When you have a past, can you put it behind you?
MCCC hosts community event on how to get criminal records expunged

By Melissa Reyes
Reporter

“I got in a lot of trouble as a teenager and in my early 20s. The first time I got arrested I was 17 and the first time I was incarcerated was at 21,” says Christine, a former Mercer student who asked to be identified by just her middle name so she could discuss her past openly. Christine says when she was a teen and young adult she made impulsive decisions when facing life stressors. She was angry and got influenced by the wrong crowd. Her incarceration at age 21 was the beginning of a complicated future and a lengthy criminal record for this now 35-year-old mother of two.

At the age of 26, Christine began to take steps to turn her life around. She says she was determined to overcome her earlier choices and wanted to pursue an education that could lead her to a career. She went on to earn a Bachelor’s degree in Psychology from Rider University and is now in her second year of graduate school at Temple University to complete a Masters of Science in Public Health, yet her past still haunts her.

“I went away and came back and pretty much changed my whole life, and now its almost 10 years later and it’s just...my record, it’s still there,” she says.

The Mercer County Prosecutor’s Office, along with several other prominent legal and advocacy groups, hosted an event focused specifically on how to expunge past criminal records at MCCC’s James Kerney Campus on September 28, 2019.

See EXPUNGEMENT page 4

Students changing majors grapple with their choices

By Jackson Earley
Reporter

Last year at Mercer, Brady Moore was taking classes in Health, Anatomy, and Biology, which he says he enjoyed. After the conclusion of the 2018-2019 school year, Moore transferred to Kean University.

“I am taking mostly sophomore-level classes for Exercise Science, so I am about a year behind schedule.” Moore says, adding, “I am 22 and only have 48 credits for my new major.”

Moore’s college career started back in 2016 at Jacksonville University where he was majoring in Liberal Arts. After the first semester he stopped attending.

“I wanted to take the best course for me and didn’t want to waste money going down an unknown path,” Moore explains.

Then, feeling ready to try again, in 2017 Moore enrolled at Union County College. He describes his mindset at the time saying, “After missing a whole semester I felt I had enough time to think. I thought I had college and life figured out, so I started taking Psychology classes.”

The 2017-2018 college year went smoothly for Moore. However, at the end of his sophomore year, Moore decided he wanted to change direction again.

“I liked Psychology, but I lost interest in it by the end of the year.” Moore says. Last year, Moore transferred to MCCC. His Union County College credits transferred, but then he began another new major.

“I always had an interest in sports and, so I decided to enroll in Exercise Science courses, but most of my second semester credits at Union were wasted,” he says. Moore’s experience is unusual but changing majors in college is common. In an anonymous survey of 40 Mercer students, conducted by The VOICE, 68% said they either already have changed their major at least once or they are seriously considering it.

Of the students surveyed who have already changed their major at least once, the majority, 64%, said it is somewhat likely that their decision to change majors will cause them to graduate later than originally planned.

Evan Janiec, a sophomore at Mercer, changed his major at the beginning of this year. He started as a Computer Engineering major and is now in Liberal Arts but is thinking about another change into “either Education or another science.” He says he is aware the changes will slow his overall time to graduation.

Another student facing the same situation is Mercer sophomore, Jordan Dickerson. He switched majors from Liberal Arts to Television Broadcasting and says “I will have to take at least a fifth year of school to get my bachelor’s degree because I mostly took science classes second semester.”

Dylan Ritzchof, has transferred colleges three times on his way to Mercer and has changed his major as he went along.

“Because I switched schools and majors, I only have 13 valid credits to my major now,” Ritzchof says, adding, “the cost is becoming close to overwhelming,” and that he is “having to take almost two semesters worth of classes in one.”

For Ritzchof and others like him, the costs can be high, but overall, for students still finding their way, there aren’t sure what they want to focus on, community colleges offer many options for a much lower price point than other types of colleges.

A student who resides in Mercer County taking a typical 15 credit semester at MCCC can expect to pay $2,737 this semester. At Rutgers the same student would be paying almost $5,000 more, assuming they were living at home and commuting.

Princeton now accepts applications for transfer students from community colleges. For those who could get in, assuming they lived off-campus, they could expect to pay $25,935 per semester (not including campus housing, food, or books) if they didn’t get any financial aid.

Associates degree programs in New Jersey require 60 credits to complete with some of the classes–like English 101 and 102–being General Education classes required for all majors. Ritzchof likely has some of these classes already fulfilled from his other work, but of classes specific to his major he may have as many as 20-30 credits left to complete.

Advisors and success coaches often recommend students who have broad interests take a variety of courses to start out with but pick ones that also fit into the General Education areas so the credits will most likely count toward their degree even if they change majors.

Emanuel Medina, an academic advisor at Mercer, says, “The advising department has multiple students changing their majors every week.”

