



# College mourns loss of beloved provost

## Trenton Campus provost Monica Weaver passed away at age 53



Monica Weaver with class of 2017 Mercer graduates.

COLLEGE VOICE | FILE PHOTO



Monica Weaver speaking at the Trenton Campus at the annual Celebration of Academic Achievement event 2017.

COLLEGE VOICE | FILE PHOTO

By Jasmine Santalla  
Senior Reporter

Monica L. Weaver worked as Mercer County Community College's Provost and Dean to the James Kerney campus for the past 12 years. Weaver passed away from breast cancer on April 1 and is survived by her daughter Kai Lynn, her father Benjamin and her aunt Amanda Goodson.

Since her start at the Trenton campus, Weaver managed many operations such as Youth College, the Community Education and Training programs, the Trenton Makes Program and the New Jersey Youth Corps-

Trenton. Weaver grew up in Cream Ridge, NJ just a few minutes from Allentown where she attended and graduated from high school. She contributed to her high school newspaper and yearbook. She graduated from Rider with a B.A. in Journalism and Public Relations

and earned a Master's of Science degree in Higher Education Management at University of Pennsylvania, then a Master's in Counselor Education from Kean University and finally a certificate of advanced educational spe-

cialization (C.A.E.S.) in Applied Developmental and Educational Psychology from Boston College. Provost Weaver showed her dedication to students continuously. At last year's Trenton campus 29th Celebration of

Academic Achievement 200 students were honored for their completion of their programs of study. Weaver said of them in a Mercer News article, "These individuals have worked so very hard. They

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# Governor visits campus to present free tuition plan

By Griffin Jones  
Senior Reporter

Between school, her work-study at Mercer's Trenton campus library, taking care of her elderly mother and sick father and her position as president of the Student Executive Council, Kulubo Koro, an education major, doesn't have a lot of time.

At one point she was working two jobs. She says, "I didn't rest much, but I couldn't complain because...you know you have to sacrifice to get to a certain point. If I don't sacrifice now I won't have my education and quitting school is not an option."

Koro isn't alone. In a survey of 50 Mercer students, 25 from the West Windsor campus

and 20 from the Trenton campus, The VOICE found that 80 percent of both West Windsor students and Trenton students work either full or part-time to afford tuition.

On the campaign trail Governor Phil Murphy promised free community college tuition for all. At a roundtable with students at Mercer on April 5, he reaffirmed that commitment.

With him was Mercer president Dr. Jianping Wang, acting NJ Secretary of Higher Education Zakiya Smith Ellis and Assemblyman Dan Benson of New Jersey's 14th legislative district. They were joined by a panel of seven student representatives selected by the administrators to

share what free college tuition would mean to them.

The hour long session included the governor's presentation of a key measure of his current budget proposal that awaits legislative confirmation. The program will dedicate \$50 million to provide what he described as "a major down payment" in an effort to make community college free for all students within three years, a project he said would cost \$200 million in total.

He explained that \$45 million of that would give free tuition to those with annual household incomes below \$45,000.

The VOICE sur-

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NJ Governor Phil Murphy greets Mercer student representatives on April 5 at a roundtable discussion about his proposal for free community college tuition in the state.

PHOTO | GRIFFIN JONES



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# Jerrell Blakeley is running for City Council in Trenton



Trenton City Council candidate Jerrell Blakeley discusses his campaign platform with *The VOICE*.

PHOTO | MONIQUE BEASLEY

By Monique Beasley  
Reporter

Jerrell Blakeley who is currently running for one of three at-large City Council seats in Trenton regularly drives from his home in Trenton to Pittsburgh, PA where he is enrolled in a doctoral program at the University of Pittsburgh. It was on that drive that he decided to run for the Council

“So, I’m driving in the middle of the night,

lonely on the road and listening to music thinking about this, asking myself, ‘Is this the right time and am I prepared?’” he told *The VOICE*. His answer? Yes.

“Trenton was in a desperate need,” he says.

Blakeley continues, “I haven’t been happy with some of the issues that have occurred in Trenton...I had this epiphany that now was the time for me to light a candle rather than curse the darkness and I believe

that it’s incumbent upon all Trentonians to put themselves out there for leadership roles.”

On May 8, Trenton residents will have the opportunity to vote. As of December 2017, a total of 16 candidates had filed paperwork to run for the seven available municipal seats, according to paperwork filed with the New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission.

Despite the odds, Blakeley says he believes he is best suited for the

position.

“I’ve been involved in the political process since I was 14 years old, and so I’ve always loved politics,” Blakeley says.

When he was 14 years old, he volunteered for the Trenton Mayor Doug Palmer’s 2002 reelection campaign. He then moved on to intern for Assemblyman Reed Gusciora (D). Blakeley currently serves as the campaign organizer for Healthy Schools Now at the New Jersey Work Environment Council, an advocacy group that works to ensure that all NJ children and employees learn and work in healthy, safe and modern public schools. He is also an adjunct professor and counselor at Rutgers University in New Brunswick.

Blakeley’s longtime friend and campaign manager, Eric Johnson, says of the candidate, “He sees the city from the inside out, not from the outside in. He’s not looking in the window, trying to fix the problems from outside.”

As one of the top

issues that Blakeley is addressing in his campaign is education which has resonated with Mercer students.

Rozanae Veal, a Mercer Education major and mother, says, “I would like to see more safe spaces for kids. I would like to see more inexpensive programs for the youth where they can create freely.”

On his campaign website Blakeley says, he will “support the creation of the Trenton Opportunity Commission that will provide a forum for Trenton nonprofits, educators, educational institutions, unions, religious institutions, and committed residents to help develop innovative educational, vocational, and professional opportunities for young Trentonians.”

Veal has additional concerns saying, “We can’t minimize others’ addictions, the craving of wanting to know what it’s like to get a piece of the streets, but what we can do is get our children excited again about education and more resources. Personally, I believe

that the children of Trenton are the hope of puzzling things back together, we just have to provide the tools as a city.”

Based on his website, Blakeley seems to share her priorities saying, “Providing opportunities for recreation and extracurricular out of school enrichment are important for Trenton.”

When asked by *The VOICE* to explain what Trenton residents could expect a year from May 8 if he were to be elected to city council Blakeley says, “City council is going to be an engine for ideas. I’m going to make sure that Trenton is on the forefront of progressive legislative changes in terms of changing the way we do business. We have the Mayor of Birmingham [Alabama] doing a fantastic job, and we have cities like Oakland, [California] and Newark, [New Jersey], and other cities that are really in the vanguard of municipal changes.” He adds that he feels “Trenton desperately needs to be a part of that kind of revolution of innovative civic” and local policy.

## Local students participate in school walkout for gun reform

By Drew Mumich & Maria Ramos  
Senior Reporters

More than 20 Hightstown High School students gathered on a brisk Friday morning carrying their backpacks outside the main entrance holding signs, giving speeches, and shouting chants as part of the #NationalSchoolWalkouts movement on April 20.

The movement was organized and led by students in the continuing efforts to bring gun reform in the wake of the Parkland shooting in mid-February. April 20 marks 19 years since the Columbine High School massacre in Colorado where two gunmen killed 12 students and a teacher. Approximately 2,500 schools nationwide participated in this event according to an article published by CNN.

The students from Hightstown, varying in age from freshmen to juniors, left their classrooms just before 10 am. The protest included speeches and chants combined that with 13 minutes of silence held in remembrance of the lives lost in Columbine, and across the nation in the many school shoot-



PHOTO | DREW MUMICH

Hightstown High School students brandish signs and give speeches outside of the school’s main entrance during a walkout for gun reform on April 20.

ings since.

Silence has been a powerful form of speech in the most recent anti-gun movement. Emma Gonzalez, survivor of the mass shooting in Parkland, Florida spoke at the #MarchForOurLives event in Washington DC and used most of her time to remain silent. After 6 minutes and 20 seconds in which she stared at the audience crying, she said, “In a little over 6 minutes, 17 of our friends were

taken from us, 15 were injured and everyone in the Douglas community was forever altered.”

Lara Pavlovic, a junior, told *The VOICE*, “We want to do this so things can change and because we care about our lives...First they told us to do this [the walkout] in the football field, but what’s the point, if no one can see us? So we decided to do it in front of the main entrance.”

As Jefferson Martinez, a junior sporting a #neveragain t-shirt explained, “I think the reason why they wanted us at the football field, it’s not because they care about us, it’s more like they want to hide us, and don’t want to damage their public view.”

A memo released late February by the New Jersey Department of Education, Guidance for Possible Student Demonstra-

tions states, “Schools are encouraged to prepare by taking steps to ensure any student gathering is away from areas in view of, or easily accessible to, the general public wherever possible.”

With high winds getting stronger, and in the 50s, dropping, two girls decided to go back inside the school to grab their sweaters, but Administrators would not allow them to go back into the build-

ing.

As well not being let into the building, students outside were given an hour of detention for every class they missed. Administration was unable to comment on the specifics of the punishment of the students who walked out of class.

Walkouts and sit ins are two historically powerful and relatively common types of protest used by activists, particu-

## Professor Pugh to retire after 46 years of service

By Jasmine Santalla  
Senior Reporter

Professor Robert Pugh will be retiring from Mercer at the end of this year after 46 years of service in the Health and Physical Education department.

Since his start, Pugh has initiated mandatory Health and Wellness courses as the coordinator of the PE program led the men's basketball team to two national championships and started Mercer's summer sports camp program in 1973. He has also served as Mercer's president of the faculty union and won countless awards in the fields of education and athletics including the 2016 Distinguished Teacher of the Year award, the New Jersey Interscholastic Athletic Association Sports Award, and the Bob Kanaby Service Award. He also earned the Central Jersey Basketball Officials 40 years of service award and the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference Supervisor's award for his service in NJ basketball.

In honor of his departure, the Mercer Foundation is conducting a fundraiser to renovate the fitness center and rename it after Pugh. Their goal is to raise \$10,000.

Pugh told The VOICE that what he will miss most is "the people. You know we look at Mercer like a family. We all work together and have bonded in a familial way. So [I will miss] that family atmosphere, but I'll also miss teaching. Teaching is what I was born to do."

