Community wrestling with a loss
College, family and friends struggle with Nick Pratico's death

By Griffin Jones
Senior Reporter

The body of Mercer student Nicholas Pratico was found in the woods across Old Trenton Road, dead of an apparent suicide. Although the suicide seems to have occurred on September 20, the day Pratico went missing, according to Hamilton Police Detective Sergeant Brian Schroeder, the body was not discovered until October 23, 33 days later.

Pratico was 18 years old and planned to attend the Conservatory for Dramatic Arts in New York City in the spring, according to his family. The discovery concluded more than a month of intensive search efforts by police and volunteers.

On September 20, Mercer security cameras picked up footage of Nick Pratico pacing back and forth on the second floor between the bookstore and the Gallery according to Marysa, and Mark Pratico Sr., in a phone interview with the VOICE shortly after his disappearance. He had just completed his placement tests, attended orientation, and gotten his student ID. Marysa reports he had registered for two ten-week courses, one Health and Fitness and one English, and was seemingly waiting for his ride home. Then he walked down the stairs to the circle and wasn’t seen again.

When he didn’t show up for an audition for West Side Story, Kelsey Theatre informed the family of his disappearance, and the search for him began. Two days later his ID was found roughly 150 feet from the Old Trenton Road entrance to Mercer’s West Windsor campus according to his father.

In an effort to possibly narrow in on his location police pinged Paratico’s phone. The last location it could be tracked to was around Mercer’s solar fields at 3:15 the day he went missing, according to his sister. Search efforts were extensive, and spread as far as New York City and Philadelphia. They finally came to an end when the body was discovered on October 23. A New Jersey State Police K9 Unit, together with Hamilton detectives, were performing a grid search. They were on their last grid square of the day when one of the dogs picked up a scent and the body was found.

Another K9 unit from the Mercer County Sheriff’s Office had previously scouted along Old Trenton Road shortly after the search efforts began. At that time no scent was picked up.

Some locals have questioned why the dogs wouldn’t have found the scent earlier. The answer may have to do with traffic. Angela Snovak writes in her “Guide to Search and Rescue Dogs” that “Exhaust fumes could potentially overwhelm a dog’s ability to pinpoint scent.”

NJ 101.5 reported that until a week before Pratico’s body was found, the area the body was found in was obscured by corn, providing another obstacle to his recovery.

Detective Sergeant Brian Schroeder told the VOICE that, although there has been no official cause of death as of yet, Pratico appears to have died of a “self-inflicted injury.” The detective sergeant also said no foul play is suspected. The body showed no signs of having been moved, and it is believed that it was there since the day Pratico died.

On brink of no confidence vote, faculty relent

By Maria Ramos, Sean O’Connor, Drew Munich, Griffin Jones & Jackson Thompson
Senior Reporters

Full time faculty union members gathered on Thursday Nov. 9, preparing to hold a vote of no confidence in Mercer president, Dr. Jianping Wang. Instead they elected to table the vote.

A vote of no confidence is essentially a resolution that, if approved, states that the full time faculty has no confidence in Dr. Wang or her ability to run the school. There are no direct consequences of the vote, but it would put pressure on the Board of Trustees, who are responsible for Wang’s employment, to act.

Several other New Jersey colleges have faced similar votes, including Bergen County Community College in 2014 and William Paterson in 2016. In both cases faculty votes of no confidence started a chain of events that eventually resulted in the removal of the president.

When asked about the faculty union’s potential vote of no confidence, Mercer’s Director of Communication, Jim Gardner described the possible vote as “water cooler talk.”

According to faculty members in attendance at the union meeting, the decision to hold off the vote was made as a good faith effort on the part of the union to work with the College’s Board of Trustees to address issues related to the performance of the president.

On February 3, 2016 in the Communications Building on the West Windsor campus.

If you or someone you know is struggling with depression, there is a number you can call for help.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
1-800-273-TALK (8255)
suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Newly enrolled Mercer student Nicholas Pratico went missing on September 20. The last place he was seen was the College’s West Windsor campus. His body was recovered on October 23 from farmland across the street from the campus. Pratico was 18 years old and planning to study Dramatic Arts.
Pratico died.

Ron Pierson, who describes himself as having been “very close” to Pratico, told The VOICE that he had tried to stay in touch with his friend after they both graduated Notre Dame High School earlier this year. He says he had hoped to go together to a Broadway show. After missing a call from Pierson, Pierson says his attempts to reach back out went unanswered.

Pierson described Pratico’s enrollment at Mercer saying: “His father has a strict rule for his kids; he wants them to go to community college first, for discipline.” He noted that Pratico had hoped to pursue a career in theater instead, saying: “He believed if he didn’t do that chance now he wouldn’t get it again.”

The Pratico family offered a different perspective. Marysa said “[Mercer] was kind of like a way for him to stay focused, to stay level headed. I mean you don’t want to become a couch potato.”

She added, “He was looking forward to spending the fall preparing for the Conservatory, and getting his stuff together.”

Father Jason Parzynski, Chaplain of Notre Dame High School who was seen to be a confidant for Pratico described him as “laid-back,” but “not a very public person about a lot of stuff.”

Father Parzynski told The VOICE about the last time he heard from Pratico. “He gave me a call two days before he went missing, asking if we could talk.”

Father Parzynski says they planned to meet up at the Notre Dame soccer game the next day, but Pratico said he had a stomach ache and cancelled. Parzynski noted he never found out what Pratico wanted to discuss.

According to Ron Pierson, Pratico’s best friend was Coby St. Phard, who was on Notre Dame’s soccer team alongside him. In March 2014, however, St. Phard took his own life; he stood in front of an oncoming train. Pierson says that Pratico was “incredibly shaken” by the loss of his friend.

Nicholas Pratico death sent shockwaves throughout the Mercer community. His friends and acquaintances describe him as a kind young man with a bright future.

If you or anyone you know is struggling with feelings of depression contact the self-help National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK(8255). You are not alone.
The epidemic has been growing. In 2014, Governor Christie signed the Mad- son Holleran Suicide Preven-
tion Act, which was inspired by a New Jersey high school track star and Ivy League college stu-
dent who took her own life.

The Prevention Act took effect for the 2016-2017 school year, and requires col-
leges and universities that have licensed health care profession-
als who specialize in reducing student suicides available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The Act requires schools to post information on student suicides and attempted suicides on their websites annually.

Although Mercer does not offer this kind of support, they do have a website, under the Students Services tab, another tab called Suicide Pre-
vention. Here they provide the counselor’s phone numbers and offices. They have also posted the phone numbers for the New Jersey Hopeline, the Mercer County Helpline and 911.

Cierra Ruiz is a Graphic Design major who says that she gets bursts of anxiety when the demands of the coursework she needs to get done combined with the mental strain of her regular job prove too overwhel-
ing. “I would go and talk to someone if we have a mental health center on campus, where I can just walk in and talk to someone, like a friendly place where to chat with an expert about mental is-

suers,” Ruiz says.

