Students lead nationwide rallies
Millions attend March for Our Lives rallies demanding stricter gun legislation

By Maria Ramos & Sean O'Connor
Senior Reporters

While more than 200,000 protesters went to Washington DC according to Digital & Imaging Service Inc. to call for greater gun control and demand action from their legislators, over an estimated 800 parallel marches were held across the country, including every state of the union. An estimated 5,000 people attended the March for Our Lives rally in Princeton that filled up Hinds Plaza by the public library, according to one of the event's co-organizers, Reverend Bob Moore.

Princeton High School senior Dziyana Zubilevich, who spearheaded the rally in Princeton and collaborated with Reverend Moore told The VOICE she expected only 500 to 800 people to show up.

"I had no idea it would be this successful. It's amazing to see how many people support this issue," she told The VOICE in an interview.

Mobs of faces could be seen peering through windows of the second and third floors of the Princeton Library, taking pictures of the rally below and holding signs. People in the lofts above Witherspoon Grill also stood outside their balconies to watch. One older couple posted a sign that read "thank you" on their railing.

Several people at the rally—both speakers and those who came simply to protest—have inspired by the leadership of the students from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, FL who survived the February 14 school shooting that took the lives of 17 of their friends, protesters lined the streets of New York City to advocate for stricter gun legislation at the March for Our Lives on March 24, 2018, including teens and elementary school children who spoke out

See PRINCETON RALLY page 9

Mercer student shot to death, found in creek

By Griffin Jones
Senior Reporter

The body of Mercer student Daniel Diaz-Delgado was found dead on the banks of the Assunpink Creek in Hamilton on March 24. According to authorities, when the body was recovered Diaz-Delgado had his hands tied behind his back and his face wrapped with duct tape. He had gunshot wounds to the head, torso and leg, according to a press release from the Mercer County Prosecutor’s Office.

Diaz-Delgado was 20-years-old and was studying engineering at Mercer.

An article by Rebecca Everett on nj.com says that divers from the Trenton Fire Department spent around two hours recovering evidence from the scene. Additional reports indicate that several bags of evidence were removed from the crime scene.

When asked whether the police had any leads, Olga Diaz, Delgado-Diaz’s mother, told The VOICE in an interview given in Spanish and translated by VOICE Editor-in-Chief Maria Ramos, "They do [have leads], but they told me not to talk about it."

Casey DeBlasio, a public information officer with the Mercer County Prosecutor’s Office says there is no indication that the death was the result of a hate crime.

Christian Hernandez, a close friend of Diaz-Delgado’s, said of his disappearance, "What the mom told me was when they came back around 4, about 5:30, he said he was going to set out to buy something for his little brother. His little brother told me that he might have been down around PA or Philly or Cherry Hill, but how he ended up in Hamilton, it’s just weird to me."

Olga Diaz says she got

See STUDENT SLAIN page 2
Friends of slain student say they want no more gun violence

Continued from page 1

worried when her son didn’t text her, as he never stayed out late. She says she went to hospita
tals and the police station when he didn’t return home, but be
cause she’s a non-native Eng
ish speaker she had difficulty communicating her problem.

The Interarsity Chris
tian Club at Mercer, in which Diaz-Delgado was heavily in
volved, organized a remem
brance ceremony for their friend on March 29. At the me
morial friends described Diaz
-Delgado warmly, reflecting on his kindness and good nature.

Denise Mosquera, who says she knew Diaz-Delgado since they were in seventh grade, told The VOICE, “He wanted to make everyone feel included. If you had a bad day, he would always make you feel better...He always kinda took care of you, you know.”

Jonathan Zahn, an
other friend of Diaz-Delgado’s through their shared love of martial arts, said, “There were different hard times in my life, just as there are different hard times in his where like, I strug
gled with being suicidal and like a couple of our other friends as well, like we struggled with be
ing suicidal and he helped pull us off the ledge.”

Jonathan Chan, who has known Diaz-Delgado his whole life since they were in daycare together, said of him, “His life wasn’t the easiest. You know he was always strug
gling with something at home or school or whatever the case may be, but he would always show positivity. He would al
ways try to keep going, no mat
ter what the problem or the situa
tion he was in.”

Zahn spoke of Diaz-Delgado’s passion for martial
arts. “Martial arts, especially taekwondo, ATA (American Taekwondo Association), the community that was one of the other family outlets, like...he has family, he has family from martial arts,” he said.

He also said of his friend, “No matter how many obstacles were in his way, he overcame every sin
gle obstacle in only ways he could.”

On Diaz-Delgado’s Facebook page, which has been turned into a memo
rial, is a picture of him and his little brother from 2015 following a martial arts tournament.

The caption reads, “On Saturday, it was my little brother’s first tournament!!! He didn’t place but me and my par
ents are still proud of his per
formances and that’s what’s more im
portant!”

Zahn told The VOICE, “He was big on family. He was our superhero. ”

Denise Mosquera, his mother, also spoke of the loss and the community’s response to it. “When the announcement of Diaz-Delgado’s death, Mosquera and other friends set up a GoFundMe page to help pay for his funeral costs. She said, “I just wanted to help his family alleviate the cost of going through a tragic event.”

She added that within 17 hours the page, which can be reached at www.gofundme.
com/remembering-our-friend
-danny, had already raised $1,360.

In addition to the warm remembrances, Diaz-Delgado’s friends say they feel a sense of frustra

tion.

Zahn said, “It makes no sense...it makes no logi
cal sense. He had no enemies. He had no one he ever hurt. It would almost feel better if the story was different. If he did have an enemy there would be a different type of closure.”

Chan said, “He was never doing anything bad, and I would know, because I was always with him. He would al
ways tell me everything.”

Elizabeth Sullivan-Crowley, a PHS freshman, said of the recent sugges
tions that the only way to stop gun violence in schools is to arm teachers, “I think it’s a bad idea and not
just be another name thrown out in the wind and be forgot
ten. I think that it should stop here.”

She added, “Danny should be the last case that is affected by gun violence. And I don’t know what my friends and I are going to do, how we’re going to get the community, or even if it’s just five people march
ning outside the State House. We will be there. We will be chanting the names that have been lost to gun violence, not just Danny, but everyone’s name.”

Police ask that anyone with information about the inci
cident call Sgt. Gary Wasko or Detective Michael Castaldo at (609) 989-6406.

Gunman shot in Princeton Panera

By Griffin Jones & Maria Ramos
Senior Reporters

just four days before five thousand people would gath
er in Princeton to protest gun violence. A gunman walked into the Panera Bread restaurant on Nassau Street and barri
caded himself inside.

Patrons and employ
ees fled to safety but what fol
lowed was a four and a half hour stand-off with police during which time negotia
tors tried, unsuccessfully, to talk the man down.

He was shot by the police and pronounced dead at the scene. No one else was injured.

Authorities lat
er identified the man as a Lawrenceville, NJ resident, 56-year-old Scott Mielenz, an Army veteran and former
IT worker who filed for dis
ability benefits in 2011. There he described suffering of anx
iety, depression and keeping himself away from social situ
ations according to an article published by nj.com.

Janeth Paz, who works at the State Farm Lo
cated above the Panera, was caught in the events.

She told The VOICE, “You don’t expect it to hap
pen to you, so you’re like, you don’t even know what to feel, you’re just like oh my God. I didn’t say bye to my mom, I didn’t say bye to my kids, I was like ‘Oh my God, I’m going to die.’ ”

While Princeton Uni
versity, which is across Nas
 sau Street from the Panera where Mielenz holed up, was on spring break, the main thoroughfare was closed down all day, several Univer
sity buildings were evacuated and Princeton High School (PHS) was placed on a shelter in place lockdown that lasted from mid-morning through to the end of the day.

Students from the school say that despite the shelter in place they were not particularly worried.

Eleventh-grader Hugo Balavoine told The VOICE, “Everyone was kind of joking about it, honestly. I wasn’t worried. It wasn’t like the Panera guy was going to walk over here.”

