



The student press of Mercer County Community College since 1968

Local temple built by forced labor, lawsuit alleges

Human trafficking allegations expand to temples in other states

By Elijah Parkman-Williams and Madhavi Steinert
Senior Reporters

Thousands of people poured into the massive Hindu temple in Robbinsville, NJ in early November to celebrate Diwali, the festival of lights. At the same time, allegations of forced labor at the temple that were initiated in May, were expanded to include temples from the same sect in other major cities in the country.

Just five minutes from MCCC's main campus, a Hindu temple known as BAPS (it stands for Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha Inc.) has been accused of labor trafficking of over 200 workers from India, paying them as little as \$1.20 an hour to work in dangerous conditions building the enormous temple which is still being constructed after more than five years.

The initial allegations against BAPS said the laborers had been assured that they would be working four to seven hours a day doing artisanal work on the temple. Instead, they say, they worked 87 hours

a week lifting massive stones, breathing harmful dust, and receiving just one day off a month.

Brought to the U.S. from India using R-1 religious visas, temporary visas that allow immigrants to do volunteer religious jobs, the workers say they were not volunteers at all and that their passports were taken away.

The majority of the workers were Dalit, the lowest rung on India's caste system.

For years, the lawsuit alleges, BAPS discouraged workers from sharing any information by threatening to reduce their pay or send them home. Deductions were also taken if a worker was at all seen idling and smoking.

Attorney Dan Werner, who represents the plaintiffs in the case-Mukesh Kumar, Keshav Kumar, Devi Laal, Niranjan, Pappu, Brajendra—is a lawyer at Radford & Keebaugh, LLC., a firm known for its focus on civil rights and employment law.

He says, "This is a horrific case of worker exploitation and it is even more disturbing

See TEMPLE page 2



PHOTO | ELIJAH PARKMAN-WILLIAMS

The main gate of the BAPS temple in Robbinsville, NJ provides security, carefully monitoring who comes in and out. The ornate temple cannot be viewed from the road.

"Mercer County has a policy to withhold comment on matters under active investigation by law enforcement. However, in all circumstances Mercer County abhors any violation of human rights and will fight for the protection of those rights and dignity for all."

-Julie Willmot, Office of Mercer County Executive Brian Hughes

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GOT A NEWS TIP?

Democratic Governor Murphy wins second term

By Mandy Sidhu
Senior Reporter

Governor Phil Murphy prevailed in his gubernatorial race against Republican Jack Ciattarelli.

Phil Murphy won 51.1% of the votes, narrowly defeating Ciattarelli who got 48.2% of the votes. Murphy is the only Democrat to win a second term in the last 4 decades.

The vote wasn't certified for days because of NJ's law allowing mail-in ballots to

be counted as late as November 8 as long as they were post marked by or on election day. There were also polling problems on election day slowing the count in the most Democratic counties.

During the campaign Murphy and Ciattarelli fired back and forth with aggressive ads and debates, clashing on key issues concerning taxes, policies surrounding COVID and even former President Trump.

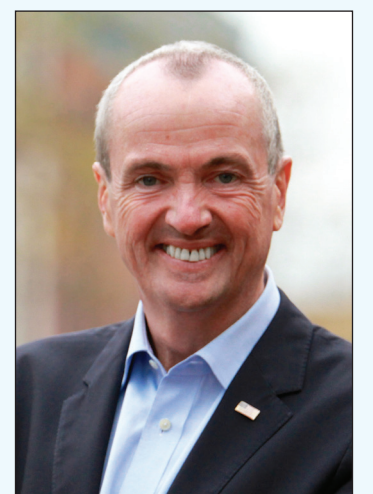
In appealing to voters, Murphy promised a \$15 minimum wage and tax equity while

Ciattarelli spoke about tackling high property taxes.

Monmouth University Polls in mid-August showed Murphy leading amongst Blacks voters by 80%, and 50% with Latino, Asian and multicultural voters while Ciattarelli held a 9% advantage with white voters.

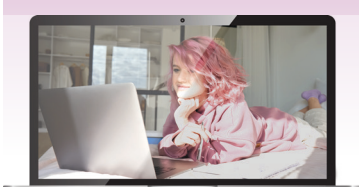
Mercer county voted for Murphy at 65%, his challenger getting 34% of the votes.

Ciattarelli finally conceded on Nov. 12, saying he saw no pathway to victory, hence no basis for a recount that he initially hinted to.



COLLEGE VOICE | FILE PHOTO NJ Governor Phil Murphy, who won a second term.

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Tabby's Place cat sanctuary welcomes all

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Animator speaks to students

By Alex Gonzalez
Senior Reporter

Animator Frank Sasso, who is known for his drawings of Stimp from the 90's Nickelodeon TV series *The Ren & Stimpy Show*, gave a presentation via Zoom for Mercer's Distinguished lecture series on October 27.

Advertising and Graphic Design Professor Tina Laplaca was the organizer for the event. When asked how she selected Sasso to speak to students she said "I had met Frank Sasso at an art opening at the Trenton City Museum at Ellarslie pre-covid, and I got to speaking with him and his wife, and I learned about his past experience of what he did as an animator. I just thought he would be a great person to bring in."

During the lecture Sasso explained that his career in animation did not start right away. His first job was stocking vending machines at airports in New York. Later he worked for a company called Spunco that went on to become Nickelodeon. Sasso says he became the new animation director for Spunco even though he didn't

have any experience in animation.

After working with Nickelodeon, Sasso went on to work at Disney. He showed renderings and drawings that he did for Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*. Towards the end of the presentation, students were given chances to win some of his signed story boards.

At the time that he was working at Nickelodeon Sasso says he was doing his animation completely with pencil and paper but that "It wasn't a challenge for me because that's how you did it. That was the way to do it."

Sasso said he had a strange introduction to Disney, being flown in on an airplane full of people wearing all black, then escorted into a jeep where no one spoke at all on the way to the Disney studio.

When asked how he felt about this experience, he said, "I felt very unnerved and concerned and scared, but at the same time, I was like "This is kind of cool."

During the presentation, he gave some advice to students. He told them, "Start your own business."



PHOTO COURTESY OF FRANK SASSO

Animator Frank Sasso, who worked for years at Disney and Nickelodeon gave a Distinguished Lecture at MCCC on October 27.

MCCC announces new vax mandate for spring

By Ben Levitt
Senior Reporter

A vaccine or weekly testing mandate will go into effect for the students, faculty, and staff at MCCC starting on January 3, 2022, as announced through two email blasts this week.

The email to students states "all MCCC students will be required to either be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 or be tested weekly...to attend in-person or hybrid classes, or participate in athletics, theater or other in-person activities."

It adds that students who are taking only online classes are exempt, and that the mask mandate will still be in effect.

Jennifer Whiting, the acting spokesperson for the college says the administration convened a task force this fall and that "their recommendation was to move toward a vaccine mandate, knowing that students have the option of attending online synchronous and online asynchronous courses, without negatively affecting a student's ability to enroll in what they want. How do we keep campus as safe as possible?"

Student Government President Christian Perez said of the mandate "I don't think it's a bad idea. I think we all kind of expected it."

When asked how the weekly tests would be funded, carried out and enforced, Whiting said that getting tested would be the responsibility of the students. She went on to say that the college is looking into how to work out the funding for them. The email sent to faculty and staff says that they are responsible for the costs of their own tests.

According to Whiting, the college is still looking into how to enforce the vaccine mandate.

Alvyn Haywood, Professor of Speech and Communications and Faculty Association President says, "Anything that is going to help us be able to interface with our students in a healthy environment, I'm for."

He added, "We need to be there for one another, and look out for one another, as opposed to making this some type of protest about our individuality and how the government is impeding on our freedom."

Whiting says "The safest way to handle COVID-19 as a society is to use the vaccinations that are available. Get vaccinated."

To upload your vaccination card go to <https://mercer-ss.colleague.elucian-cloud.com/Student/DocumentRequests>

Temple faces allegations of human trafficking

Continued from page 1

that it has gone on for years in New Jersey behind the temple's walls." Werner adds, "These workers were coerced through lies to come to the United States to work and then suffered tremendously - they were basically forced into servitude."

There were also instances where workers were threatened by physical restraint, serious harm, threat of a legal process, as well as various other schemes, the suit alleges.

One worker, Moham Lal, who was just 37 at the time, died at the Robbinsville temple. Three more workers from the temple died after returning to India.