Dean of Health Sciences Robert Schreyer told The VOICE, "In the two years that I have known Bob, I have observed him to be a kind and generous individual. His willingness to support students has been inspiring, but he does not stop there. Bob is also a strong supporter of the adjuncts in his courses and the faculty throughout the college."

Pugh grew up, as he says, "a country boy" from West Virginia. He attended West Virginia State University for his Bachelor's degree. He was the first in his family to go to college. While there he enrolled in the Reserve Officers' Training Core program. Serving in the

Army and eventually attending flight school, Professor Pugh was stationed at Fort Dix in Burlington County and from there he got his Masters degree at TCNJ.

Professor Pugh says he fell into the field of physical education by accident. "I didn't have much guidance or advice from family because they didn't know any more than I did, so I picked physical education because I was an athlete. I played football and basketball...[I] found out later that I really did like it."

While he played basketball as a point guard for only one year at West Virginia State, he has maintained his interest in the sport as a referee for Division I basketball for 25 years after graduating from college and is now an official for the NJ Athletic Conference assigning referees to games.

"You know back then the scholarships weren't as free-flowing, so I had to work. I scrubbed dishes and floors...The traveling part [while refereeing] was a little difficult, but I never missed school. I made sure I was here and kept up with my main responsibilities. But I loved meeting people and that pressure-packed environment." Pugh says.

Professor of Exercise Science and fellow coordinator of Health and Physical Education, John Kalinowski, says of his mentor, "Professor Pugh has dedicated his tenure at Mercer to maximizing opportunities, learning and the promotion of healthy lifestyle behaviors for students and faculty alike. He is passionate about his own health and fitness, as well as that of others and does not hesitate to promote this outside of the classroom."

Having been at Mercer since 1972, Professor Pugh says he has seen Mercer evolve in many ways. The biggest changes have come in the form of technology. He told The VOICE that when he started, "students were still operating typewriters."

Professor Pugh is retiring with his wife, Brenda. They have three daughters together which, he says are what he and his wife are most proud of.

As far as retirement plans go, Professor Pugh is still wrestling with what to do with all of the time he will have though he remains optimistic. He said he will continue with his passion for tennis he first picked up 35 years ago and he has recently picked up pickleball.



COLLEGE VOICE | FILE PHOTO  
Professor Robert Pugh poses in front of exercise equipment in Mercer's Physical Education building.

Pugh told The VOICE: "I'm still mulling over what I will be doing for my retirement but I'm sure my wife will have a list for me [laughs]. I like fitness so I will continue to stay active...I also assign refs to the NJ Athletic Conference so I plan to attend a lot of games watching my refs."

Looking back at his career Professor Pugh says, "There have been some very funny moments in my time at Mercer. The kids just come up with such funny things and overall I just enjoy feeling like a family in the classroom. Mercer has been a great home to me."

## Passing of Monica Weaver has deep impact on Mercer community

Continued from page 2

have earned the right to chart their own destiny."

Coordinator of Enrollment and Student Services at the downtown campus, Kimberly Bowser, was a colleague and friend to Weaver.

Bowser told The VOICE "Even on days when she wasn't feeling well, [Monica] would take the time to listen to you and find a positive spin on the situation. You could feel the love that she had for each of us in the time she spent with [us]... There have been countless times, too many to remember, that Monica would put herself on the back burner to solve a situation or help a student."

Dean of Students, Dr. Diane Campbell, spoke to The VOICE about Weaver's immersive approach to running the Trenton campus saying, "Monica Weaver connected into the community to try to be able to better help the students who took classes at the James Kerney Campus. Although students at both campuses need assistance at one time or another, Monica had a special interest in the students who

lived in Trenton."

One of the places Weaver worked to help the Trenton was through her position as a board member in the Trenton Downtown Association (TDA). TDA is a non-profit organization with the aim of "revitalizing" the capital city of NJ through ways of increasing business competition and engaging the citizens.

Chairman of the board of directors at Trenton Downtown Association, Willard Stanback, says of Weaver, "She was helpful and supportive both outside and inside the boardroom. Actually, Monica and I were planning for her to give me a tour of the new Mercer building and eat there... She also was very enthusiastic about the downtown facility and the opportunities it provided both to her students and the downtown community."

Assistant Director of the Career Training Institute at the Trenton campus, Craig Morris, said of Weaver, "Her legacy is something that we the staff of JKC will carry on. She knew the importance of education in helping lift up not only



COLLEGE VOICE | FILE PHOTO  
JKC Provost and Monica Weaver with students at Mercer's JKC campus Spring Day.

individuals but how that impact has a ripple effect to help a family."

Many loved ones have left messages on Ms. Weaver's online obituary.

One being Mercer's Operations Coordinator for Mercer's Center for Continuing Studies, Roseann Cooper.

She writes, "Born

at Thanksgiving time and home on Easter - Thanksgiving and Celebration of New Life - that about sums up Monica. We are all better for her life. She was a

wonderful colleague, an outstanding woman, and a devoted mom. Rest in Peace, Monica and peace to all those who remain to carry on your work."

# Starving for an education

## Students nationwide forced to choose between textbooks and food

By Maria Ramos  
Senior Reporter

One Mercer student, who we will call L, is trying to finish her degree and move on in her life as soon as possible, but economic problems have delayed her graduation. She has had to drop out of college two times and has often gone hungry in order to pay the bills.

"In different occasions I've had to think about if it is best to use the money for food or a different purpose, like savings for tuition, transportation or rent. In most cases I choose to buy cheap and unhealthy food, most likely from a vending machine if I'm at school, or fast food." L told The VOICE.

Having "A lack of available financial resources for food at the level of the household," is also known as "food insecurity," according to Feeding America's website, and it has become a major problem for community college students as tuition and the cost of textbooks continue to rise. Also, the reliance on part-time jobs that pay minimum wage makes it nearly impossible to cover all the expenses.

L's case is a common problem nationwide and also at Mercer. The VOICE conducted a survey of 50 students, 25 from the West Windsor Campus (WWC) and 25 from the James Kerney Campus (JKC). Sixty percent of WWC students reported they have been worried about running out of food before they got the money to buy more, while 80 percent of JKC students reported the same.

A new survey and study were conducted by Sara Goldrick-Rab, Professor of Higher Education Policy at Temple University, who has worked on this topic for several years doing research on homeless students and food insecurity. More than 33,000 students from 70 different community colleges were included in the study.

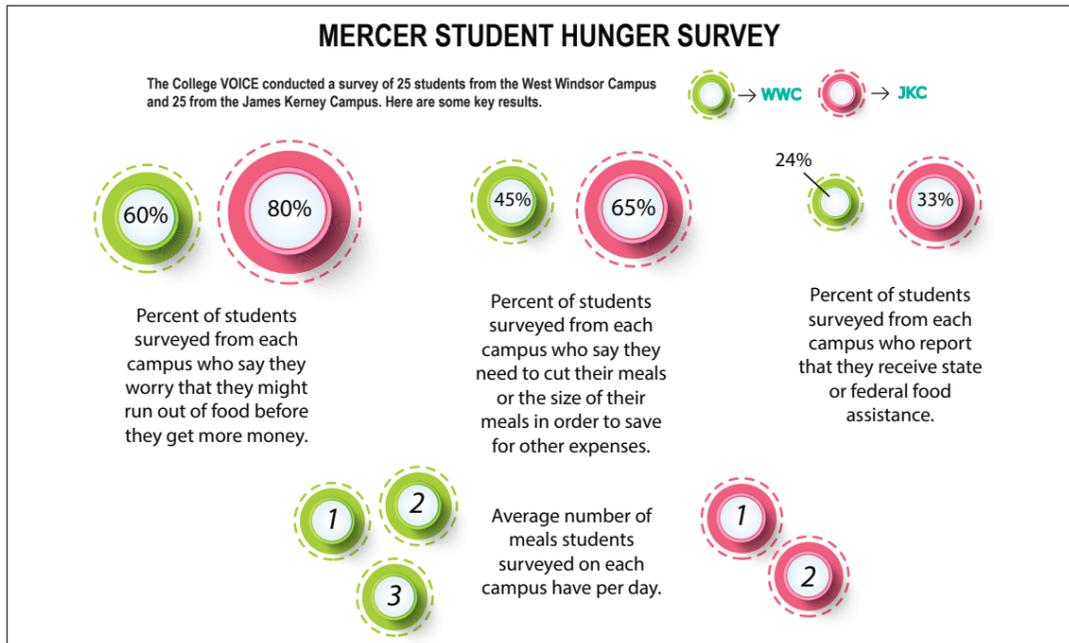
The results showed that one-third of community college students go hungry and 12 percent are homeless. Based on these results, Goldrick-Rab mentioned in an article published by NPR, "It really undermines their ability to do well in school."

Goldrick-Rab added, "Their grades suffer, their test scores appear to be lower, and overall their chances of graduating are slimmer. They can barely escape their conditions of poverty long enough to complete their degrees."

Multiple initiatives, programs and non-profit organizations across the country are trying to end this problem, but there is still a long way to go.

Rachel Sumekh, founder and CEO of Swipe Out Hunger, a nonprofit organization that addresses hunger among college students and currently operates in 19 states, told The VOICE via email, "Community colleges often have a higher need population and even fewer resources to provide."

On the VOICE survey, Nayoni Manning, a Business student at the JKC campus, wrote, "I feel like Mercer should start meal plans like 4-year insti-



INFOGRAPHIC | JASMINE SANTALLA

tutions that is incorporated into our tuition."

Mercer does not have any meal plans for students directly, but some student assistance programs do offer support.

One key college cost seems to connect directly to student hunger is the cost of textbooks.

An anonymous nursing student from JKC wrote on the VOICE survey, "How are we supposed to get good grades when we have an empty stomach and we need to pay like \$500 for textbooks each semester?"

A number of professors and librarians at Mercer are working together to try to address this problem. Among them are Kathi Paluscio and Dylan Wolfe, Professors of Communication. They are leading

Mercer's Open Educational Resources (OER) initiative which is part of a nationwide movement and invites faculty at Mercer to use free, online, content that is diverse and offers more resources rather than relying on expensive textbooks.

Paluscio said, "We want to help faculty and students, so this way we are not only eliminating costs but also increasing the quality of the materials that can be used."