As Mer-

cer’s Medical Laboratory Tech-

nology Program Coordinator Lisa Shave told The VOICE, “We only have three or four sons dealing with this for both cam-
puses. We realize that we didn’t have a central location where we could pretty much spread the news about health and safety.”

Shave also mentioned an ad-hoc committee being lead by Andrew Millin, the Medical Office Assistant Coordinator. She said: “We are researching opportunities to bring licensed counselors to campus...We are reaching out to master’s degree programs that offer counseling, where they might have an in-
ternship opportunity and they can come to our campus and start to have open rooms for students to go and talk. A safe place.”

Nursing professor Ad-

ena Romero-Ratliff told The VOICE that that action begins in order to bring men-
tal health awareness to Mercer.

“We are creating this new Committee of Health and Safety, where the nursing pro-
gram is actually partnering with the security staff to come up with ways we can make the cam-
pus safer and try to put together resources, so we are starting to have these conversations now,” Professor Romero-Ratliff said.

Elizabeth Mizerek, the Nursing Program Coordinator, is set to lead the committee, ac-

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ber], I know students pay for a semester and it’s hard earned money, and then if something happens that requires antibiotics and they can’t get it, then the whole semester is gone, and there is no way we can help them. It’s not only a problem we see in the college but overall in the country.”

- Dr. Bettina Caluori, Professor of English and Assistant Dean of the Honors Program

7 of New Jersey’s 18 community colleges, have health centers. Mercer is among those that do not.

Mental Illness At Mercer County College

Suicide is the tenth leading cause of death in the U.S. and the second leading cause of death for people aged 15-24

According to a study last year by the National Institute of Mental Health, there is a high likelihood of self-harm among college students, with 50 students participating. Approximately 300,000 people commit suicide every year according to the World Health Organization.

Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

Approximately 800,000 people commit suicide every year according to the World Health Organization.

Survey data collected by The VOICE 50 students participated

65% Of Mercer students surveyed say they suffer from depression

70% Of Mercer students surveyed say they suffer from anxiety

Suicide Prevention Act requires schools to post student suicide and attempted suicide resources on their websites annually.

By Maria Ramos
Senior Reporter

Jessica Perez has many responsibilities on her plate in her day to day, not only as a Mercer stu-
dent, but also as a mother and as a worker. Perez is sophomore studying Digital Film. She says, “I get very stressed out with all my classes and then I need to work. My kid. But the worst is that I had to take classes that aren’t related to my major. This just brings more stress and anxiety to my life.”

Perez’s case is typical for community college students, most of whom are trying to get their degree while also engaged in some other time-consuming aspect of life, such as working, parenting, and being a care of a sick family member. Managing stresses is key, but often stress levels exceed what is manage-
able putting community college students at particularly high risk for mental health problems such as depression and anxiety.

All four years, and many two year colleges have health centers with counselors who can help students struggling with physical and mental health problems. Of New Jersey’s 18 community colleges, seven have health centers of some sort, Mercer is among those that do not.

Mercer does, however, have one licensed counselor, Dorothy Gasparro, and two other counselors who work with her, Martha Gunning and Fred Weinert. Because three people can’t take care of the needs of more than 8,000 students, most of the time they offer students who seek help assistance in finding local resources.

With so much going on in Perez’s life, she decided it was time to see a private psychiatrist, who is helping her balance all of her responsibilities. She said: “Of course it’s frustrating [as a faculty mem-
ber], I know students pay for a semester and it’s hard earned money, and then if something happens that requires antibiotics and they can’t get it, then the whole semester is gone, and there is no way we can help them. It’s not only a problem we see in the college but overall in the country.”

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Mercer County had the second highest rate of suicide attempts and self-inflicted injuries in the state for youths between 10 and 24

In 2014 the Center for Disease Control estimated that suicide rates had increased every year between 1999 and the year of the study.

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Wildflour Bakery and Café, 15 minutes from Mercer’s campus, on Main Street in historic, downtown Lawrenceville, is serving up everything from pastries to pizza, and the food is actually edible for people who are gluten intolerant.

“There isn’t much competition [in the gluten free restaurant world] and I really felt like we could do a good job,” says Marilyn Besner, owner of Wildflour. She added, “I think we’re doing well and we’re getting to be more of a destination.”

Wildflour opened five years ago on May 12, 2013. Since then, Besner has hired three experienced bakers and had earlier brought on a consultant through the American Bakers Association to help convert recipes into gluten free recipes.

The bakery is in a converted building that was once a home before 2001. The current café on the first level in what would be a dining room, then the upstairs bedrooms hold a large banquet room and another for families with small children. Besner describes that as “The Happy Room.” The bathroom is also located upstairs and still features a vintage clawfoot tub.

In the basement—more appropriately should be recalled as the underground lair—the bakers craft cakes, breads, black bean burgers, and their “Hippie Bars”—energy bars made with hemp seed oil—among many other delights.

For gluten sensitive consumers, it is a rare occasion to be able to indulge without stress of cross-contamination, but at Wildflour you can sit and feel comforted by the homey decor and the fact that you can actually eat something a sandwich. Start with the sundried tomato pesto, eggplant, spinach, and mozzarella cheese panini, you’ll find the bread is like deep dish pizza, toasted to a crisp on the outside and left soft on the inside. There is a pleasing amount of salty, gooey cheese and spinach, and then the eggplant laid happily in the middle as if tucked in for bed.

The physical consistency of breads and cakes is a common worry for the gluten free community and is often the main element of concern when ordering gluten free bread, desserts, pizza and so on. The panini bread at Wildflour crushed any remembrance I have of regular bread.

Manal Alnor in a review on Wildflour’s Facebook page, “I ordered my husband a birthday cake. The cake was gluten, dairy, egg, corn, and soy free. I had expectations that we would be able to tell that it was not a ‘regular’ cake. First of all, it was a beautiful cake. More importantly, it tasted absolutely amazing. Nobody could tell the difference or guess that it was allergy-friendly.”

If you are at Wildflour for lunch and order a panini, they are served with chips and a side of greens. Every element is safe for gluten free customers.

A good follow up to a panini is the apple pie crepe. It features crunchy streusel, strawberries and a scoop of vanilla ice-cream inside the spiced apple crepe. It’s like a taste of Thanksgiving that includes everything but your family, although the smiling faces and a welcoming environment are a pretty good substitute.

Wildflour has convenience off-street parking that is accessible behind the restaurant. Their current hours are Tuesday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturdays and Sundays from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. They are closed on Mondays.

REVIEW: Wildflour Bakery and Cafe
Rustic Lawrenceville coffee shop is a refuge for the gluten intolerant

By Jasmine Santalla
Senior Reporter

Wildflour Bakery and Café, 15 minutes from Mercer’s campus, is the last of its kind downtown Lawrenceville, is serving up everything from pastries to pizza, and the food is actually edible for people who are gluten intolerant.

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By Bart Padalino
Reporter

Amwell Valley Diner
A place for good food, and where everybody knows your name

Dining & Reviews

PHOTO | JASMINE SANTALLA
Employees at Wildflour Bakery and Café produce fresh cream cheese blends daily. The bakery in the basement operates as a lair to Wildflour’s three bakers where they create their gluten free breads, veggies black bean burgers, cakes, their signature “Hippie Bars”—energy bars made with hemp seed oil—and more.