Mercer English Professor Laura Knight, who has visited the Robbinsville temple, says, "I am very disappointed that an organization that has done so much charitable work would treat their workers in this fashion."

According to their website, the followers of the temple believe Bhagwan Swaminarayan, the founder of BAPS, to be an earthly manifestation of Aksharbrahma, defined as the Ultimate Reality in Vedic scriptures.

The site says under his teachings and philosophy, "The universal values He preached promoted non-violence, detachment to material wealth, and devotion to God and His sadhu. The moral disciplines He reintroduced to society have built cohesive communities."



PHOTO | ELIJAH PARKMAN-WILLIAMS

The BAPS temple in Robbinsville, NJ maintains tight security around its vast perimeter.

The BAPS organization is closely linked to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his highly conservative and nationalist government, having donated hundreds of thousands of dollars to his projects. In 2020 Modi tweeted "I am very proud of my association with the @BAPS family, known for its impeccable service world-wide."

The Robbinsville temple refused to respond to numerous requests for comment.

Asked for his reaction to the situation at the temple, County Executive Brian Hughes said through his representative Julie Willmont, "Mercer County has a policy to withhold comment on matters under active investigation by law enforce-

ment. However, in all circumstances Mercer County abhors any violation of human rights and will fight for the protection of those rights and dignity for all."

County Prosecutor Angelo Onofri, who spoke on the topic of human trafficking as part of MCCC's Distinguished Lecture series in 2018, could not be reached. His office said that the matter has been handed over to the federal government and is no longer under their jurisdiction.

David Fried, Mayor of Robbinsville, also declined to comment on ongoing investigations, but told the Asbury Park Press back in May, "We're very surprised by this. They've had

a great relationship with the town. They've been a great corporate citizen." He added, "I've certainly never seen anything that would give me pause during my visits there. This is absolutely very surprising."

New Jersey is a national hot spot for human trafficking problems. According to data tracked by the National Human Trafficking Hotline, New Jersey has averaged about 200 reported cases per year since 2015. But the problem in this case seems to have spread.

The indictment, originally handed down in May of 2021, was expanded at the end of October to include BAPS temples in Atlanta, Houston, Chicago, and Los Angeles. ■

Red Cross faces blood shortages

A single blood donation can save up to three lives

By McKenna Miller
Reporter

Starting in August the Red Cross faced a blood shortage for hospital patients that rely on donors for transfusions and surgeries. Turnout for blood drives decreased by 10% due to the COVID-19 Delta variant becoming more contagious according to the organization's website.

At the start of the pandemic, the blood supply shortage was not as severe as it is now.

Lisa Shave, Program Coordinator for the Medical Office Assistant program at MCCC and front-line worker in a blood bank at a Pennsylvania hospital says "Last year during the pandemic people actually really wanted a reason to leave their house. So, last year there actually was a lot of donors."

She also explained that because of COVID, "a lot of the surgeries in the hospital were actually canceled or postponed. So, it was almost like we had a lot of blood last year but no one to give it to. And now all of the surgeries that were postponed are back and less people are going to donate."

Diane Concannon, communications director for the Red Cross Organization in the New Jersey region for the past 18 years says "the emergency appeal went into effect at the end of last month because the blood supply is so low. That's why we are saying to people, please come out to donate, make an appointment, keep the appointment, and help save lives."

In a positive sign for the organization, a blood drive



Volunteer at Red Cross Blood Donation Center contributing blood.

PHOTO | MCKENNA MILLER

held in Hightstown, New Jersey on October 23 was completely filled up with appointments. Shown on their site, Red Cross was completely booked with people willing to donate blood despite the concerns with the Delta variant.

Kyle Hahn, a blood donor volunteer at the Red Cross Blood Donation Center said "I know a lot of people that either are ineligible to give blood or are kinda nervous to do so, so I just feel privileged to be in a position where I can donate. There is always a huge need."

MCCC Athletic Director, John Simone, who attempted to donate every year pre-covid time says that "I kind of knew about it when it came to Mercer but I really didn't put much thought into it until I actually saw people at the Red Cross and then I found out."

So who will the donors

help?

Posie Carpenter, a registered nurse, and the director for the volunteer service nursing network for Red Cross explains that several groups of people benefit most from blood donations. These include "Cancer patients because cancer patients get platelet donations an awful lot. Trauma patients because they bleed and then they need red blood cells. Sickle cell patients, these are patients that are born with an odd red blood cell, predominantly [seen in] Black people."

In hospitals, the most common shortage of blood is Blood Type O and Blood Type B.

Shave says "So, the biggest shortage right now is for O blood. And 45 percent of the population is actually O. So, if 45 percent of the people just

went out and donated, we could start to replenish our supply. We are also short on B blood as well. But less people are B."

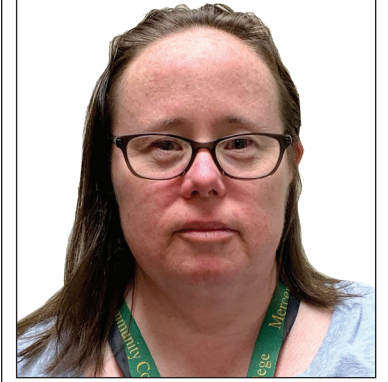
According to Carpenter, to help increase the blood supply, the Red Cross has been hosting more and larger blood drives but more spaced-out ones as well.

Shave says, "I just try to educate people on the process because it is not as scary as it seems, and it is extremely valuable."

After a person donates blood to any blood drive, their blood is sent back to the center and tested for any issues. From that point there is a 35 day window for it to be used.

Shave says, "Just by donating one whole blood unit, it can actually be split into 3 different parts, so you could save up to 3 people's lives."

Laurie's Corner



By Laurie Gallagher
With support from
the Staff of The College VOICE

I recommend Wawa; it has everything you need

As college students we are often looking for a place to get a cup of coffee, soup, a sandwich, snacks or even something cold like ice cream. I recommend Wawa. It is my favorite because it is a store that has everything. Plus, the food is really good.

There are two Wawas close to campus, one on Quakerbridge Road and one on Nottingham Way. So you can easily go as often as you need for food and supplies. They have all the little supplies you expect at a good convenience store.

Although Wawa doesn't offer a specific student discount, they often have deals going on and if you join their membership club you get "free coffee Tuesdays."

Wawa does delivery. You can place an order through their website wawa.com

At each store you can find ample parking spots for your car or bike. Masks are still required.

Trenton finds solution to avoid radio services shutdown

Funds from American Rescue Plan to be used to help update equipment

By Kelly Renegar
Reporter

Trenton's radio services have been facing the threat of a shutdown that would affect the ability of police, fire, water utility and other essential personnel to dispatch assistance and communicate during a crisis. A resolution to the problem was finally achieved when the city council voted in favor of Mayor Reed Gusciora's plan to use \$10.1 million to address the problem on November 14.

The vote followed a presentation by the Trenton Police Captain, John Zapple, who is responsible for the radio operations.

Motorola Solutions will receive \$9.9 million to facilitate the transfer to the new

system. The changes will use some funds given to the city under President Biden's COVID-19 relief American Rescue Plan.

MPS Communication, which has provided the services up to this point, had planned a shutdown for October 31, citing a bill for \$218,000 in unpaid services. But a judge agreed to extend the city's shut off date until December 31, 2021.

According to reporting from Isaac Avilucea with the *Trentonian*, in the past several years, Trenton has had problems with Kenwood Radio System which is operated by MPS. There is a count of 345 system glitches, one of which allowed a bank robber to steal \$10,000 in 2019.

MPS vowed to fix the

communication issues when Trenton threatened to take legal action, but there were still continuous problems even after a third communications tower was installed on South Broad Street.

"Communication services need to be reliable. If my house was burning, I wouldn't want to dial 911 and cross my fingers that I will receive help on the other end. That should be guaranteed," says Trenton resident Kyle Lang.

Councilwoman Kathy McBride, who has been vocal and even derogatory in her disagreements with Mayor Gusciora's leadership, has fought him on the idea of replacing emergency radio equipment with a system that is compatible with the Mercer County radio system utilizing the ARP



PHOTO | KELLY RENEGAR

City Hall in Trenton has found a solution to radio services problems.

(American Rescue Plan) funds.

In an article by P. Kenneth Burns on why.org, McBride explained that she thought a better solution, and use of money, would have been an overhaul of the radio

room rather than just replacing equipment.

Councilwoman McBride and MPS Communications did not return phone calls and emails requesting comment.



