed Blessing

Jelisa Lyde

Have you ever been so fixated on something that it is the only thing you will work on it until it is done?

Hyper-fixation is an intense focus on one thing to the exclusion of everything else. I tend to hyper-fixate a lot. While it is not exclusive to having ADHD, most people with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder know what it is like to become so engrossed by something that everything disappears and time passes.

As someone with ADHD, I can personally attest to becoming so fixated on things that I keep my attention focused until I am tired of them or forced to switch my attention.

Sometimes, it is my superpower to get things done.

While my hyper-fixations can take over my daily routines, they can also benefit me. Sometimes, I become so focused on the task that I am working on that the only way that I can stop is by finishing it. Some of my best work comes from moments when I am so transfixed on something that I keep working on it.

I don't think there has ever been a time when I haven't struggled to write an assignment.

It has always been hard for me to create things that do not initially pique my interest; my brain has a challenging time doing things that do not excite me, but once I find something that triggers that side of me, it is hard to stop.

Other times, ADHD is my kryptonite.

Picture this: It is a holiday break, and I am home from my first semester at college, and the only thing on the ION television network is "Law and Order: Special Victims Unit." So, my mom and I start watching it. I become so entranced by the characters and the storylines connected to them that I must go back to the beginning to see their origins.

So naturally, I do. From November 2020 to March 2021, I watched all 486 episodes that were currently out and caught up with the broadcast of new episodes. It was the only show that I cared about for five months. I was hyper-fixated on the show. If it was on, I watched it.

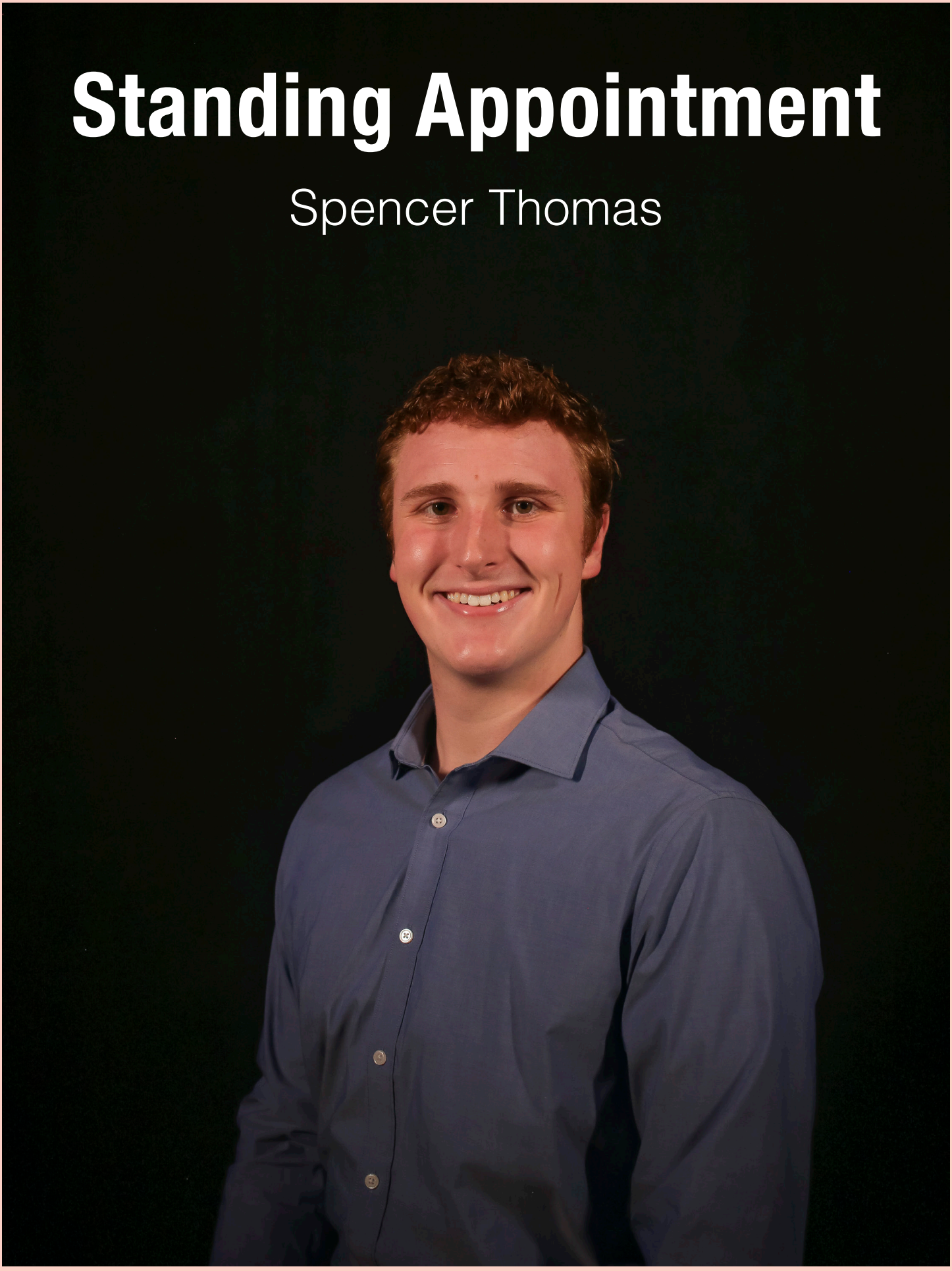
The minute I finished with classes, I would start watching until I was so tired that I couldn't keep my eyes open. I couldn't end on an odd number of episodes, or if I had two more episodes until the season was over. Most nights, I stayed up until 3 a.m. even though I needed to be up at 8. I watched while doing my homework, cooking dinner, and Facetiming friends. It completely took over my life.

Ok, I still come home every Thursday with plans to curl up on my couch and enjoy "Law & Order."

But I have found a happy balance between my schoolwork and "Law & Order." I plan out my Thursdays, so I don't have to focus on two things simultaneously. I get my work done before I get home and then I enjoy all the new episodes.●

Standing Appointment

Spencer Thomas



"Got a demerit from Steadman. I tripped on a chair in the middle of the room."

So reads an email that I sent to my mom in December of 2014. There was no need for salutations; me informing her of my infractions was routine. What Wilt Chamberlain was to scoring in basketball, I was to accumulating demerits and detentions in middle school.

I was lucky enough to go to an elite, all-boys private school from third grade on. The school had been around since 1890 and was very strict in its traditional behavioral standards. Look no further than the fact that we were led by a "Headmaster" and had a Harry-Potter-style house system.

As I graduated into middle school, I was subject to all the standards enforced. You were expected to behave. I did not.

I practically had a standing appointment at the Friday afternoon demerit hall. My mom would plan her work schedule out weeks in advance under the assumption that I was going to be held in detention.

Many of my infractions were on the more mundane side. Things like forgetting to get a parent's signature, not bringing a pencil to class, or turning in homework past the deadline.

It may seem like this column is about to complain about how schools handle kids like me – the lightning bugs who never stop moving and struggle to conform to rigid structure.

It is not. I was a a goof-off and a nuisance and in hindsight I recognize the importance of laying down the law.

Was it a little over the line to "detain" me over something like a forgotten notebook? Sure. But that is to be expected when you sign up to be handcuffed by a private school.

That is because some of my other mistakes were a little more worthy of punishment. About a week into ninth grade, I threw a friend's shoe at a trashcan from about 40 feet. (It went in).

Several months later I superglued a classmate's headphones to a table in the biology lab. I also got marked up for poking a classmate in the eye with a pencil and dragging a wet rag across my mates at the lunch table. That didn't go over well, and neither did shouting out suggestions for pro wrestling moves to perform on a classmate who had fallen out of his chair.