Asked to describe his experience, eleventh-grader Orie Bolisho said “Nobody really knew what was happening, at first I thought it was something bigger. The vibe around school was kind of gloomy and weird, it didn’t really feel right.”

In the wake of the Parkland, FL shooting last month, PHS students and fac
ulty alike shared strong views on guns in schools.

Elizabeth Sullivan-
Crowley, a PHS freshman, said of the recent sugges
tions that the only way to stop gun violence in schools is to arm teachers, “I think it’s a bad idea and not
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Young girls from West Africa were brought to the United States legally but held against their will and compelled to work long hours in East Orange, New Jersey. They were forced to do work in a salon doing braids every day and were living in poor conditions. This story was reported by Scott Bronstein, Amber Lyon and Alexandra Pooles and published by CNN in 2010.

This is just one of the many cases of human trafficking, otherwise known as modern slavery, which is a multi-billion dollar criminal enterprise that can happen anywhere, to anyone.

Mercer County Prosecutor Angelo Onofri spoke about the business of human trafficking in New Jersey as part of Mercer’s “Spring 2018 Distinguished Lecture Series” on March 20. Prosecutor Onofri, who has served as acting prosecutor since March 2015, has worked on several cases related to modern slavery in this area.

In 2017, 8,524 cases of human trafficking were reported by National Human Trafficking Hotline (NHTH) in the United States. 161 of those cases were from New Jersey, which is 14th in the nation for human trafficking. First place is held by Texas.

Prosecutor Onofri went over the frequent forms of slavery and human trafficking, such as labor, where individuals are forced to work against their will and most of the time under threat of violence, domestic servitude, where the victims usually perform householding tasks and/or childcare for a very low payment, and commercial sexual exploitation, where victims are forced to perform commercial sex against their will and with multiple persons.

He also mentioned how many times the victim doesn’t know that they are a victim. Often they assume that’s just the way things work, especially in cases where the victim is brought from another country into the U.S.

Human trafficking can happen anywhere. Most of the time it happens in places that we visit frequently and we never realize it. For example, Prosecutor Onofri mentioned there are kitchens in multiple restaurants that have undocumented workers who are paid around 10 or 15 cents per hour.

“Usually these workers are afraid of speaking out for fear of being turned to immigration officials,” he added.

Alejandra Fernandez, a criminal justice student at Mercer, told The VOICE, “It was very interesting to learn about something. It’s an eye-opener for me and I feel like now I am going to be more careful of who is around me.”

New Jersey is well known as the Garden State for all its farms and crops that it produces, yet many farm workers are treated as slaves, having to work very long shifts for less than the minimum salary.

According to a 2015 report from the American Immigration Council, 1.3 million immigrant workers comprised the labor force in New Jersey. Roughly 45 percent are involved in the farming, fishing, and forestry industries. Usually, these workers are brought from another country and have difficulty speaking or understanding English, leaving them voiceless and unable to report or claim what the fair regulations should be.

However, many cases of human trafficking also apply to US citizens who are “chosen” to be part of these crimes. A documentary by CNN entitled “Chosen” explains how this happens to young, smart and regular girls who ended up getting sexually exploited.

These are students who most of the time fall for an older guy or the person known as the “pimp” who later becomes their boyfriend and starts getting them expensive gifts or taking them places to make them feel happy and special. This is to create a dependency on this person.

The pimps usually try to isolate the girls from their families and/or friends. As a result of the isolation, the girls will depend only on the pimps, and they end up being forced to do sexual things against their will, not only with the pimps but with multiple men.

Prosecutor Onofri told lecture attendees that most of the time these types of cases are brought to light because other citizens contact the police when they see something weird going on. In 2017, 8,524 cases of human trafficking were reported. About 71 percent of cases became known due to local citizens tipping off the police, according to an NHTH report from 2017.

Nairnubay Gray, a criminology major who attended the Mercer lecture, said, “It’s impactful to believe that this can happen in the state of New Jersey. We actually need to open our eyes and be aware of the people who are around us.”

New Jersey passes new gun legislation

The day after millions of people took to the streets for the March of our Lives rallies across the nation, New Jersey’s Democratic majority in the state Congress passed six pieces of legislation tightening gun restrictions in the state. Although NJ is already known for it’s relatively strict gun laws, this action fulfills a campaign promise presented by the state’s new Governor Phil Murphy.*

*Information drawn from state legislature records.
The VOICE surveyed 50 students and 20 faculty members at Mercer to find out about their experiences with guns and gun violence, and their views on the subject. Here are some of the key results and what you had to say.

- **Students**: 6% of Mercer students surveyed had been shot at, all of whom were African American males.
- **Faculty**: 15% of faculty surveyed (3 out of 20) reported having been shot at, twice the percent of students. All three are women.
- **Students**: 72% of Mercer students surveyed think gun violence is a significant problem in the US, and 90% say there should be stronger gun restrictions.
- **Faculty**: 30% of faculty members surveyed knew someone who had been killed by gun violence. All but one of those faculty members also live in a home with a gun in it.
- **Students**: 18% of students surveyed say they have attended a political march or rally. By contrast, 40% of faculty report having done so.
- **Students**: 34% of Mercer students surveyed say they do not feel safe from gun violence on campus, compared to 25% of faculty who feel that way.
- **Faculty**: 25% of faculty say they do not feel safe from gun violence on campus, and 45% think MCCC doesn’t have resources to help troubled students.
- **Students**: 72% of Mercer students surveyed think gun violence is a significant problem in the US, and 96% say there should be stronger gun restrictions.

The VOICE surveyed 50 students and 20 faculty members at Mercer to find out about their experiences with guns and gun violence, and their views on the subject. Here are some of the key results and what you had to say.
WHY DREW IS GOOD FOR MERCER COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS:

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THE ART OF ARRANGEMENT

PROFILE: Adam Hillman

By Chelsey Johnstone

Picture hundreds of gum- my bears arranged in con- centric circles by color, or Q-tips spiraling into an in- tricate windmill, or a check- erboard pattern of strawber- ries and Nutella covered toast squares, and you begin to get a sense of the art of former Mer- cer student Adam Hillman.

Since graduating Mercer in 2016 with an asso- ciate’s degree in Art History, Hillman’s work has taken off through his Instagram site @witenry.

“It all started with Facebook,” Hillman told The VOICE in a recent interview.

After joining a Face- book group entitled “Uned- ited Smartphone Aesthetic Pics,” Hillman began to pursue photography. He had no background in it, only a natu- ral instinct that told him to “Do something to the objects themselves than take a photo of that arrangement.” Hillman added.

“I got sort of a nero- rity in the group as the per- son who posts the stuff that gets the most likes,” says Hill- man. Soon he landed an inter- view with Paper magazine, which increased interest in his work.

As his number fol- lowers increased, Hillman wondered, “Could this [type of art] do well outside of this closed environment?”

The answer! Defi- nitely.

Now with 252, 000 Instagram followers and counting, Hillman has in- spired multiple other artists.

Emily Kathleen, one of Hillman’s followers from Ontario, Canada told the VOICE, “I love that he takes mundane things and turns it into something so remarkable. I really end up trying to put myself inside his brain.”

Margherita Crippa, a @witenry follower and User Interface (UI) designer from Milan, said in an interview that Hillman’s artwork, “makes me feel quiet and peaceful."

She continues, “The attention he gives to every single de- tail is reflected in the whole work, giving it a real coherent connection within all the ele- ments.”

Asked to describe exactly what he does, Hillman says, “For me, arranging is tak- ing usually some kind of everyday object, and moving things around until it gets to a certain composition I am looking for.”

Inspired by early abstract art from the 20th cen- tury, Hillman says he is creat- ing art arrangements based on simple geometry.

“I draw inspiration a lot from minimalism and a lot of art historical movements,” Hillman explains, continuing, “I like the idea that one line changes everything.”