Children participated in traditional dances at Princeton's Dia De Los Muertos celebration on November 6.

PHOTO | ELIJAH PARKMAN-WILLIAMS

Arts Council of Princeton celebrates Día de los Muertos



PHOTO | ELIJAH PARKMAN-WILLIAMS

Participants in Princeton's Dia De Los Muertos celebration attended in traditional Mexican costumes.

By Elijah Parkman-Williams
Senior Reporter

For over 20 years The Arts Council of Princeton has celebrated El Día de los Muertos, Day of the Dead, a Mexican holiday that recognizes the passing of loved ones and honors them with dance, music, art, and other traditions. This year's event took place on November 6.

This year the events were led by Artistic Director Maria Evens, Program Manager Melissa Kuscin from the Arts Council of Princeton, and the Torres-Olivares family.

Valeria Torres-Olivares, who is a senior at Princeton says, "My mom worked on all the events with the Arts Council for El Día de los Muertos this month and we've been working on it for I think ten years now."



PHOTO | ELIJAH PARKMAN-WILLIAMS

An altar inside the Princeton Arts Council building provided a place for people to honor the dead with gifts of all kinds.

On November 2, the Arts Council hosted a lecture by Dr. Trenton Barnes on the Indigenous Influences on Día de los Muertos in Mexico. Throughout this lecture Barnes talks about the art and architecture of Teotihuacan, one of the largest cities in the Mesoamerican period and its influences on many modern practices.

Torres-Olivares says, "The professor is actually my professor right now, I'm taking his class. It's been really a privilege to be learning then and here about the Indigenous ancestry, as well as El Día de los Muertos, as well as how it's combined with and evolved through the ages due to colonization and interjections of religion."

During the pandemic year The Arts Council was not able to hold the annual Día de los Muertos celebration, but this year the parking lot where it was held was filled with people from all over the Princeton area, visitors and students alike.

"I think we had an extra great time this year because we hadn't been able to have a big party during the pandemic," Torres-Olivares said.

There was a mariachi band that drew bystanders in with the strumming of string instruments, loud trumpets, and mesmerizing voices.

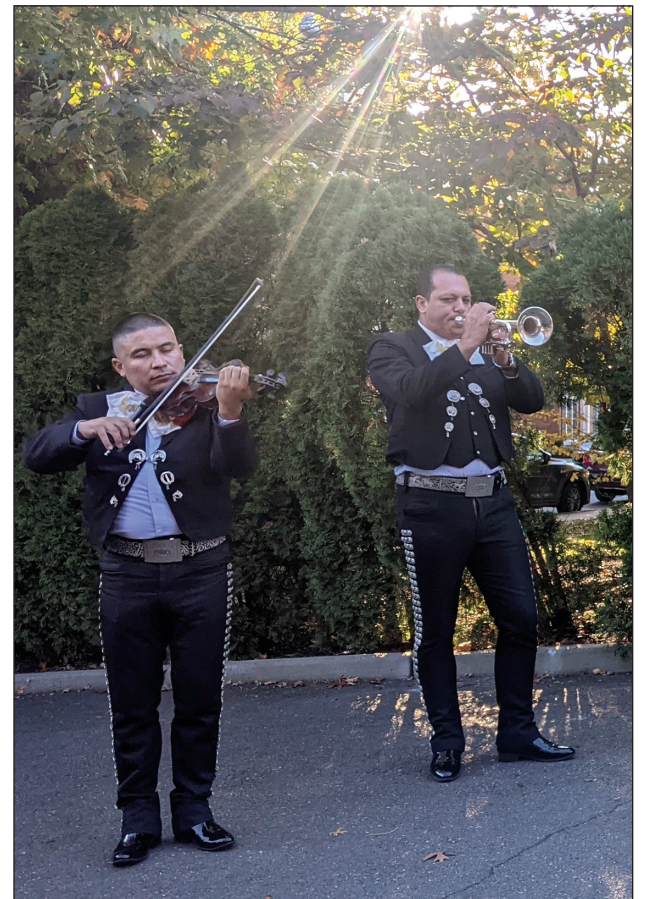


PHOTO | ELIJAH PARKMAN-WILLIAMS

A mariachi band performed at Princeton's Dia De Los Muertos celebration on November 6.

The event also included traditional Mexican foods: crispy flauta, topped with lettuce, tomato, and chile sauce, tamales, and sweet churros.

Abelardo Montaña, a Princeton resident, says "I see it as a celebration of the living when we remember the people that have died."

Inside the Arts Council building there was a community altar where people placed sweet breads, candy, crafts, memorabilia, and pictures of loved ones who have died, remembering them through what they loved most.

"You go to the cemetery and you bring ofrendas, food, and music and flowers," says Abelardo Montaña.

Torres-Olivares added, "El Día de los Muertos definitely holds a very, very special place in our hearts because it's a time for us to remember our family members who have passed away, friends who have passed away, ancestors."

Coffee Facts

Among coffee drinkers in the United States, the average consumption is 3.1 cups per day!



Coffee is a world commodity and is second only to oil.



35% of coffee drinkers prefer their coffee black
65% of coffee drinkers prefer to add sugar and/or cream



A lighter roast has more caffeine than a darker roast because coffee loses caffeine as it is roasted.



Source: www.e-importz.com/coffee-statistics.php

The whole wide Small World

By Madhavi Steinert
Reporter

Small World Coffee in Princeton lives up to its name. It is an excellent cafe that beckons students from around the world and around the area and offers a stage for artists and musicians.

The cafe was founded in 1993 by Brant Cosaboom and Jessica Durrie, who met after college in Michigan, but both grew up living all over the world, from Italy to Korea. According to their website, those experiences abroad provided the foundation for their cafe.

Now, they have two locations. The main one, on Witherspoon Street, is not only a great spot for students to grab a cup of coffee and pastry while crunching out some work, it's also a hub for artists from all over the country, visual and musical alike.

On Saturday November 6, Benya Stewart, a singer songwriter from Athens, Ohio, performed an acoustic set on his guitar.

"It's very comforting and welcoming. I really enjoyed the live music that was here. It really decreases the stress," Princeton student Dorothy Junginger said.

Beyond the coffee bar is a platform with tables and booth-like chairs extending along the art-decorated walls.

Small World hosts art exhibitions every month, where artists or collaborative groups display their work. This month,



PHOTO | MADHAVI STEINERT

Students and locals at Small World Coffee in Princeton can expect art displays and frequent live music events.

a group photo show, Perspectives on Preservation, takes the spotlight.

Stewart enjoyed how nature was the focus of the exhibition saying, "I derive a huge amount of inspiration from the forest for my music. I play forest and mountain music, you know, in terms of the folk music."

While Stewart was playing, students sat throughout the back of the cafe behind laptops and open books.

"I really liked getting away from being on campus," said Princeton student Rio Baron.

Mercer professor of

Visual Arts Lucas Kelly used to work at Small World and remembers the companionship and kindness he found.

Kelly says, "[Small World] gave me access to a lot of the things that Princeton has to offer that Mercer students regularly access, and I don't know that I would have tried to access them had I not been literally dropped right in the middle of town." He added that, "Small World is very welcoming to Mercer students."

Small World Coffee hosts live music every Saturday night from 6pm to 7:30pm, their lineup including Fear of Dancing, Darla Rich Jazz, and Rich

Seiner. The next art exhibition to see Small World's walls is a series of work by Diana Dubossarska, slated to install on 12/8.

What this Princeton cafe boils down to is its community and excellent beverages. Baron prefers their cappuccinos, while Junginger prefers their hot chocolate.

Small World has excellent mochas, hot or iced, and hot chocolate. Both are balanced with vanilla undertones. Professor Kelly says, "There's this family oriented feel to that space that I don't think happens in a lot of environments. At Small World, it just kind of happens."

One Up One Down has great coffee, vegan treats, atmosphere

By Kelly Renegar
Reporter

What is now One Up One Down Coffee Roastery & Caffee on Cass Street in Trenton began as an online subscription for bicycle-delivered coffee beans. In 2015, owner Vince Camioli and wife Natalie set up an online shop for their home-roasted coffee beans.

Vince spent a year and a half apprenticing as a coffee roaster in order to learn the craft. He recalls how he "started roasting coffee almost a decade ago on a popcorn popper at home, as many roasters do."