When your puppy keeps running away from home, you don't reform it by letting it roam farther than you are comfortable with. You also do not try to sit it down and educate it to behave better. The best thing to do is buy an electric fence and zap the dog until it acts right.

The development of children has seen a progressive trend of adapting to the outlandish behavior of kids like me, but it is important that that approach is not coupled with the lowering of behavioral standards.

Years after the fact, my seventh-grade advisor said that he tried to protect me from being "picked apart" by the guidelines of the school. Looking back, I appreciate that flexibility, but also wonder if I needed that boot on my neck, establishing that there was no way but the right way.

While having such a rigid system may have caused anxiety for me as I grew through middle school, I can only imagine it would be significantly worse if I had never received the message that society requires discipline.

Eventually, it was drilled into my head that I had to stay in line.

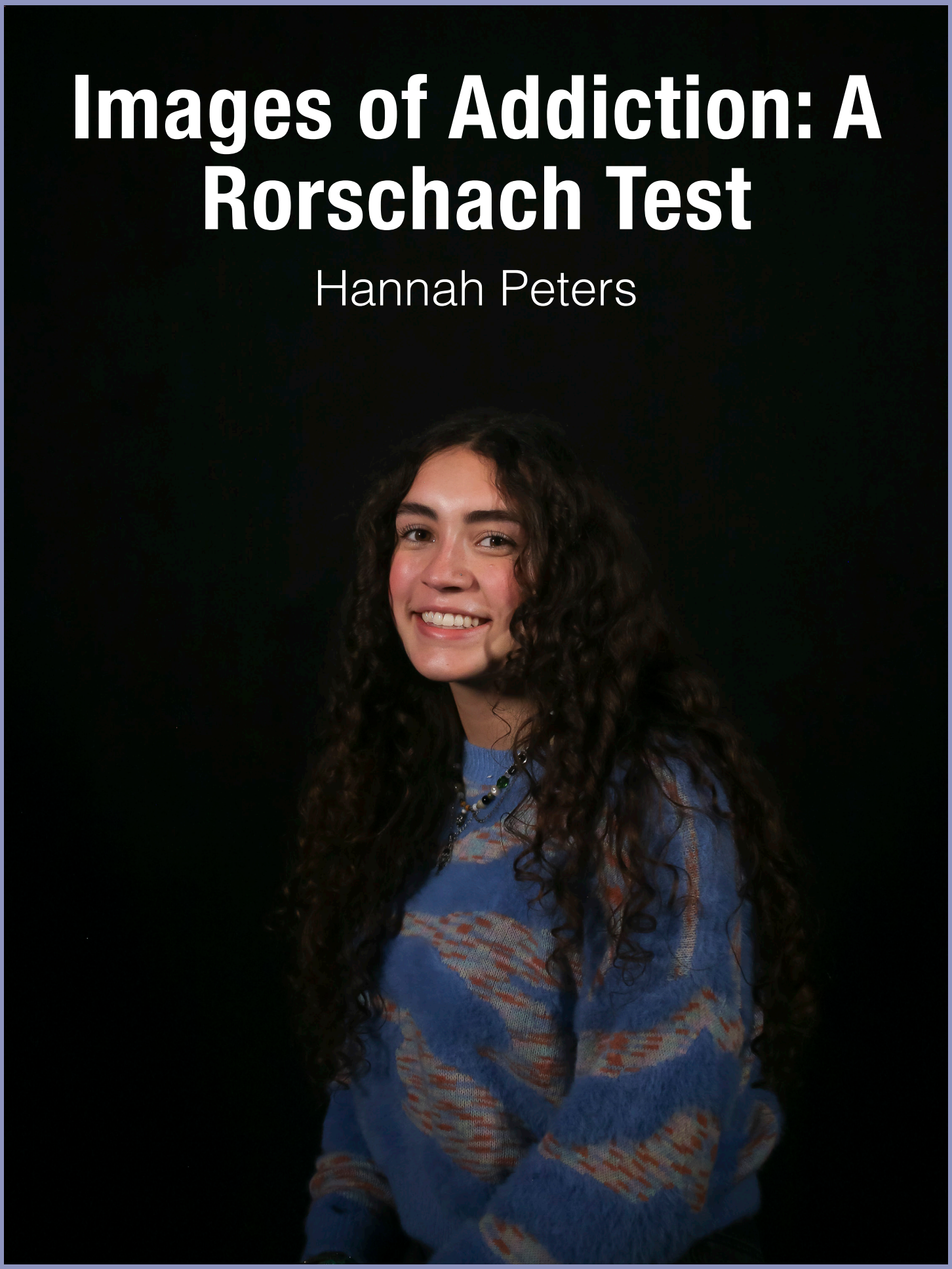
I never had my joy robbed from me; I just had a better understanding of how to expend my energy.

Now out in the real world, I have a serviceable amount of self-control for which I can thank my middle school for beating into me.

Sometimes it is good for your hands to be "tied down," because then you can focus on the learning rather than whatever misdeeds you'd be committing. ●

Images of Addiction: A Rorschach Test

Hannah Peters



It was such a small, forgettable moment. If not for the quiet hallways of my community college and an impasse in the conversation with my friend who was accompanying me to class, it could've easily been missed. One of those typical-looking school activism posters drew our attention: a young man, with hurt and conviction written across his face, held a whiteboard between his hands, with the words "I am not a crackhead. I am a person with substance use disorder," scribbled across.

To my friend, I suppose the man's claim seemed ridiculous, and a dismissive snort of amusement escaped him. An unremarkable moment, yet it has stuck with me ever since.

What he saw on that poster was someone with a drug problem using a fancy label to sound like a better person. It's not an uncommon deduction. But when I looked at the poster, I saw my mom. I saw someone who fought a disease no one could see, one that was able to hold on longer because the fear of others knowing made seeking treatment look like an impossible battle.

I cannot personally relate to the man on the poster, but that moment still made me feel the stigma. Is that how my friend would look at my mom? Would he think me ridiculous if I labeled my mom 'a person with substance use disorder' instead of calling her a junkie?

My mom struggled with addiction to opioids from around the time I was in 3rd grade to my sophomore year in high school. I had not a clue of her condition until I bore witness to the symptoms of opioid withdrawal and found myself being buzzed into a psych unit. None of my family really knew.

My mom has struggled with several health conditions over the years and this acted not only as the guise of her addiction but as its gateway as well. On paper, she would seem quite far from someone who was asking doctors for 'extra' pills and mixing substances: Graduate of a small Christian college, military wife, mother of four, regular churchgoer, freelance author.

Addiction is like a shadow. It is really good at hiding and obscuring the truth, really good at looking like something it is not. To both those who use substances and those who do not. Misinformation and misconceptions have fueled the drug crisis in America and as a result, created a stigma that is both harmful and counterproductive.

When you picture 'an addict' in your head, do you see more of a criminal or a hospital patient?

Unfortunately, this term has been somewhat tarnished, bringing with it associations of crime, fear, shame, and disgust. And I get it. It's hard to have empathy for someone who continually takes destructive actions towards themselves and others. Plus, society's criminalization of those dealing with substance use disorder has certainly been no help either.

Sadly, the War on Drugs did a much better job at targeting the people associated with drug use than the actual drugs themselves. They have been met with a mindset of punishment rather than treatment. And it has painted a picture of slackers who have nothing better to do in life, lowlifes that wander the street, crazed people that turn to violence, miscreants only interested in crime, the list goes on.

The truth? Substance use disorder is a disease of the brain, one that affects your mind and behaviors and leads to the inability to control the use of a legal or illegal drug or medication. One that fed my mom lies, allowed her to rationalize taking more pills, and withhold from asking for proper help.

Having a mindset of prejudice, shame, fear, or aversion towards those with substance use disorder has done more harm than good. This is not a criminal justice issue but a public health issue. We know it's not an epidemic that spreads through germs, bacteria, or saliva. It's called a "disease of despair." Its infection has been formed from the social and cultural environment of our society. And so it's up to us.