According to the National Association of College Stores, the average price of a new textbook increased from \$58 in 2011-12 to \$80 in 2015-16. The cost of expenses continue growing and students need their textbooks in order to complete their assignments and leaving them with less money to spend in food and impacting their abil-

ity to succeed in class.

Professor Paluscio says, "The huge issue now is that they are so many students who don't buy the book...There are a lot of students that don't have the money when the semester starts. They just don't. They pay for their classes and maybe they will buy the one book they can afford." She added, "The students are failing classes, specifically because they waited to long to buy a textbook."

Multiple factors can affect students and their education goals but food insecurity is persistent and hard to beat.

L told The VOICE, "It is not comfortable to ask for that kind of help as it is not a position you think you will have to face, [and] at the same time you know you are asking people that is almost in the same economic situation as you are at the time."

## Students worry about consequences of walkout participation

Continued from page 2

larly since the 1960s. The goal is to disrupt activities in order to draw attention to a pressing issue or cause. Because the actions are inherently disruptive, they are not a protected form of political speech.

Eyla Huertas, an intake attorney for the American Civil Liberties Union in New Jersey told The VOICE, "Schools are allowed, unfortunately, to discipline students for disrupting a class or if they wanted to leave a class to go protest...what they cannot do, is they cannot punish them more harshly because of the political conduct, because of [what] they are protesting."

There has been broad controversy over how much punishment is appropriate for students participating in gun violence protests. Schools have an obligation to educate, so disruption is usually not tolerated, but at the same time, many administrators nationwide support the cause of keeping guns out of schools. Some have tried to minimize punishments.

In a document issued

from the U.S. Department of Education in 2008 called Lessons Learned from School Crises and Emergencies says "This is an opportunity for instructors to dialogue with students about the rights and wrongs of the situation and confer with them on whether there is a better way for their voice to be heard. Once again, the district relates to the students in a way that promotes the spirit of education and opportunity for students to express themselves—not punishment for their desire to be political."

Though as Taylor Carmona told the VOICE "The People that stayed out the whole time got two Saturday detentions. If people stayed outside during two class periods they got one Saturday detentions."

By the sound of it these students are going nowhere soon. As student Nicole Field told The VOICE "We are not just gonna stand by and let stuff like this happen, and even though we can't vote, we have the power to influence people who can and are in charge of this kind of thing."



PHOTO | DREW MUMICH

Hightstown High School students outside of the school's main entrance with hand-made signs protesting gun violence at the April 20 student walkout.

# Students support Governor's plan for free tuition



PHOTO | GRIFFIN JONES

Governor Phil Murphy with Mercer President Jianping Wang.

Continued from page 1

vey found that 36 percent of West Windsor campus students and 75 of Trenton campus students are from households below that line, which would qualify them for Murphy's proposed plan.

At the roundtable the Mercer representatives, from older returning students to those straight out of high school, voiced support for the plan, saying it would have made their own ability to get through school easier had it been available.

Jennifer Eng, Student Government Association President, said, "If I was to go off my own experiences, [free tuition] probably would have allowed me to go full-time at school instead of working part-time and going to classes part-time, which condenses the timeline of graduation."

Murphy responded saying, "I'm a big believer that education ought to be a right,

not a privilege...I think you heard a whole lot of stories about life challenges, a lot of work, a lot of extending their years in school because they had to work to afford it."

The issue of colleges affording the possible influx of students was brought up.

Murphy explained that the other \$5 million allocated in the budget would be split by the 19 state community colleges to help them handle the likely increase in enrollment.

In an interview with The VOICE following the roundtable, Dr. Wang was asked if she was worried the facilities would be unable to cope with the increased student population. She said, "[I am] not worried about that, I would love to have enrollment boom because the college revenue right now, 51 percent of our college revenue comes from enrollment. So enrollment declines very much hurt the college because the buildings still have to be maintained.

English Professor Dr. Barbara Hamilton says, "I hope they use [the money given to the school] for more full-time faculty and not for more administrators or staff members since all the research shows that students who make a personal connection with a faculty member are more likely to finish courses and finish their degrees."

In a paper by researchers at Indiana University and the University of Michigan, it was stated that "students' decisions to persist or withdraw from college depend on their successful academic and social integration within the college. Part of this successful integration was dependent upon the favorable daily interactions between faculty and students."

Jack Tabor, Professor of English told The VOICE, "I think making community college more accessible to more students is very important, however, while I think it sounds good...I worry about the numbers and how we would pay for it. I worry about what programs would have to be cut in order to find the funding to keep the school going because that revenue has to come from somewhere."

Murphy stated at the round table that the funding was coming from the budget, and will not be tied to additional funding from sources like lotteries like Tennessee uses to fund its free community college program.

During his budget address on March 13, Murphy said that the budget will increase its revenue by imposing a "millionaires' tax," which would raise taxes for those making over a million dollars, and increasing the sales tax to 7 percent, a 0.375 percent increase.

Sixty percent of West Windsor campus students and 45 percent of Trenton campus students said they would sup-

*"If I was to go off my own experiences, [free tuition] probably would have allowed me to go full-time at school instead of working part-time and going to classes part-time, which condenses the timeline of graduation."*

- Jennifer Eng, Student Government Association President

port free community college if those measures were taken.

On the survey, an anonymous communications student wrote, "I absolutely love it. Although sales tax would slight [sic] increase, everyone would have the opportunity to get a degree no matter income status."

Senate Leader Stephen Sweeney (D) has objections, however. "I'm of the mindset that we are not going to raise taxes," he said at a press conference in February, according to an article by Politico.

Sweeney decides which bills are brought before the state Senate, without his approval any changes to taxes cannot be approved, leaving the future of free community college in question.

Senate Republican leader Tom Kean agrees with the sentiment. In a statement released in response to Murphy's Mercer event, he said, "No government-funded program is free. Taxpayers always pay the price and frankly, people in New Jersey pay far too much already."

He continued, "What we shouldn't do, is force over-taxed families to pick up the tab for Governor Murphy's spending-spree."

Some students are opposed to the idea of free community college too. Chris B., a Liberal Arts major, wrote on a survey, "Who is paying for this? Nothing is free."

Another student wrote, "I believe that it will be greatly beneficial for those who hail from a household that is low income. It may also be a great disadvantage as there will defi-

nately be students who will take the opportunity for granted, therefore wasting taxpayer's [sic] money."

Faculty had their own concerns about the implementation of the plan. Dr. Carol Bork of the

English department told The VOICE, "It'll be hard to create a plan that gives everyone a fair chance and lots of second chances but doesn't allow people to game the system."

Dr. Leonard Winogora, adjunct professor and on-site coordinator for William Paterson at Mercer, says, "I favor [free community college tuition], but I want to make sure it's not just a giveaway...Like all financial aid, tuition should be based on an accepted level of academic performance."

Koro mentioned to The VOICE about others she knows who have struggled with work and school, saying, "A lot of people [drop out of school], my best friend who's a single mom started school and she stopped. When you have to think about what comes first, 'I have to feed a child. I have to feed myself or go to school,' you don't think that school is like that important you're like that can hold off, I need to go to work"

Dr. Wang addressed situations like that at the roundtable, saying that although community colleges have low graduation rates, it wasn't because of the students themselves.

"It's not that they are not intellectually capable, not personally committed," she explained, "it's just that the financial burden takes them away."

Governor Murphy agreed, concluding, "You look at a budget of 37.4 billion dollars, which is the budget that we presented, and you think that a very modest fraction of that will have an impact like the one we're talking about, I think that may be the best investment that I know of."

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# Trenton's Punk Rock Flea Market has something for every taste



At Punk Rock Flea Market Vendor sells homemade scented candles and artwork.

PHOTO | CHELSEY JOHNSTONE

By Chelsey Johnstone  
Senior Reporter

Labeled one of 2014's Best Flea Markets in America by The Huffington Post, Trenton, New Jersey's Punk Rock Flea Market features a variety of vendors and food trucks. Presented multiple times a year, over 200 companies and individuals team together to share different forms of original art, music, clothing, antiques, jewelry and more.

Punk Rock Flea Market first time vendor and artist who goes by the name G Terado, was once interested in creating personalized zombie portraits. He said, "I started with this market called Geek Flea Market that's held in Kearny. I was putting all

my zombies out and actually 'zombifying' my clients."

Currently working with the concept of life, death and rebirth, Terado has taken initiative to become his own identity and to spread it to this newly found alternative community he encountered at this year's Punk Rock Flea Market.

Terado added, "Going in at first I really didn't know what to expect." However, upon entry, he realized, "They're just people like you and me with certain interests."

The Punk Rock Flea Market is subject to many stereotypes. With the genre of punk commonly associated with terms such as anti-author-

ity and promiscuous, it is often that those who enjoy punk are judged.

Joleen a twenty-three-year-old from Chesilhurst, New Jersey (she declined to give her last name) told The VOICE, "We're scary and we dress scary to [the general public]. The people who come here are judged in a poor light."

What is seen and assumed by the general public and what is actually the case are two separate identities. Most would assume those found in the punk community are just that, punks. However, after speaking with some members of the community, they believe punk has really become just an

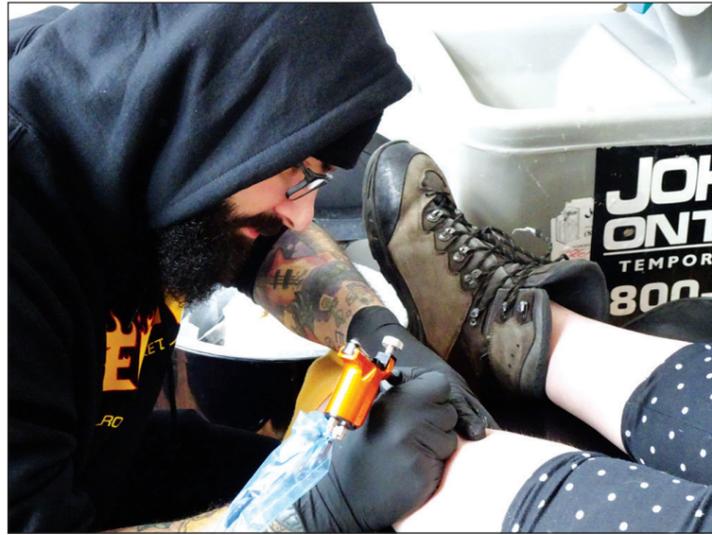


PHOTO | CHELSEY JOHNSTONE

At Trenton's Punk Rock Flea Market local tattoo artist offers \$50 tattoos.

alternative group of people.