Reflecting on his own experience, Randy Moore says, “I wish I had been more thought-ful of the future when making my decisions, but I’m glad I went to community college from Rider University and have broad interests take a variety of courses to start out with but pick ones that also fit into the General Education areas so the credits will most likely count toward their degree even if they change majors.”
The most recent exhibit at MCCC’s Art Gallery was titled “MCCC Visual Arts Faculty Exhibit.” It offered a variety of pieces in various mediums from sculpture to photography. Artwork came from full and part-time faculty and all pieces were new and relevant, having been made within the last two years.

Two of the most prominent pieces featured in the exhibit were called “Tick” and Capitol Reef National Park. “Tick” takes up an entire wall of the gallery and includes numerous different hung clocks. This “found objects” sculpture was created by Emily Buchalski, an Adjunct Professor in the Visual Arts department since fall 2018.

Buchalski says a found objects sculpture is “an item that you find and you work with, rather than constructing something from scratch.”

Alice K. Thompson has been the Gallery director for the past 13 months. She picks out the pieces she says she feels will “work together” the best. When individuals bring in pieces, Thompson is the one who selects which ones are featured in each exhibit.

She then hangs the pieces herself. Another piece featured in the faculty exhibit was called Capitol Reef National Park. By Ann Casey, an adjunct instructor in Art History and Photog- raphy who has been at Mercer since 2014, had a photograph in the exhibit. She explains that her photograph was part of her series Loss Event which she created as a way to cope with the death of her best friend. The idea behind the piece, she says, is to let people know that if they lose a loved one, they do not have to grieve alone.

A student volunteer who works at the Gallery, Ad- rya Nadigam, says her favorite piece in this exhibit is a painting called St. Francis, by Fine Arts Professor Kyle Steven- son.

The Gallery itself is a quiet space for students to take a break from studies. The over- head lighting, the soft classical music, and the shape of the space with its separate sections for different installations creates opportunities for visitors to experience the pieces at their own pace.

Gallery exhibits usually are up for about a month and there is a reception at the start of each new exhibit that is open to the public. Usually the artists are at the reception and attendees can meet and talk with them. The next exhibit will be “Transient Brevity” and will run from October 28 to Decem- ber 19 with the reception on November 6.

There is a gallery on each campus. The one located at the West Windsor Campus is on the second floor of the Communications building. It is open Monday–Thursday from 11 am to 3 pm and Wednesdays from 11 am to 7 pm. The Gallery is free to all attendees.

How is the college handling climate change?

By Caitlin Oliver

On September 20, 2019, concerned citizens worldwide held a “Climate Strike” and protested to draw attention to the current climate crisis. The event was led by young people inspired in part by the school strike for climate change initiated by Greta Thunberg.

Princeton High School junior and environmental activist Martin Mastnak helped organize the local event at Hinds Plaza in Princeton.

Mastnak says that over time he has come to realize global climate change’s severity and has been moved to action. He has joined groups like the Princeton Student Climate Initiative and New Jersey Student Climate Advocates. Additionally, he manages the Fridays for Future New Jersey Instagram account.

Mastnak worked with a number of classmates to organize the “Climate Strike” event at Hinds Plaza on September 20. At the event, Mastnak gave a speech condemning big business conglomerates like Koch Industries and Exxon Mobil who are considered to be major polluters and who downplay or even deny the problem of climate change.

In a recent interview, Mastnak characterized the Princeton event as “very energetic.” He continued, “Seeing around three, four, five hundred people walking around was a big shock for me. I wasn’t expecting such a big turnout.”

Princeton youth aren’t the only locals responding to the climate change crisis. Many of Mercer County Community College’s staff and faculty also have campus sustainability on their minds.

One notable effort to promote campus sustainability is Mercer’s solar farm. According to Bryon Marshall, Mercer’s Director of College Facility and Safety, the project’s construction began in December 2011 and was completed in October 2013.

A display in the Student Center provides statistics about the solar farm indicating it has generated 43,859,331 kilowatt-hours of energy since its completion, equating to 31,490 tons of CO2, which equals 3,552,605 gallons of gasoline.

The Environmental Protection Agency’s Greenhouse Gas Equivalencies Calculator states that those 43,859,331 kilowatt-hours actually equate to 3,489,948 gallons of gasoline, that is 62,607 fewer gallons than the estimate provided in the college’s display.

Nevertheless, the solar program has had a measurable impact, whereas campus recycling has proved more challenging.

Professor Amy Ricco, coordinator of the Ornamental Horticulture and Plant Science programs, served as head of Mercer’s Sustainability Commit- tee but stepped down as of 2016. She says “I felt that we, as a committee, couldn’t accom- plish basic tasks...I still feel like the college doesn’t recycl[e] properly.”