PHOTO | BART PADALINO
Amwell Valley Diner located in Ringoes, New Jersey is a favorite among locals where customers are greeted by the owner, Aglaia Siliverdis.
311 rocks the Wellmont Theater in Montclair

By Mike LaFisca

311 (pronounced three eleven), the rock, reggae, rap group from Omaha, Nebraska, packed the crowd like a rush hour subway way at the Wellmont Theater in Montclair on Saturday October 28. Coming off a full summer tour behind their 2017 album, "Mosaic," the band continued right into fall. This is the first time they’ve done a fall tour in seven years.

Before the show began the line to enter was two blocks down the street from the 2,200 capacity theater. Fans sporting 311 shirts, hats, socks, and even pants, jumped up and down to keep warm in the cool fall night. Many fans not decked in 311 apparel came in costume to celebrate Halloween's fast approach. Outfits included 80’s hair metal band, cats, skeletons, and, of course, people dressed as the members of 311 itself.

311 is named after the police code for "indecent exposure" in their hometown of Omaha, and is made up of Nick Hexum (Vocals/Guitar), SA Martinez (Vocals/DJ), P. Nott(Bass), Tim Mahoney (Guitar), and Chad Sexton (Drums/Percussion). Dubbed "The Beatles of Rap Rock" by news host John Oliver, 311 started in 1990. They have 14 studio albums with all five original members still in the band. Twenty-seven years later, they are kings of live performance.

Vocalist SA Martinez talked with The VOICE and explained his straightforward view about why 311 is a success, "We enjoy what we do, it comes from the heart."

Martinez explained, “We worked with [Feldmann] three quarters of the way through making the album. We never switched things up like that, and he had a different approach. It was a 180 shift of how we operate, but we’re most likely going to continue with him in other directions in the future.”

As soon as the band shifted back to older material and played their 1997 hit, "Beautiful Disaster" the mosh pits re-formed and heads started banging.

"311 shows are the most exhilarating concerts I’ve ever been at each concert. They connect with the audience in a way that not every artist can. They show they’re having fun with the fans and you can feel the positive energy they give off. Everyone is together enjoying the moment, dancing, letting loose, and not having a care in the world.”

-Marisa Falsetti, Nursing Major

"311 shows are the most exhilarating concerts I’ve ever been at each concert. They connect with the audience in a way that not every artist can. They show they’re having fun with the fans and you can feel the positive energy they give off. Everyone is together enjoying the moment, dancing, letting loose, and not having a care in the world.”

Frontman Nick Hexum of 311 performing live at the Wellmont on Oct. 28.

"We’re a several decades entity at this point, you don’t get that far just on your charm. You need a big net of support and our fan base is that for us. So honestly, it was a nod to them for being with us for so long, and making them feel a whole part of this whole process.”

Playing the 2001 hit, "Amber," Mahoney made a groovy, Grateful Dead sound with his guitar, while Martinez provided harmonies underneath Hexum’s melody. The audience was led into a sing-a-long while dancing under the blue and yellow lighting projected around the theater.

311 ended their set with the 1995 hit, "Down," their 2017 song "One and the Same," and their 1993 song "Unity." Hexum dedicated these to "the old school 311 fans," showing the band still goes back to their music roots.

Elizabethtown graduate and Yardville resident Noah Rusnak said, "This was my fourth time seeing 311 and I’ve been impressed with variety of music and energy they put in at each show. The set was energetic and the crowd reflected the energy of the band.”

What is next for 311? Martinez hinted, "We’ve made some changes in our organization and things are lined up for now and we feel like we need to get back in the studio to make another record. We’re grateful to be where we’re at." Not having a time for the arrival on a new album he did say, "We’re going to try to come with another one relatively soon.”

As the band left the stage Nick Hexum said one last thing, "Stay positive and love your life," quoting the song "Unity," adding that "311 is down for the unity, Unanimity is down for the unity."
The 2016-2017 Mercer Men’s Basketball team struggled to stay on the court due to issues in the classroom, and when they were on the court they weren’t exactly the ’96 Chicago Bulls.

Last season’s team won just two games, and just two of last year’s players are returning to the team this season. Guards Dave Coulange from Burlington Twp. High School, and Jamir Jenkins from Nottingham High School are the two returning from last season. Jenkins will start the season injured, but Athletic Director John Simone believes he will return to form soon and provide an immediate impact. Simone told The VOICE, “He’ll be back soon and ready to play.”

One of the biggest advantages, but also one of the biggest disadvantages for Mercer this season will be the arrival of their 14 new players. It may be hard for the Vikings to roll at first, but some believe this team will mesh well.

Of those 14 new players, Guard/Forward Eddie Williams from Calvary Christian High School in Clearwater, FL, is a player that is expected to have a big season. Simone believes that along with Williams, John Evans, a guard from Camden High, will be in the lineup as well to provide some life in their offense. Simone believes that having John Evans, a guard coming from Camden High, in the lineup along with Williams will give some life to their offense.

The season continues on October 22 at the Flemington Ice Arena in Hunterdon, NJ.

The arena was filled with friends and family of the players.

Play was tight and with scores landing on both side. By the second period the goal scoring was tied with two goals each.

Midway into the third period Flyers player Kyle Washkalutch scored with an assist from Ben Meisinger. The Renegades answered that with their own goal two minutes later but it wasn’t enough to close the gap.

The final score was 5-3 for the Jr Flyers.

Afterwards, the coaches from the Renegades shared a variety of opinions on how the night’s game went, and what the players could have done differently.

“I could have gone better, the kids tried hard, just mental mistakes and it costs us the game. They could have crashed the net harder and listened to what the coaches told them, what they needed to be doing,” said Assistant Coach Jonathan Craig.

Owner, general manager and co-head coach Cliff Graziano told The VOICE: “I think we actually played really well, even though we lost. Sometimes you win and you don’t play well and you get lucky, and sometimes you lose and you play well. It’s about developing good habits and I think we are well on our way to becoming one of the better teams in the league.”

Graziano added, “I think we just need to pay attention to the little things. The little things are usually the important things, but they are often overlooked by a lot of players. And once they do that and realize that, we are going to be that much better.”

Graziano’s co-head coach, Peter Rossi says, “I thought after losing the first period we came back and battled back to tie the second and third. But the problem is we can’t start slow and give up two goals, especially against good teams.”

He added, “They gotta get ready to go right from the drop of the puck. We can’t wake up all of a sudden the second period and decide that now’s the time to play.”

“The players on the NJ Renegades added their perspectives on the game.

Defensive Brian Frister said, “You know we had a slow start in the first period, and a little bit of a slow start at the first five minutes of the second period, but other than that we were taking it to ’em.”

Forward Alec Dugan analyzed the team’s weaknesses saying, “I thought we performed all right. Just the small mistakes hurt us. We definitely just need to minimize the gray zone turnovers, and just the bad aspects of our game to really just fine tune us for the rest of the season.”