Amanda Ciccione of Brooklyn, artist and owner of Dark Arts and Roses art company states, "I like the inclusiveness of it. It seems like there are people from every walk of life."

Ciccione explains just how important it is to society to have differences in communities. She says, "(If we were to just) accept what everyone tells you is what you have to do and how you have to live, the world would be really boring."

The Punk Rock Flea Market challenges the norm. The event encourages all to participate and enjoy art that is not typically seen every day.

"It's for everybody and it's for anybody," said Terado. "I was set up next to a guy who made his own barbecue sauce. Across from me and that guy, there was someone selling jam and peanut butter," he stated.

As Joleen says, "I can't just go to Walmart and buy this stuff." The Punk Rock Flea Mar-

ket carries oddities and creative works most would overlook if this event had not existed. To many, events such as the Punk Rock Flea Market are important in raising awareness to "odd" and different local art.

Some even believe these events will improve areas of New Jersey such as Trenton. Perry, a 27-year-old from Philadelphia says, "They say Trenton is on the rise and they're trying to improve it. I think this will definitely help."

As a whole, Trenton's Punk Rock Flea Market creates an environment important to the local community. While spreading awareness of local artists, eateries and musicians, the Punk Rock Flea Market welcomes an array of people. Even from someone who had no idea what to expect, Terado says, "There is zero chance that you're going to bring someone there and they're not going to be interested."

## REVIEW: Spring Awakening at Kelsey Theatre, a modern risk pays off

By Monique Beasley  
Reporter

It was a spring resurgence for the musical *Spring Awakening*. Mercer's Theatre and Dance Departments offered their interpretation of musical this past weekend to a packed house at the Kelsey Theatre.

The eight-time Tony Award winning rock inspired musical was a pleasant break from the usual traditional musical theatre fare the college offers. "Spring Awakening" takes place in the nineteenth century in Germany, the issues of discovery that the characters deal with are still relevant for young people today. Based on the play of the same name written by Frank Wedekind that was once banned in Germany for being too controversial.

The cast, consisting of a mix of Mercer alumni, current students and community actors, as spotlighted in the Mercer Arts press release, provided an entrance to a world that was pleas-

ant to watch, despite the show's deep subject matter, from the opening to the closing number.

Julia Toto from Pennington played the charismatic Wendla who helps the audience understand why the kids aren't alright. In it she sings about the mama who gave her "no way to handle things/who made me so sad."

Her male lead counterpart Melchior, played with subtle charm by Marshall McGuire of Ewing, echoes her sentiment while singing "All That's Known," his own monologue about the issues with the adults in their society. The entirety of the musical plays out to the ramifications of a society based on fear, where the teenagers take the brunt of the repercussions.

Jody Gazenbeek-Person, co-producer and choreographer for the show explained, "We [the production team] all agreed that what this play brings up is something we have all felt in our high school and middle school years, which is a kind of claustrophobia, that you're in a box and that's why the stage has

been made smaller by a set on top of the stage floor."

He continues, "The movements don't speak far past the arms, everything is held tight and inward."

With songs that deal with sexual yearning, masturbation, suicide and rape, this show is not recommended for younger viewers. And although the topics sound bleak on paper, the rock musical score and lyrics written by Steven Sater and Duncan Sheik give them a modern and entertaining interpretation that one would not normally reserve for such taboo themes.

Breanna Rapp, Mercer Alumni '17 told The VOICE, "I was blown away, super impressed. It was my first time seeing a rock style musical and I really, really like the difference in energy over the other shows. This is completely different...it's a nice change of pace,"

There were also stand out performances from the ensemble cast as well. Donte Wilder of Ewing, who plays George, shines whenever he is vocally



PHOTO | MONIQUE BEASLEY

Marshall McGuire (Melchior) and Julia Toto (Wendla) in an April performance of "Spring Awakening" at Mercer's Kelsey Theatre.

allowed to and Liam Smith of Yardley provided comedic chops and real dancing prowess as the snarky but loveable Hanschen. Ilse, played by Bridget Hughes of Jackson, has a deep and soulful voice that is both as warm as it is commanding. Her duet with Ted Braun's Moritz serves as a special moment in the show.

Overall the cast and crew provided a great night of

musical theatre that was both modern and thought provoking. I walked away hoping that the message would spark a dialogue between parents and their children. As Gilda Gildenberg, an audience member from South Brunswick agreed, "It was thought provoking. There are people who are afraid to talk to their kids, and this has to change."

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# Mercer helps more than



PHOTO | GRIFFIN JONES

Mercer student volunteers organize to aid with the April 3 release of neutered cats back onto Mercer's West Windsor Campus.



PHOTO | GRIFFIN JONES



PHOTO | GRIFFIN JONES



ABOVE: A newly neutered cat awaits release onto Mercer's campus on April 3 after program. LEFT: MCCC Student Government Association members prepare to release feral cats at the April 3 release of feral cats on Mercer's West Windsor campus

By Griffin Jones  
Senior Reporter

Dozens of cats raced out their cages in a scene reminiscent of the Spanish Running of the Bulls on April 3rd, having just been treated by a Trap, Neuter, Release (TNR) program.

These were no ordinary house cats, but the 59 feral cats that live on Mercer's campus.

TNR is a process where cats are captured, sterilized, vaccinated and then released back into the wild.

On an American Society of Prevention and Cruelty to Animals (APSCA) web page entitled "A Closer Look at Community Cats," it states, "By stabilizing the population, cats will naturally have more space, shelter and food and fewer risks of disease. After being spayed or neutered, cats living in colonies tend to gain weight and live healthier lives."

Despite the rain, Jacqueline Spadaccini looked on proudly at what she had helped accomplish. "It really feels good to let them go," she said.

Spadaccini is one of a number that has expressed interest in aiding the feral cats. A

number of concerned Mercer staff members help too.

Ronald Rabideau, Mercer's Greenhouse Manager, has also been caring for the feral cats.

He says, "I like cats, and they're nice to have around here because mice and ... things are a big pest for horticulture." He continued, "They do a pretty good job I think of keeping the neighborhood population under control."

However, cats and mice aren't the only wildlife around. Locals have observed a number of coyotes and foxes eating the cats.

Rabideau mentioned his own struggle with losing cats. "I've had kittens die out here too, I tried helping them as best I could, but only so much I could do," he said.

Rabideau also says that a number of cats set up house in one of the abandoned greenhouses. With help, it was converted into a place for a few cats to stay.

He added, "Occasionally there'd be a litter that would

pop up and if I could catch them early enough I'd try to adopt them out, find some good homes for them."

Most he was able to find homes for through a student of his that works at a veterinary clinic, he says. Last year he was able to find homes for nine kittens.

But he wasn't satisfied. He says, "To address the situation long term I felt that somebody needed to come in and trap and neuter the cats so they would put an end to the kitten production problem. So I reached out to a few different organizations in the area."

Rabideau continued, "So turns out that one of the people that I had reached out to ... reached out to someone else, that's Jacqueline Spadaccini, and Jacqueline came here and met with me ... took it upon herself to do a lot more research and she actually found funding."

He added, "Jacqueline did most of the work, I just had a foothold here to...I put her in touch with Bryon Marshall I

# in four dozen feral cats



PHOTO | GRIFFIN JONES

After going through the Delaware-based Catch, Neuter, Release program, a student government member released neutered cats onto campus. BOTTOM LEFT: A cat

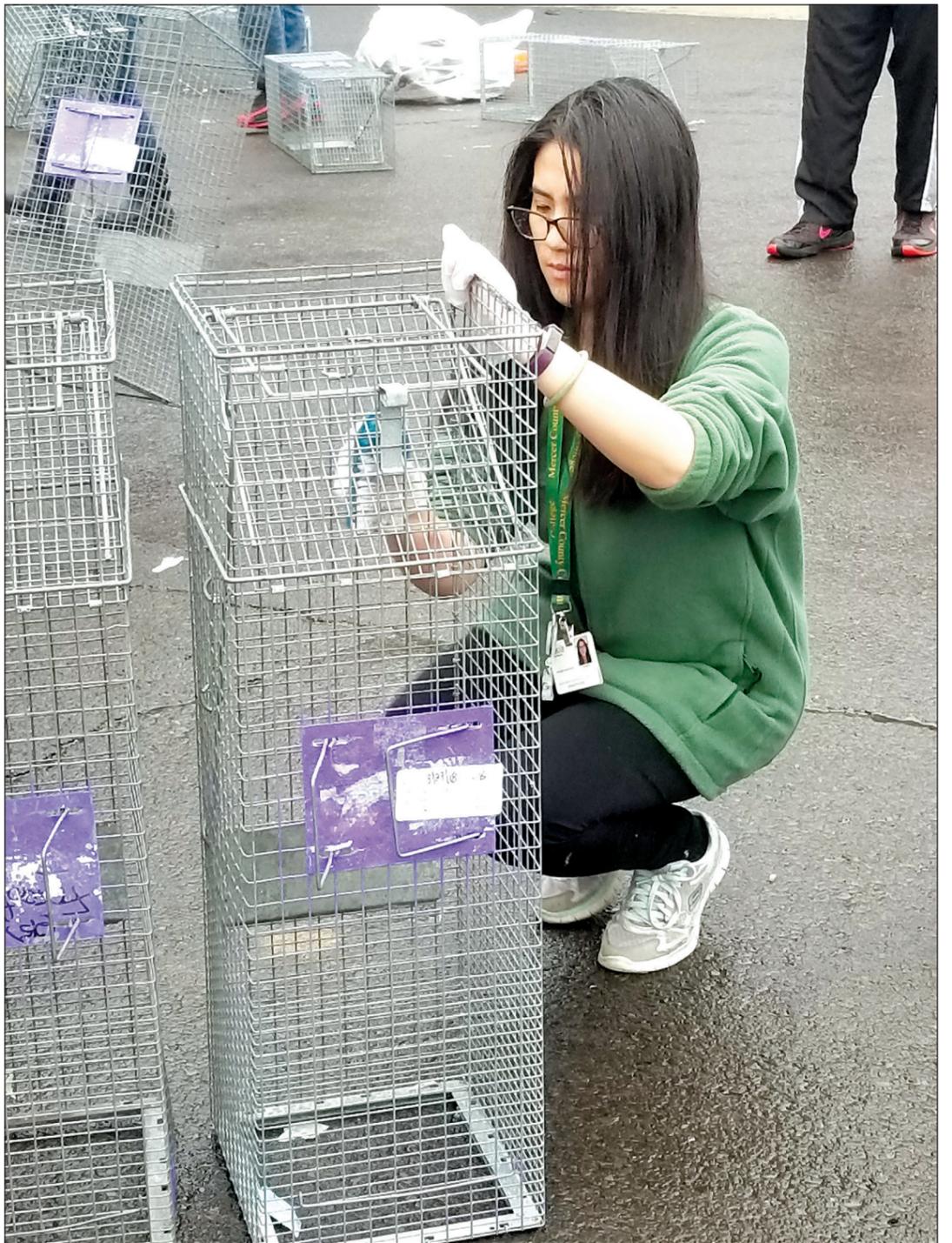


PHOTO | GRIFFIN JONES

Student Government President Jenn Eng cleans out used cages following the cat release.

think.”