According to Marshall, Mercer employs a single-stream model of recycling collection and processing, meaning one where all recyclables are placed into a single bin and are then taken to materials recovery fa- cilities where they are sorted and prepared to be reused.

A VOICE article from May 2019 suggests that the recycling bins around campus are organized in such a way that they often collect a substantial amount of regular trash that does not actually qualify for re- cycling.

When it comes to mak- ing the Student Center sustain- able, the President of MCCCs, Dr. Jianping Wang says, “We want [to] make it bright...but not very energy-costing, so we designed it in such a way that [the build- ing] absorbs[ ] the daylight at the maximum....So instead of [having] lighting, it will be natural light.

“Third-year Liberal Arts major Heidi Montes suggests that in the Student Center Caf- eteria “replacing plastic utensils with biodegradable utensils...would be more sustainable.”

Marshall sees another opportunity saying, “I believe the movement to paperless re- cords and documents represents a large item on the to-do list.” He adds, “The College, at large, needs to continue to explore and investigate [environmentally friendly] alternatives, product specifications, and choices to provide for a more sustainable future.”

Institutional changes and grassroots activism are two responses to the issue of climate change.

Mastnak says that his hope is “to bring about some sort of meaningful and impact- ful change that will allow for our children and our grandchildren to grow up in a world where they don’t have to worry about the impacts of pollution...we want to transition to a greener future and a more livable [and] more sustainable future.”
Proposed development of local Dam Site 21 faces some backlash

By Alessandro Rivera

A proposal by the Mercer County Parks Commission to develop a section of land known as Dam Site 21 has created a public controversy. The space, which includes wetlands and woodland, is located less than a mile from the MCCC's West Windsor campus, on a 280 plot of land adjacent to Hughes Drive.

According to documents, on Mercer County's official website, the Parks Commission is seeking a firm to create a "unique passive recreational park with a focus on the lake and water activities and to provide the citizens of Mercer County the opportunity to appreciate and enjoy the beauty of this special property. Specifically, we would like to include water-based programming and activities that don’t presently exist at the County’s other lake facilities."

While the Parks Commission says the development will have recreational and financial benefits, a vocal group of residents opposed to the plan says it will be bad for the environment, costly, and will cause traffic and noise on Hughes Drive.

At a Hamilton Town Council meeting on October 1, Hamilton residents showed up with signs. Dino Spadaccini serving as their leader. He asked the council: "Why is the council not answering us? Is the county being underserved in terms of parks? Where does this come from?"

Speaking on behalf of the group he said that nearby residents already have access to many other green spaces including Mercer County Park, Sayen Gardens, and Veterans Park.

He said that, despite having public meetings the Park Commission has been "hiding behind Mr. Simone," referring to the project leader from Simone Collins Landscape Architecture firm.

Anthony Cucchi, the chair of the Advisory Committee for the project said in a letter to Hamilton’s mayor that the goal "is to balance sustainable use of this beautiful site with the concerns of neighbors."

The Mercer County Parks Commission received over 268 comments online public survey on gague public opinion. Seventy-five percent of people taking the survey said they believed their recreational needs in the county are already being met.

The survey had an anonymous comment section which has received 288 comments so far ranging from emphatic responses like "NO NEED FOR DAM SITE 21!!!" to "Some great ideas, I’m particularly interested in seeing more environmentally conscious developments in the park."

The issue has become so tense with residents that not only have they reached out to request support from the Town Council members to stop the project, but they are also organizing a protest on October 26, at Hughes Drive.

Not everyone is against the project, however, as shown in the survey. Residents from other towns have said they believe that the project will be good for the greater communities outside of just Hamilton Township.

Ted Pivovarick, who owns property in both Robbinsville and Hamilton Township, says he wants to "keep [Dam Site 21]", but that he is not opposed to compromise and can accept "core trails" and other promised renovations.

The situation will remain in limbo until November 12th, when the presentation of the Draft Master Plan will be revealed by Mercer County Park Commission in or after the third public meeting.

By Kaylee Reyes

The Moth Coffeehouse is a 20 minutes from campus and a perfect study hangout

The Moth Coffeehouse, with its calming views of the Conines Mill and the prices on the old mill and is named after the luna moth.

According to Zoe Danch they chose the name when they opened the business since “the luna moth signifies new beginnings.” It has been almost four years exactly since that date and business is booming.

If you’ve ever seen a cafe in a movie, where everyone seems to know each other in a small town and the environment is to Hughes Inside and out, that’s the vibe that The Moth has. Also, it features healthy and tasty vegan and vegetarian food and is less than 20 minutes from MCCC.

Their drinks menu consists of items like espresso, capuccinos, kombucha, and cold brews and there are many non-dairy milk options.

ing Mercer County Park, Sayen Gardens, and Veterans Park.

It says of the Moth, "I like the decor and setting, it is very cozy and inviting. The staff is always very friendly and their coffee tastes amazing.”