For the first few years, One Up One Down was kept as a side-hustle for the co-owners who worked other day jobs, but as things progressed they decided to expand their enterprise by opening the Cass Street location in September of 2019.

Within six months, the nation was in covid lockdown, but the cafe survived and has now returned to normal operating business hours, closing by 4pm on weekdays and 1pm on

weekends.

With the emphasis on specialty beans, ethical products, and the official Italian spelling of caffe with two 'f's, it would be easy to feel intimidated by the trendy coffee boutique if you've never been there.

But inside One Up One Down is spacious, with leather couches and armchairs, and stacks of used books sitting on coffee tables and spilling out from bookshelves.

With free wifi, plenty of space, and affordable quality coffee, One Up One Down is a proper work spot for Mercer students.

Vince Camioli says the goal of One Up One Down is to serve a "well-balanced cup, and present it in an unpretentious, down-to-earth setting."

As a local food professional, Natalie got to work ensuring that the cafe is stocked with baked goods, all of which are vegan, and some of which are gluten-free.

Whether it be a creamy latte, aromatic espresso, or a good ol' cup of drip coffee, customers can be sure that their potion of choice is sourced re-

sponsibly and roasted by true artists.

The drinks at One Up One Down range from \$2.00 for drip coffee to around \$4.50 for specialty drinks. Baked goods fall around a \$2.50 average.

If you're looking to get into coffee brewing yourself, there is plenty of brewing equipment to try out from simple filters, cold coffee brewers, to drip kettles. Some of these items are exclusively offered in their online shop.

Masks are required for both employees and patrons to ensure safety, which is a comfort to know for those who are itching to get out of the house, but still want to feel safe in public spaces. Unfortunately, there is no wheelchair access to One Up One Down and the entrance sits several steps up. On-street parking is offered which can sometimes be a challenge during busier mornings.

Vince says that the very name of the cafe—One Up One Down—reflects his personal philosophy; "it embodies a simple concept that I attempt to apply universally: Balance. Work balanced with play."



PHOTO | KELLY WILLIAMS

One Up One Down Coffee Roastery & Caffee on Cass Street in Trenton offers artisan coffee and vegan baked goods in a welcoming atmosphere.

Online sports gambling targets youth

By Kyle Johansson
Reporter

In 2018, Governor Phil Murphy signed into legislation the full legalization of sports gambling which is highly popular and lucrative for the state. But while advertising always says “Gamble responsibly” addiction is commonplace and covid isolation has only worsened the problem, especially for young adults.

James Martinez, a certified counselor at Stress-Free Recovery LLC said in an interview “the pandemic and social distancing has immensely accelerated the current social and economic trend and it does not surprise me that there is such a growing trend in the young adult population.”

Access to betting platforms on smartphones and the ease of using a credit card to place bets at any time along with the relatability and thrills makes sports gambling particularly attractive to young adults between the ages of 21-29.

Martinez explains, “young adults become at higher risk to develop sports gambling problems than older adults through online betting platforms because they tend to have more daily online interaction for personal amusement. What starts as a recreational

activity can later become a serious gambling problem because young adults may also tend to minimize any emotional and financial consequences typically seen with older adults”

According to MCCC Psychology Professor Kimberly Adkins, adolescent brain development plays a key role in the problem.

“Youth are at an increased risk for sports gambling because of the brain’s development... The brain develops from back to front with the prefrontal cortex fully developed around age 24. This part of the brain is responsible for making good decisions,” Professor Adkins says.

One key to taking advantage of this vulnerability is through advertising targeted at the vulnerable population.

In an interview with John Norton, the communications manager at the National Council on Problem Gambling, he said major sports betting platforms—such as DraftKings, FanDuel, BetMGM, and Golden Nugget—create a “flooding of advertising” to specifically target young adults to join sports betting platforms.

Norton says “there is no question that television and digital advertising is the driver for a major uptick in young

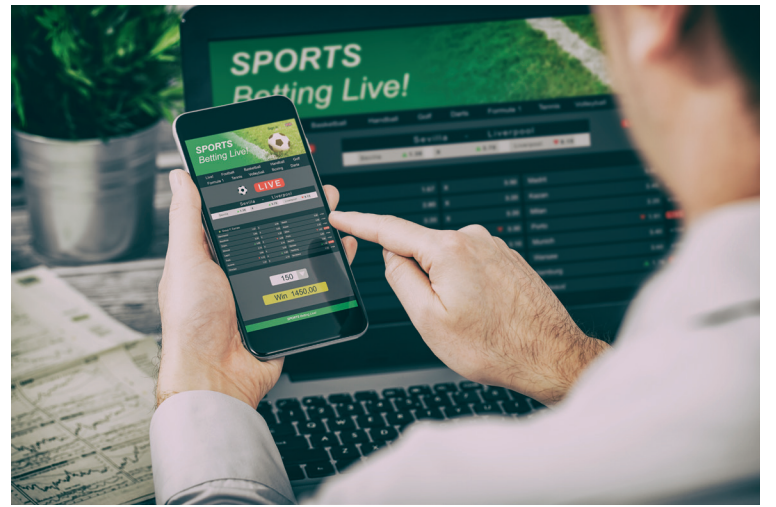
adults starting to do sports betting. Sports booking companies flood the advertising zone, they are on television, radio, and in podcasts, and provide an immense amount of information about betting and sports events.”

Sports betting companies also offer many introductory offers that can attract younger adults who may have lower incomes compared to older adults.

For example, FanDuel Sportsbook currently offers a \$2000 risk-free sign-up bonus, Bet MGM now offers multiple “free-play” bets once signing up, and Draft Kings offers a sign-up bonus of up to \$1000 and a 20% initial deposit match.

Further research into the sports betting website’s terms and conditions also shows that recent sign-up players may have to bet a certain amount of times or complete introductory bets in order to receive advertised sign-up bonuses.

James Martinez says “Besides not gambling, education is always the best preventive strategy. It is also important to know that it is easier for a person with substance use problems to develop behavioral addictions as it develops in the same general areas of the brain,



COLLEGE VOICE | FILE PHOTO

Coming out of the pandemic isolation, young people have become particularly vulnerable to online sports betting addiction, in part because of ease of access, in part because of intense advertising efforts.

and professional guidance is often needed to help individuals navigate their recovery process to find healthier recreational activities that are less damaging.”

There are resources for young adults such as a self-assessment test to see if someone may have personality traits or behaviors that can indicate a susceptibility to gambling addiction. It can be found on The National Council on Problem Gambling’s website.

New Jersey also offers an “opt-out” portal for someone to register their name and contact information to have their

gambling accounts closed and opt-out of any online gambling promotions.

Sports gambling addictions are on the rise in New Jersey, however, resources are available throughout to help and prevent young adults from becoming addicted.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:
NCPG Self assessment test
www.ncpgambling.org/help-treatment/screening-tools/

NJ online self-exclusion opt-out for online gambling
www.njportal.com/dge/selfexclusion

Tabby’s Place cat sanctuary accepts neediest cases

By Angie Varela
Reporter

Tabby’s Place in Ringoes is a cat sanctuary that rescues cats from hopeless situations. Jonathan Rosenberg, who had been the CTO of CNET online media company, founded Tabby’s Place in 1999 when he and his wife learned that their beloved cat Tabby had untreatable cancer and only months to live.

It made Rosenberg think: what was he doing with his life? Was he really making a difference? How could he honor Tabby who had spent 15 years with them? He resigned from his job and committed himself to creating Tabby’s Place.

Tabby’s Place is cage-free and has suites, offices and a large lobby and lounge area where the cats can relax and roam. Thirty to forty percent of the cats have chronic conditions like diabetes, heart disease and paraplegia.

Rosenberg, when asked what he would want people to know about Tabby’s Place, said, “Because we tend to specialize in cats with

special needs people often think those are the only cats here, but there are plenty of friendly adoptable cats here too.”

Veterinarian Dr. Laura Collins works part time at the sanctuary and full time at Nottingham Animal Hospital just minutes from MCCC’s campus. She began working at Tabby’s in January of 2004, shortly after they opened.

When asked about the medical conditions the cats face, Dr. Collins said, “We accept cats without regard to their health challenges. We have a lot of cats with ongoing medical issues. All the cats face challenges adapting to our sanctuary.”