I don't remember feeling any sort of resentment toward my friend. Just at a loss for how to address a misconception that was not necessarily his fault for believing. But I look back and I wish that I asked my friend about his snort, wish I had started some sort of conversation.

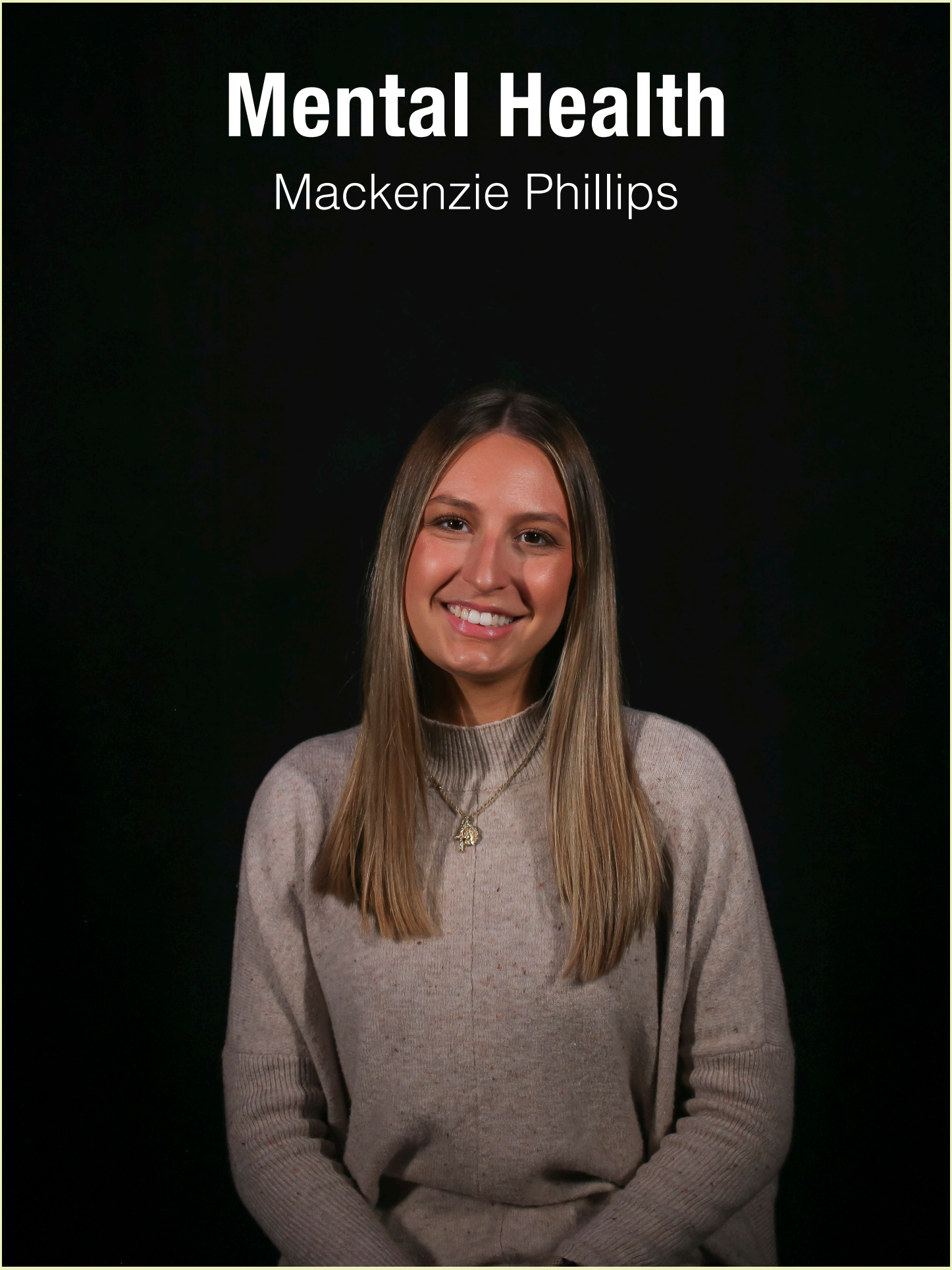
I think now I would tell him that I am lucky. So extremely lucky and every day I am grateful that my mom did not become another statistic. In fact, she became so much more.

After recovery, my mom went back to school and became a counselor for the family members of those struggling with substance use disorder. Helping people like me understand and support people like her. She won her battle and is now back on the ground fighting the battle for others.

And she is the strongest person I know. ●

Mental Health

Mackenzie Phillips



Choking in a sob and feeling the breath catch in my throat, my first panic attack in over a year bubbles to the surface. What starts as a numb tingle in my hands crawls its way to my face; my vision blurs with tears of a past I've tried to conceal.

A random Wednesday in November was all it took to know that I'm not okay.

Anxiety, isolation and therapy. These three things have become an everyday normal for me. And I know I'm not alone.

We are told to "get over it," or, "suck it up." College students are supposed to be in the best chapter of their lives, but what happens when it seems to be the loneliest?

A minor drama was the cherry on top to trigger an emotional break containing months' worth of stored up emotions. I had to cancel my LSAT I spent months studying for and return to my childhood home for days.

As a senior at Duquesne University, my time as an undergraduate is running out. I plan to attend law school post-grad, a never-ending process of LSAT studying and applications amongst the juggling game of school, a social life and extra curriculars.

Moving from fully outlined plans in undergraduate studies to the real world is a daunting journey. Constantly told what to do and who to be, approaching college graduation has opened my eyes to a new reality.

The biggest question college graduates face is, "What's next?" It opens the door to other questions, and doubting the choices I've made to this point.

Am I cut out to be a lawyer? Am I passionate enough to do this for the rest of my life? Am I good enough?

I am not alone with these thoughts. With the addition of the stress of the COVID-19 pandemic ushering in a virtual landscape of teaching, according to the American Psychological Association, more than 60% of college students reported having at least one kind of mental health problem during the 2020-2021 school year.

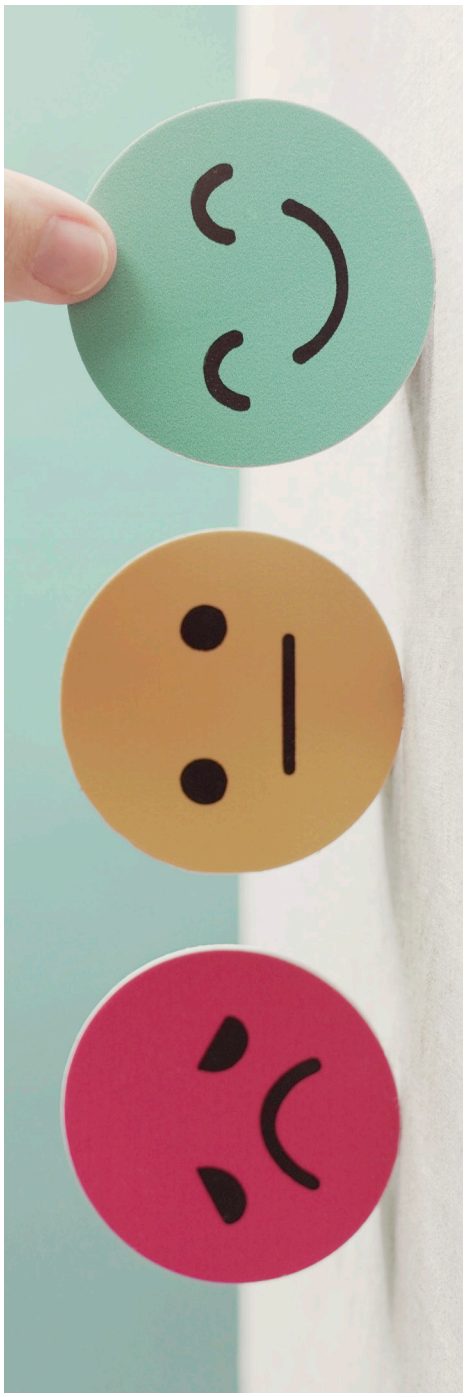
Often there are warning signs or triggers that allow us to know when someone we care about is suffering from these issues. Other times, this is not the case.