Spadaccini says the TNR project had been in the making since last November.

She says she became encouraged to start a TNR program on Mercer’s campus when she was walking through Mercer County Park, adjacent to the college grounds. She noticed that the cats had begun to encroach on the park. “They were infringing on the community,” she says.

After reaching out to Mercer several times in the past efforts failed due to a lack of money.

Three thousand one hundred dollars would be needed to fully treat all the cats. Spadaccini says that she was able to raise half of that from the college, the Student Government Association (SGA) and from the Animal Protection League of New Jersey.

But the other half remained, and to raise it Spadaccini created a GoFundMe with the help of Kate Featherstone from the Feral Friends Network of Alley Cat Allies. She adver-

tised it by posting flyers around the community, including many on Mercer’s campus.

The GoFundMe was able to raise 1,700 out of its 1,600 dollar goal, according to Spadaccini. “It really worked out perfectly,” she added.

She contacted Forgotten Cats of Delaware, who she hired to help.

They sent a woman who wished only to be called Michele the Cat Trapper, who came to work with Spadaccini and together with the help of the college community they captured 62 cats, including a mother and her two kittens.

The two kittens will be able to be adopted out once they stop nursing, at which point the mother will be neutered and returned to Mercer.

The TNR has already shown results. Rabideau says “[The report] said there were 71 unborn kittens that were prevented.”

But even though the TNR is done, there is still work to do. Spadaccini says, “A TNR project only takes place and is

successful when there is a caretaker and this should be more than only one person, especially for the number of felines [that Mercer has].”

Michele added, “I was suggesting that they get some kind of a club or an organization to monitor them and to take responsibility for them.”

There have been concerns that feeding the cats may have increased their population and made them a problem, but Michele denied that. When asked she said that if they weren’t being fed they would just be eating the birds and wildlife instead, harming the local ecosystem.

Jennifer Eng, the Student Government Association President says, “The SGA is discussing what options we have to help the cats.”

She added that if any students want to create a club or organization to help the cats that would be their right, and they would receive the support of the SGA.



PHOTO | GRIFFIN JONES

A newly neutered cat awaits release after going through the Delaware-based Catch, Neuter, Release program.

# REVIEW: Real tacos take over Princeton



PHOTO | MARIA RAMOS

Carne asada, pollo tinga, and pollo asado tacos alongside a variety of salsas and a Coke imported from Mexico, as offered at Tacoria on Nassau Street in Princeton.

By Maria Ramos  
Senior Reporter

When a new restaurant in town promises to have “real Mexican tacos,” I am always curious to try them and see if they really taste like the tacos my mom would make in our home in Mexico.

It is a struggle to find authentic tasting Mexican tacos in the US, not just for me but for everyone that appreciates the taste of real Latin food and not imitations like Tex-Mex. In particular, it is difficult to find spicy freshly made salsa

When walking along Nassau Street in Princeton on a warm, sunny Saturday, I decided to try the latest claimant to the taco throne, Tacoria.

As soon as I saw the sign, I was able to see the long line of people waiting to order stretching outside. I wasn’t planning to spend my whole Saturday in line, but I wanted to give it a try anyway.

Despite the crowd, the people working there were moving fast and taking orders in a very welcoming and fast paced environment that kept the line moving.

The decor is done in what can only be described as a “grunge street” style. One section of wall was covered in tin panels, like the wall of a shanty. There was also graffiti and a mural of Albert Einstein in a Princeton sweater blowing a kiss.

With all the people gathering, chatting and eating in the spring heat it really did feel like an authentic taqueria back in Mexico, where the streets are always busy and full of people and the taco places are working nonstop.

Tacoria was founded by 4 Rutgers University alumni. Two of the co-founders are the Patel brothers, Sean and Hazel, originally from India. Along with them there are two more friends who are also the co-founders.

Hazel Patel is in charge of the new location in downtown Princeton. When The VOICE asked where the concept came from he said,

“I feel like Mexican food is very similar to Indian food, there are a lot of spices involved, we have something similar to tortillas back home. We have always had Mexican food,



PHOTO | MARIA RAMOS

Diners take in the atmosphere and food at Tacoria in Princeton

and so we started [Tacoria], because that’s what we wanted as customers to have.”

When my food arrived it was like love at first sight, three freshly made tacos laid out on a metal tray. Each laid on a corn tortilla and was topped with fresh creamy guacamole, cilantro, cheese and sour cream.

As a meat lover I decided to go for the carne asada, pollo tinga and pollo asado, along with a Coke imported from Mexico.

The carne asada steak was grilled and seasoned with Mexican spices that tasted like heaven. Neither too hard nor too soft, it had a smoky touch.

The pollo tinga was mildly spicy, but as you eat the initially lightly spicy aftertaste builds until you have to reach for your drink.

The last thing on my platter was the pollo asado. The

chicken had a refreshing lemon taste that complemented the habanero. The citrus helped to balance out the heat of the pepper while also not dampening it.

When it comes to salsas, is essential for me and all spice lovers that the salsas are spicy and not sweet. When making tacos, Mexican kitchens have a special combination of flavors, the sweet flavor of the corn tortilla, the savory flavor of the meat and vegetables and the spicy flavor of the salsas combine for a flavor unlike any other.

Tacoria nailed this, they offer a variety of salsas, like verde, roja and habanero. I tried each of those, the green salsa was mildly spicy, the taste of green tomatoes (tomatillos) and jalapeno peppers was present, the salsa roja was a combination of different peppers, cilantro and garlic, that had a

tangy and savory flavor without any heat to deter those less inclined to it.

My favorite was the habanero salsa, this can be a tricky one, it starts kind of sweet but by the moment you think twice the spices hit your tongue.

Patel explains the process of the salsas at Tacoria.

“They are all fresh... nothing is frozen at all...we get deliveries on a daily basis... and these guys [the chefs] take around three or four hours every morning because they prepare everything fresh,” says Patel.

Tacoria also offers nachos, Nutella nachos, a kids menu and vegan options.

Yaritza Balderas, a Mercer student and Veracruz, Mexico native, who was visiting Tacoria for the first time, said, “Tacoria is the bomb, it’s the place to go and get real Mexican tacos.

## Afghan Kabob: not just another Italian restaurant in Hamilton

By John Thau  
Reporter

Afghan Kabob isn’t the traditional Hamilton restaurant. Walking in one feels instantly at home as the overwhelming aroma of masala fills the air. Warmth envelops you as you sit at one of the many traditional diner tables, yet what lines the walls are not the usual items you’d find at one. Instead, many traditional Afghan decorations adorn the space, including several decorative weapons.

“I was once a skeptic myself of Afghan food but I was proven wrong when I first came here,” says James Howard, a 52-year-old from Hamilton.

One of the lead cooks, Rashid Nabi, says, “Afghan Kabob was founded by my elder family members who were fleeing home in the 1990’s during a civil war. We decided to establish in Hamilton because it

gave us a chance to share our product in an environment that has limited contact with Afghan food.”

A regular to Afghan Kabob named Shane Jones, a 35-year-old from Bordentown, NJ, had a lot to say about his experiences at Afghan Kabob.

Jones says, “Afghan Kabob has some of the finest dishes I have ever had when it comes to trying ethnic food. The Hamilton area has too many Italian restaurants and burger joints so it’s refreshing when there is an option to eat Afghan food for a change. I would definitely recommend to anyone looking to try something that you cannot normally find in a typical Hamilton restaurant.”

Busboy Ahmed Khan greeted me and told me about the options available. “Here at Afghan Kabob, you can expect to see all types of food. Some of this food includes gyros, curries, wings and vegetarian cui-



PHOTO | GRIFFIN JONES

Afghan food and fresh vegetables with rice and naan at Afghan Kabob and Grill in Hamilton.

sines,” he said.

It is loud during lunch hour.

I went up to the counter and placed an order of a shrimp kabob, which came with Afghan rice and a type of Mid-

dle Eastern bread called naan.

The shrimp kabob came out well cooked with a seared brown coating over the shrimp. It was so fresh off the grill that it was still sizzling. The rice and naan had notable oreg-

ano seasonings on top and was well prepared.

The naan added a great taste that went along with the texture and spices of the shrimp when eaten together. The Afghan rice also had lots of spicy seasoning in it and also had a great texture to it.

Another customer, Tara Spilaman, a 41-year-old from Robbinsville, NJ said, “Afghan Kabob provided some of the best food I’ve ever had ... The customer service here was also great as the food was quickly brought to your table and still had the appearance of not being rushed while preparing the dish.”

Afghan Kabob is located at 888 NJ-33, in Hamilton. They are open 11 AM to 10 PM seven days a week. Entrees range from \$5.99 to \$10.99 For more: [afghankabobandgrill.com/menu-brunswick/](http://afghankabobandgrill.com/menu-brunswick/).