Companies have started seeking Hillman’s work, including PureWow, a womens lifestyle media net- work, Story, a gallery and bou- tique in New York and Super Deluxe, the television and me- dia network based in Los An- geles.

Before the start of this career in the arts, Hill- man debated whether college was the right path for him. He stated, “I figured, [Mercer] would be a good place to meet people.”

One Mercer instruc- tor who particularly inspired Hillman was Professor Yv- geniy Fiks, teacher of drawing, digital media art and design.

“I think especially what he taught me in 2D de- sign really clicked. I’m sure that that had a huge impact on me,” Hill- man says.

Adams mother Erika Hillman says, “We have a crea- tive family and raised both our children in and around arts.”

Kylan Hillman, Adam’s younger brother and a current music student at Mer- cer is also a You tube singer, guitarist and composer. Mrs. Hillman says, “His dad and I are both musical, artistic and dramatic.”

As a toddler… “Mrs. Hillman explains, “… he used to line up his Matchbox cars end-to-end for hours. He was very precise about it.” By the age of 14, Mrs. Hillman con- tinues, “He began most of his free time drawing very intri- cate designs. Each piece took months to complete.” At that point, Hillman’s mom says she knew he was destined to be an artist.

“He’s a perfectionist” Mrs. Hillman states. “I some- times feel the need to remind him to find balance in his life.”

Adam says that sometimes “There is a lot of pressure,” having thousands of fans across the globe.

Asked what causes him to stick with it, Hillman says: “It’s never been about money for me. It’s these pat- terns that I have and I have to get them out somehow.”
New York’s MoMA an opportunity for students

By Chelsey Johnstone

The famous artwork of the past is easily overlooked with the rise of the digital era. In the digital age, you can find these pictures online anywhere...” stated Leah Mellmer, the student manager of Pacific Lutheran University’s Lute Air Student Radio (LASR). However, New York’s Museum of Modern Art is still attracting a large crowd to its many exhibits.

For Mercer residents, the MoMA is a short train ride to view exceptional artworks, like the well-known, Starry Night by Vincent Van Gogh. The museum gives discount tickets to students with ID’s. For 14 dollars, you cannot go wrong.

Mellmer stated, “if we are talking about art museums in the United States, everyone, I feel like, thinks of MoMA. People come here from all over the world.” Being based out of Washington State, Mellmer came a long distance to have this experience.

She told The VOICE, “It’s an amazing feeling just after knowing something that only had existed in books. It’s like now it exists in your world!”

In the six-story building, hours of art surrounds the building’s interior. Art you can visually dive into, art you can scale with your fingertips, and art that rattles your eardrums overwhelmed the senses, making for a different experience than the average museum.

The Museum of Modern Art has created an atmosphere that is beyond a framed piece of art on the wall. Exhibits such as Reanimation by Joan Jones, includes a wide variety of colorful projections along with delicate hanging crystals. Music, both relaxing and intense, complements the mood of this artform’s overall impression.

“It really took ahold of my attention” Mellmer states. “You walk around the projections, you become part of the project and the crystals are just kind of mesmerizing and hypnotic. Everything’s changing.”

When it comes to art, The Museum of Modern Art changes its former meaning. You can almost feel the presence of the artist and the steps that they took when you’re looking at it in person, up close”, Mellmer states. No longer is art just something pleasing to the eye, but now a full body experience, and an experience worth fulfilling.

Local folk duo Jackson Pines gaining attention

By Chelsey Johnstone

The local group Jackson Pines includes singer-songwriter and guitarist Joe Makoviecki and upright bass player James Black. Formerly members of the traditional folk band known as Thomas Wesley Stern, which opened for popular folk bands like Old Crow Medicine Show and Mumford & Sons, the duo branched off into their own storytelling journey in 2016. Makoviecki says, “Our old band played traditional folk music. Half of our set would be from the 1920’s and 1930’s. When that band ended, we decided to keep playing music under a new name with totally new songs I’ve written. That became Jackson Pines.”

Named after their hometown of Jackson, NJ, the duo’s work features raw acoustic guitar riffs and evokes a sense of small-town longing.

On their first CD, “Purgatory Road,” the title track tells the story a woman having her first child, and a preacher scared the world is going to end. Lyrics such as, “In the town where I was born, where the boys run wild, she waited her whole damn life for her firstborn child,” paint an intimate picture.

“I don’t write any songs that don’t have at least one foot in my real experience,” says Makoviecki.

He adds, “Those characters aren’t based exactly on real people, but they’re based on attributes of people we’ve met over the years...Every song is a different animal. They take root from experiences.”

As for his songwriting process, Makoviecki says “All of our songs exist in a world that we’ve created; sort of like a collection of short stories...We kind of worked them into these characters to try to say something about our world we are living in now.”

Makoviecki notes that folk music has a reputation for preaching a call to change, but that is not his musical agenda.

“What we are trying to do is sing a song that is honest and makes you feel something deep down, without trying to lead you in a certain direction,” Makoviecki says.

When they first started playing as Jackson Pines in 2016, Black and Makoviecki’s work attracted the attention of Simone Felice of the well known American folk rock band The Felice Brothers. Felice offered to record them on Purgatory Road.

“Joe and James reminded me of my bros and I when we first started out, very green but very passionate,” Felice told the VOICE via email.

When asked what intrigued him about the band Felice stated, “The vibe was heartfelt, melancholy yet positive, a tricky thing pull off.”

The duo’s second effort was a four-song EP called “Lost & Found” that came out last August. It picks up where “Purgatory Road” leaves off, focusing on life’s transitions.

Owner of a music-oriented content platform called Thriving Era, Tyler Harrison, recalls his first experience hearing the group.

“The first time I saw Joe and James play was in 2013 or 2012 with their full band Thomas Wesley Stern...Joe is a monster on that acoustic guitar and James Black seems to keep people bumping on that upper right bass. Them together is an awesome dynamic.”

This year, Harrison will be filming them in a video he says will be “up close and personal with the music for Jackson Pines.”

Makoviecki, whose grew up in a musical house hold—his father is a music teacher and full-time musician—says, “My whole life has been this conversation with music.”

He adds, “The difference between everybody else and a songwriter is the only way they can express it is by molding it into a three to five minute song string of rhythm and sound.”

Starting in April, Jackson Pines will be going on a short tour including Nashville, Tennessee and Virginia, before coming back to New Jersey. They will play the Wonder Bar in Asbury Park on May 1.
I get the feeling that nothing is changing, but when I saw the students of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School standing up, I felt inspired by them and I said, enough is enough.

-Joe Redmond

Protesters of all ages participated in March for Our Lives rallies across the nation.

A student from Princeton High School holds up a sign during the Princeton March for Our Lives on March 24.

I was 18 and I felt the desperate attempt to stop hyper-violence. I was 18 and I felt the fire alarm blared as the library of my school caught fire. I clasped my friend's hand in a desperate attempt to stop hyper-ventilating. I was 18 and I felt the ceiling of death hovering over me. This wasn't how it was supposed to end, I thought. I hadn't even gotten into college yet.

Joe Redmond, a school shooting survivor and senior at Princeton University, speaks at the rally. He is a gun control activist in New Jersey and the only person from Mercer who was at the rally. He spoke about his own experience and said that he has been personally affected by gun violence.

"We want everyone to do the right thing, whether they're Republican, or Democrat, or any other party," he shouted.