Those around me describe me as extremely happy, organized, and optimistic. What they don't know is the dark cloud that seems to always follow me around no matter what I do.

My way of coping, you may ask? It is simply ignoring my problems. Holding it in and hiding it from not only those around me, but myself, has done far worse than good.

That random Wednesday might have been one of my worst days, but also the most enlightening.

Since then, I've had to not only relearn how to live my daily normal, but also learn to open up to others when I need their help. Although it hasn't been easy, it has already made me stronger.●



Byline or Beeline?

Megan Trotter

What does the newsroom look like to the next generation of journalists? To the new hire or intern? The college student experiencing their first published byline?

This year, as a college sophomore, I got my first taste of a big-time newsroom, interning for the Pittsburgh *Post-Gazette*.

I have been infatuated with journalism since I was in 5th-grade. My first encounter came in the form of the 2000s drama, "Gilmore Girls." I remember protagonist Rory Gilmore's determination, curiosity and passion.

Later in my 8th-grade history class, we learned about Ida Tarbell and her takedown of the oil industry and labor practices— opening the world of investigative journalism.

Throughout high school, I poured myself into media-related opportunities and attended a journalism conference through George Mason University. Here I heard from *National Geographic* Editor-in-chief Susan Goldberg about the process behind publishing controversial covers.

My internship with the Post-Gazette required me to work four days a week, sometimes even "split shifts" where I would come and go from the newsroom twice a day in order to accommodate my class schedule.

Fortunately, this internship was not one that took on the life of a glorified secretary – fetching coffee or filing papers – but rather one that threw me into the field.

I found myself embodying the stereotypical "struggling journalist" scheduling interviews, running around covering events, guzzling caffeine in the car and testing how many words I could write a minute to meet deadline.

My work typically got published once or twice a week and as a new reporter scratching the surface of what it means to be a journalist, I clung to little victories like seeing my byline attached to a piece — I was proud.

Then, in mid-October, over 100 *Post-Gazette* employees walked out of the newsroom.

The animosity between labor and management escalated and I found myself internalizing the tension. Everyone began to focus more on the newsroom crisis and consequently my writing no longer received feedback. I began to worry if this was the result of unspoken dissatisfaction with the quality of my work.

No one informed me of the issues and strain filling the newsroom and I was forced to put on my reporter's hat to piece together what I was noticing.

Once the strike was in full effect, I quickly found myself in the midst of a labor dispute.

I now had to make the decision of whether to cross the picket line and continue to work, gaining experience and padding my portfolio, or respecting my fellow reporters by taking my name out of the reader's eye and ceasing my work.

The stress of facing the fact that this one decision could potentially impact my career before it even started, began to creep its way into almost every aspect of my life. I didn't want to burn any bridges.

I became mentally exhausted, and my schoolwork began to decline. I struggled to enjoy social outings and exhausted the refresh button on the *Post-Gazette's* page. I wanted to stay up to date on the strike.

It was a time of extreme stress, and I thought back to my early inspiration — I don't remember Rory Gilmore receiving phone calls urging her not to go to work.

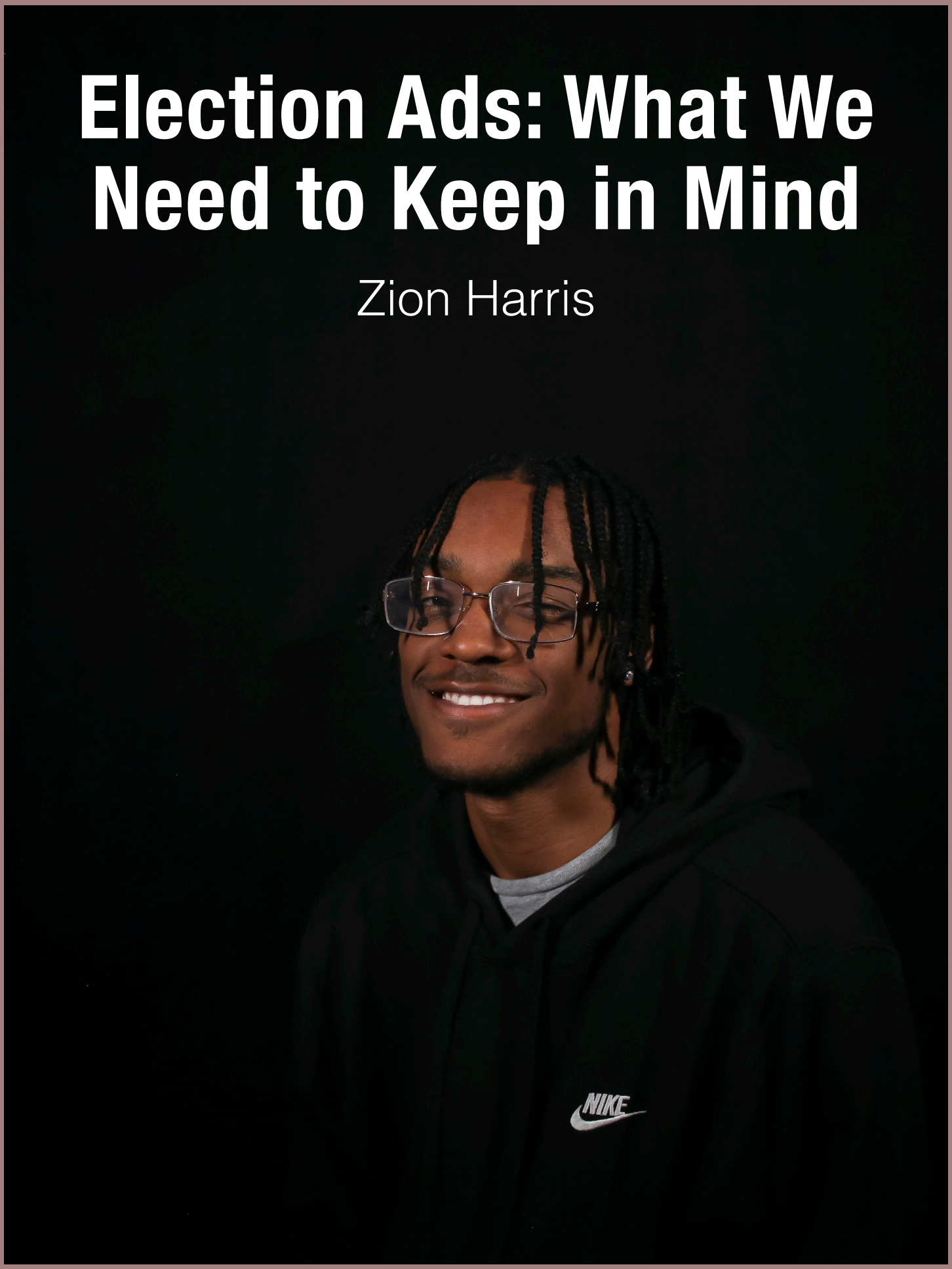
In a whirlwind of communication involving my editor, a few seasoned reporters, my internship coordinator and myself, a decision was made.

I would no longer be interning for the *Post-Gazette*.

Going into the internship I expected to be covering news stories not becoming part of one.●

Election Ads: What We Need to Keep in Mind

Zion Harris



Okay. Now that the election is over, we can wipe off the grime and annoyance that was brought upon us by political advertising. Moving forward, I feel there is a better way of advertising to help citizens decide who they want to vote for.