As for his overall play and his penalty, Dugan said, “I was in the box for six minutes haha...I think I brought the intensity all 60 minutes. Just try to jump start the boys, get them going. And I thought it helped the second period.”

The coaches for the Renegades say they are focused on helping their players get where need be.

Rossi says, “We take pride in having our kids reach the next level whether it’s they go on to NCAA hockey, club hockey, or just they get into college and enjoy that experience.”
Mercer to add a men’s lacrosse team in 2018
Adding a men’s team raises a possible Title IX problem

By Jackson Thompson
Sports Reporter

Fall 2017 marks the first official phase in the development of Mercer County Community College’s men’s lacrosse program. Head Coach Robert Siris, formerly boys lacrosse head coach at Hopewell High School, is tasked with building the program as he makes the transition from high school to collegiate level head coach.

Siris told The VOICE: “It was a tough decision for me to leave Hopewell but I have really strong connections with people in central Jersey, and I think this is a great opportunity.”

The program is currently in its recruitment phase. Head Director John Simone’s primary goal for fall of 2017 is establishing a core of players, consisting of prospects enrolled at Mercer, high school prospects from New Jersey to Pennsylvania, as well as transfers from Division I programs across the country.

Siris says: “I’ve been in contact with about 60 recruits from all around New Jersey. Pennsylvania, the shore area so the recruiting process has gone really well and I think there’s a strong interest in playing lacrosse around Mercer County.”

He added, “It seems like our roster for next year might be filled over the next month or so.”

One of the first recruits is former Hightstown High School lacrosse and football player, and Delaware Valley transfer, Tommy Nicola. After suffering a shoulder injury, he is making the transition from football at Delaware Valley to men’s lacrosse at Mercer.

Nicola says, “We got a bunch of athletes, were just looking to move forward and create a program like the soccer team and baseball team that we already have here. We just want to build a winning program.”

The program is scheduled to transition into organized practices in the spring, and by next fall is expected to be playing intramural games against other schools. Spring of 2019 will mark the program’s first official season as a Varsity NJCAA men’s lacrosse team and will compete in Division 3 against other junior college programs in the region.

Athletic Director John Simone says “I would hope by Spring ’19 we have a roster of 25 students playing lacrosse here on our turf field...I don’t know how competitive we’ll be early on. It will take time to build a team, and all those things, so it could take two years just to get more competitive.”

According to Simone a turf field devoted to Lacrosse just finished being seeded and will be ready by the spring. Some old space has been cleared out and is being renovated to serve as a locker room for the team. A key area of concern with the new program is that it will create an imbalance between men’s and women’s teams at Mercer.

Under Title IX—the landmark federal civil right that prohibits sex discrimination in education—every college is required to have an even number of men’s and women’s athletic programs. The addition of the men’s lacrosse team will put the men’s programs one above the women’s. Under the law, the college has a three year window after the official induction of the program to address this imbalance.

Mercer President, Dr. Jianping Wang told The VOICE how the college plans to proceed.

“We’re taking two steps. One is we have to sort of wind down a program that is not very robust, and that happens to be a men’s team...It is one of those teams that is not very robust, not very attractive I guess” Wang said in reference to the men’s cross country team.

Another option would be to introduce another women’s team to balance the numbers. Suggestions have been made that a women’s lacrosse team may be added at some point. However, adding a women’s team would require planning and resources that the college is not currently prepared to commit.

Dr. Wang responded to this option saying: “You have to build one team at a time. It’s not easy to build even one team. To concurrently build two teams is just not feasible.”

Wang continued “You have to hire a coach. You have to have a locker room. You have to buy the equipment. You have to have storage space. It’s a lot of logistics going there... Logistically speaking, nobody does that kind of thing unless you have Princeton money, then it’s not a problem.”

Men’s Soccer: Underdog team wins Region 19 Championship

By Drew Mumich
Reporter

On Saturday October 28, a collection of soccer players with origins spanning from Trenton to Jordan traveled to the Princeton Grounds at Conshohocken, PA to battle an undefeated Essex Essex team for a championship title.

Coming into this game with 16 wins under their belt Mercer’s soccer team faced the task of playing the underdog role against an Essex team that hadn’t lost a game dating back to October of 2016.

A silence swept over the crowd as the first period began, Mercer starting on offense and were able to get the ball in to the Essex half of the field but couldn’t break through. The crowd sat in still anticipation, waiting for the Essex team to score. The Essex’s Cheering Section was met with a different routines from the side.

Both teams fought back and forth flinging the ball from one corner of the field to the other. Mercer scored the first goal in the last two minutes of the first half. The crowd of only a handful of Mercer and Essex fans celebrated accordingly.

As Karissa Estelle says “It’s us and the players families.” Mercer’s soccer team is almost all international with only two American born players. As the game went on the they the spectators constantly updated Facebook to let the families in other countries know.

The Vikings and Wolverines fought until the end of the first half. Mercer in the lead by one goal. This wasn’t the end of the battle as Coach Widmark said to his team in a halftime speech, “This game is gonna be ugly, it’s not gonna be pretty.”

The second half started off with a bang as the teams caught their second wind and halfway through Mercer goal keeper Francesco Zanin lunged head first into a clear to catch the ball before it was scored. He had a scoreless first half letting one goal in on the second, and have his only save resulting in an injury. Which was sustained by diving head first.

Both he and the player he head-butted from The Wolverines went down. The Essex players walked off the field, while Zanin stayed down, both coaches ran onto the field, wrapped his head, and much to the disbelief of the audience, he stood up and played for the rest of the game.

Mercer scored two more goals within this time, and Essex, though fighting very hard, scored only one goal. When asked to talk to the fans, they refused to comment.

As the game went on both teams never stopped fighting until the end of the second buzzer, Mercer winning by two. The energy on the field still radiating afterwards as the teams shook hands, an emotional time for both teams, as one is seen upset and sad from their loss, while the other celebrated their victory.

After the game, Player Chadwan Johnson told The VOICE that the Essex team had a great season, and that he is looking hopeful to next year. Emiliano Fama, a second year soccer player for Mercer said “The team build up confidence throughout the year, and all that confidence we showed here on the field today.”

If Mercer beats Monro via they will be headed to the National Championships.

On October 28, fans watched MCCC’s Men’s soccer team compete against Essex.

WOMEN’S XC GOES TO NATIONALS IN IOWA
The women’s cross country team won the Region 19 Championship and are going to the Nationals in Iowa. VOICE Editor in Chief, Maria Ramos, who is on the team, will be there. Look for a follow up on their season in our December issue!
After DACA, what’s next for Dreamers?

By Maria Mora  
Reporter

There are more than 800,000 children whose families brought them to the U.S. from other countries when they were little, but then overstayed their visas. The children, commonly known as Dreamers, are undocumented, and while they are allowed to attend public schools through high school, after that things get much harder. Many colleges won’t accept them, they cannot get financial aid, and they live with the constant prospect of being deported back to countries they have never called home.

Earlier this year President Donald Trump decided to terminate a program that was established to address this group. The program is called Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Act, or DACA. DACA required an application process and fee and allowed Dreamers to gain a provisional status which made them eligible to work and go to college.