Another 8 percent cannot plan to and six percent of those who are registered don't plan to vote. Another 8 percent cannot vote because of immigration status or age. Sixty-eight percent of Mercer students who participated in the VOICE survey are registered to vote, and another 24 percent are eligible to register but have not yet registered. A third of those who could register didn't plan to and six percent of those who are registered don't plan to vote. Another 8 percent cannot vote because of immigration status or age. Sixty-eight percent of Mercer students who participated in the VOICE survey are registered to vote, and another 24 percent are eligible to register but have not yet registered. A third of those who could register didn't plan to and six percent of those who are registered don't plan to vote. Another 8 percent cannot vote because of immigration status or age. 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A third of those who could register didn't plan to and six percent of those who are registered don't plan to vote. Another 8 percent cannot vote because of immigration status or age.
Since the Columbine High School Massacre in 1999, 187,000 students have experienced the effects of gun violence at school according to an article in the Washington Post by John Woodrow Cox and Steven Rich.

As Cole Montplaisir, a building construction technology major from Mercer, whose first lockdown drill was in ninth grade explains, "The lady in the main office would say this is a lockdown drill, it may be real, it may not be, so shelter in place and depending on where you were, if you were in a classroom, the lights went off, the shades went down, the doors were closed and locked, and hid behind the filing cabinet, or the desk and depending on where you were, if you were in a classroom, the lights went off, the shades went down, the doors were closed and locked, and hid behind the filing cabinet, or the desk and depending on where you were, if you were in a classroom, the lights went off, the shades went down, the doors were closed and locked, and hid behind the filing cabinet, or the desk"

With this in the back of every teenager’s mind, and the recent event of the Parkland, FL shooting, at the forefront of their mind. The youth of America flooded the streets of Washington DC to protest Congress to put in stricter laws on gun control on the national level. Washington DC wasn’t the only city to have a march through, with dozens of sister marches, one of the larger ones was held next to Central Park in Manhattan of New York City.

Men, women and children poured into Columbus Avenue by bus, car, boat and train, to support the recent victims of the Parkland Shooting.

The official march began with a rally at 11 A.M. on 72nd street, though due to the enormous crowds, the marchers pushed the parade’s beginning all the way back to 86th street.

The crowds were separated by a police line. By the New York City Police by metal barricades. These opened much like a levee letting the let the crowd trickle down to the next city block as the let protesters from the adjoining streets flood into Columbus Avenue.

Even with the recent events of Parkland FL, the atmosphere was anything but melancholy, as protesters danced, cheered and chanted all the way down Columbus Avenue.

As 20-year-old Julie Sharps from New York City told The VOICE, “This has been happening since I have been in high school, and nothing has been done on a federal level, and it’s disgusting to see how many politicians are in the pocket of the NRA.”

With chants like “Bullets not bullets” and “No more silence, end gun violence,” the protesters were emotional and determined to take a stand. As Julia Betancourt, a high school senior from Long Island explains, “It makes me feel hopeful for the future because our generation is the next one that is going to be writing.”

The marches around the nation demanded change in gun legislation on a nationwide scale. The last major gun reform was the implementation of the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) in 1998 by former President Bush. The Giffords Law Center explains it “provided financial incentives for states to provide to NICS (the database used to perform a background check when a firearm is purchased from a federally licensed dealer) information relevant to whether a person is prohibited from possessing firearms, including the names and other relevant identifying information of persons adjudicated as a mental defective or those committed to mental institutions.”

There are federal laws created to ensure a broad sense of gun safety but is ultimately left up to each state. California has the strictest gun laws, while Louisiana has the most lenient gun laws, according to deseret-news.com.

Julia Rizzo, an English Professor who had an experience in Los Angeles with an active shooter in 1986 told The VOICE “If you think that policy decisions will help change a culture, then policy decisions are the way to go. But I think things have to change at the cultural level, that people have to to have to have a different relationship to gun violence than they currently do, and I’m not sure what would change that.”

-Prof. Diane Rizzo

The election of Donald Trump prompted the Women’s Marches. Since then, women in particular have are becoming vocal advocates on the political issues that concern them most. The gun control movement Enough has prompted teen women to become even more motivated to participate.

“I think that policy decisions will help change a culture, then policy decisions are the way to go. But I think things have to change at the cultural level, that people have to have to have a different relationship to gun violence than they currently do, and I’m not sure what would change that.”

-Prof. Diane Rizzo

The sound of the NYC March for Our Lives was dominated by chants lead by women on megaphones, and the fervent beat of drum corps.

Julia Rizzo, an English Professor who had an experience in Los Angeles with an active shooter in 1986 told the VOICE, “If you think that policy decisions will help change a culture, then policy decisions are the way to go. But I think things have to change at the cultural level, that people have to to have to have a different relationship to gun violence than they currently do, and I’m not sure what would change that.”

-Prof. Diane Rizzo

Over 800 March for Our Lives rallies were held on March 24 with one or more in all 50 states.

#MarchForOurLives

“Speaking for those who can’t...stop gun violence.”

-Rachel Westbrook and Maria Ramos contributed reporting for this article.
Over 200,000 people of all ages descended on Washington DC to support gun reform initiatives on March 24th according to Digital & Imaging Service Inc. Following the death of 17 students in Parkland, Florida at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School on February 14, surviving students began to push for stricter gun laws.

Their activism caught the attention of EMPOWER, the youth branch of the organization behind the Women’s Marches. Their activism caught the attention of EMPOWER, the youth branch of the organization behind the Women’s Marches.

The March for Our Lives on March 24 was the result of their efforts thus far. A number of celebrities performed at the event between powerful speeches given by student activists telling their own stories of loss that brought many in the audience to tears.

Often the topic was not only about school shootings but also about the urban violence faced by many black and Latino youth, such as when student activist Edna Chavez spoke about the loss of her brother Ricardo Chavez.

In a survey of Mercer students conducted by The VOICE, it was found that half of all black students surveyed knew someone that had died due to gun violence. In a survey of Mercer students conducted by The VOICE, it was found that half of all black students surveyed knew someone that had died due to gun violence.

But the most powerful moment of the rally came when Emma Gonzalez, the face of the Stoneman Douglas survivors, came on stage. Following a powerful speech, during which she listed all of the things her fallen classmates would “never again” do, she suddenly fell totally silent.

In that instant the crowd fell absolutely silent, barely a single sound escaped from the hundreds of thousands gathered there. The National Mall was transformed into a sacred space and Gonzalez into a priest leading a wake.

Confusion soon spread in the crowd, with various cheers of support coming up at various times. It was unquestionably an awkward moment, as all present wondered what Gonzalez was doing. Yet she stood resolute, tears in her eyes, with unwavering determination.

Finally she spoke, “Since the time that I came out here, she sounds. The shooter abandon his rifle and walk fr And with wildly. It was as if you heard the girls who survived loud a gunshot in Sandy and students becom ing so hard to rel He con students came from South Lake who carried a poster that said, “I’ve been to 8 years old to gunmen in the this to when he refused they abducted a. That was gun violence, how high school was a student with a r were proven false County police,
Young people of different backgrounds, races and religions came together to protest gun violence during the March for Our Lives in Washington DC on March 24, 2018.

County police, Chaves says, “Nobody knew what was going on for 40 minutes, we were in the dark for 40 minutes.” She also said, “I was just thinking in my head, ‘I’m going to be the next person in my family that’s shot and killed,’ and it was just very terrifying not knowing anything, because when you’re in that situation, when you’re inside, you don’t know anything. And so I was texting my family and my friends, just saying our good-byes just in case anything did happen.”

A recurring theme throughout the rally was that the March’s efforts were not going to end when the day did. Repeatedly speakers called on the audience to register to vote.

When David Hogg, another Parkland survivor, took the stage, he started his speech by attaching a price tag to his shirt labeled “$1.05.” He said of the gesture, “I’m going to start off by putting this price tag right here as a reminder for you guys to know how much Marco Rubio took for every student’s life in Florida.”

In a page entitled “Don’t Put a Price on Our Lives” on the March for Our Lives website, the movement claims “There are 3,140,167 students enrolled in Florida. Marco Rubio has received $3,303,355 from the NRA. That comes out to $1.05 per student.”

Marco Rubio is a senator from Florida, where Parkland is. Hogg’s message was clear, support gun control or be voted out. He finished his speech by saying, “To those politicians supported by the NRA that allow the continued slaughter of our children and our future, I say get your resumes ready.”