Consider:

"Don't vote for this guy. He was a criminal growing up, he even shot a guy!!"

"Vote for me because I am pro-life not pro-choice!"

"Let's take the fight to Joe Biden and Kamala Harris because they are releasing prisoners back onto the streets to cause more violence"

I mean seriously, why would I want to vote for someone who is constantly slandering their opponent? One out of every 10 ads that forcefully popped up on my screen was about the bad things these politicians were going to do if they were elected.

We need to get rid of ads like this: "John Fetterman wants to release ⅓ of prisoners and eliminate life sentences for murderers."

A man is trying to become a senator to release murderers from prison? I don't think my grandma would even believe that.

I understand that these ads are trying to convince people to vote for the other side, but what about the politician telling me what they are going to do for the state? I don't care to hear about the other side and their evil plans that will destroy Pennsylvania. What are you going to do for me and the state?

We need to stick to hearing things in ads like this: "I see people struggling, left behind. I will always focus on the things that matter like access to healthcare, lower cost, and good jobs."

"Covid has shown us that the system is broken, we lost too many lives, too many jobs... Washington got it wrong, they took away our freedom without making us safer."

These are the ads I would actually take some time to watch without getting irritated, or even closing my YouTube app all together. I think many Pennsylvanians would agree that they would rather see more positive ads in the next election. Future politicians, here is what you will need to do to get my vote. (And more votes in general)

As part of the younger generation watching the United States continue to be in shambles, I want to see what you would do for our state. Try to make it believable because we already know you all can lie. Worry about yourself more than your opponent. Creating ads distorting something an opponent said is wasted time. We do not care.

You folks need to tighten up before I enter the next election... because I will win.●


CHURCH BREW WORKS
CHURCH BREW WORKS
CHURCH BREW WORKS


188


The Enrico Biscotti Company


THE SOLAR SYSTEM
RELATIVE DISTANCES OF THE PLANETS FROM THE SUN
VINTAGE SCHOOL CHART
ATLANTIC OCEAN
PACIFIC OCEAN
INDIAN OCEAN

BIG PICTURE

From the soaring glass towers of PPG Place Downtown to the imposing stadiums that hug the North Shore to the gleaming limestone of Pitt's Cathedral of Learning, the city's physical architecture is hard to miss. But there are subtler aspects of its civic infrastructure, from the bicycling organization that is transforming the Steel City into the Two Wheel City, to a church where a bit of salty language might accompany scripture, to Pittsburgh's hidden Queer History.

Bike Pittsburgh Strives for Safety

Mackenzie Phillips

Cycling in downtown Pittsburgh can feel like an uphill battle. A hill like Canton Avenue in Beechwood to be exact.

Canton Avenue features one of the steepest hills in the city, a daunting challenge for even the best cyclists. Pittsburgh's "Dirty Dozen" hosts a yearly challenge for those willing to attempt to reach its apex.

Jill Bodnar has photographed the annual "Sufferfest" event and finds that through her toughest challenges as a cyclist, she enjoys the most reward.

Bodnar, a Duquesne alum, has been biking her whole life. Fun-loving and adventure seeking, she knew she found her niche after receiving her first bike as a kid.

After briefly living in Seattle and traveling to Italy, both areas with bike cultures more accepting of cyclists, these cities opened Bodnar's eyes to the changes Pittsburgh needed.

"That's just the culture there," Bodnar says of living in bike-friendly locales. "You get the right gear, you get fenders on your bike, and everybody's doing it, so you don't feel like the odd duck. You feel like the odd duck if you're not doing it and everybody's really welcoming. It just became even more part of my identity."

The transition back to Pittsburgh, however, hasn't been as smooth of a ride.

On her daily commute to and from work at the University of Pittsburgh, an inescapable fear lingers over her as aggressive drivers fly by, almost throwing her from her bike, or worse.

"You don't really realize how much tension is out there," Bodnar said. "I've had so many negative interactions with drivers. You know, almost being hit. I had several friends who were hit."

In an ever-changing environment of hybrid cars, Ubers and electric scooters, biking has remained a consistent mode of transportation in urban areas worldwide.

To many drivers, cyclists are nuisances on the roads. Because of this, cyclists put their lives on the line every time they mount their bikes and strap on their helmets.

Per the CDC, nearly 1,000 cyclists die and over 130,000 are injured in crashes that occur on roads in the

United States every year.

According to bike specialists and advocates in the Pittsburgh area, aggressive drivers, minimal bike lanes and a lack of regulation offer very little in terms of safety for those that would rather take a bike route on their daily commute.

Non-profits like Bike Pittsburgh, located in Lawrenceville, advocate not only for the safety of their riders, but also for an increase in bicycle education downtown.

Founded in 2002, Bike Pittsburgh has helped to sponsor numerous new bike lanes, while also lobbying the city to improve bike infrastructure.

Bike Pittsburgh opens its doors to host events and sponsor bike rides for avid cyclists. The most notable of its events is Pedal Pittsburgh, which attracts thousands of cyclists, experienced or not, to the city.

Eric Boerer, Bike Pittsburgh's Advocacy Director, has been with the non-profit since 2005.

"Our mission is to help make it easier for people to get around without a car, whether that's walking and biking," said Boerer. "We feel that car dependency is a problem in Pittsburgh and the nation, and we're trying to make it easier for people to bike and walk."

Pittsburgh, unlike some other cities, has a lack of resources necessary to thoroughly provide the right infrastructure to support both cars and bikes.

POGOH, Pittsburgh's main source of city bikes, has helped not only to fix this problem, but contribute to better the environment.

Erin Potts, the director of Marketing and Community Outreach at POGOH, has worked with Bike Pittsburgh and Pittsburgh's Department of Mobility and Infrastructure to make bike riding more accessible and safer for those in the downtown area.

POGOH, operated by Bike Share Pittsburgh, was formally named Healthy Ride, and has bike stations throughout the city.

Potts and numerous coworkers are avid bike riders themselves.

"That's kind of what connects me to this work is that like, I'm not what I think of as a cyclist," Potts says. "I don't really even necessarily identify as a cyclist per se, just because I've never done that kind of riding, but I bike almost every day. It's a community that I think is really shifting, and we really want to shift that whole perception of what it means to be someone who rides a bike."

POGOH has added E-Bikes to their docks, making rides up the steep Pittsburgh hills or cobblestone streets that much easier for inexperienced riders.

POGOH highlights the hard work that has been done to promote safety for cyclists and anticipate what efforts still need to be made in the future.

For those who cycle, the effort made in the past decade is one to commemorate. Cycling is not only a form of transportation, but a way of life.

"All sorts of strange things the universe starts to throw your way," Bodnar says. "Bicycling has really just kind of in the glue that's held me together."●

Hot Metal Faith Community is Not Your Typical Church

Spencer Thomas

Talk to the pastor in a traditional church for as long as you'd like, and you aren't going to hear any foul language. The same cannot be said for the Hot Metal Faith Community on Jane Street in the South Side. The community is what Pastor Erin Jones calls the "church with no bulls--t".

The community hosts a service every Sunday morning, and finds its identity in being open to everyone. It is noticeably informal; churchgoers are likely to show up in sweatshirts or jeans. Still, it has many of the markers of your grandma's chapel, such as communion, a sermon and prayers.

According to Jones, even the history of its location is nontraditional. Founded in 2004, the church is located at the corner of Jane and 27th streets. The building of worship was previously the first lesbian bar in the city of Pittsburgh, a Taco Johns, and a mafia restaurant.

Even little things like the language used by the speakers are meant to accommodate everyone in the audience. They'll say to "stand up if you are able," which is particularly inclusive as one member was in a wheelchair on a recent Sunday.