Those people who were dependent on DACA—including many Mercer students—now face great uncertainty.

Karen Segura, a current Mercer student, who is 19 years old, told The VOICE: “I am a citizen, but I know a lot of people who are being affected by the removal of DACA. It is becoming a problem for those who are currently in school. They’re not even sure if they’ll be able to graduate or continue their education.”

The President gave Congress six months to come up with a replacement for DACA. Republicans have proposed a plan called SUCCEED, while Democrats are advancing an alternative called DREAM.

The SUCCEED Act, proposed by Republican senators Thom Tillis, James Lankford and Orrin Hatch, would offer a 15 year road for undocumented children, who came to the U.S. before the age of 16, and who have continuously resided in the U.S. since 2012, to gain their citizenship.

During the 15 year process, Dreamers would be protected from deportation, allowing them to maintain permanent residency in the U.S., as long as they commit no crimes. They would also be required to stay enrolled in school if they are under age 18. Those over 18 would be required to obtain a high school diploma or GED and attend college or enroll in the U.S. military.

However, SUCCEED comes with a catch; several catches actually. First, President Trump has insisted that the wall with Mexico be built as part of any protection for Dreamers. Second, recipients would be required to sign a conditional departure order, which states that if they fail to comply with the terms of their status, they would be obligated to leave the US without resisting, essentially signing their own deportation orders. The third catch is that while those in the SUCCEED program would be able to gain full citizenship after 15 years, they would not be permitted to sponsor family members—including spouses and children—to help them obtain legal status in the U.S.

On the other side of the aisle, the Democrats in Congress have proposed an alternate plan called the DREAM Act. This is an updated version of an Act that has failed to be passed several times since 2001, and which ultimately led former President Obama to create the DACA program.

The new DREAM proposal has a lot of similarities to SUCCEED, but there are some stark contrasts as well. They both require thorough background checks, and the obligation to maintain student or military status and to avoid trouble with the law. However, DREAM does not support the conditional departure order, or eliminate the possibility of sponsoring certain family members.

A source who asked to remain anonymous due to her undocumented status told The VOICE, “As a mother of a Dreamer, I support both bills. SUCCEED grants my child to stay. Even if they can’t sponsor me as his mom, I know he will be okay, and that’s what is important to me at this point.”

Another woman in a similar situation, told The VOICE, “I know I am older and do not have the same opportunities as my children. However, I want them to be safe here, and continue on what I brought them here to do, which is to work hard and achieve an education.”

Anonymous Mother of a Dreamer

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Anonymous Mother of a Dreamer

The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services website lists how currently enrolled members can retain both DACA and their work authorization until they expire.

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DIVERSITY COMES TO GeekVILLE
NEW YORK COMIC CON LOOKS TO INCREASE MINORITY AND LGBT REPRESENTATION

Say "Comic Con" and most people already have an image in their head: A bunch of fat, old, white guys in costumes clearly meant for someone several sizes smaller, with not a woman or minority in sight. But this October 5-8 at New York Comic Con, fans of many different backgrounds came together to celebrate their shared geekdom.

Panels exploring diversity ruled the schedule this year. From explorations of hip-hop culture in comic books to discussions on gender identity, not a single kind of person was left unincluded.

Alexis Sanchez, co-founder of LatinXGeeks, was responsible for promoting positive Latinx representation, part of which included organizing a panel entitled "The Invisible Latinx" which covered the struggles of improving Latinx representation in media.

Sanchez told The VOICE, "It was nerve-wracking. I wasn’t really sure if they’d pick up. There had never been an all Latinx panel before." She continued, "But they did, and it was exciting."

Sanchez explained that this was her fourth year attending New York Comic Con. Comparing this year to those previously she noted there were "Definitely more diversity panels. But where I think it matters is in panels like ‘X-Men Through History,’ and there was more diversity there...I think this year people are more comfortable. And you see more cosplayers of color, which I love. It’s more in the spotlight."

Cameron Glover, a writer and activist, moderated a "#BlackComicsMonth" panel. In an interview with The VOICE conducted through online messaging she said "This year I’ve seen more panels, speakers, meet-ups and cosplayers being outspoken about the role that identity and marginalization plays in their lives, and how they feel about nerd culture. That has really been inspiring to see, especially since so much of nerd culture [still] hinges on gate keeping."

The VOICE also spoke with the Vice President of Geeks OUT, which has a focus on LGBT representation in pop culture, Nicole Gitau. Gitau, a New York Comic Con veteran of five years took a slightly different position saying, "In the past 3 or 4 years there has been a shift towards accepting fans of all backgrounds and making safe spaces."

Gitau emphasized that changes in the political climate did not spur a sudden interest in diversity. Rather, she said, "What we’re seeing this year is the latest in a series of changes. Conventions of this size don’t just change in a year. They were making these changes a long time ago; we’re seeing it pay off now."

Speaking of this year’s Comic Con, Cameron Glover, a writer and activist, moderated a "#BlackComicsMonth" panel. In an interview with The VOICE conducted through online messaging she said "This year I’ve seen more panels, speakers, meet-ups and cosplayers being outspoken about the role that identity and marginalization plays in their lives, and how they feel about nerd culture. That has really been inspiring to see, especially since so much of nerd culture [still] hinges on gate keeping."

By Griffin Jones
Senior Reporter

PHOTO | GRIFFIN JONES

At New York’s annual Comic Con on Oct. 5-8, 2017, panels discussed diversity and increased representation of minority groups. Above: Alexis Sanchez, co-founder of LatinXGeeks, lead a panel entitled "The Invisible Latinx."
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Cameron Glover, Writer and Activist

NEW YORK COMIC CON LOOKS TO INCREASE MINORITY AND LGBT REPRESENTATION

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Speaking of the convention organizers she continued, "The organizer's efforts to bring more diversity to the panels makes me feel like they're sending a message that people of all those identities are welcome at the event."

Not all experiences were positive, however. Bleeding Cool, a news outlet focusing on geek culture, reported that in a Marvel Q & A with comic retailers discussion about Marvel's diversity push got heated as attendees began to shout slurs such as "homo" and "freaking females."

Glover mentioned another negative side saying, "I feel like both push back and push for diversity is becoming more out in the open."

While Sanchez saw progress, she also had some criticisms saying, "A lot of the diversity panels are still relegated to smaller rooms in the back."

But the consensus was that representation is improving. Glover said, "I think overall, the voices of those saying that change needs to happen is louder."

The push for diversity is spreading beyond NYC as well. This November 18, Philadelphia will host Nerdtino Expo, which is billed as "The first East Coast Latinx comic book, sci-fi, fantasy, horror convention."

PHOTO | GRIFFIN JONES

PEOPLE TO GEEKVILLE

DIVERSITY COMES TO GEEKVILLE

PHOTO | GRIFFIN JONES

PHOTO | GRIFFIN JONES

PHOTO | GRIFFIN JONES

At New York's annual Comic Con on Oct. 5-8, 2017, panels discussed diversity and increased representation of minority groups. ABOVE: Alexis Sanchez, co-founder of LatinXGeeks, lead a panel entitled "The Invisible Latinx."
Tuesday, Nov. 7, the entire New Jersey government went up for grabs as a series of elections were held that would decide the new occupants of the State House and the Governor’s Mansion. The election’s effects will reverberate nationwide, but they will be most profoundly felt on the local level.