Tappan Vickery, a volunteer coordinator with HeadCount, an organization that helps to register voters at events was there striving to ensure that.

Throughout the mall there were seven stations set up by HeadCount, and over 800 volunteers spread out across the area, Vickery said. Their goal was to collect a thousand total new registrations by the end of the event. As just the station she was at she noted they had registered about 200 new voters.

She noted that most of the new registrations were for young voters, and a number of those too young to vote had pre-registered so that they can vote once they turn 18.

She told The VOICE, “It’s so awesome to see these kids excited about wanting to engage.”
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Help is here!

Dear Voice,
I saw a student peeing on a tree at the edge of campus. What’s that about?
-Skeeved Out

Dear Skeeved,
The bathrooms aren’t what they used to be, but we recommend holding it til you get home. There are some ferocious looking squirrels out there.
The VOICE

Dear Voice,
Where were you when Mrs. Peacock was murdered?
-Wadsworth the Butler

Dear Wadsworth,
I was in the dining room wondering why my lasagna hadn’t yet been served. Tell me, Butler, where were YOU?!
The VOICE

Dear Voice,
Why does it seem like offices are always moving at Mercer?
-Mazed and Confused

Dear Mazed,
Because this is Hogwarts! Have you not seen the moving staircases yet?
The VOICE

Dear Voice,
What is your favorite book?
-Li’l Bookworm

Dear Bookworm,
See earlier reference to HP.
The VOICE

Dear Voice,
What should I do if a ninja attacks me on the way to the parking lot?
-Crouching Tiger

Dear Tiger,
Don’t worry, our security guards are ready for anything. Call ext. 3503.
The VOICE

NOTE: THIS FEATURE IS FOR ENTERTAINMENT PURPOSES ONLY. ANY RESEMBLANCE TO ACTUAL PROBLEMS IS PURELY COINCIDENTAL.

Capricorn
Dec. 22 - Jan. 19
It is time to focus on that project you have been neglecting for a while. Put in the effort now and you will be rewarded later.

Aquarius
Jan. 20 - Feb. 18
Times may be rough now but don’t give up, it won’t last in your favor. However, if you give up now you will be doomed for the rest of the month.

Pisces
Feb. 19 - Mar. 20
You may feel things are not working out for you, but something good is coming your way in the next few days.

Aries
Mar. 21 - Apr. 19
Relationships are the focus this month. Some conflicts with family members will affect you and everyone around you.

Leo
Jul. 23 - Aug. 22
It’s time to de-stress. Head for the shore or maybe a spa day, even yoga can help. Take a breather before you lose it.

Taurus
Apr. 20 - May 20
You are centered and grounded as usual this month. Keep it up and focus on family and don’t be afraid to let loose.

Gemini
May 21 - Jun. 20
You have trouble trusting people sometimes, but now is the time to take a risk. You need help right now and someone is offering.

Cancer
Jun. 21 - Jul. 22
Don’t stress so much, good news is on the horizon. Work may be the area of change for you. All the changes will be good!

Virgo
Aug. 23 - Sept. 22
Big news that you have been waiting for arrives around the 14th. We can’t promise the outcome but wait at least will be over.

Libra
Sep. 23 - Oct. 22
Celebrations are in the works. Don’t party too hard, the consequences could be undesirable. On the other hand, it’s not going too far to wear a pirate outfit to work on the 4th.

Scorpio
Oct. 23 - Nov. 21
Get your pincers ready, you will need them in the next few weeks. People will need to be put in their place. You are the only one who can keep them well behaved. Use your skills well.

Sagittarius
Nov. 22 - Dec. 21
It’s time to de-stress. Head for the shore or maybe a spa day, even yoga can help. Take a breather before you lose it.

Horoscopes

SUDOKU

DIFFICULTY: 3 (out of 5)

8 7 6 2 4 1 8 3 5
9 8 4 2 7 3 5 1 9 6
3 1 5 8 6 9 2 4 7 1
6 2 4 3 1 8 5 7 9 4
5 8 4 9 2 7 6 1 3 1
4 3 8 6 7 2 9 5 1 8
2 6 1 5 9 3 7 8 4 7
5 7 9 1 8 4 5 3 2 6
1 3 7 9 5 6 4 2 8 3

PREVIOUS SOLUTION

WELL THIS TAKE LONG?

2X DILBERT AND GET FUZZY

AMBER, I’LL PAY YOU $500 A MONTH TO PRETEND TO BE MY FRIEND ON FACEBOOK

ALL YOU NEED TO DO IS LEAVE ME A PUBLIC MESSAGE EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE

WHAT ARE YOU UP TO?

YOU IGNORANT JUICEBAG!

I’M RECALCULATING MY LACK OF FAITH IN HUMANITY

NO, I STARTED BY READING OPINIONS ON MESSAGES BOARD AND... I CAN COME BACK LATER.

YOU MIGHT AS WELL MAKE A FLYING VICTORY... I DON’T KNOW WHAT IT IS...

YOU MIGHT AS WELL MAKE A FLYING VICTORY... I DON’T KNOW WHAT IT IS...

SO IN YOUR OPINION, WHAT IS THE TRUE NATURE OF CHILDREN’S CHARACTER?

UN... UNH, IT’S LIKE A PRONGHEADED MOTH WHO MIGHT COME THROUGH MY WINDOW ANY TIME...

THREE DAYS THINGS THAT WENT TOUGH... I’M SNITCHING,田园 THE CASHIER, T竞选 CHEATING THEIR WAY OUT OF RENT. NOW, THEY’RE TRYING TO CARRY ON AND CHARGE ME...

WHAT IS YOUR GOAL IN LIFE, MATT WALKER? COULD YOU GET ON THE PHONE?

YOU HAVE TO THINK ON YOUR FEET. I TRIED TO TALK YOU OUT OF TAKING THAT KIDS’ SCIENTIST JOB.

YOU HATE, RIGHT? I HATE THEM, TOO... I’M THINKING ABOUT MEDICAL HERBS...

NOW, STAND UP...

YOU TOLD ME YOU HAD SUPERHERO SKILLS. THAT WOULD MAKE ME A...

THAT WOULD MAKE ME A FRIEND TO?

YOU NEVER KNEW I WANTED TO BE A SUPERHERO!

COLD WIDE GENETIC EXPERIMENTS- FIST!

2X FOR THE LOVE OF THE SCARY ‘BABY GENIUS’ EXPERIMENTS!

OH, SHEET! YOU’RE THE ONCE WHO HAS THE SCIENTIFIC CAPACITIES TO MAKE THE MUSCLES BIG BENDS AND LAY THE FRESH TO THE SANCTUARY OF NATURE’S WILDLIFE ANIMALS!

WHAT DO YOU THINK, MATT WALKER?

YOU HATE, RIGHT? I HATED TRYING TO TALK YOU OUT OF TAKING THAT KIDS’ SCIENTIST JOB...

PREVIOUS SOLUTION

HOW TO PLAY: Each row, column and 3x3 box of numbers 1 through 9 without repetition.

9 7 6 2 4 1 8 3 5
8 4 2 7 3 5 1 9 6
3 1 5 8 6 9 2 4 7
6 2 4 3 1 8 5 7 9
5 8 4 9 2 7 6 1 3
4 3 8 6 7 2 9 5 1
2 6 1 5 9 3 7 8 4
5 7 9 1 8 4 3 6 2
11-30-10

SC Jumpstart -- Dist. by UFS, Inc.
Off-Broadway show Halcyon Days uses 1980’s to critique today

By Griffon Jones
Senior Reporter

For those willing to brave the nor’easter raging outside, the Alliance of Resident Theatres in New York City had a warm surprise. Greeting those that came to see the performance of “Halcyon Days” by the Oberon Theatre Ensemble was a different world from the frigid tundra caused by the storm.