In addition to the Sunday services, Hot Metal Faith also hosts a community meal on Sundays, Alcoholics Anonymous meetings semiweekly and free meals on Tuesday and Thursday evenings.

In charge of those is Karl Casey. He joined the church two years ago as an intern in the commission pastor program. Soon after, he realized he wanted to stay.

"Right now, we're serving between 80 and 110 meals in the evening," he says. "We work in partnership with 11 churches, two nonprofits and several individuals."

In addition to the meals, the church also provides food and supplies to those in nearby homeless encampments, and they have an in-house mental health professional. Also on site is a care-closet with toiletries, tents and sleeping bags. Soon, Casey says they should have a refrigerator available outside the church that with be available to members of the community.

All of these edible methods of support make up just one-third of the community's mission, which reads: "Where you are loved, fed and affirmed as your whole self."

In terms of its faith, the community follows the Presbyterian mission in its preaching, though as one might expect, it is far less rigid compared to its contemporaries.

"We're kind of like an amalgamation," Jones says. "We have a lot of people who are formerly evangelical, kind of in that decon-

structing mode, and so just being a soft place for them to land and figure out what is next."

After moving from California, Jones began looking for a place in western Pennsylvania that would allow her to serve her principles through serving God.

"I was really intentional about wanting an affirming church, and those are few and far between in western Pennsylvania," she says. "[Hot Metal] is a really loving community, a community committed to serving others, that's what drew me to it."

Unlike most churches, Hot Metal is particularly open about activism and political involvement. In accordance with the wishes of a member, the service took a moment to demonstrate thanks to Pennsylvania for electing a pro-life Governor in Josh Shapiro.

"We are a community committed to building a welcoming space for all people across socio-economic boundaries, across identity boundaries," Jones says. "We are committed to LGBTQ welcome, anti-racism work, especially as allies."

In their time in the South Side, the church has been able to cultivate a strong relationship with the community.

"We've become a safe place for a lot of people. They know they can come here," Casey says. "We just reach out, let them know they're loved and loved as they are."

One member, named Glenn, had been attending services for about a month and had nothing but praise for his new community.

"Um, it's awesome. The reason we're here is the vibes are good and the theology is great," he says. "Every aspect in the service, in both large ways and small ways, is welcoming to all."

The church also gives significant vocal power to its members. Just inside the entrance is a large sheet of paper that reads; "Blessed are the..." and provides markers for worshipers to finish the sentence. The responses reflect the community in every way.

"... the mistake makers"

"... people who are afraid to live authentically"

"... people just trying the best that they can"

The ability to express those sentiments that may not be welcome in every house of worship is what Jones says her community strives for.

"Everybody is welcome, there is so no parameters for attending, no parameters for joining," Jones says. "It is a very affirming church."●

Rediscovering Pittsburgh's Queer History

Megan Trotter

Pittsburgh history is collected across the city through museum archives and commemorative statues but is missing an important piece: the stories of individuals who were forced to hide behind closed doors.

Founded in 2012 by oral historian, Harrison Apple, who prefers they/them pronouns, The Pittsburgh Queer History Project, reconstructs the history of LGBTQ+ individuals.

Beginning as an investigation of gay-owned-and-operated after-hour nightclubs, Apple's work has blossomed into a safe community of what they like to refer to as a place of "labor and love."

With the search starting as a deep desire for continuity between their own experiences as a gay person and the experiences of individuals 30 to 50 years older, Apple collected thousands of stories and artifacts of the gay community.

"The sort of coded languages and the strategies for invisibility make it really hard to understand what happens behind closed doors. Which of course was the point. I needed to find a way to answer my question of what is a gay social club," Apple said.

Focusing their research on creating outreach Apple slowly built up trust and was eventually introduced to a pioneering member of Pittsburgh's gay community, Robert Johns, otherwise known as "Lucky."

In 1967 Lucky opened the first gay social club known as the "Transportation Club."

Despite commercial establishments being prohibited from serving known homosexuals during this era, Lucky's club created jobs for people who did not pass as straight or cisgender during the 1950s and 1960s.

Apple recalls sitting in their car on Lucky's street trying to catch their breath before formally meeting him for the first time.

"I was so scared to meet him

because I had heard about him for almost a year," Apple said.

Despite the nerves, Lucky welcomed them, stating simply that Apple was family. The two built a friendship that lasted until Lucky's death in 2014.

In Lucky's memory, Apple opened the "Lucky After Dark," visual exhibit featuring over 12,000 items ranging from photographs to clothing to video and realia— testaments from gay social clubs between the 1960s and 1990s.

"It's so common for people to be extractive and think that they're doing something good when you're really just eulogizing someone's impending death and burying them in their memories," Apple said about interview work with members of the gay community.

During their initial meeting warmed by the comfort of an electric fireplace, Lucky provided knowledge and experience that continues to aid Apple's research.

He had given a clear picture of the gay origin story of Pittsburgh. On Dec. 5, Apple, and a few other Pittsburgh Queer History Project members gathered in Carnegie Mellon's College of Fine Arts building for the 3rd iteration of the MS89 screening series.

Director Zed Armstrong, who prefers they/them pronouns, and collaborator Michel Ferrucci served as panelists for the screening of the 1988 City Council fight for anti-discrimination laws in Pittsburgh The documentary featured testimonies from the case and interviews from the gay community after learning of the ruling.

Audience members snorted at the remarks of council members who proudly opined that it was "Adam and Eve not Adam and Steve," during an interview within the documentary.

The evening closed with a more lighthearted and elaborate video performance by Pittsburgh drag queen "Sandy Beach."

Armstrong, formerly Pittsburgh's Original Gay Cable Network producer, spoke about their work covering the construction of the AIDS Memorial Quilt.

As part of filming, Armstrong ventured to Washington D.C. to cover the small groups working on sections of the quilt in memory of their friends.

"It seemed like they were endless. Each piece represented a person who had died of AIDS," Armstrong said.

Apple shared the struggle of reconstructing individuals' experiences during the time of the AIDS epidemic.

"It's a big ask to have people retell incredibly traumatic stories about people they loved and lost way too soon. And in a world that would in response to that death tell them that they deserved it and that they caused it," Apple said.

Ferrucci, who owns a vintage clothing store that is popular among the younger queer community, is a long-life resident of Pittsburgh. He recalls his earlier years within the city when gay individuals were not as accepted.

"Pittsburgh can be kind of a conservative town even among the gay community. I mean, not quite so much now as it used to be, but I think we were seen as kind of weirdos," he said.

In the mid-eighties, Armstrong was one of two artists who put

together an exhibit on Duquesne's campus.

Featured in the display was a photo of Armstrong's girlfriend's unshaven legs.

"They were abstract. But my photographs were considered offensive to the community, so they shut the gallery down," they said.

While Duquesne offered no official reason regarding the closure, Armstrong learned from an employee the true nature of the exhibition's shut down.

"If I hadn't been so naive, I might have done some self-censorship for the sake of having an exhibit in a legitimate gallery," Armstrong said.

Since then, Duquesne has begun to take steps in broadening its acceptance through several LGBTQ+ organizations and an annual gender-neutral fashion show. Despite prior backlash Duquesne continues to include these resources on campus.

While the Pittsburgh Queer History Project seeks to celebrate and memorialize gay individuals, there are certain artifacts Apple can't include in the public side of the project.

"Lucky, when I was interviewing him, had given me 5 diaries that he wrote between 1955 and 1979," Apple said.

"He explained to me that 'I know you, and you know me, and I want you to read these to get a better sense of how you write my story, but I don't want you to share them.'"

Apple plans to pass the diaries on to someone who understands the agreement to never share them publicly.

Apple said that oral history has taught them that no one has the right to know everything, and to listen to what someone says and understand that it's not an invitation to try and convince them otherwise.