There is an adoption application like any other shelter or rescue program but Tabby’s Place takes extra time to check veterinary references and ensure prospective adopters have what it takes to care for the cats, whether the cat they are adopting has special needs or not. Once the veterinarians are confident the cat is ready to go, the adoption is finalized. After that the sanc-



PHOTO | ANGIE VARELA

Valerie, a Tabby’s Place resident, was hit by a car and is paralyzed in her hind legs. Many of her fellow felines at the sanctuary have similar mobility problems.

tuary does multiple follow ups to ensure the adoption is working out.

Tabby’s Place Development Director Angela Hartley says “It’s the joy of my life to get to serve the most vulnerable cats alongside the kindest, most compassionate people I’ve ever known. Our brave, goofy, boundlessly loving cats give us more af-

fection, laughter, courage, and unsinkable hope than we can ever return, and it’s the greatest honor to be part of their stories.”

Rosenberg explains that the sanctuary is a non-profit organization and that 95% of the million dollar annual operating budget comes from individual donations. People also volunteer their

time and donate items the sanctuary needs such as cat food, litter, and soap

Hartley says, “I’ve been at Tabby’s Place for over fourteen years, yet I’m still amazed daily by the love that flourishes here. We truly are a sanctuary for cats and people alike. I’m so grateful to be part of the miracle of Tabby’s Place!”

TikTok fame comes with a lot of challenges

The downsides of TikTok are not lost on its stars



PHOTO | MADHAVI STEINERT

Trechelle and Treona Andino who go to MCCC and are on the basketball team, are better known as the SplashTwinz on TikTok and have 10.4 million followers who watch their daily dance videos.

By Madhavi Steinert
Reporter

Better known as the SplashTwinz, first-year Mercer students Trechelle and Treona Andino, who play on the basketball team, went viral on TikTok in their freshman year of high school five years ago for mocking a trending dance. Since then, they've accumulated 10.4 million followers on the popular social media platform, for hopping on dance trends and posting content every day.

"We started taking it to the next level when it was Musical.ly," Treona said. "The headquarters came across our stuff, and they reached out to us, and they put us in this group with a whole bunch of influencers."

The company challenged them to gain one hundred thousand more followers within a month, and they did. In doing so, TikTok flew them out to Los Angeles, California to visit the headquarters amongst other West Coast sights.

As the Splash Twinz have maintained their platform, they've seen their fair share of brand deals with companies like Nike, Coca Cola, Overtime, and Boohoo. In the spirit of continuing their influencer careers, these TikTok famous twins are business majors at Mercer. Though they aren't sure yet whether they will complete their associates degree and move on to a four-year college. They say they are keeping their options open.

"I would say the ingredients of a viral video are luck, pacing—short to the point videos are more likely to gain traction—and entertainment factor. Are people going to sit there and rewatch your video? Because watch time allegedly has a lot to do with how much your video is pushed out. From that point, it's just, does the algorithm smile upon you and push your video out?"

- Meg Levine, TikTok influencer

The twins' path to TikTok fame follows a pattern that is not a pattern. There is an element of randomness to how people become famous.

Sammy O'Donnell landed in the spotlight by accident, going viral for belting the high notes of the song "Into the Unknown" from the movie *Frozen 2*, in a bathroom with lots of reverb, on her way to work.

Influencer Emily Robinson of Ocean County, New Jersey, also known as Emily Riboflavin, gears her content toward fashion and makeup, specializing in cottage core, nature-inspired costumes.

Her mushroom character with a unique pillow-like hat and colorful dress reached an audience: 6.1 million views, and got 1.7 million likes. This year for Halloween, she created eight different looks including a highly popular zombified fairy.

Meg Levine, a social media influencer and model who goes by meglev on TikTok, calls her journey to TikTok fame a soft launch, as she slowly went more and more viral. What pushed her

into the spotlight was a series where she would sing through all of the female roles of a musical in one minute and one take. She now has 637,000 followers.

Levine says that while luck is a factor in achieving TikTok fame there are things that help.

"I would say the ingredients of a viral video are luck, pacing—short to the point videos are more likely to gain traction—and entertainment factor. Are people going to sit there and rewatch your video? Because watch time allegedly has a lot to do with how much your video is pushed out. From that point, it's just, does the algorithm smile upon you and push your video out?" Levine says.

The algorithm is a major factor that is the engine propelling content creators to fame on TikTok. It is the company's internal recommendation system that puts posts in each viewer's "For You" section. The program is supposed to promote content viewers will like based on their previous behavior, but it has major drawbacks according to con-



PHOTO | MADHAVI STEINERT

TikTok star and influencer Emily Robinson, who has 1.4 million followers, poses for an album cover photoshoot in Princeton, NJ.

tent creators.

"The algorithm exploits young women more than young women exploit themselves," Levine says.

She explains how the algorithm has exploited her when she's gone live in a low cut top.

"I have creepy, creepy men from all over the world telling me to stand up, turn around, do a dance, take my shirt off, and I'm like, wrong app, wrong place," Levine said.

O'Donnell agrees but thinks it's a given in some sense, "I feel like social media always does that, why wouldn't TikTok? The algorithm loves to flaunt women and their bodies."

All of these creators come to a couple similar conclusions; first, as unpredictable as the algorithm can be, consistency is an important part to maintaining a platform.

She is now the self-proclaimed ex-CEO of bathroom singing. Since she is not as active on TikTok anymore, her engagement has decreased; her videos which used to see 40-100k views on average now receive around 10,000.

Robinson, who currently posts about every other day on TikTok, says she is frustrated because she can't count on the algorithm to do its job, despite doing hers.

"This is my fucking

job. It sucks that I have to leave it up to an unpredictable algorithm to kind of define where my wellbeing stands at the moment," she says.

She says that the algorithm can sometimes backfire and randomly remove content based on Community Guidelines.

"I've gotten stuff taken down that's less revealing than the stuff that's more revealing, even if the views are the same," Robinson says. She adds, "I've gotten stuff taken down that says I'm impersonating somebody. I don't get it."

What's more concerning to her though, is her SFX makeup videos being removed.

Overall, however, a key upside of being TikTok famous is that when things are working, the influencers stand to make money from endorsement deals.

Because of her platform, Robinson was able to launch a clothing line and attained partnerships with multiple companies like MAC Cosmetics.

For the Splash Twinz, Levine, O'Donnell, and Robinson, TikTok has provided an opportunity to build and maintain a platform and create an actual career out of their work. However, it has also exposed the social media site's weaker points: its algorithm, how it relates to sexuality, and the seemingly random application community guidelines.

what a

Mercer tops the list

By Ejiroghene Omoru

From my personal experience I can give several reasons why Mercer should be among the top most boring and lonely higher education institutions. Some may argue that the pandemic is to blame, but I am of a different opinion.

The place has felt lonely from the first time I set foot at Mercer. I have never enjoyed the privilege of a friend nor a study partner, and I'm four semesters down the line. Students here always mind their own businesses.

At this point, I bet you have already

labeled me an introvert. That's where you are wrong! Although I cannot be described as an extrovert, I would place myself in the category between the two terms. I am an introvert until I get close to someone, someone close enough to unleash the extroverted version of me.

As a student, having friends comes with multiple advantages. You not only have people to hang out with when not in class and during the weekends, but also gain academically. Maybe those of us who have been lucky to secure a few friends know what I have been missing. Having a study partner can go a long way in improving one's grades. I am not insinuating that I do not perform well, but I believe I would be better off with someone by my side.

Most students who study at MCCC agreed with me to some extent that Mercer is a lonely place. From a survey of 37 students, 25 strongly agreed with the premise that Mercer is a lonely place. Only 3 students disagreed.

In an interview on their perception about Mercer County, Juliet Banos, who majors in biology, lamented that "Mercer makes me unhappy, unmotivated and it's affecting my entire grade. I have no one to talk to or a reading partner. You can go a week without anyone saying 'hi' to you."

Annet, a close friend of mine who attends Rutgers, had this to say: "Of all the campuses I have visited, I would say Mercer is among the top most boring. Students are just aloof." She is an athlete, a position that has allowed her to visit and interact with students from multiple campuses. Thus, her input is valuable. Student athletes like Annet have the advantage of an automatic community from their team. The rest of us have to make friends without any support.

Please
don't
leave us in
the dark

By Liam Simonelli

This November marks ten years that I have been battling depression. Through it, I've had my highs and lows. Lows that have left me in a desperate mental cage and a need for any help I could find. Of course my life has many highs too, more highs than lows, ones that make me love the life I have and inspire me to just grab as many opportunities as I can. But this year has been especially difficult for my mental health. The fears of uncertainty in a lingering pandemic and the desire for a return to 'normal' are more present than ever in my mind.