A small lobby had been transformed into a vibrant slice of the Caribbean island of Grenada, complete with vividly decorated flags, colorful lights, music featuring the steel drum, and a miniature Tiki bar (for which drinks were, thankfully, only by suggested donation). Brad Fryman, the artistic director for the production explained. “As soon as you walked into the lobby, you would hopefully stop thinking about the blizzard outside.”

The play focuses on the US invasion of Grenada of 1983 and the events leading up to it. Two interconnected narratives play out as Washington attempts to find a justification for their planned invasion and manipulate the public support, while simultaneously those in Grenada are pulled into their plotting.

The tone of the play was satirical, with moments of levity in between power-ful scenes about the United States and its imperialist nature. Funny and tragic in equal measures, the play maintains a perfect balance that manages to juxtapose the frivolity of the 80’s with the gravity of what these men and women were doing.

Director Alex Dinellaris said of that choice, “I try to juxtapose the frivolity of the 80’s with the gravity of what these men and women were doing.”

Although it was the final day of previews for the performance The VOICE was able to attend, the performance ran smoothly, with only a few minor tics here and there that did not distract from the production itself.

Being so close to the actors allowed for a completely different experience than the traditional Broadway play. The experience was decidedly personal, even intimate. I felt less like a member of an audience and more like a participant in the events unfolding before me. I was no mere observer but a Washington insider or Grenadian citizen, depending on the scene.

The actors all excelled in their performances, which was no surprise given that all but one are members of the Actors’ Equity Association. Their acting was the same quality one would expect of a Broadway performance, but at a reasonable price, only 20 dollars for students.

The standout performance was Ralph Guzzo as Raper, presidential adviser to Ronald Reagan. It was difficult to tell he was even acting as he seemed to genuinely believe he was the character. He spoke with an authentic anger and conviction in his words, and his movements were wild and exaggerated, even violently so.

Most impressive was his eyes, which one was able to look into due to the proximity of the stage to the audience seating. They held a genuine, righteous anger within them that showed the depth of the actor’s ability to control the window to the soul itself.

As the play drew to a close, a fake election poster was projected on the walls of the stage, reminding the audience of the relevance of the performance to contemporary events. The image showed the smiling face of Ronald Reagan, reading “REAGAN FOR PRESIDENT: Let’s make America great again.”

The political message was clear. Patricia Peralles, an actress from Brooklyn, said, “It’s a bit depressing to see how we’re being deceived in terms of false reality but hopeful in terms of we’re writing about it. You can apply it to a lot of things going on now.”

Following the performance, the audience was informed that there would be a “very casual” talkback with the cast and crew at a nearby wine bar. To be able to interact directly with those that made the play possible in such a relaxed setting, as well as speak to the actors The VOICE had spent the last two hours watching in their true personas, was an extraordinary experience.

Hannah Jane McMurray, as Patricia, speaks to a cardboard cutout of Ronald Reagan in a production of “Halcyon Days” on March 7, 2018 in New York City.

PHOTO | GRIFFIN JONES

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- Money Magazine
Brazillian martial art finds home in New York

Mohammad Wiswall
Reporter

Walking into the Marcelo Garcia Academy (MGA) in Midtown, Manhattan, the noise of the street dies out as you walk up three floors of gray cement stairs. The first thing to hit you is the smell of sweat and the muddled sound of thumps and loud music ranging from Wu-Tang to the Red Hot Chili Peppers. Step through the door and you’ll see what may look like a bunch of sweaty students aggressively hugging and wrestling each other, at least if you’re unfamiliar with Brazilian jiu-jitsu.

Brazilian jiujitsu is a martial art system of joint locks, choke holds, throws and pins on the ground. It has origins on the battlefield of feudal Japan. Its purpose was to be used by a disarmed combatant, because strikes would be useless against the hard armour of samurai warriors.

By the late 1880s a refined version of jiu-jitsu known as judo was developed by a man named Jigoro Kano. One of his students, Mitsasu Maeda, decided to leave Japan to fight overseas in the Americas, eventually settling down in Brazil, where he crafted what is now known as Brazilian jiujitsu.

Fast forward decades later and this sport has spread and found a home in NYC. According to Bjjheroes.com, Marcelo’s Garcia’s record is 86 wins and 17 losses in his professional grappling career. He has won multiple world titles. He retired back in 2013 however, and now puts his focus and emphasis on his students to become the world’s next top competitors.

Another instructor at MGA, Joel Burgess, one of Marcelo’s students, is also well decorated and has competed at the highest level. His accomplishments include winning some of jiu-jitsu’s most well known competitions, the New York Open and No Gi Pan Ams multiple times, No Gi Worlds and Europeans. Also in various North American Grappling Association and Grappler’s Quests. Additionally, he fought in the Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) ring twice and won both by submitting his opponent.

In an interview with The VOICE, Burgess spoke about being an instructor at MGA and how he approaches the challenge of teaching jiu-jitsu. “There is what is taught to people and then there is actually what is done so one thing I’ve always found interesting and challenging is trying to teach people what is actually done. And don’t get me wrong, I teach what is standard or the way traditional people teach but especially against more advanced or for more advanced students I try to ….. Especially for when I’m teaching the stuff I know, I try to teach the stuff I exactly do teaching them what I do exactly and exactly what Marcelo does.”

He was also asked what is it like being a competitor. What is his mindset going into a competition. “I’ve always been a very competitive person so it was natural I was gonna compete. But for a long time I had a hard time with the nerves.” he continues to say. “What I found best for me and what I feel still works for me is to not think at all.”

Students at Marcelo Garcia Academy in New York City practice jiu-jitsu.

Highly accomplished athlete Joel Burgess is an instructor at Marcelo Garcia Academy and also one of Garcia’s most successful students.

Also, Burgess has the perspective of being a student. He often talks about his teacher Garcia and what kind of advice he gives him. He recalls Garcia once saying to him “Don’t remember the loss remember the mistake.”

PHOTO | MOHAMMAD WISWALL

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*N National Public Radio, September 2015

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The Value of Family

*N National Public Radio, September 2015

Holy Family University
NONTRODUCATIONAL: I started college at age 16

Rachael Westbrook

My first and only nickname at Mercer was “the fetus.” It was given to me during a meet and greet activity in Spanish 102. We had to go around the room and find people that had certain attributes, one of which was to find someone younger than you. When the other students found out I was only 16 one said “wow, you’re like a fetus!” and the name stuck. It didn’t bother me. I understood it was unusual.

It wasn’t hard to qualify to be a dual-enrollment student. I simply had to get permission, register, and take the placement test. Then I just followed the same process every one does. I got a school ID and registered for classes.

The first thing I learned at Mercer was that I didn’t look as young as I felt. Most of the time if I didn’t mention anything, I could easily pass as the average college kid who pre-enrolled and complained about homework. But once I get to know people I don’t mind telling them I’m a home-schooled high school kid who got a jump start on college.

It hasn’t always been easy. There are struggles that come from having started college early. Often things other students think is common knowledge is news to me and vice versa. For example, during my first semester at Mercer, I learned plenty of students come to class late and even without homework, something that terrifies me as a person who has always had to live with the teacher who had the ability to ground me and take away all my privileges.

The ability to work around difficult teachers and other students was also lost on me. Group projects, especially ones where no one does their work, are still a challenge. On the other hand, I’ve blended right in with the team at the college newspaper.

The biggest learning curve was realizing that if I wanted information, I had to seek it out instead of having it handed to me. The problem was, it was hard to reach out in a place that was so different from what I am used to. I would often try something and wait to see if anyone stopped me rather than asking if I was doing the right thing.

I didn’t know if I could use the gym or the tutoring services. I didn’t know if my student ID somehow marked me as different since I didn’t know what anyone else’s looked like (answer: identical). I wasn’t sure I was even allowed to join the college newspaper.