"Now, 10 years later, I don't see myself starting another oral history project because you spend a lot of your time getting to know people, trusting them, loving them and then watching them die," Apple said.●

REFLECTION

Here, our writers tell the stories behind their stories.

ISABELLA ABBOTT

I've always wanted to be a writer.

When I was younger, I would write (not great) stories all the time with an imagination like no other. Stories about the most random things I felt had no purpose but were just for fun.

But now, I want to write stories that have meaning and purpose. I want people to read my stories and admire and appreciate what I've written.

And that's exactly what I learned how to do during our Magazine Journalism class. Not only was I able to go out in Pittsburgh and learn about new people and new things but I was able to enhance my reporting and writing skills as well. I was able to ask questions and make the answers into a story.

I hope from here on out that I continue to write these types of stories and help make an impact on the communities I'm involved in. ●

JULIA ALLMAN

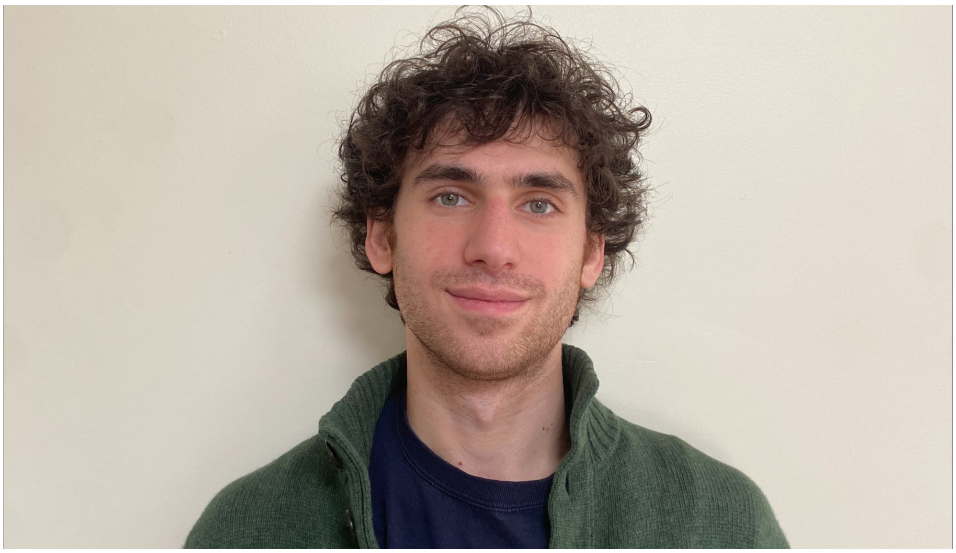
This semester, reporting for *Off the Bluff* has taught me a lot about myself and my writing.

Going into the field to do reporting taught me a lot about what I was capable of, and those situations pushed me to overcome my initial apprehension. I loved how I could learn more about places I enjoyed visiting in Pittsburgh, and it broadened my horizons of the city and what it had to offer.

I am usually curious about the history behind businesses and what their story is, but I have always been too nervous to ask. Being a part of this magazine project taught me how to overcome that hesitation and gave me the tools to follow my curiosity.

This project not only taught me a lot about myself, but I also learned a lot about my writing skills. The class has allowed me to expand my writing and reporting skills, giving me the opportunity to go out in the field and write about what I experienced.

I learned how to condense my writing and use fewer words to add to my main idea. I also learned about when to cut parts that do not coincide with my theme, even if it was something I really wanted to add. Sometimes, less is more. And I have to let the story speak for itself, instead of trying to speak for the story. ●



ETHAN GEORGE

If I learned anything this semester, it was how to properly scramble for a deadline.

This was my first experience putting articles together for a real publication and with each story I tackled, I learned new things about reporting and new things about myself. The most important lessons being: ask too many questions, write down everything you see, and edit the horrible mistakes when the first draft is complete.

The semester began – for me – with a story on Steel City Improv, a comedy theatre venue I had never been to before and was nervous about reporting on. Reporting consisted of going to shows alone, sitting in a crowded theatre by myself, and taking notes frantically as fellow viewers side-eyed me in confusion. Working as a reporter can be tough if you're worried about other people thinking you're a weirdo.

Oddly enough, that feeling is what drove me to pursue a career in reporting. I enjoyed being apart from the crowd. I enjoyed pretending like I was there on important business. And I really enjoyed the freedom of putting myself out there and saying, "it's okay, I'm a journalist," to anyone who looked at me weird as I covered each story.

Researching each piece felt like an operation, a mission to gather intel and report it to whoever ends up reading the magazine. I felt like I was doing something important, and I was.

Pittsburgh has been my city since I was born and has always been in my mind as a place where cultures, ideologies, religions, and more all blend together. The arts and cultural scenes here are rich but sorely overlooked, which is why *Off the Bluff* was such an exciting magazine to work on.

As I interviewed comedians, researched community gardens, and profiled a dedicated educator for a nonprofit program, the city opened up to me in ways I had never experienced before in the 20 plus years I've been here. I felt like both a part of it and a worker for the city itself, using writing to tell the stories that play out here each day without any kind of recognition or appreciation.

The most impactful story on me was my piece on the community gardens. Being able to address the issues that this city faces, while writing about an organization and practice whose only motive is to help local communities felt meaningful.

I began studying journalism because I wanted to be a part of the changes this city made. I wanted to make some kind of difference by covering the things I felt were either important, or that showcased parts of the city and the people in the city that makes Pittsburgh such a special place.

I'm not saying that what I wrote or what I'll go on to write will be some groundbreaking story that changes the entire city. Instead, I'm saying that working as a reporter gives me a sense of purpose. It makes me feel like I am doing something for the community, even if it's something that will go unnoticed or underappreciated. It's the love of the city, the people in it, and the memories I've made here that make me want to contribute in one of the only ways I can. ●

HANNAH PETERS

For an incoming transfer student who just graduated from community college in New Jersey, Pittsburgh was very much unfamiliar territory. When I moved here in August, Communication Studies degree in hand, I had no idea what 'the T' was, and 'yinz' was a word I'd never heard before.

Don't get me wrong, I am a somewhat typical ex-military kid who has moved about 12 times, so being new is nothing new. As a seasoned new kid, I thought I already knew all the best tips and tricks to integrate yourself into a new place.

I was wrong. My student success counselor unknowingly made sure of that when she enrolled me in the magazine journalism course taught by Dr. Dillon.

When the first day of class rolled around, Dr. D asked us to "Start thinking of places, people or events going on in Pittsburgh that you would like to write about." With my still severely limited knowledge of Pittsburgh and its people, just about zero ideas came to mind.

I felt like I was staring at a blank map and an empty contact list. Little did I know, however, that I had just been handed the key to the city.

To fulfill my instructions to write about the city, I was forced to meet with and interview people who have been long-standing members of the community. Forced me to visit places like quaint local bakeries and random wedding after-parties.

I've adventured through unknown neighborhoods to simply observe everything around me. I've learned about its history, enjoyed live banjo music, and also tasted the best biscotti of my life. All because of my homework.

And it hasn't just been me learning about the city, but my peers too. Every Tuesday and Thursday at 4:30, College Hall room 345 acted not only as the place I learned the ins and outs of magazine journalism but as a sort of Pittsburgh get-to-know-you session.

Frequent updates on the stories my classmates were working on in addition to reading and editing them provided me with 10 (11 if you count Dr. D) different perspectives on what makes Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh.

I think if I've learned one thing from the sum of communications and journalism studies, it's the importance of observation. Observing not just who or what the story is about but interactions, small moments, or tiny details because that is what makes a story special. (Or so I've gathered.)

So Pittsburgh, I've observed. And you know what? In just a few short months, I can confidently say that I don't feel so new here anymore.