A good lunch option is the Grilled Veg. The nan bread is soft, chewy and lightly toasted. Inside, there is a combination of flavorful grilled vegetables such as zucchini, mushrooms, peppers, onions, with melted cheese blending in between the vegetables.

The Grilled Veg, priced at $8.50, comes with a side salad of lettuce, shredded carrots, red cabbage, tomatoes, and cucumber, topped off with what appears to be a balsamic vinaigrette.

Sarah Miller, 19, said, “The first thing I thought when I walked in was...it is such a cute coffee place.”

If there is any aspect where the Moth comes up short it is the minimal amount of parking provided outside in a small gravel lot that is shared with several other businesses housed in and beside the old mill building.

The gravel path leads down to a larger lot but it is intended for people headed to Heritage Park which is just behind the Moth. Most patrons have to park on the street. One tip for busy times is to turn onto Lakerview Drive which is a block north of the Moth and has two parking areas.

The Moth is open Tuesdays through Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and is a perfect spot for students.
WHY BOTHER?

"Cause I'm like I need a career event through Facebook. son said she learned about the Foundation, and The National to the Boardroom, The Greater ization of Black Women Lawyers Prosecutor's Office, the Associ of Upward Bound Parent's As groups, including: The MCCC sion was presented by various Mercer County Prosecutor's of an Assistant Attorney for the

Convention for expungement, which usually costs anywhere from $80-$100. There were speakers who explained the process and participants had the chance to ask questions to a panel of lawyers, including an Assistant Attorney for the Mercer County Prosecutor's of, who gave advice on the expungement process.

The information ses present by various groups, including: The MCCC Upward Bound Parent's As sociation, the Mercer County Prosecutor's Office, the Associ ation of Black Women Lawyers of New Jersey, From the Block to the Boardroom, The Greater Princeton Chapter of Drifters, The Ivy League Educational Foundation, and The National Congress of Black Women. Attendee Zalika John son said she learned about the event through Facebook.

"It really pushed me. 'Cause I'm like I need a career and they're (going to) do a lot of criminal background checks at jobs," Johnson said.

The MC of the event, Nicole Williams, a volunteer at the Greater Princeton Chapter of Drifters, Inc., explained that "People go on about their daily lives, and forget about [their re cord] until they apply for that one type of job that really does a different type of background check...As long as it never comes up, people don't often seek to get it removed from their record."

Williams also said that many people are not even aware of what expungement is, or do not have the financial re sources to go through the pro cess. Expungement is a legal process that can take from six months to two years to com plete and can cost anywhere from $100-$2,000 according to the information provided. But for someone like Christine, expungement can be the key to moving forward. She says, "I would like to start a career and having a criminal record stops you from even getting your foot in the door to a lot of places. The first thing they do on paper interviews is ask 'Have you ever been accused of a felony?' and if you say 'Yes' in case they do a background check, and then most of the times you won't ever make it to a second interview."

Christine is a strong candidate for expungement. In addition to going to college, getting a degree, and avoiding any further criminal activities for the past decade, she also has made meaningful con tributions to her community, something the judge will look at when making the expungement decision.

Christine works with people with autism, has vol unteered at a homeless shelter for pregnant and postpartum women, and has volunteered with Carawan of Love to take homemade blankets as gifts to children from birth to age 17.

Other things that the court looks at when individ uals seek expungement include the type of crimes they were involved in, the completion of any drug treatment programs, keeping up with parole obliga tions, and payment of fines. Certain types of major crimes are never eligible for expungement including homicide, sex ual assault, robbery and human trafficking among others. But Christine's crimes don't fall into those categories and she believes she would have long-term benefits that extend beyond her own well-being to the rest of her family.

Stacey Denton, the Di rector of Upward Bound, a pro gram that prepares high school students for college, says she was inspired to help organize the event because she saw the need for expungement extend ing beyond just the people who have gotten into criminal trouble in the past.

She said, "When it was time to do financial aid for our students they were saying, I can't do that."

According to Den ton, students were deciding to not go to college because their parent's past criminal records could affect their qualification to receive financial aid, making education impossible. The Upward Bound program collaborated with Tracey Syphax, a Trenton lo cal who runs from the Boardroom, Inc. and is an expert on reentry programs for former inmates. Syphax knows the experience from the inside out, having gone, being on a new ac count, from being a drug dealer to a successful entrepreneur. Syphax has devoted himself to creating and supporting events like the one held on September 28, focussing on the Trenton community in particular.

Narline Casimir, an Assistant Prosecutor with the Mercer County Prosecutor's office who participated in the event, says of expungement, "It's about making our commu nity better and safer, and it's for people to know, even if things happened in the past, and they made mistakes, there's redemp tion."