Mercer has helped me learn how things work, but I also love homeschooling because it is flexible. It has let me explore different kinds of hobbies like being able to snowboard on Fridays in winter. It has let me travel. I have family all over the world and have been able to visit most of them.

I don’t remember the first time I traveled outside of America because I was 9 months old. Imagine my surprise when I learned that most people don’t have passports and don’t fly regularly.

Being a dual-enrollment student has allowed me to prove to myself that I can do college level work. Next semester I transfer to a four-year college on the other side of the country and I am not afraid. I’ve learned how to ask, learned how things work and learned how lucky I am to have done it this way.

Growing up with Downs

Laurie Gallagher

When I was born in April 4, 1974, the doctor told my mom I had Down Syndrome and that I would never be able to make it to college or have a regular life. Forty-four years later here I am in my second year as a college student working towards my associate’s degree in Communication at Mercer County Community College.

I remember being bullied and teased by other classmates during my elementary years. I’ve continued to defy the odds that the doctor told my mom I would never be able to make it to college. I have been able to visit most of the states here in the US as well as a lot of countries other than the United States.

Despite the setbacks, I kept on learning and taking my classes. My family helped me develop as an adult. They taught me everything they could to help me succeed and become independent despite my differences.

When my dad got a job offer in New Jersey in 1980 we moved to the Garden State. I started to work when I was 13, I had all kinds of different part-time jobs. I worked as a bagger in a supermarket, and at Bristol-Meyers Squibb helping out with the mail. I also helped at the desk of the YMCA. Then in 2002, I got a job at Target. I had this job for about 8 years. That’s when I decided to start my education in Mercer. I told my parents that I always wanted to go to college and I was ready for it, so they supported me as always and they told me they would help me to pay for school.

This is my second year at Mercer and I feel thankful for the opportunity to be a college student and to defy the odds that the doctor who brought me into the world gave me. At college, I can talk to other people and learn a lot. All of my professors are always very welcoming and helpful whenever I ask for something.

When I learned that the school had a newspaper, I wanted to join them and learn more about writing. Now as part of The College VOICE I have been learning about how to write articles, improve my interviewing skills and work with all kinds of people. The staff always help me and work with me on the writing.

Everything that I am learning in my day to day life at Mercer and with The VOICE is helping me to achieve my dream. I hope one day I can become a writer for a magazine or newspaper.

*Maria Ramos also contributed to this article.

MAIL CALL

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VIEWPOINTS
In order for you to understand why I’m 32 and still working toward my Bachelor’s degree I must tell you the ironic story of how I came to despise college and then fell in love with it.

Though I was already a failure school I looked at the world in a very philosophical, intellectual way. For example, with friends and I used to debate the existence of God. We also liked to debate the question of what made art “good” or “bad.” More often remarked that if I desired just some of the thought and energy I invested in questions about God and art into school work I would get good grades.

But alas, my mother’s wisdom was ignored. I evaded homework so diligently that it earned me an F in Math when I was in fifth grade. I did bring the grade up to a C+ the next marking period and won an award for “most significant improvement” which was good enough for me. Getting Cs and B’s would be my tepid academic aspiration throughout middle school and high school.

In 2004 I enrolled at Kean University to study Eng- lish, hoping to hone my craft as a writer. Outside of class I spent a lot of time studying a variety of writers. Among them, Jack Kerouac was the one I related to the most. Though I sped through his novel “On The Road” and contemplated it deeply I wasn’t getting any college credit for it. Coursework was to me what Louise is to the speaker in Bob Dylan’s “Visions of Johanna”: “She’s all right, she’s just neat.”

And so did Kerouac! In his novel “On The Road” the guy named Sal Paradise takes a series of road trips across the United States, experimenting with a variety of drugs, has long, “intellectual” conversations and writes in between it all. Sal made the grade up to a C+ the next semester I transferred to Florida Gulf Coast University.

The campus was stunning. There was evidence of acres of wetlands and marsh- es and walkways passing through it. Some of the scenes were ubiquitous and alligators—so exotically to my eyes—swam and walked around. The novelty of it was all certainly enough to inspire a young poet. Un- fortunately school itself was still a bore. Even the electives couldn’t compete with my growing infatuation with Allen Ginsberg, Arthur Rimbaud and Bob Dylan.

I had to come believe college was a waste of time be- cause all this so-called “knowledge” and “experience” I came across amounted to nothing more than fascist attempts to turn me into a bow-tie wearing debonair deb. Regardless of that, I actually didn’t think whether or not I was in college up to me anymore. As Bob Dylan put it: “sooner or later one of us must know! You just what you’re doing.” So I didn’t. I thought I would have me stay in college, some- thing would compel me to stay, yet nothing did. Instead, I as- sumed it was likely my fate that I would soon become a rich and famous poet.

When I was waiting for fame to just find me I suc- cumbed to a combination of se- vere, nihilism induced depress- ion, and adventurous coughiness. One English professor, who dis- liked the obscurities packed in some of my poems, called me a punk. Dylan put it: “I’m not a punk. I didn’t need that close-minded criticism be- cause I knew better than any- one, except maybe Dylan, what was what.”

It was time, I thought, to escape the monastery of col- lege.

At one point in my new life as a college dropout I ended up living at a hostel in Tampa and was almost homeless. While at the hostel, despite the fact that my funds were limited, for the most part I evaded the need to get a job. Even when I didn’t evade it, I did nothing to woo employers. In one interview I landed for a job as a busboy at a restaurant a few blocks away, the man conduct- ing the interview took me at face value and, in a husky voice said, “Come back shaved, with a hairnet and a nice shirt. Then I’ll interview you.”

But I could not afford a “nice shirt,” and to hell with him if he was going to make me shave my beard and cut my hair to a plain corporate America thought this guy was as close- minded as the English professor at Florida Gulf Coast University who called me a “punk.”

Nobody was going to tell me what to do! Never mind the policy that my obstinacy would come at the cost of an- other self-made poverty spell, like when I was dropout South Bay half a year earlier and some- times had only spoons full of peanut butter for food, and a few grapes from a jug of water to hydrate. I was doing it again. One day at the hostel it got so bad that I had to sell my own clothes to someone for some cash so I could buy ramen noo- dles at the nearby Asian market.

Eventually I ran out money and could no longer af- ford to stay at the hostels. Since I was not on speaking terms with my parents and my friends were not in fantastic shape, I had no money, no roof I could afford to sleep under. Were it not for the kindness of the man who owned the hostel and let me stay, I would have lived on the streets. That fact is forever embedded in my mind. It would take me years to teach anything for years.

I did address relation- ship problems I had with my family and made it back to New Jersey where I spent seven years working as a cashier. Scanning items and asking customers if they had their shoppers’ club card over and over, while trying to contemplate what I deemed to be a creative, intellectual career about now. Soon I started causing panic attacks. While I was waiting for fame to just find me I succumbed to a combination of se- vere, nihilism induced depress- ion, and adventurous coughiness. One English professor, who dis- liked the obscurities packed in some of my poems, called me a punk. Dylan put it: “I’m not a punk. I didn’t need that close-minded criticism be- cause I knew better than any- one, except maybe Dylan, what was what.”

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Viking Lacrosse enters final phase of recruiting

By Jackson Thompson

With over 20 committed recruits, a growing coaching staff and less than a year to go, the Mercer County Community College men’s lacrosse program is full steam ahead to their inaugural season. Once the team breaks ground next spring in their first game, it will complete a near four-year process and the construction of Mercer’s first new athletic facility, the incursion of the men’s cross country team in 2014.

The investment required to finance this new lacrosse team eclipses that of the cross country teams as well. According to Simon the program’s startup budget is close to $50,000. It is a budget that accounts for supplies like helmets and gloves, as well as the structural factors mentioned by Simone, like a new field and locker room.

According to Mercer’s Executive Director of Financial and Accounting Services, Brian McCloskey, the demand for college lacrosse in the Mercer County region has already taken advantage of strength training, assets the staff is already using.