I feel I am a seasoned enough new kid to give the ultimate recommendation for how to get to know a place – become a journalist. ●

SPENCER THOMAS

As the Sports Editor at the *Duquesne Duke*, I entered this semester with *Off The Bluff* feeling confident. I had tons of experience at the Duke, several other journalism classes and a summer internship freshly under my belt.

Quickly, I was humbled. I was being pushed miles outside of my comfort zone. Whether that be in planning my articles, going out on my own to get the work done or writing articles I'd never been asked to do before. I'd never been asked to write a "montage" story, and my first attempt looked less like an article and more like a rambling stream of consciousness. I'd never had this sensation where I knew my writing was a mess yet had no idea how to fix it.

But through lessons, advice and most importantly, experience, I figured it out. It took as much out of me as any article I have ever written, but my profile on Miguel Francisco came out as one of my favorites.

My column was an awkward piece of superficial junk, but once I opened myself up, I felt that I had adapted to a whole new style of writing that is now in my repertoire. Thanks to my time here, I realize that some prodding into the unknown is the best method to step up and grow as a writer and a journalist.●

MACKENZIE PHILLIPS

Throughout my time in Magazine Journalism, I learned a lot about not only my city but myself as a writer.

Going out into the community to write stories that pique my interest could feel like a daunting task. However, the positive responses I received from those around me made me appreciate Pittsburgh more as a whole.

You never really realize how willing people are to tell their stories. Whether they're funny and long-winded or short and subdued, these stories, and the history that comes with them, are some of the most interesting parts of our city.

As a writer, I found that I not only was able to become more comfortable with going out and interviewing people, but I was able to tell their stories in a way that reflected them as accurately as possible. Making sure their personalities and how they reflect their communities shine through was the greatest reward. I didn't think Magazine Journalism would really stick with me as much as the fast-paced environments of Newsroom and other Journalism courses, but I find that building these stories from the ground up was the most rewarding part for me. ●

MEGAN TROTTER

Throughout this class, I have learned so much about the art of interviewing and reporting. No matter what topic I was covering I really had to fight to get people to agree to interviews and balance follow-up calls and messages without smothering my interview subjects during scheduling.

I think that one of the important things I learned was how to approach people when you want to write a story about them. I originally assumed people would love the media coverage, especially since many of my topics covered business within Pittsburgh. However, people were not as comfortable as I expected.

I found a huge aspect of my story's success depended on building trust with my sources. This was especially true while writing my final piece about the Pittsburgh Queer History Project, because it is a very personal and often controversial topic.

Despite these issues, during the project I encountered my most powerful and emotionally charged interviews yet.

One of my sources shared how in the mid-1980s Duquesne shut down her photo exhibit for featuring a photo of a girl's legs unshaved. This was an incredibly painful memory, and this source later asked me not to include the story after our interview. However, I called her and we discussed the importance of this moment to my story and ultimately the source trusted me to include it in my article.

The queer community really opened up to me and shared stories of coming out, lost friends and painful experiences of homophobia.●

ZACH PETROFF

Growth requires discomfort.

Every few months I have an existential crisis that makes me question every decision that has led me to Duquesne University. Feelings of self-doubt and regret take over. I am so far out of my comfort zone that I may as well be on another planet.

Growth requires discomfort. Getting out into the world, even as every fiber in my being is screaming at me not to, has been a challenge. This semester I tried to embrace the unknown. I sought comfort in the uncomfortable.

"There's a story here," often echoed in my head, quieting the voices of insecurity.

As my journey to hone the craft of the written word continues, I found that immersing oneself into the experience can be the best teacher. Anyone can interview anyone, but the aspect of really hearing the words and feeling their presence has become a critical part of my writing process. Pittsburgh has so many interesting and powerful stories that need to be told.

With a world that is continuously competing for our attention, those who can pull themselves from the screen and observe the environment around them can find beauty in the mundane. Or the unknown. ●

ZION HARRIS

Throughout my semester in this class, I learned many things about the city, reporting for stories and getting quotes to write about different organizations.

This caused me to travel around the city and discover things that I would usually overlook. Being from Pittsburgh, learning something new here about the city is exciting to me. This project expanded my knowledge about Pittsburgh and the few neighborhoods I went to for my stories.

A thing I learned from reporting was that there is always another story that can be written. This year most of my story plans didn't come together on the first try, so I had to try again with another place and person. Switching from one idea to another isn't always easy because most of the time I usually prepare for the interview process with notes and questions to ask, but then I would have to scrap all my work due to a person canceling an interview. I had to understand that not everyone wants to talk to a reporter and that people have their own lives to live.

This class has shown me to always have an open mind. ●

EMILY BROZESKI

Being a photographer for *Off the Bluff* has given me the opportunity to grow not only as a photographer, but as a student in digital media.

I would not consider myself a photographer before this position; I would take pictures of friends and family for fun, but nothing too serious. This semester presented new challenges that were enjoyable and great learning opportunities.

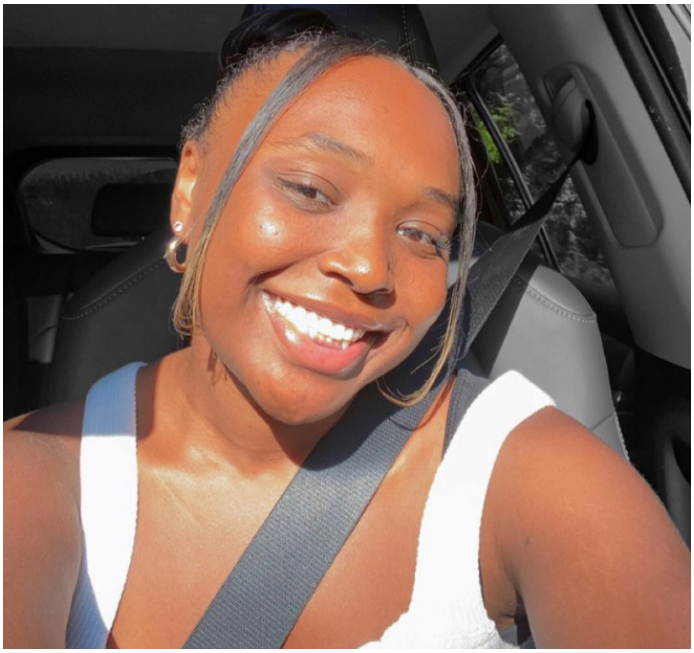
Shooting for a magazine challenged me to think of how to tell a story the journalists were trying to convey. I discovered new angles and ways to display different perspectives of the activities that were going on around me.

Being a visual journalist, as Steve Mellon of the Pittsburgh *Post-Gazette* told our class, really got me to go outside of my comfort zone and challenge myself to see the world in different perspectives. I am thankful for this opportunity and look forward to continuing to grow in this field as the co-editor of *Off the Bluff*. ●

JELISA LYDE

I have been living in Pittsburgh for almost 14 years. I don't think I have ever spent this much time getting to know the city and the people that make up its heart and community — from going to Zenith and Meeting Elaine Smith to working at the BTC Center Food Bank to interviewing my high school art teacher, Mary Martin, *Off The Bluff* allowed me to explore Pittsburgh in a new light. Every person I interviewed and everyplace I went was like finding another piece of the puzzle that makes up Pittsburgh.

I have always said that Pittsburgh was like a city with the feel of a small town, but getting to know the people and places that make Pittsburgh special is an experience that I will always hold near to my heart. Pittsburgh has hidden nooks and crannies that are just waiting to be explored. I am glad *Off the Bluff* allowed me to do just that. ●




National Aviary
Children's Museum
Downtown
PNG Park
Point Park
3 Rivers
P
Mayfly
Deli
Market
Soups
Sandwiches
Coffee
Borden Mansion
1518 Arch St.
UPTOWN
Ferris Wheel
George Ferris INVENTOR
1893
on 1318 Arch St.
1 Block Down
1893
City of Asylum
Alphabet City
Writers
Poets
You