Legislative Districts 14 and 15 include most of the Mercer County area. The 14th District contains Hamilton, and the 15th includes Trenton and Ewing. In both districts every seat went Democratic on Election Night, even the Hamilton area, which is usually split down the middle between Democrats and Republicans.

Each district voted in one state senator, and two assemblymen to send to the legislature. The senators and assemblymen will represent the students of Mercer County Community College when debating state laws. But what issues do they plan to take up for their constituents?

When asked what issues he thought were most important to college students, aside from keeping tuition costs down, Assemblyman Dan Benson, of the 14th Legislative District, said, “Well, I think it’s about making sure that there’s affordable housing to go to after they graduate and that there are jobs available to them, and that’s why in my campaign, as well as in my tenure, I’ve always focused on making sure we have high paying, quality jobs, particularly for those first jobs out of college.”

Shirley Turner, who represents the 15th District in the State Senate responded to the same question. She emphasized the need to keep costs down, but also added that college students “Are also concerned about civil rights ... human rights.” She continued, “They feel that people should be accepted regardless of their race, ethnicity, religion, or gender.”

Benson was asked about Governor-Elect Phil Murphy’s promise to increase funding for public colleges. He told The VOICE, “Well, I know his focus right now first is on making sure we start getting some more revenue in, focus on fully funding education and growing our economy. If we grow our economy then we can start working on these aspects of phasing out funding to get ourselves to a more affordable college tuition here in NJ.”

Turner agreed that funding should be a priority, saying that currently “We’re not funding [public colleges] adequately. That’s why we’ve seen the tuition spike as much as it has.”

When asked about Murphy’s plan to make community college tuition-free, Turner expressed a similar opinion to Benson’s on college funding saying, “I think that would be ideal, community college education tuition free for anyone who wants to continue their education beyond high school.” She added, “But it may not be possible to do right now because we have so many other pressing financial needs that have to be addressed.”

The senator also gave her opinion on dealing with the current opioid crisis in the state, advocating for a two-pronged approach, “I think first of all we need to better educate people in terms of the dangers of becoming hooked on drugs, no matter what the form it takes...Prevention is the mainstay in terms of any approach.” She continued, “But also treatment.”

Senator Turner noted that the state lacks resources needed to properly combat the epidemic, “We don’t have the residential treatment facilities that I think we need in this state if we’re going to rehabilitate addicts.”

Benson seemed to agree with Turner on this point, noting that one of the issues he will fight for in the Assembly will be “Fighting for expanding health care coverage, fighting for Medicaid.”

Turner, broke with the Governor-Elect’s plans in one significant area, however. While Murphy has promised to sign a marijuana legalization bill into law within his first 100 days, Turner said, “Oh I don’t think it’s going to be achieved in the first 100 days, no I don’t.”

She continued, “I think we need to think long and hard about legalization of a drug at a time when we have an epidemic in terms of opioid addiction.” She added that legalizing marijuana would be “opening Pandora’s Box.”

OPINION: Murphy promised, now let’s hold him to it!

Sean O’Connor

Phil Murphy was just elected Governor of New Jersey this week. I hope he keeps his promise to make taxes here fairer, and more affordable because as you probably know, New Jersey is way too expensive! It’s our job as the people who elected him to serve us to make sure he does what he said he would do.

An honest heart of our tax crisis and what makes New Jersey so expensive is our present inability to fully fund our public schools. An actual "school funding formula" was established by the New Jersey legislature back in 2008 but Governor Chris Christie refused to actually follow the formula, even though the New Jersey Supreme Court literally ordered him to do it last January.

For a clearer understanding of why this school funding formula is so important consider what David Danzis explained in the New Jersey Herald last February. He said: “376 school districts throughout New Jersey are underfunded based on [the formula]. Worse still, 239 of those districts receive less than 70 percent of what they should be getting. Conversely, 209 districts receive more than 100 percent of what the law says they should get.”

And the consequence? Our serious, state-wide property tax crisis. And for renters that’s driving up costs for us too since landlords and the owners of apartment complexes have to pay that tax and charge us more to make a profit.

Danzis quotes New Jersey Superintendent Ken Greene who spoke to the NJ legislature last January. “Districts are forced to try and make up the differences by raising their local taxes.”

In other words, property taxes: taxes on home ownership and business buildings too. But with home and business owners particularly in the middle class - paying so much money just to live and work in New Jersey while some of the richest in our state literally get away with not paying their taxes, the set up we college students are working so hard to pay for our new lives in is absolutely unfair!

Phil Murphy grasps this and told Christian Herrick of The Observer last June that he would fully fund the school formula and he would raise taxes on the New Jersey’s richest - to cover the costs. Republicans might argue that this is an unfair attack on the rich, who are guilty only of being successful, but we must keep in mind, some of these people are the ones who have been paying us minimum wage that is impossible to live on. In other words, some have been getting rich because they’ve been exploiting us.

Here’s more... Murphy told Claude Browsers-Anger of NJ Advance Media for NJ.com last July, if elected he would eliminate “a tax loophole that allows corporations to shift profit made in New Jersey to lower-taxed states.”

This particular policy is referred to as “combined reporting.” According to The Institute for Local Self-Reliance in a June, 2010 report “Closing State Corporate Tax Loopholes: Combined Reporting” this policy has been upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court, and is the law of the land in 25 states “As of December 2015.”

Especially noteworthy here: it’s not just the Democratic states like Hawaii, Vermont, and our beloved neighbor, New York. It’s also Republican states like Utah, Texas and Idaho. So Murphy and our state legislature in theory really shouldn’t have a problem with this. This is just one loophole he says he’ll get rid of.

There are other aspects of Murphy’s plan but the last one I want to mention is his call for legalizing marijuana because he told Brent Johnson of NJ Advance Media for NJ.com back in August that he “projects” the legalization of marijuana could raise “300 million a year in tax revenue.” Not to mention, as he’s said throughout the campaign, there’s also the social justice element here.

Many New Jerseyans have been unfairly imprisoned for the sale and/or possession of marijuana, and frankly, as many know, it has been disproportionately minorities, so, the tax issue aside, it needs be legalized.

I’m happy Murphy has a plan to make home ownership in New Jersey possibly much more affordable. I am willing to give him a chance, but we’ve got to keep our eyes on him and make sure he does what he promised: increase taxes on the rich, get rid of those tax loopholes, and legalize marijuana.
November on Netflix

RATINGS KEY

So good you’ll be binge watching previous seasons
People will be talking about it. A show that could become addictive.
Worth a watch if you want mindless fun.
Don’t bother.