Many in this country have become well acquainted with depression in this long, stressful pandemic, but as the pandemic era winds down, it takes its fears and demons along with it. Not for all of us though. For some, the demons remain seated, menacingly anticipating an uncertain future.

According to an article in Lancet, in the months prior to the pandemic, depression rates among adults in the United States sat at roughly 8 percent. That soared to 27 percent in the months following the initial COVID lockdown in March of 2020. Over the course of 2020 and the start of vaccine administration earlier this year, the numbers of depressed people lessened. But most of the 8 percent will continue to struggle.

Our society's mental health awareness the past twenty months has been encouraging and much needed. Resources were made available for many and our relatability to one another has never been stronger. We must keep the conversations and support going past the pandemic's end. We need to keep hearing each other and understand that depression is not a passing burden for all.

Everyone's mental suffering is relative of course. But please do not let the pandemic's gradual end take with it all the things we've been doing for the good of our minds. All of our experiences, pre existing and new, should be heard. The struggle continues and for many of us, it is worse than it's ever been. Keep the resources open, keep the open talks ongoing and keep understanding. Please don't leave us in the dark.



Are we thinking?

You may argue that the situation is due to the pandemic. However, the findings from my survey had a different opinion.

Nineteen out of the 37 participants were at the college before the pandemic. Out of these, 15 maintained that Mercer has been boring since before COVID struck.

COVID only came to add salt to the injury. The social distancing and fear of contracting the virus have only made the situation worse than before. The pandemic has aggravated the situation, it cannot be blamed for Mercer's loneliness.

Yet, I believe the situation can change. Let us try to be friendly and accommodative with one another. The vaccines are here, and the risks are minimal. Say hi to people at random. Let's transform our campus into a community!



Mercer is a lonely place

By McKenna Miller

Mercer is a lonely place.

I am a high school senior taking part in the Career Prep Program at MCCC, where high-schoolers can experience college life and a variety of other classes that they would not be able to take at their home school. One thing I have noticed during my brief time being here, is that there is a loneliness on campus, completely different from my high school.

At my high school, students are usually always talking to one another. There is constant background noise, people laughing, people yelling at one another, fights, and people filling the space with sounds, even with their masks on.

But on the MCCC campus walking to class there is barely any talking. Everyone has their headphones in, listening to music, or talking to someone on the phone, even though there are people right in front of them.

Mercer is lonely. Even though it is a community college, there is no community here. Students can always join clubs to see other people who have the same interests as them. But what about the students who are too busy for clubs? What about the students who work 9 to 5 jobs?

I have only been on campus for about 2 months and whenever I am here there is a feeling of isolation.

I am lonely here. I feel as if I do not have anyone to talk to or share ideas with. At first, I thought it was just because of my younger age, I am only 17, but as time went on, I realized it just seems like the atmosphere.

I thought I was the only one that felt that way but I conducted a survey of 30 people and confirmed that at least 17 of those people have also felt lonely on occasion or in general at Mercer.

There needs to be a safe space for students to feel comfortable with sharing their mental state. There needs to be a place for students to release their stress, their anxieties, their worries about the week to one another.

I have firsthand experience of the negative impact of loneliness as I suffer from a mental disorder myself. It is destroying, feeling as if there was no one that you could bare your feelings to which creates a separation between your thoughts and reality.

I know what it's like to feel as if you can't go on another day. I know what it's like to feel hopeless and lonely. I know what it's like to wonder what it would be like if you weren't here.

I don't want people to feel as if they have no one, I don't want other people to feel the way I do every day.

Loneliness leads to people believing they have no support with their own mental setbacks which can affect their concentration, their anxiety, and their emotional wellbeing.

To erase the loneliness hovering over the campus, it needs to start with the students. Giving small waves or greetings to one another could lighten the mood.

Saying "hi" to one another, asking someone about their day, getting a chance to know classmates, being approachable, and just being kind to someone could change their mental state.

By giving someone one kind word, you are allowing that person to spread that kindness to other people.

Recently, I had an encounter when I was handing out my surveys. This one girl took the time to fill it out for me, and I said "Have a good day" and she responded with "You too! I love your coat!"

It made the rest of my day. I walked to my car with a huge smile underneath my mask, a smile so big I'm sure you could see it in my eyes. One kind word, one tiny little word, could change someone's mind, could help them realize there is hope and people that care in this world.

You never know what inner turmoil people suffer on the inside, you never know, your kind comment could change someone's life for the better.

By Ashley Peng

Zombie

Wake up
Work
Eat
Sleep

Wake up
Work
Stare at unfinished project sitting in the corner
Eat
Sleep

Wake up
Look at alarm clock
Sleep

Wake up
Work
Eat
Sleep
Repeat

Untitled

By Ashley Peng

You were given 10 years to live
And you made it beyond that.
Now starts the true countdown
So before the clock strikes 0
This is what I want you to know

We may not see
eye to eye
But we will always stand
Hand in hand
Facing whatever
This life
And the next life brings

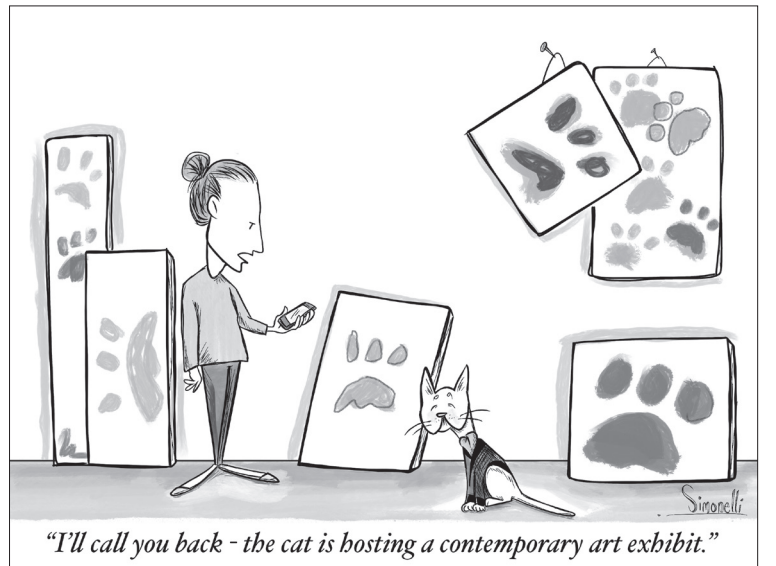
By Emmanuel Amankwaah

The Winter Trail

On the lunar cliff I stood up high with affection
Standing right by my side she craved attention
"Wow! This Chai was made with love"
Born and raised, her name is Genevieve
Let me curse you with my smile, no regrets tonight
"Curse me," down the winter trail I will lead you, no remorse tonight



DRAWING | KRISTINA HONTZ



"I'll call you back - the cat is hosting a contemporary art exhibit."



"Harold is kicking off his worldwide book tour today."

TOONS | LIAM SIMONELLI

Mercer Word Search

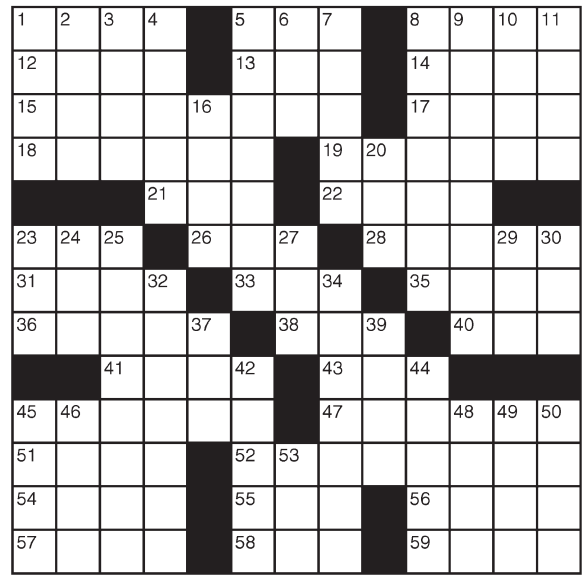
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 S W T U I T I O N N C Q X T N
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|------------|------------|-----------|
| athletics | degree | wifi |
| Trenton | masks | textbooks |
| campus | success | tuition |
| commute | coach | Honors |
| professors | parking | Zoom |
| bookstore | graduation | Wang |
| classes | study | |