"We’ve been bringing them to practices a few days a week, skills and drills to try to see how they do," McCloskey said. "If your partner makes a mistake individually for singles so if you have to play, “something’s very wrong with that. It’s very inefficient to play with two people on one side so there’s a lot of experience in understanding what it means to be a collegiate student athlete.”

According to Siris, Serfass also brings a breadth of experience with speed, agility and strength training, assets the staff is already taking advantage of as they prepare their players for game action a year from now.

"We’ve been bringing them to practices a few days a week, skills and drills to try to see what their ability level is and trying to form a team building and team bonding aspect," Serfass said.

While the win marked Mercer’s first match especially counting and values playing as many matches as possible. "A match means something to me. I think practice doesn’t have to come here had we not had the program to offer," McCloskey said. "It is expected to be self-sufficient in year one.”

The program’s budget can also support a staff of up to three coaches, which Simone and head coach Rob Siris are already acting on. They have recently added coach Matt Serfass, a former linebacker at Shippensburg University, to serve as the defensive coordinator on Siris’s staff.

Serfass has worked alongside Siris in the past, as he served the same role for Siris during their tenure at Hopeville.

"He’s got a great rapport with the men on the team already,” Siris said. “He was a college linebacker, so for him he has a lot of experience in understanding what it means to be a collegiate student athlete.”

The process of building the team is ongoing as Siris and Serfass are still actively adding talent from around New Jersey and beyond. The roster as it stands now is offensive led by top recruits Justin Brown, a senior at Cherry Hill East who is committed for next spring, and Ocean County transfer Sam Buck.

On defense goalkeepers Colin White from North Brunswick and Hayden Lions out of Northern Burlington are key recruits for Siris, who places heavy value on depth at the goalkeeper position. "While the likes of Brown, White and Lions are seen as the marquee players for the program now, Serfass believes that the nature of building a talented roster at the collegiate level can be an exact science.

"It’s totally different at the high school level. Not only that, but different areas have some stronger lacrosse than others. So you could have a defender that stands out amongst his peers in one place that maybe wouldn’t even be in the starting six at another place,” Serfass said.

As the final phase of the recruiting process begins, Siris will also look to add another coach to the staff at some point in the summer to coordinate the offense.
Unexpected snow days help baseball team refocus

By Jackson Thompson
Reportor

Head Coach Kevin Kerins and the 2018 Mercer County Baseball Vikings were not where they expected or wanted to be when they returned from Myrtle Beach on March 15. Even with a winning record of 9-8, the team was off to one of its slowest starts since Kerins took over the program in 2012.

“We’re off to a slow start but we got a lot of new pieces. We’re getting to learn who’s going to be our producers, who’s going to be guys that we can trust in big spots,” Kerins said. He added, “Getting guys to learn how to play the style that we want as coaches takes time.”

Eighteen games into the season, the program was at its lowest win total since 2011 according to MCCC’s Athletics. But with 18 games played, the most by any team in the region at that point, it gave the coaching staff ample opportunities to test out a number of lineup strategies before settling on one that has now spearheaded the team to six straight wins.

“I think we settled in on a lineup... I think we have some really talented players, it’s just a matter of us putting them in the right spots,” Kerins said.

A three game win streak to finish the Myrtle trip parlayed into the team’s homecoming against Borough of Manhattan. The Vikings picked up two more wins and outscored their division III opponents 21-5.

And then the snow came and when all was said and done the Nor’Easter that occurred on Wednesday, March 21 may very well be remembered as a turning point in the Vikings 2018 season. Following their wins against Manhattan, the team was dealt with a 10 days break from game action, a circumstance that sophomore catcher Jimmy Versage claims can swing either way for a team trying to get back on track.

“We had a bit of a rough of a first half of the season, so this break might be a positive or a negative, so we’re hoping it’s gonna be a positive,” Versage said. “We had a couple really good practices where the coaches were really hard on us, so I think that kinda changed everybody’s outlook.”

For the time being it has worked into the Vikings favor. Against ASA the team was able to pick up another win and ‘tune back up’ against an opponent that the program hasn’t lost to in Kerins’ tenure as head coach.

“We were basically gonna chop up the entire game so that everybody stays fresh and is sharp and available the rest of the week,” said Kerins.

Kerins’ tuneup strategy featured the use of three pitchers over five innings. Chris Mummere, Cole Davis and Dave Scoe all combined for a one hit, six strikeout shutout performance over the ASA offense that has scored four runs against Mercer in the past four years according to MCCC Athletics.

Versage led the way on offense with three RBIs and a run scored as Mercer only needed five innings to put away the Avengers 11-0 in what Kerins deemed simply a tuneup game.

“Every game matters, they seed the playoffs, they seed the world series but with us not having played in such a long time it was important that we chop up our lineup today so that all of our guys are available Thursday,” Kerins said.

In an interview with the VORCE ASA head coach Francisco Perez stated the disadvantage the weather presents to his team with several of his key players being transfers from the Dominican Republic, while also giving credit to Mercer and their talent.

“I don’t think we were fully prepared but I can say the same thing for Mercer. It’s tough weather. They do have some tough kids, especially from around here with kids that are used to this weather so it makes it a lot easier, but they got a really good ball club,” Perez said.

Mercer’s continued dominance of the NYC based D3 program will be tested however as they are scheduled to meet two more times this season.
Head coach Ryan Zegarski picked up two more wins on Tuesday, March 27 to bring his career total to 403, when the Vikings swept a doubleheader against the Lions of Raritan Valley Community College.

“It really means that I’ve had a lot of great players,” Zegarski said in reference surpassing 400 wins. “It’s a great honor but I really don’t place too much emphasis on stats like that. I’m more concerned with coaching these players for this season.”

In game one of the doubleheader sophomore pitcher Tatum Marshall held Raritan to only one run while striking out six. The game was called in the fifth inning after Mercer took a lopsided 18-1 lead.

With the win Marshall remains undefeated as she moves to a perfect 5-0 on the season, and according to NJCAA.org she has pitched to an ERA of only 0.81, the ninth lowest in Division II.

“She throws strikes, that’s all you can ask out of a pitcher is to throw strikes and keep the ball in play and we’re confident that our fielders behind her can make the plays,” Zegarski said.

The second game yielded a similar result with Mercer putting up 10 runs in just the first inning. It would be another short affair as the second game would also be called in the fifth inning with Mercer up 13-1. Catcher Gabriella Early went 3 for 3 and racked up five RBIs.

Mercer, which had been scheduled to play seven straight home games after returning from their annual Myrtle Beach trip, hadn’t seen game action in 10 days as five of their scheduled home games were canceled due to the recent inclement weather.

“Sometimes time off gives you time to reflect on the good and bad things you’ve done already. We did a lot of talking to them about what we’ve accomplished so far,” Zegarski said. “We try to keep up the good and correct the bad.”

Meanwhile Raritan suffered a pair of noncompetitive losses in a late start to their season. The weather had cost the Lions the entire early portion of their schedule leaving Mercer as their first opponent of 2018, as they failed to go a full seven innings in either game.

In game one, Raritan sophomore pitcher Amanda Hansen opened her 2018 season with a scoreless first inning before giving up six runs in the second and eight more in the third. She was pulled late in the fourth inning and left the bases loaded.

“I think we all just got a little discombobulated since it was our first game and our first time playing here,” Hansen said. “We probably would have been a little bit better if we were able to practice on our field and had more practices in general since the weather did cancel a lot of our practices and games.”

Raritan was also at a disadvantage of playing on unfamiliar surfaces. According to Raritan head coach Donald Meister, his team practices is an indoor facility and plays on an all grass field, a far cry from the dirt of Mercer’s home field.

With the pair of wins Mercer’s record improves to 13-2-1. They will not get a chance to make up the home games they missed as seven of their last thirteen opponents will be faced on the road.