By Laura Pollack
Senior Reporter

The College VOICE
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November on Netflix

Stranger Things 2 - Release Oct. 27

The whole gang is back for a second season of the standout sci-fi drama. This year some new characters are added and a bigger, badder monster takes over where the demogorgon left off. Unfortunately most of the extra cast members don’t have much to add and some plot developments are so silly it make it impossible to suspend your disbelief. Millie Bobby Brown, as Eleven, is still hypnotic, and Sean Astin as Joyce Byers’s new love interest brings depth and warmth. But some of the best talent is under used. The plot grinds under its own weight. It’s worth a watch but not binge worthy. Hang in for Season 3. Hopefully it’ll be better.

Jim & Andy: The Great Beyond - Release Nov. 1

It’s a movie about a movie about a guy who used to make movies played by a guy who makes movies. But seriously, if you like deep dives, this is a good documentary about the comedian Jim Carrey and the time he spent working on the movie Man on the Moon, for which he won a Golden Globe award. In the movie he played real life crazy, comedy genius and performance artist Andy Kaufman. The documentary sifts through hundreds of hours of behind the scenes footage and makes a highly watchable piece on the power of performance. Maybe it is a bit too lauding of its central characters, but Jim & Andy is edited well and engaging.

Marvel’s The Punisher - Release Nov. 17

Yup, another series from the Marvel universe. As of press time, we still have four days to wait before we can dive in. In this installment we follow Frank Castle, a man who avenges the death of his wife and children, but ends up uncovering deep conspiracies within the criminal underworld. Known as “The Punisher,” Castle (played by the stoic Jon Bernthal, who you know from The Wolf of Wall Street) goes on to root out villains etc. etc. Look, if you’re a fan of this kind of thing, it’s bound to be delicious. Even if it’s hokey, like Jessica Jones, it’ll still be good. If you’re not into the genre, there’s no chance you will be able to enjoy this.

King Crossword

ACROSS
1 Eye layer
5 Poorly illuminated
8 Answer an invite
12 Send a naughty photo
13 Environmental profile
14 Elevator name
15 Goblin part
16 Camomile-eating bird
18 Highly odorous
20 Most up-to-date
21 Satan’s purse
23 Post occupancy
24 Snapshots
28 Omit
31 Web address
32 Darenst
34 A Gabon sister
35 Settled a debt
37 False teeth
39 Wire measure
41 Kitchen, e.g.
42 On the schedule
45 Tropical fruit
49 Blends
51 “American —
52 Sandwich

DOWN
1 Letters on old
2 Kill a bill
3 One of the brass, for short
4 Maximally
5 Hosp. area
6 Garden party
7 Galley girl
8 GPS findings
9 One who joggs
10 Competes
11 “Hey, you!”
12 Spigot
13 Masterstroke
14 Shunned person
15 Letters on old
16 Young dog
17 Playlist
18 Reach a peak
19 Short story?
20 “ — Get a Secret”
21 Old portico
22 Handsome
23 Markings
24 "Same as above"
25 Baseball arbor
26 Romanian money
27 Old Italian coin
28 Hammer
29 Urn
30 Brew products
31 Craft, e.g.
32 Hebrew month
33 Cover-up
34 Bizarre
35 Baseball
36 Markings
37 "Secret"
38 “ — Got a Secret”
39 “ — Get a Secret”
40 “ — Got a Secret”
41 “ — Got a Secret”
42 “ — Got a Secret”
43 “ — Got a Secret”
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52 “ — Got a Secret”

So good you’ll be binge watching previous seasons
People will be talking about it. A show that could become addictive.
Worth a watch if you want mindless fun.
Don’t bother.
Last weekend two VOICE staffers went on assignment to cover a psychic conference in Doylestown, PA. We arrived to find half a dozen psychics and a few lonely vendors wandering dreamily around the James-Lorah Memorial Home, a historic building with an open auditorium space. They were carrying everything from essential oils to tarot cards.

In the small reception hall there were six physics, each assigned a table by host, Elizabeth Joyce, who, incidentally, predicted a Clinton victory last November. Joyce sent attendances to the psychic she felt would help them the most. But there weren’t a lot of attendees. It’s not clear if anyone predicted that.

Passing by one of the booths, a woman reached out and informed us that we are in the “baby stages of the 5th dimension,” which will last for over 200 years. Apparently, this will give us the power to access the “8th through 12th chakras” with names like “Libra,” “Infinity” and inexplicably, “li-MC(2)”. Also, it seems like when I achieve the 12th chakra I will obtain the sutras of “teleportation” and “Father.” This news left me somewhere between confounded and terrified of whatever “Father” is.

Joyce has been a psychic for over 30 years, training under a half dozen mediums like Mata Amritanandamayi, (or “Amma” for lay people), the Hugging Saint. Joyce has hosted these gatherings for ten years as a charity event.

Sharon Kahara, a psychic from Long Branch, said of Joyce: “She is one of the top psychic energy worker healers.”

Saying what you will about psychics, their hearts are in the right place. This year’s charity was the Twilight Wish Foundation, which is like the Make a Wish Foundation but for the elderly.

Spokesperson Annabel Wood said of Twilight, “The foundation is all about helping seniors achieve what they have never been able to achieve before.”

To make a wish you have to be 65 years old or older, but you do not have to have a terminal illness. Wishes can be anything from a special trip to a useful item like a hearing aid. Periodically throughout the event there were guest speakers, who spoke on everything from “Omm” bowls, to the pyramids, to new spiritual beliefs. One woman named Luna was selling authentic Tibetan Singing Bowls, otherwise known as “Omm Bowls.” When they are rubbed on the sides they create a single note that sounds like their name. Each bowl has a specific note, and each person’s ears are known to have a certain note played for them and only them. The bigger the bowl the lower the note.

Other vendors were selling tea leaves and essential oils.

In an interview with fifth generation psychic Kaitell Paige she described her first time seeing a dead person. She said she was channeling with a client and she kept seeing an image of an old woman with her hair dyed pink. Channeling is the belief system that everyone has spirit guides or guardian angels.

Another psychic in attendance was Celeste Oli- ver. She is a descendant of the Fox Sisters, 19th century psychics known as the “Founders of Modern Spiritualism.” The sisters’ interest in connecting to another plane created great controversy among their fam- ily members. Celeste is a channeler. She also lets people know their loved ones are still out there. “You do it for the greater good of the person in front of you.”

Another vendor showing the VOICE how to play a traditional “Omm Bowl” that course can purchase for $65-$135.

A vendor showing the VOICE how to play a traditional “Omm Bowl,” course can purchase for $65-$135.

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Congressman Chris Smith needs to go!

Sean O'Connor

Many people on Mercer’s campus are represented in Congress by a hypocritical and evasive man named Chris Smith who needs to be voted out in the next cycle.

There are a lot of reasons to oust Smith, but the most important one of all is that Smith doesn’t care about his constituents and we know that because he won’t talk to them.

Smith—a Republican who represents Mercer communities Robbinsville and Hamilton—has been in office since 1980 and hasn’t made himself available for a public comment since 1992.

When I called Chris Smith’s office to ask why he hasn’t responded to his constituents, they declined to comment.

People show up at his little storefront headquarters in Freehold to protest and he hasn’t even bothered to open the door. The local activist group called District 4 Coalition has no intention of subjecting his constituents to the animosity and hostility that has been directed at him and his staff. Is he really afraid of his constituents facing animosity?