# Baseball: late inning struggles lead to costly slump

By Caitlin Clarke  
Reporter

In a rematch of last year's Region 19 championship game, the Mercer baseball team dropped both games of a doubleheader to Lackawanna on Saturday, April 21. Their unsuccessful road trip to Scranton, PA capped off a trying week during which the Vikings lost four out of the five games.

Beginning in the ninth inning against a top ranked Rowan Gloucester (RG) team on Tuesday, April 17. Mercer carried a four run lead into the ninth inning but failed to record an out before RG was able to bring the tying run to the plate. A series of key RG hits combined with a multitude of throwing errors by the Mercer defense allowed for the Roadrunners to put up six runs in the ninth and steal a win from Coach Kevin Kerins and his Vikings.

Kerins said, "Blowing a lead is always a difficult way to lose. Our coaching staff likes to stress that once we have a lead we need to focus on how we respond."

Their struggles continued on the road with a 7-12 loss against Brookdale on Wednesday, April 18, which snapped Mercer's streak of 6 straight wins against the Lincroft based program dating back to 2015. Mercer's lone win of the week came against ASA College on Friday, April 20.

With the number one seed in the region on the line, the Vikings would then travel to Scranton, PA to defend their 2017 Region 19 championship win against rival Lackawanna.

Before the doubleheader, Vikings assistant coach Fred Carella told The VOICE, "I think that every region game is important...I mean, every year at this level you turn over half your team, so there's not a whole lot of guys who were here last year, so we're just making sure that we put ourselves in a good position for the playoffs this year."

Lackawanna got a statement win in the first game of the doubleheader, beating Mercer by a score of 9-5. Although sophomore Jimmy Versage gave Mercer a chance with a key hit in the fifth that tied the game at four all, in the bottom of that same inning, Lackawanna's Thylar Summarell restored his team's lead with a two run single. Summarell would finish the game 3-3 with four RBIs and a run scored.

"Throughout the season we've had a lot of ups and downs, but we've just gotta play our ball and get timely hitting. We did that today, and the score reflects it," Summarell said following game one of the April 21 doubleheader.

Mercer would then look to salvage a win in the second game of the day with sophomore Cole Davis on the mound. Lackawanna took an early lead

with two runs in the first inning, but Mercer would respond with five in the third and followed up with another seven unanswered runs during the course of the next two innings.

With a 12-2 lead, Kerins and company appeared to be on their way towards a win, but fate would have other plans in this matchup. Mercer's week would end much like it had begun: with the team failing to finish.

In the bottom of the fifth, Lackawanna would begin a rally of their own, scoring six runs to cut the lead to 4. In the very next inning, they would score another 5 to take the lead, and sweeping Mercer.

Lackawanna head coach Bruce Thompson told The VOICE, "I'm proud of our guys. Down 12-2, things weren't going our way, but we stayed the course, kept battling, and [had a] big comeback there. It was a team effort."

For Lackawanna, aside from avenging their loss in the Region 19 championship last season, the sweep also leapfrogged them over Mercer and into the first place spot in the region. Mercer, despite falling into second place, is still in good standing to make the playoffs and get a first round bye.

The larger concern for the Vikings and Coach Kerins is the morale and focus of a team that blew sizeable leads twice in one week. Kerris says, "There is no time during a 56-game season to feel sorry for yourself,

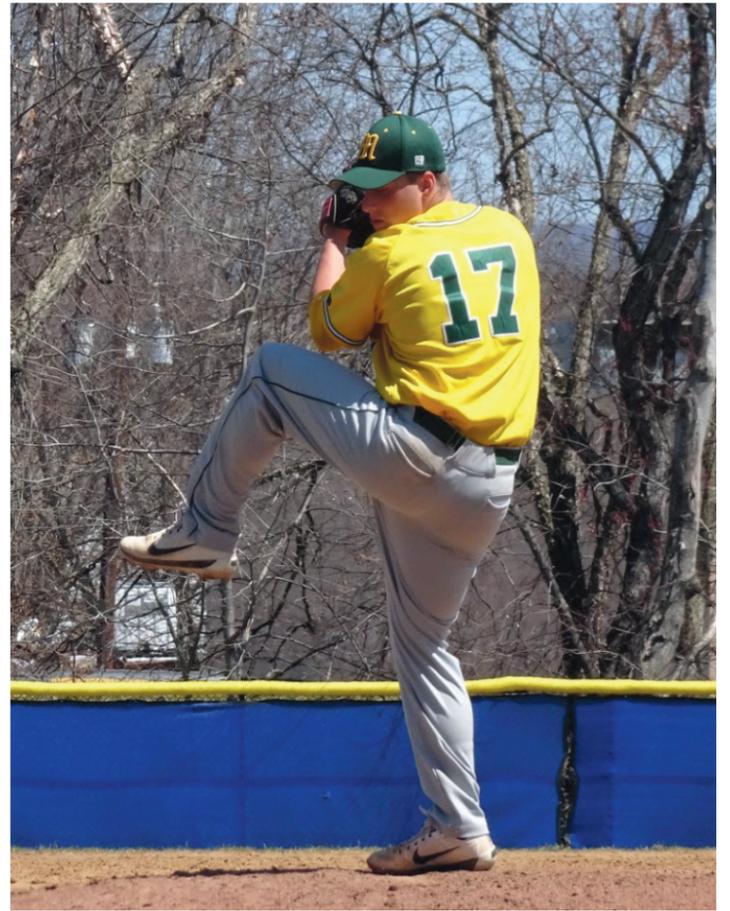


PHOTO | CAITLIN CLARKE

Vikings Pitcher Chris Mormile (#17) winds up to pitch against Lackawanna in the team's 5-9 loss on the 21st of April.

and I am sure teams in our conference aren't feeling for us. Our message to the team is to compete in all we do and bring energy and attitude each day."

The final couple weeks of the season will be a defining stretch for Kerins and his team. With several conference games and a rematch against Rowan Gloucester to finish the regular

season, Mercer will be tested and tasked with earning top seeding for the playoffs. They will have the luxury of playing their last six matchups on their home field, so expect a lot of meaningful late season action on campus toward the end of the semester and continuing into the summer.



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## PROFILE: Local athlete Ben Ruta plays for Thunder aspires to Yankee

By Jackson Thompson  
Senior Reporter

As standout baseball player at West Windsor-Plainsboro South High School, Ben Ruta rolled through his senior year in 2012 batting .462 with 20 RBIs and 11 stolen bases. Under head coach Don Hutchinson, Ruta developed into a speedy contact hitting shortstop. Six years later Ruta is a surging prospect in the New York Yankees farm system and the top hitter on Mercer County's own Trenton Thunder.

Hutchinson says of Ruta, "He had that real nice sweet sing to opposite field, and he learned how to pull the ball as he got stronger. He played a solid shortstop which to be a successful high school team is a critical position...but probably his greatest asset was what he brought out of other players because of the way he conducted himself and went about his business the right way."

Ruta says to

Hutchinson helped him build solid fundamentals. He told The VOICE, "He always harped on hustling around the field, running out ground balls really hard, and he talked a lot about the smarts of the game so knowing situations and knowing what to do and thinking things over before they happen."

Ruta's skills and demeanor as a student athlete at WW-PS drew the attention of several college programs. At the end of his senior year, Ruta decided to go to Staten Island, New York to play baseball and major in liberal arts at Wagner College.

Ruta was the beneficiary of an unprecedented hitting streak that spanned over two years. He continued his streak through the final stretch of his freshman season, but two games into his sophomore year he suffered a season ending injury.

According to Wagnerathletics.com Ruta came back and

continued the streak that began in 2013, 21 games into the 2015 season. Ruta finished his career at Wagner with .333 batting average, and .939 fielding percentage and even made NEC Spring academic honor roll three years in a row.

In the summer of 2016, Ruta's many years of efficient play, and high character would earn him the opportunity in the 30th round of the 2016 draft by the New York Yankees.

"That day obviously was a great day," Ruta said. "We didn't have a set team that we wanted to get drafted by... but when we heard it was the Yankees it did make everything more special just from all the memories as a kid."

Ruta has excelled throughout the minor leagues and progressed at a rarely accelerated pace, playing his way into the double A level in only two years. As Coach Hutchinson explains, "I mean I knew he was a good player

but to be truthful, I'm not shocked but I would not have thought that he would have climbed as fast and as high as he has already, so good for him."

After two seasons playing through the rookie, short A, and full A leagues, Yankees management decided Ruta would bypass the high A league level and begin the 2018 season in Trenton with the double A level Thunder, only 13 miles away from WW-P High School South. (source: MiLB.com)

Nineteen games into the season Ruta leads the team in hits and stolen bases. Leaving his mark on the rest of league as well as he currently leads the entire Eastern League with a .392 batting average according to MiLB.com

"Obviously it's early on right now, I'm just trying to put good at bats together and be a consistent player for the team, but I'm definitely just relying on the hard work and preparation in



COLLEGE VOICE | FILE PHOTO

Trenton Thunder outfielder and West Windsor High School alum Ben Ruta as pictured on the team's online roster at [TrentonThunder.com](http://TrentonThunder.com).

the offseason and letting that come through in the games."

With over a hundred games left in the Thunder season, Ruta will most likely be play-

ing in Trenton for the next couple months and will have to excel at the triple A level if he is to fulfill his goal of being called up to the Bronx.



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# The benefits of majoring in Liberal Studies

## PERSPECTIVES



Sean O'Connor

One of my favorite words is “holistic,” which vocabulary.com defines as “encompassing the whole of a thing, and not just the part.” Thinking holistically is what my interdisciplinary liberal studies major has taught me to do. This means not seeing something merely from one specific academic perspective. It means even considering non-academic, more personal perspectives as well.

Simply put, liberal studies can develop a person's sense of culture and a person's soulfulness. By developing a person's sense of culture I mean liberal studies can show you what's “out there in the world;” the different kinds of people there are and the different things they know and do. By developing a person's soulfulness I mean that liberal studies can push you to think freely about what it means to a human, an individual- to have a self yet live among others.

This kind of learning and thinking is much more fulfilling, personally than being thrown a plethora of information simply to memorize and

regurgitate so I can prove I'm competent. Moreover, my liberal studies major is not just a means to an end so I can get a nice bachelor's degree and snag myself some job that's in high demand and pays generously. This major has changed how I think, what I think and thus how I am living, and even where I want to live.