King Crossword

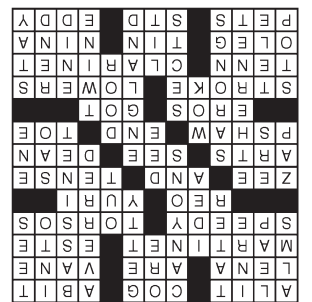
ACROSS

- 1 Landed
- 5 Gearwheel tooth
- 8 Slightly
- 12 Sultry Horne
- 13 "— you serious?"
- 14 Barn roof spinner
- 15 Strict disciplinarian
- 17 Noble Italian family
- 18 Swift
- 19 Sculpted trunks
- 21 Old Olds
- 22 Doctor Zhivago
- 23 Wye follower
- 26 Moreover
- 28 On edge
- 31 Sciences' partner
- 33 Observe
- 35 Campus VIP
- 36 "Hogwash!"
- 38 Finale
- 40 Water tester
- 41 Love god
- 43 Inherited
- 45 Painter's motion
- 47 Reduces
- 51 Nashville's st.
- 52 Instrument in a Dixieland band



DOWN

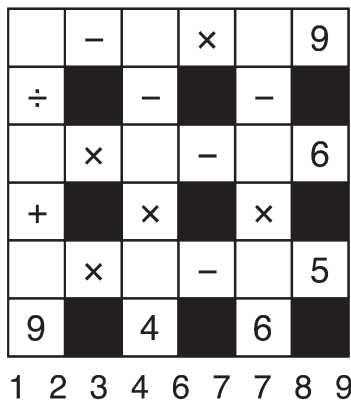
- 54 Couturier Cassini
- 55 Stannum
- 56 Pinta's companion
- 57 Favorites
- 58 Norm (Abbr.)
- 59 Vortex
- 8 Declared
- 9 Baby's bed
- 10 Division word
- 11 Casual tops
- 16 Notion
- 20 Ump's call
- 23 Hit with a ray gun
- 24 Triage ctrs.
- 25 System for linking computers
- 27 Ruby of films
- 29 — Paulo, Brazil
- 30 Away from
- 32 Island wraps
- 34 Queen's domain
- 37 Stir-fry pan
- 39 Entryway
- 42 Factions
- 44 Packing string
- 45 Halt
- 46 Far (Pref.)
- 48 Author Bagnold
- 49 Tear
- 50 Remain
- 53 Torched



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GO FIGURE! by Linda Thistle

The idea of Go Figure is to arrive at the figures given at the bottom and right-hand columns of the diagram by following the arithmetic signs in the order they are given (that is, from left to right and top to bottom). Use only the numbers below the diagram to complete its blank squares and use each of the nine numbers only once.



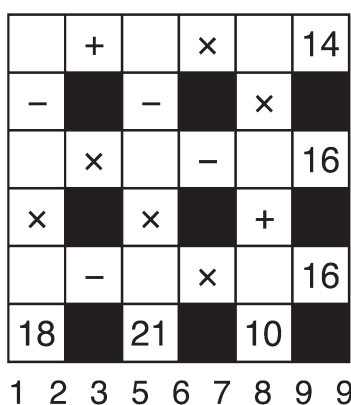
DIFFICULTY: ★★★

★ Moderate ★★ Difficult
 ★★★ GO FIGURE!

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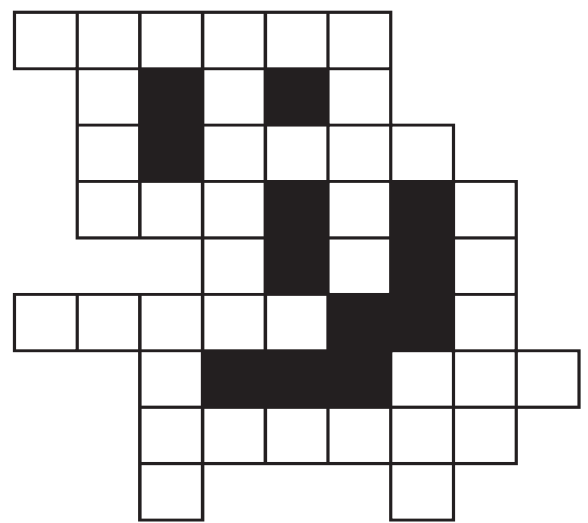
DIFFICULTY: ★★

★ Moderate ★★ Difficult
 ★★★ GO FIGURE!

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- SPO
- SLUCNO
- ♥DIGLE
- PLMI
- OPTGIS
- ♥IPN
- ♥HICN
- LERPI
- ♥USP
- DUPLEG
- DUMTI
- SUPL



Unscramble these twelve letter strings to form each into an ordinary word (ex. HAGNEC becomes CHANGE). Prepare to use only ONE word from any marked (♥) letter string as each unscrambles into more than one word (ex. ♥RATHE becomes HATER or EARTH or HEART). Fit each string's word either across or down to knot all twelve strings together.

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5 things no one tells you before you get to MCCC

By Kyle Goldware
Senior Reporter

1 TEXTBOOK STICKER SHOCK

Brace yourself. Textbooks, especially for science, are extremely expensive ranging between \$900-\$1200 after four semesters.

One student who responded to a survey about surprises of MCCC life said, "I was so mad at the Professors who made us buy this completely ridiculous book and never use it once. It's amazing how some Professors knowing we are broke college students could do this to us."

The best way to avoid paying for meaningless materials is to email the professor before buying from the bookstore to see if you really need them.

2 VENDING MACHINES, FRIEND AND FOE

Mercer's vending machines can be a blessing if you want a quick snack and not a meal, but make sure you're prepared for a possible disappointment.

Communication major (and VOICE reporter) Madhavi Steinert says, "I think they have a good variety of snack options, but some of them say they take a card and don't, which is annoying."

In a survey of 32 students, half said they use the machines. Problems with payment are cited as chronic.

3 THE WIFI CANNOT BE TRUSTED

Wifi dead zones on Mercer's campus have caused plenty of student frustration.

Second year and Television major Kelly Williams sums it up saying, "Mercer's wifi is ass."

Studying for exams in class using Kahoot or Quizlet with no connection is also annoying and forces you to miss out on a great opportunity.

Sadly the only solution here is to wait for MCCC to get better wifi. Don't hold your breath.

4 PLAYING EMAIL ROULETTE

In our survey 60 percent of students said they had good communication experiences with their profs but that leaves 40 percent of us who know all too well the frustration of professors with erratic email habits.

Communication major Noah Serafino says, "I will get emails hours later and at times late at night. I am then held responsible for whatever happens next even if I miss their response because it comes in at 10:30pm." The solution? There isn't one. You get what you get with community college.

5 LOST IN MCCC SPACE

The college has recently put better signs in place to show where the different buildings are, but the campus is large and students still get lost. A lot of the building names don't add up. Why is the Hospitality program in the Engineering Science building?

First year Game Design major Gregory Johnson Jr says, "I have been late or almost late to class, but it never hurts to ask anyone that's around to help you find your class."



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giving students a voice

New toons each month from the VOICE's editorial cartoonist:



LIAM SIMONELLI



Editorial Policy:

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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, tone or clarity.

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MCCC's masking policy is incoherent

MY PERSPECTIVE



KEN FANTRY

The MCCC masking policy is unclear to faculty and students, to the detriment of everyone. The college's home page tells the community that "everyone is expected to do their part to be a responsible member of our college community" and that "success starts with following the guidelines that protect against COVID-19 for the safety of everyone on campus."

I could not agree with this sentiment more. Sadly however, the administration has not done its part by provid-

ing a clear policy for everyone to follow.

This issue is apparent to anyone walking past the student dining room where students eating indoors without masks, often at the same table, can be seen daily. In an anonymous survey of students conducted in person and via email, 20 of 20 students said they did not eat or drink in class, but 19 of the same 20 students said that they ate and drank indoors on campus. Many of the respondents were unmasked and eating in the dining area as they answered.

This would seem to violate the college's stated policy against unmasking "in the presence of others" but that term isn't well defined.

Presumably we are intended to follow the six foot of social distancing that we have all come to know and love. But nowhere is that suggested in the actual policy. If it's not the six foot rule, then exactly how on top of each other must we

be before there is a masking requirement?

Initial inquiries were sent to two different offices, each saying the other was where to direct this question. After a request for clarification, college president Dr. Jianping Wang agreed to sit down with me.

She said, "No policy can be effective, unless we all enforce it."