Jumping into Inktober challenge

Panelists at the seminar on expunging criminal records, held at the MCCC: Trenton Campus, included representatives from the Mercer County Prosecutor's Office, and the Association of Black Women Lawyers among others.

Moving beyond the stigma of a past criminal record

By Kristina Hontz

PHOTO COURTESY OF JAMES KAMINSKI

This month artists everywhere are participating in a challenge known as Inktober. Anyone can participate simply by following daily prompts—usually a single word—as inspiration to create a piece of artwork using ink-based tools like pen and ink, shar ps, and outliners.

There is no money in volved. The goal is just to build consistency of artistic habits. Many people who participate choose to share all or some of their work on social media. Parker began in 2009 and was originated by artist Jake Parker, an illustrator, writer and teacher based in Utah. Accord ing to his website, his original goal was to challenge himself to improve his inking skills and to "develop positive drawing hab its."

The list of daily prompt words can be found on Parker's website mjparker.com. The 2019 list features terms like: mistletoe, indi gena, haze and new beginnings. Parker got into it in 2014, when it was right for him. However, he says he got into it in 2014, when he was feeling artistically iso lated after finishing college.

Kaminski says the chal lenge helps him as he strives to make as "clean and cohesive of a product as possible."

Kaminski says he found out about Inktober through his illustrator friends in 2012, but at the time it was not as popular as it is now and he was not sure if it was right for him. However, he says he got into it in 2014, when he was feeling artistically iso lated after finishing college.

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Students try to handle the STRESS

By Cassie Webb
Senior Reporter
Being a college student comes with stressors such as studies, work, money, personal relationships and more. In a survey conducted by the VOICE, out of 30 students, 53% said college is their main stressor.

According to Bud Livingston, a Health Professor at Mercer, the first step in managing stress is managing the causes and being aware of symptoms. A reaction to stress is the fight or flight concept, he says: your instinct to handle the situation is fight or run.

While much research and many tests have been done on stress, The Franklin Institute for the Sciences website states, “As science gains greater insight into the consequences of stress on the brain, the picture that emerges is not a pretty one.”

According to Mercer’s Senior Counselor, Dorothy Gasparro, who has been a counselor for 14 years, students struggle with the transition from high school to college, managing the differences between expectations and reality, and not having adequate support networks.

In a VOICE survey of 50 students conducted for a previous article, 75 percent said they have problems with anxiety and 65 percent said they suffer from depression. Taking time to deal with these issues can cause students to miss class and assignments which in turn leads to more stress.

Professor Livingston suggests a variety of ways to begin to think about handling stress. These include: trying to shift how you view your problems, controlling emotions through meditation and exercise, building a social support network including family and friends, doing activities like deep breathing, praying, and trying to get seven to eight hours of sleep per night.

With so many common stressors among students, Gasparro says, “There are a lot of resources, there’s me, the success coaches, clubs, and SGA to get involved and to reach out for help.”

STRESS STRATEGIES

1. PANIC ATTACKS
   - Panic attacks can be terrifying. One method psychologists recommend to help get through a panic attack is called “grounding.” They say to find and focus on five things you can see, four things you can hear, three things you can touch, two things you can smell, and one thing you can taste.

2. RECOVERY
   - Recovery from addiction is a long process, but there are some free apps that can help. One free app is called NOMO. It has quick games to help you refocus, and calendars to help track sobriety.

3. STRESS
   - There are many phone apps to help fight daily stress. Calm and Happy both have free trials (and discounts for people in high stress jobs). They include breathing, meditation and sleep tools.
Halloween lights in Lambertville, New Jersey bring people out even before it’s time to trick-or-treat. The tradition of going over the top decorating for the holiday is well established in this riverside town.

One particularly well known spot is known as “Halloween House” on North Union Street. Dolores Dragan, a retired school art teacher, has lived in Lambertville for the past 20 years and began the Halloween tradition back in 1998.

In a short film by New Hope videographer, Bob Krist, Dragan explains how many of her ideas come from the people that she knows. The figures are not exact replicas, but rather reflect some aspect of the person’s essence in caricature form.

She uses blacklight to give the white figures a spectral glow. Dragan says that at the school where she taught they had a blacklight theatre for children who had slight learning disabilities and this was where she got the idea.

Maria Tsardrulas, a student in Dragan’s art class in elementary school, says, “We used to do paper mache when we were in her art class.”

Maria McGrath, a local resident that also decorates her house, talks about Dragan as “making it very competitive for the blocks.”