Here's a concrete example for you to illustrate just how my thinking has changed: the way I now dress.

I used to wear a suit and bowtie virtually every day at work out of a compulsive desire to demonstrate my commitment to professionalism. But I began applying my new skill of looking at things from different perspectives and came to perceive this practice as conforming to traditional and confining notions of professional attire.

I decided to open my mind a little and now I dare to come to work without a bowtie, and maybe add a pair of jeans, or a Hawaiian shirt to the mix, never excluding the option to one day throw on the suit and tie again.

Here's another example: I now value diversity much more than I did. It's not that I was ever anti-diversity. I just never thought much about it as I grew up with a lot of diversity- I was a white half-Jewish kid (in name only!) who was often around black people, gay people, etc. You could say I took it for granted.

This realization really hit me while taking my se-

*I used to wear a suit and bowtie virtually every day at work out of a compulsive desire to demonstrate my commitment to professionalism. But I began applying my new skill of looking at things from different perspectives and came to perceive this practice as conforming to traditional and confining notions of professional attire.*

nior capstone course where my classmates and I have been engaged in an interdisciplinary study of Native Americans. I'm writing a paper for this course about how a Native American Cowlitz tribe member, personal essayist and memoirist named Elissa Washuta conceptualizes her Indian identity and writes about the uniqueness of individuals beyond the scope or race that becomes so apparent by perceiving them holistically. This, she says, helps dissipate stereotypes.

The notion of dissipating stereotypes, and seeing peoples' uniqueness to me also requires immersing oneself in environments where there are a lot of different and unique people. The importance of this ruined my plans for a possible move to New Hampshire.

When I went to visit the state I saw literally how exclusively white not just New Hampshire is, but really much of New England, and I found myself conceding that New Jersey- a much more diverse state- is not so bad a place to live after all (excluding the hectic traffic and lack of open space!)

Unfortunately, not everyone appreciates this mind

opening quality a Liberal Studies major offers.

Fox Business columnist Steve Tobak, in a March 2016 article described liberal studies as one of those “useless degrees.” He says “You don't need a liberal arts degree

to become well read, a good writer, an inspired man of God, or the most prolific philanthropists the world has ever known.”

He does have a fair point that you don't “need” a liberal arts degree to gain those qualities he listed. Abraham Lincoln didn't “need” a law degree to become a successful lawyer and perhaps the greatest president in American history. He taught himself law however that was in part due to his circumstances. A chance to study at Harvard wasn't exactly thrown at him.

Imagine if it was. He may have had a wider community of encouraging people with whom he could have discussed all the fascinating nuances of the law. The key word I hope you'll consider here is “community.” Liberal studies, when you really break it down into its pieces, serves to inform a community of interested people on how to foster a community.

Let's just list a few of the pieces. Philosophy examines what we can or cannot know and how that should impact how we treat others. Imagine if we had no ethics!

Psychology examines how we think and act. Imagine there was no such thing as ther-

apy. Sociology and anthropology examine how we interact and the cultures we create. Imagine we were all isolationists.

Political science examines what rules we should be bound to. Imagine anarchy or an unchallenged, and unhinged totalitarian dictatorship.

History helps us understand how the world has come to be as it is. Imagine the consciousness of Americans unable to grasp the slavery of blacks and the genocide of Native Americans (President Donald Trump and many within his cabinet may help you with that one.)

Literature--if it's really good--makes us forget we're reading something academic, and makes helps us think about experience. Imagine television shows on Netflix on without any dialogue! (There is actually a Norwegian TV show where the camera just stares at firewood or some other thing, but imagine there were no artists to argue that this might actually be a good idea every now and then.)

Each one of these academic disciplines is a crucial element that helps us understand how to preserve and strengthen our communities and liberal studies teaches how to integrate all of those pieces into a holistic perspective.

So in review: do all people in general “need” a degree in liberal studies to gain this knowledge? Again, no. Of course not! But do we need a community of people devoted to community?

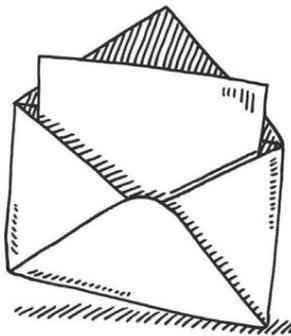
Yes. Our lives depend on it.

## EDITORIAL CARTOONS



## MAIL CALL

What do you think? Do you agree with the opinions you see here? Do you like our coverage of College and local issues? Is there a topic you really want us to cover? DROP US A LINE AND LET US KNOW!



**VOICE**

The VOICE is online  
at [mccvoice.org](http://mccvoice.org)  
Read documents and  
extra materials to go  
with all the articles  
you see here.

Do you see a  
typo?

Good. Join the staff  
and help us fix it!

Mon + Thur  
12-1:15 in ET 127

REGISTER TO  
VOTE

# Supporting student journalists pays off

## Editorial Board

Maria Ramos, *Editor in Chief*  
Drew Mumich, *Managing Editor*  
Jackson Thompson, *Sports Editor*  
Sean O'Connor, *Viewpoints Editor*

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Nnamdi Achebe, *Reporter*  
Caitlin Clarke, *Reporter*  
Laurie Gallagher, *Senior Reporter*  
Chelsey Johnstone, *Senior Reporter*  
Griffin Jones, *Senior Reporter*  
Rachael Westbrook, *Reporter*  
Hugo Vivar, *Reporter*  
Mohammad Wiswall, *Reporter*

## Faculty Advisers

Professor Matt Kochis, *Co-adviser*  
Professor Holly Johnson, *Co-adviser*

## Editorial

We are living and experiencing historic moments. As student journalists, we have been able to cover those stories and tell our community what is happening with fair and balanced reporting.

We have learned from trial and error how to craft articles, master interview skills, do deep research and tell the stories that are important for our readership: Mercer students.

As of now The VOICE stands as one of the best two-year college newspapers in the nation. We are improving every day. It is nice to win awards which are important in the world of journalism and on our resumes, but we push ourselves primarily to improve and to maintain the highest standards of journalism.

The most important and essential job of a journalist, no matter if it's a student, a senior reporter or an editor is that we all want to give a voice to the voiceless, inform our communities and hold accountable the institutions that govern us.

That duty to be the watchdogs of the world is why the press is also known as the "Fourth Estate." As members of the "Fourth Estate" on the local level, we have a special role as we are often the only ones who can hold city councils, administrations, and local judges accountable and tell every story.

We understand that as part of the school newspaper we have an obligation to always report truth, facts and cover the topics that are genuinely newsworthy. Some stories are painful, such as the death of a fellow student or community member. Some are controversial. They are sometimes even painful for us to write, but we know our readers need to stay informed

and get accurate information. Some stories require us to report on the operation of the college when it has a direct impact on the students, our readers. Those stories need to be told.

In order to achieve a broad range of coverage, you must have a dedicated, well trained staff. At a two-year institution, it is hard to develop a team of reporters. Two years is not enough time to learn everything, and not everyone joins their paper right at the beginning of their first year. It is even harder when students are taking a full load of classes, participates in sports and are either full or part-time workers.

Nevertheless, each year The VOICE staff rebuilds itself. It is a diverse team of individuals who are committed to their education and believe that doing an extracurricular activity such as the school newspaper is worth every minute invested in the newsroom.

This school year has been an exciting and successful time for The VOICE. At the start of the fall semester, we had only four staffers. Despite this, we were able to pull the first issue together in time for press day. We didn't let the situation get us down. Instead, we saw a challenge and a new opportunity to incorporate new voices and add diversity to our team.

Having all kind of points of view in a paper is essential, especially when millennials are dying to share their opinions and tell the world what it matters for them and make sure authorities (administration and government) know what worries them.

Millennials are often criticized for being lazy and always attached to their phones. Yes, we might always have our phones, but this doesn't mean we are not aware of and curious about the world around us.

Reporting gives us a chance to address the problems and the things that need to be changed in order to have a better future, not only for us but for following generations.

As in any other field, a journalist needs tools to do the job. We don't need much but what we do need is essential to sustain a quality paper and train us for the job market that is waiting for us and which we are hungry to explore.

A notebook and pen are a journalist's best friends. They are easy to get. An audio recorder is also essential. But The VOICE has struggled to get computers that work and we have no cameras for the staff. Despite limited resources, we were able to win 17 awards from the New Jersey Collegiate Press Association, including the General Excellence award and rank as finalists with seven nominations, two of which won, from the Society of Professional Journalists Region 1.

Several of our top awards were in photography, but the photos were taken with cellphone cameras. Those of us who are graduating hope that the paper can get several DSLR cameras for future staffers because cell phones don't train journalists for the modern newsroom.

It is not just The VOICE that is struggling for resources. Many college papers are and some of them are facing funding cuts as a form of censorship. A movement called #SaveStudentNewsrooms has developed to raise awareness of the problem, and The VOICE supports it.

But we also understand that image conscious administrations are often reluctant to allow students to report on the institutions' strengths and weaknesses. It is not always easy to recognize that tolerating criticism actually demonstrates

a serious commitment to student success. Although The VOICE receives its share of criticism, Mercer has not censored and has often been responsive to the feedback directly from the students that they otherwise could never get.

We know the college has a tight budget, but what the college gets in return for their investment is unmatched. Staffers develop polished writing skills and succeed wherever they go.

We can see this in VOICE alumni. Recent students are now in Ph.D. programs, working for international companies and others as journalists in all different fields. One VOICE alumnus from 2009 is now working for The New York Times. Another has started her own journalism program for students in Vietnam. We often invite alumni back and they always recall how important the school newspaper was in their lives, not just because of the academic and journalistic opportunities, but because of the people they were able to meet.

Our current staffers agree. At The VOICE we maintain professionalism, but we aren't just colleagues, we are friends. We are fortunate to work with people from all kinds of backgrounds. We have a mix of cultures that complement one another and deepen and enrich our work.

We encourage our administrators to continue to support The VOICE and encourage students to join their school newspapers. It not only looks good on a resume but teaches you to write well, share your voice and be part of history.

Journalists are at the forefront of monumental change now more than ever. By bringing the facts to the world it makes it possible to make a difference.