Another constituent who has tried to get in touch with Smith is Kevin Akey, 66, retired and presently living in Little Silver—one of the towns represented by Smith. Akey is part of the activist organization Indivisible NJ 4. He told me he wants to discuss issues like health care, reproductive rights, the Muslim ban, and gun control with Smith and calls Smith’s offices “just about every day,” but even staffers in charge of specific policy areas are “never available on the phone” and that Smith is “notoriously hard to get a hold of.”

Akey and his group have been petitioning Smith to hold a town hall meeting since last January and have personally delivered petitions to Smith’s Washington D.C. and Freehold offices, but they’ve received absolutely no response on the matter.

They also put a petition up on change.org to get Smith to address his constituents and 1,587 people have signed it as of November 4. Still no word from Smith.

One person who actually did manage to get a comment from Smith’s office is Katie Park, Sge, who reported on Smith’s absence last February for the Asbury Park Press. Smith aide, Jeff Sagnip, got back to her a few hours after she made her request and sent a statement saying that “[Congressman] Smith has no intention of subjecting his constituents to the animosity and hostility that has been directed at him and his staff.” Is he really afraid of his constituents facing animosity?

Another reporter, Tom Moran, in his column for The Star-Ledger last February, reported that Smith was upset because people “called [him] an asshole, and worse than that.” Smith reportedly said, “And when people call me an asshole, I’m less likely to take their opinions seriously.”

Of course there is no indication he ever took anyone’s opinion seriously. Moreover, President Trump’s ramapant name calling doesn’t appear to have caused Smith any concern. He hasn’t distanced himself from the President at all. He is quite insulting himself. Last January he said—as reported by NJ Advance Media—that he does “not construe homosexual rights as human rights.”

I don’t condone name calling, but if Smith has been utterly incapacitated by mean comments from constituents since 1982, unable to address any issue for a quarter of a century, he’s obviously not fit to hold office.

Even Republican students on our campus find Smith’s inaccessibility alarming. When asked what she thought about Smith’s 25 year long reluctance to hold a town hall, Mercer Freshman Angela Pettinato, one of Smith’s constituents, and a Republican from Robbinsville, said “I think that’s horrible!” She added she would not vote to reelect him in 2018.

Mercer student Mi- kayla Eckel Cifrese, also a Republican from Hamilton said of Smith: “He’s supposed to represent the people. To just ignore everyone, that’s not okay. If he’s not able to do it he should not be a politician.”

This October CNN reported on a Washington Post—University of Maryland poll that found “71 percent of Americans say politics has reached a dangerous low point.”

If we continue to elect people like Chris Smith, who ignore their constituents and discriminate against many of them, anger and divisiveness will surely get worse.

Challengers and their supporters need to get to work now. We deserve to be represented by someone who will actually hold a town hall, preferably more than once every 25 years. Actually, we deserve a lot more than that, but it would be a good start.

Top five Thanksgiving guests to watch out for

5. The Malcontent Nothing makes this person happy except telling you about everything that makes them unhappy.

4. The Narsy Ever wanted to know all the things (real and imaginary) that you are doing to ruin your health and your life? This person will tell you.

3. The Badger No matter how happy you are with your life, the Badger thinks you should have done something different (gone to law school, married an accountant, moved to Mars) and is still trying to get you to do it by badgering you about it at every family occasion.

2. The Whack-job Known for their inedible food (even though they insist they have studied culinary arts), the Whack-job makes the day extra exciting by inserting useless information into the conversation, showing you naked baby photos and giving ill-timed foot rubs.

1. The Woode The Woode is the most unpleasant and despicable family member there is. Usually a hybrid of at least two other types, some woodies demonstrate all four evil personality traits at once!

Where’s Congressman Chris Smith? Probably wherever Waldo is.

Where's Waldo?

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EDITORIAL: The student email switch was a fiasco

“A significant amount of my day is taken up by students not knowing how to log into their Email account,” says Ar-iel Contreras, current Mercer library employee.

On Nov. 1 Mercer disconnected student and faculty Gmail accounts from their myMercer portals in order to convert to the new Microsoft Office Outlook programs. The big switch, as Contreras states, “wasn’t well advertised.”

The major switch in accounts and programs completely blindsided a majority of Mercer students and faculty. Contreras explains: “There was absolutely no communication in terms of the switch and students are still confused.”

Turns out, the college actually did send out an Email, though apparently, but students get tons of Email from the college and it wasn’t like the Email was the top. Didn’t anyone think the subject line, or even near it definitely would be visible, in a way that makes it sound like a topical ointment: “We have finished implementing Office 365…This allows for better communication and consistent applications…”

Better communication would have been not burying the lead. Eventually the letter comes around to the section that starts “If you still use your old Email, this is what you need to know.” It’s here that we are informed that our Google accounts will still exist until the day after Christmas, but if we want to know more about how to get back into them, there’s another document we can go read.

Most of us had all our class documents saved into our Google Drive accounts, because that’s what our professors told us to do. For those of us who didn’t read the notification carefully enough, or didn’t go read that other document they gave a link to, we woke up to find we couldn’t access documents we needed for class.

“At least once every couple of days I have a student struggling with recovering their documents.” Contreras says.

Rosemary Gurak, current Mercer student expresses, “Outlook is a pain in the ass!” She continues, “It’s not intuitive the way Google is.”

Possibly the most frustrating thing about the switch is that they changed our Email addresses by one letter. Instead of firstname.lastname@student.mccc.edu they just added an S to make the word “student” plural. Didn’t anyone think about the kind of confusion this would cause?

Here’s an example: you’re waiting to hear back from a college where you applied for transfer and you listed Email as the best way to contact you. Well, now you need to contact them (and of course it isn’t just one school, it’s more like seven) and tell them that we have a new Email address, and then try to explain over the phone that they need to add an S?

Of course, in the end, we’ll all just learn to adapt, because that’s what we always do at Mercer. We adapt when the whiteboards are smeared with black marker. We adapt when there are buckets in the halls collecting the rain water dripping through the ceiling. We just adapt.

But the reality is, this shift was abrupt, it distracted from our learning, and sending out a poorly crafted Email didn’t help.

Mercer prides itself on being a technologically accessible college. There are phone apps to access schedules, grades, and updates. There is a home-base website where course catalogs are accessed. Classes have Blackboard portals with course content. This “simple” email switch was touted as the “latest and greatest,” promising better communication between faculty, staff, and students. Instead it has just left everyone feeling disconnected.

CORRECTIONS

• In the Sept. 16 issue of The College VOICE, the article “Where do we stand on taking a knee?” identified the 49ers as the Giants as the winners of the 2011 Super Bowl.

• In the Sept. 16 issue of The College VOICE, the center-infographic “Mercer Money” incorrectly indicated the rates for student tickets averaging $44 at Mercer’s Kelsey Theatre. This price applies to ticket packages for multiple performances, whereas student tickets for individual shows are $9.

AD AND NOW A WORD FROM NFL COMMISSIONER ROGER GOODELL

“LIVE 2 DO”