By Bianca Martin & Kristen Miller
Senior Reporters
Halloween lights in Lambertville, New Jersey bring people out even before it’s time to trick-or-treat. The tradition of going over the top decorating for the holiday is well established in this riverside town. One particularly well known spot is known as “Halloween House” on North Union Street. Each year Dolores Dragan, a retired school art teacher, creates an elaborate display featuring spooky, life-sized paper mache figures. Dragan has lived in Lambertville for the past 20 years and began the tradition back in 1998. In a short film by New Hope videographer, Bob Krist, Dragan explains how many of her ideas come from the people that she knows. The figures are not exact replicas, but rather reflect some aspect of the person’s essence in caricature form. She uses blacklights to give the white figures a spectral glow. Dragan says that at the school where she taught they had a blacklight theatre for children who had slight learning disabilities and this was where she got the idea. Maria Tsardrulas, a student in Dragan’s art class in elementary school, says, “We used to do paper mache when we were in her art class.” Maria McGrath, a local resident that also decorates her house, talks about Dragan and how she “makes it very competitive for the blocks around here.”

By Bianca Martinez & Kristen Miller

TOP: Many houses in Lambertville’s Halloween tradition feature life-size decorations. This display includes a pair of zombie farmers with full-sized skeletal horse. ABOVE: Dolores Dragan whose haunting annual displays are among the most elaborate, uses black lights to add a spooky glow to her hand crafted paper mache figures. RIGHT: Dragan has so many visitors that she sets up a donation jar for the Lambertville Community Kitchen. LEFT: A deathly angel by Dolores Dragan in paper mache, accompanied by glowing severed head.

PHOTOS | KRISTEN MILLER
The Mercer women's soccer team fell 3-2 at home to the Community College of Baltimore County-Essex on Saturday, October 5, despite a late push in the second half that almost saw the Lady Vikings erase a three-goal deficit.

Neither team was able to break through in the first half, although CCBC Essex came closest to breaking the deadlock. A last-second goal-line clearance from Vikings defender #18 Gianna Clevenger allowed the home team to head into the break with a clean sheet still intact.

Four minutes into the second half, CCBC Essex forward #7 Taylor West found the back of the net after she volleyed a pass from teammate #12 Dani Zacierka off her left foot and past Mercer goalkeeper Courtney Fox.

CCBC Essex doubled their advantage two minutes later with a goal from #10 Kara Dietrich.

After receiving a pass down the left-hand side of the field, the Knights midfielder found space in Mercer's six yard box and buried her shot at the near post.

CCBC Essex extended their lead even further with a goal from a corner kick fourteen minutes into the second half. #5 Emily Vetri whipped the ball into the box and #15 midfielder Ryleigh Fachler connected with her right boot, sending the ball into the back of the net.

"I thought the first 25 minutes of the second half went very well; it was about as well as we have moved the ball this year," CCBC Essex head coach Joe Fiedler said.

"Mercer’s top scorer overall, Jamie Ervin, felt the Vikings had the Knights in their grasp but let them slip away. "I believe we had them the whole time, like we have the capability to win but we just came out flat in the second half. We definitely had the opportunity to score more goals than we did," she said.

The Mercer women's soccer team’s record is 10-5 this season so far, compared to last year’s losing 4-11-1 record. Ervin thinks the numbers should be slanted even more in Mercer’s favor this season.

"I just think we had the opportunity to win more games than we actually do. Every game this season we lost, we actually had the opportunity to win. We just need to give it our all. We’re not all giving 100 percent," she said.

Women’s soccer falls at home to CCBC Essex

Each year Mercer the Mercer Vikings softball team welcomes new players and works to get the whole team ready for the new season.

By Patrick Mulligan
Senior Reporter

The Mercer women’s softball team fell 3-2 at home to the Community College of Baltimore County-Essex on Saturday, October 5, despite a late push in the second half that almost saw the Lady Vikings erase a three-goal deficit.

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Mercer softball prepares for spring season with fall scrimmages

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Mercer's softball team is gearing up to make another run at the College World Series in Clinton, Mississippi this Spring. This will be the Vikings’ attempt to make up for last season’s disappointing end that saw the team fail to qualify.

During its 2018 season, Mercer advanced through the Region Final and won the District Tournament, which qualified the Lady Vikings for the College World Series. Mercer lost in the Regional Finals last season which prevented the Vikings from playing in the World Series or the District tournament.

Catcher Gabby Estrada is confident in her team and its ability to reach its goals this season. "I can see the team winning regions and I think we definitely have what it takes to make it to the World Series," Estrada said.

The Vikings roster consists of 16 players, seven of whom return from last year’s team that lost in the Regional Finals. Mercer’s veteran coach Ryan Zagarski enters his 16th season and is looking to bring his team back to the World Series once again.

"Last year we struggled a lot more, we had a lot of injuries, which ultimately cost us a lot of wins," Estrada continued. "I really think we have what it takes to go really far this season and be successful."

In 2018, the team began its Spring season with only 12 girls and one pitcher. It now carries four healthy pitchers and a squad of 16 girls.