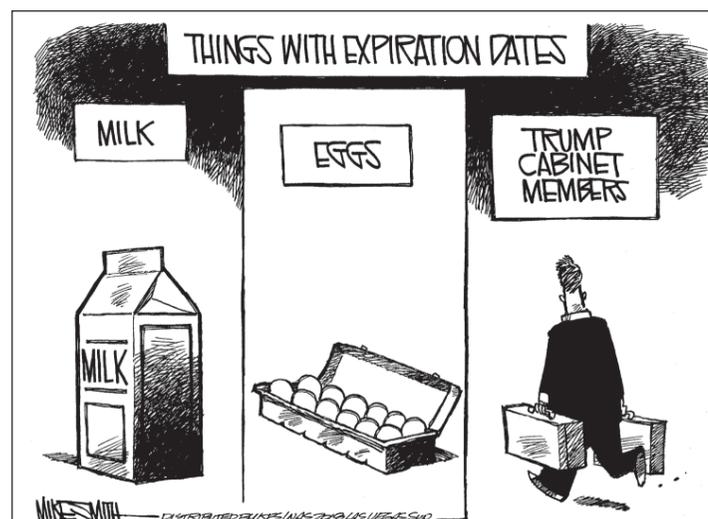
**top ten**

**WILDLIFE VIEWING SPOTS AT MERCER**

1. Baseball fields (deer)
2. LA trash cans (squirrels)
3. Behind MW (cats)
4. Behind Ornamental Horticulture (song birds)
5. Bark Park at MCP (dogs)
6. BS hallway (insects)
7. Parking Lots (road hogs)
8. Quad in July (lightning bugs)
9. MCP Marina (beavers)
10. The VOICE office (ivory billed woodpeckers...jk)



## EDITORIAL CARTOONS



### Editorial Policy:

The College VOICE is written and edited by students of Mercer County Community College and published every 3-4 weeks under the guidance of faculty advisers. The material printed in The College VOICE, be it articles, advertisements or opinion pieces, does not necessarily represent the views of the editors, the faculty, staff, administration or the board of trustees of Mercer County Community College.

### Write to The College VOICE!

Do you have something to say? The College VOICE accepts letters to the editor. Submissions should be no more than 300 words; longer submissions may be shortened. Submit materials in electronic format, and include your name and status at Mercer (major and year, faculty or staff position or alumnus). All materials submitted become the property of The College VOICE, which reserves the right to reject or edit material based on length, taste or clarity.

### How to contact us:

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c/o Prof. Matt Kochis  
Mercer County College  
1200 Edinburg Rd.  
West Windsor, NJ 08690

# JUST 4 FUN

## HOROSCOPES

### ASK THE VOICE: GOOD ANSWERS TO TOUGH QUESTIONS



Help is here!

long ago approved the swap. It's a dumb trick, but you gotta do what you gotta do.  
-The VOICE

directory online?  
-Lost

Dear Voice, I accidentally left my flash drive in one of the computers in AD and when I came back it was gone along with my homework. What do I do?  
-Need my drive

Dear Need my drive, What do you do? You save all your work to the cloud. What were you doing using a flash drive in the first place? You brought this on yourself.  
-The VOICE

Dear Voice, I think my boss is gaslighting me. I know I told him I needed off this week to prep for finals, but he says I never told him and now I have a 30 hour work week and two term papers. HELP! - Bye Good GPA

Dear Good GPA, The only solution to a good gaslighting is to do it back. Find someone to swap shifts with and then go to your boss and act like s/he had

Dear Voice, Why is my adviser's actual office number not listed in the faculty

Dear Lost, Right? Seems like an easy fix, but they haven't done it. Fortunately we have a work around. Wander the halls of ET, LA or BS and find one of the administrative assistants. They have a paper phone directory with all the offices listed in them. Please do not ask us why this magic receptacle of knowledge isn't available online.  
-The VOICE.

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

### CLASSIC PEANUTS



**Capricorn**  
Dec. 22 - Jan. 19

You forgot to eat breakfast again. It's the most important meal of the day. Don't miss it if you expect to be at your best and able to concentrate.



**Aquarius**  
Jan. 20 - Feb. 18

You keep trying to do good for others and no good deed goes unpunished. Don't give up the fight, but do find some backup and take some me time so you don't burn out.



**Pisces**  
Feb. 19 - Mar. 20

Sometimes people look at you and don't notice that you are an old soul. But inside you is a deep connection to a source of goodness that you are able to bring to others.



**Aries**  
Mar. 21 - Apr. 19

Who stole the cookie from the cookie jar? Not you. You are finally on track with your exercise and eating goals. Don't worry. Your resolve will remain strong. Summer body here you come!



**Taurus**  
Apr. 20 - May 20

Sleep. You must. It's tempting to stay up after you're finally done with all the work and chores and watch a little TV but you have to get to bed earlier for a few weeks.



**Gemini**  
May 21 - Jun. 20

Animals factor heavily in your life this month. They may be actual or symbolic but they are definitely guiding you spiritually. Don't be afraid to follow.



**Cancer**  
Jun. 21 - Jul. 22

Start saving a few bucks away for summer blockbusters. Your AC will give out for a week or so in mid-July and you will need to go to the movies to cool off.



**Leo**  
Jul. 23 - Aug. 22

You will be getting your hands in the dirt this month, sewing seeds either real or metaphoric. Get ready for a bumper crop!



**Virgo**  
Aug. 23 - Sept. 22

A long time ago you made a wish and it has gone unanswered for so long you have likely given up on it. Well let hope come back in your heart. Your wish will soon be resolved!



**Libra**  
Sept. 23 - Oct. 22

You're good enough, you're smart enough, and gosh darn it, people like you! Seriously. They do. Don't stop believing in yourself or believing other people who believe in you.



**Scorpio**  
Oct. 23 - Nov. 21

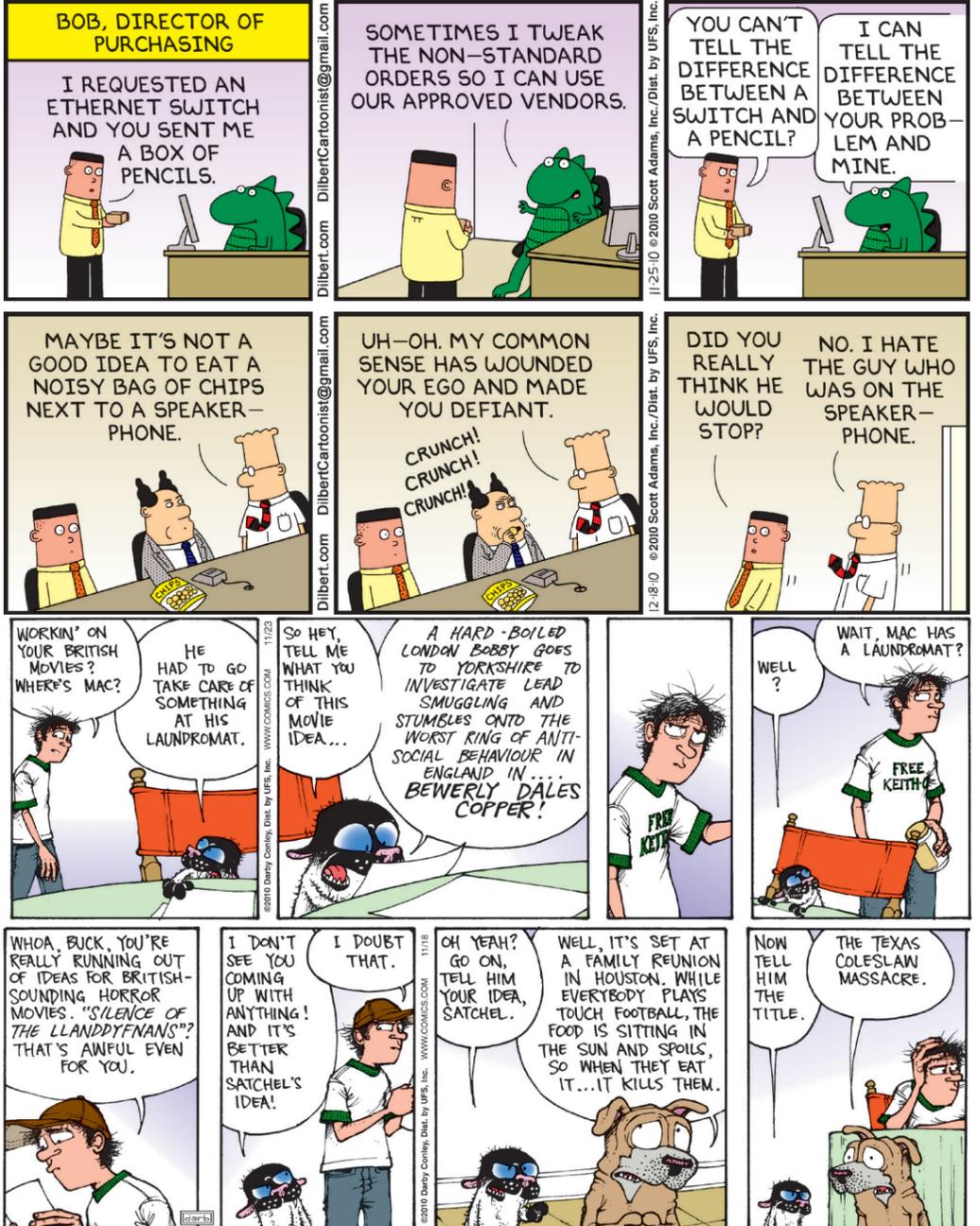
As usual you glow with inner and outer beauty. It can be hard to be so attractive because you never know if people really like you for you. Fortunately one person has your heart and loves you inside and out.



**Sagittarius**  
Nov. 22 - Dec. 21

You are the hardest working person around, whether people know it or not. You are also ready for a break, and the good news is that one is coming your way. Get ready for excellent travels.

### 2X DILBERT AND GET FUZZY



## SUDOKU

Difficulty: 2 (of 5)

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

11-22-10

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### PREVIOUS SOLUTION

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

**HOW TO PLAY:**  
Each row, column and set of 3-by-3 boxes must contain the numbers 1 through 9 without repetition.