"I just think we had the opportunity to win more games than we actually do. Every game this season we lost, we actually had the opportunity to win. We just need to give it our all. We’re not all giving 100 percent," she said.
MRI or CRP scans

MRI or CRP scans

MRI or CRP scans

MRI or CRP scans

MRI or CRP scans

MRI or CRP scans

MRI or CRP scans
Calculating the exact value of club participation

A lot of students come to Mercer, sit quietly in class, then go home or to work and never participate in life on campus. This can be isolating and even make it harder to feel motivated.

One way to build interest and connection is to join a club. There are more than 45 of them and according to Gerson Martinez, the Orientation Coordinator at Mercer, 35 are currently active.

Most clubs meet at least once a month and have two events of some kind within a semester. That could be anything from a party on the quad to a fundraiser for Toys for Tots. In a VOICE survey of 30 students who were hanging out in the Student Center, which is where the club offices are located, 93% said that they have made friends because they joined a club.

Some clubs are academically or career-focused, like the Criminal Justice Club of the Physical Therapy Assistants’ Club, others are social and cultural such as African Student Organization, Carribbean Vibes and the Rainbow Coalition, while others are just interest-based like the Gaming and Adventure Clubs.

All the clubs are free to join, and some people even start new clubs based on common interests. Once they find a faculty advisor and fill out some paperwork they can qualify to get a budget to use for events according to Martinez.

In a study titled “The Impact of Extracurricular Activity on Student Academic Performance,” researchers Jing Wang and Jonathan Shiveley found that students who graduated high school with a 3.0 GPA and joined a club in their first semester at college saw a stall in their academic performance. By contrast, students who finished high school with the same GPA but who did not join a club ended up with an average GPA drop from 3.0 to 2.2.

That data is supported by students here at Mercer. In the same VOICE survey, 70 percent of students who joined a club saw their GPAs go up after doing so. So if not to end the lonely monotony, joining a club is academically a smart move.

Volunteering is valuable even for the busiest college student

Volunteering “is good for your soul, and the smiles and bright eyes of others in their community. The simplicity of knowing that you have done something for someone else, and that you have in some way made their day better, can help relieve some of the stress that comes with being a student. If you’re thinking, “What can I possibly offer the world?” volunteering can offer the answer.

Ultimately, no matter how little we have, we always have something to offer, and community service can help college students forget about their issues while possibly finding a bit of peace along the way. “It makes me feel good, not only because I’m helping but because I know that I am showing someone that there is kindness in the world.” De Paz says.
The lonely stress of spring transfer
What happens when you leave MCCC in December, not May

Bianca Martinez

For those who plan to graduate from Mercer with an Associate’s degree, completion within two years may be your goal at first but isn’t always realistic for a variety of reasons like inability to take summer classes or too many hours spent working.

Whether you end up at Mercer for one extra semester or three it’s entirely possible that you will end up graduating in December rather than May, and it can often feel like you’re the only one.

The spring transfer process happens every year; yet not all information is available online or on campus. When researching how to prepare for a transfer, there are countless articles out there geared towards those following the traditional pattern of entering in the fall but very little info for students transferring mid-year.

One thing that remains the same is the required paper and work. All students, no matter the semester, always have to submit their application, college transcripts, financial aid papers, etc. depending on the number of credits they’ve taken.

Due to this, some may argue that the time of year does not matter, that the information provided in these articles can apply to both types of transfer students, but that’s not really true. Spring transfers face specific issues.

Deadline dates are different. Some schools only accept Fall transfer applications, and admitted spring students can be ineligible for certain scholarships.

For example, Rowan University, a four-year public university located in Glassboro, NJ, has a specific scholarship titled as their Transfer Trustee Scholarship, with special consideration given to students from New Jersey’s community colleges.

For this specific scholarship, as stated on their website, “Students entering during the spring term are not eligible for scholarships.”

Do you plan to study abroad? In addition, there’s the stress of trying to finish class assignments during the fall semester while filling out these transfer applications. There is no summer break to make preparations for the next transition.

“You transfer in the fall, you have the entire summer to make arrangements for housing, with lots of time to plan out finances and apply for financial aid. For the spring there is a much shorter time, but has to be submitted in a short amount of time. Jumping to a new school mid-year is particularly intimidating as such a large jump,” Nemer says.

Julia Nemer, a Communication Studies major at Mercer, says she believes there is definitely a time crunch. “When you transfer in the fall, you have enough time to make arrangements for housing, with lots of time to plan out finances and apply for financial aid. For the spring there is a much shorter jump,” Nemer says.

Laurence Jones, the Director of Transfer Services at Mercer, says, “Well, it is true. You only have about three weeks or so in between semesters so it requires you to get things done a lot faster. So you finish here and you have to pick up your classes and get school started...”

This feels especially true for community college transfer students, who may not be used to large four-year universities, for example.

If they are moving on campus, they need to know what to pack and which supplies to get. It is vastly different than being a commuter at Mercer.

Jones does recommend trying to find peace within your major. It can make a student body of 15,000 feel as if it’s been reduced down to just the people in your classes.

If you’re the type of person comfortable in joining a club or organization, doing that can also enable you to find people like you due to shared interests.

Spring transfers need to feel assured in their choices and ready to move on. It can be hard if they feel rushed or underprepared. It can be why some students opt out of the decision.

Jones says, “For some people, they sometimes will say to me, I’m gonna wait for the fall just because I wanna start when most people start...but that’s not everybody.”

Nemer’s case, she also has bad doubts.

She states, “spring transfers really only have the opportunity to get moving in January to make big, important decisions about the next 2 years. Because of this extreme time crunch, I might have to defer transferring until next fall. It’s just not enough time to get everything sorted! But I’m trying my best to make it work.”

There is also the question of graduation and leaving with a diploma. For those who finish their degree and transfer in the spring, they do not close the Mercer chapter in their life with a cap and gown ceremony in January.

Mercer does offer the option for spring graduates to participate in the commencement ceremony in May, but it is not required. For some students like myself, it can feel too detached once you’re already at a new school.

Jones states, “I think that’s a personal decision because you will have moved on, you’ll be at another school and then you have to say, ‘Well I gonna go back for my graduation’...so it’s up to you to think that’s an important thing to you...but a lot of students do go.”

Nemer is also thinking about the decision she will have to make.

She says, “I am planning to come back for the big ceremony in the spring, but I’m not sure if it will be as impactful since I will already be studying at a new institution. I think my parents will want me to walk more for their own sake than mine.”

The concept of transferring in the spring can seem daunting, but students should not have to feel as if they are the only ones going through it. Building a support system of family and friends that can help and contacting your school’s transfer services as early as possible can help make the process easier.
ASK THE VOICE: GOOD ANSWERS TO TOUGH QUESTIONS

Dear VOICE, Whenever I try to get to class I am always followed by the same fox. I don’t know if it’s because of my lovely scent, or the way I walk, but it’s always hard to push him away. And tips on getting rid of foxes?

-Foxy Lady

Dear Foxy,
It’s important to listen. What does the fox say?

-The VOICE

Dear VOICE,

2X DILBERT

SUDOKU

Place a number in the empty boxes in such a way that each row, each column, and each small 3x3 box contains all the numbers from one to nine.

DIFFICULTY THIS WEEK: ☑

Moderate ☑ Challenging ☑ HOO BOY!

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

Dear Allergic,
You need an alternate route. It’s true, the second floor of the student center is blocked off by construction, but climbing through dangerous equipment sounds like it could be the best option for you.

-The VOICE.

Dear UnPennywise,
Go to the vending machines on campus and see if anyone left any change in them. It’s better than nothing.

-The VOICE

Dear Loser,
Write from the heart. But try not to sound desperate.

-The VOICE

Dear Voice, I have an allergy to beef, yet I walk past the school cafeteria every day. I’m in chronic anaphylactic shock. Help.

-Allergic Beef Student

Dear Allergic,
You need an alternate route. It’s true, the second floor of the student center is blocked off by construction, but climbing through dangerous equipment sounds like it could be the best option for you.

-The VOICE.

Dear Love Sick Loser,
Write from the hard. But try not to sound desperate.

-The VOICE

Dear UnPennywise,
Go to the vending machines on campus and see if anyone left any change in them. It’s better than nothing.

-The VOICE

Dear Voice, I’m broke. My financial aid is running out. What can I do.

-UnPennywise

Dear UnPennywise,
Go to the vending machines on campus and see if anyone left any change in them. It’s better than nothing.

-The VOICE

TOURISM OF THE DEPARTMENT OF COMEDY

ONE OF YOUR 800+ APPEARANCES AT THE VENICE BOOK FAIR, WHERE YOU’RE NOT EVEN INVITED.

I’M A TECHNICAL GESTIC, I UNTIL DON’T UNTIL YOU CAN EXPLAIN THE APPROPRIATES THAT TIY 3210 IS DIFFERENT FROM THEIRS.

WHEN YOU FIND A BIG KETTLE OF CRAW, IT’S NOT TO STIR IT.

CAPTAIN OPPORTUNITY?

TINA: YOU CAN’T WORK AT HOME ANYMORE BECAUSE THE APARTMENT CAN’T DO IT. AND YOU’RE NOT IN THE APARTMENT.

FLASH GORDON

Out on a Limb
by Gary Kopervas

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

PIAZZA BARBERINO
Rome, Italy

THE PLANET MONGO

IT’S NOT THAT I’M NOT COMFORTABLE IN THE KONGS. I’M COMFORTABLE IN THE KINGDOM

IT’S NOT THAT I’M NOT COMFORTABLE IN THE KONGS. I’M COMFORTABLE IN THE KINGDOM