She continued, "If you are in the cafeteria, and you are keeping distance, but someone come running, and they pull a chair right next to you, because they know you...and then you [should] say 'can you move the chair over a little...because its better if we keep safe distance.' This is vague, but it is in keeping with The CDC's recommendation.

The president's next example, however, creates an undeniable inconsistency.

"Needless to say, when you are in the toilet on the stall, by yourself, with the door

closed, you don't need to wear masks," she said.

Entering a stall, a small, enclosed space, previously occupied by someone who while in the stall, was unmasked. Does this sound like a safe environment in which to unmask yourself?

Dr. Wang offered an example of "common sense" policy, which is both inaccurate, and demonstrates the need for specifics.

"No one is jaywalking on a highway, that's a common sense. But we don't have a policy, we don't have any rule saying you cannot jay walk on a highway," Dr. Wang said.

This would in fact violate New Jersey Statute Title 39:4-34. It is unlawful in New Jersey to cross a highway with median barriers unless a provision is made for pedestrian crossing. The New Jersey legislature apparently found "com-



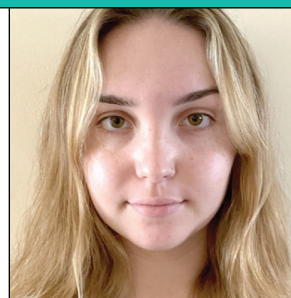
mon sense" insufficient.

The reason offered for a lack of specifics, is exactly why they are needed. "The policy doesn't stipulate each scenario...because if we talk about bathrooms...what if a closet, what if tutorial center, what if it's a group study room... there are so many scenarios..." This complication results from nothing but a lack of a specific policy. If there were a specific distance, it would not matter where on campus one was.

Personally, until the administration moves beyond obfuscation to "common sense" I will be following the masking advice offered by Mercer Honors student Elliot Smith, "When in doubt, WEAR IT!!"

You can't get TikTok famous; don't bother trying

AS I SEE IT



MADHAVI STEINERT

TikTok's algorithm is impossible to predict. No matter how hard you try to go viral, no matter the hours you put into whatever content you want to push out, the world may never know how great of a singer you are, or how good you look while doing Meg Thee Stallion's Savage

dance.

What most creators agree on is the key to getting content pushed out is consistency. TikTok preys on the faults of the jacks-of-all-trades.

It doesn't matter if you're more than just a hot ginger who posts thirst traps; once you go viral, that's your brand. Who cares if you can land a trick shot if you're attractive? There's no more to you than being objectified by randos in your comments.

The algorithm can also be exploitative. If a woman wants to show more skin, the algorithm is likely more inclined to push out her content than a woman who doesn't.

Creator Adrienne Finch posted two videos of herself doing the same dance: one

with less clothes than the other. The one where she's showing more skin got ten thousand more views than the other. Coincidence? I think not.

The kicker though is that if showing skin isn't a regular part of your videos, then the creepy old guy upping your view count probably won't get off on your thirst trap. And if he unsubscribes, then you lose a follower.

This raises the issue of minors on the app. Does TikTok care if a sixteen year old girl is shaking her ass in a video? Definitely not! But does TikTok care if a twenty-three year old plus-size woman is twerking to Cardi B? Absolutely!

TikTok picks and chooses what does and doesn't violate its community guide-

lines in a methodical, misogynistic, and fatphobic way.

Every TikTok Catch-22 circles back to the algorithm's unpredictability. Even if you establish a brand for yourself, stick to creating your niche content, what about trends? Are you forced to conform to viral sounds if you want to maintain consistent engagement? What about hashtags? There are simply too many variables.

If you are trying to go viral, then you are wasting your time. In my own experience, my dumb videos with friends or about my awful job go way more viral than the material I would prefer to pick up steam.

Forget hashtags and trends; there is nothing you can do but offer your account up to the TikTok gods and maybe

sacrifice your dog in hopes that one day a video of yours might accumulate a few hundred thousand views.

And don't even think about the creator fund. Though TikTok makes it seem like they pay creators for pushing out content, the reality of the creator fund is you're going to get maybe a few dollars, if not cents, for a video you spent hours creating.

You're better off getting arrested for setting their headquarters on fire and getting a prison job than rotting in your bedroom waiting for the likes to roll in. #dontevenbother



Visit us online!

mcccvoice.org

FAST JLAW FACT

You can't go on private property and take a news photo, but you can stand on public property take a pic of what's on the private property and use it.

STRANGE BUT TRUE

The two faculty advisers for The College VOICE are Professors J and K, just like agents J and K in the Men in Black movies...only cooler.

JOURNO LINGO

See that blue list of names on the top right column over on page 14? That's all of us who work on The VOICE. The list is called the "masthead."

GREAT NEWS

Former VOICE editor in chief Maria Ramos Pacheco, who graduated from MCCC in 2018 had her first front page article at the Dallas Morning Star on 11/3.

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!**



Do you see a **typo**?

Join the staff and help us fix it!

Meetings Mon + Thur
12-1 on Zoom or in person!

NOTICE

MCCC LIBRARY

Need help with research papers? Check out Reference Chat online M-F 9-5.
mccc.edu/student_library.shtml

ADVICE - ASK THE VOICE

HELP IS HERE!



Dear VOICE, I have reached that "end of semester slump" and I don't know how to get out of it. Do you have any advice to help?
-Sally Slump

Dear Slump, Mix redbull and coffee and see what happens. That's how we do it at the VOICE.
-The VOICE

Dear VOICE, Mercer's student wif constantly asks me for email verification! I can barely get any online work done on campus!
-WiFi Willie

Dear Willie, Withdraw some money and tell your family you love them. You're going to be in that student center for a long time.
-The VOICE

Dear VOICE, It's my last semester at Mercer and I wanna end the year with a bang. What's the best possible way to do that?
-Graduated (almost)

Dear Graduated, Go into the middle of the quad with a boombox and start blasting YMCA. Everyone will be obligated to join in and you'll get to dance with your classmates one last time. Or for the first time, depending on how social you've been.
-The VOICE.

Dear VOICE, I feel like there's no time

left between Halloween and Christmas. Where does the time go?
-Cranky for Christmas

Dear Cranky, Thanksgiving is a trash holiday anyway. Just go straight to the Christmas cheer.
-The VOICE

Dear VOICE, Got any suggestions for losing my quarantine weight?
-Chubby and Isolated

Dear Fellow Travler, Watch a lot of Lizzo videos and get body positive. You've got enough to deal with without fat shaming yourself.
-The VOICE

NOTE: THIS FEATURE IS FOR ENTERTAINMENT ONLY. ANY RESEMBLANCE TO ACTUAL ADVICE IS ACCIDENTAL.

HOROSCOPES



Capricorn

Dec. 22 - Jan. 19

You might be to the books, but you're too to the books. Let loose! You need to learn spontaneity. Take life for its journey, not its destinations.



Aquarius

Jan. 20 - Feb. 18

You've been feeling down on your luck, but you need to stop manifesting more bad things by focusing on what's already passed. Clean slate, now's the time to begin again.



Pisces

Feb. 19 - Mar. 20

People might say you have too many dreams, but maintain your confidence that you can do it. Believe in yourself! Don't let the haters get you down.



Aries

Mar. 21 - Apr. 19

After a period of general stagnancy, you're moving into a time where you have more power. Start that project, chase that bag. Good things are coming!



Taurus

Apr. 20 - May 20

If you've been feeling a lack of motivation, a creative spurt is just around the corner. Start journaling! That spark you're looking for is already inside you.



Gemini

May 21 - Jun. 20

So you're experiencing commitment issues. Take some deep breaths, and know that you don't have to decide everything all at once. Make a list, stay organized. You got this.



Cancer

Jun. 21 - Jul. 22

Emotions running high? You need to relax. Now's the time for a self care day. Do some yoga, bask in the fall air. You deserve to rest.



Leo

Jul. 23 - Aug. 22

You're on fire and everyone knows it. Stay careful of walking the line between confidence and arrogance. Don't be shy, just stay humble. Be the light you know you are.



Virgo

Aug. 23 - Sept. 22

How's the burnout treating you? You can try to do everything at once, but it's not going to work. Take it slow. You have all the time in the world.



Libra

Sept. 23 - Oct. 22

If you're feeling unseen and unheard, you should take a step back. Surround yourself with people you love and support you. Don't stand by those who don't make you feel good.



Scorpio

Oct. 23 - Nov. 21

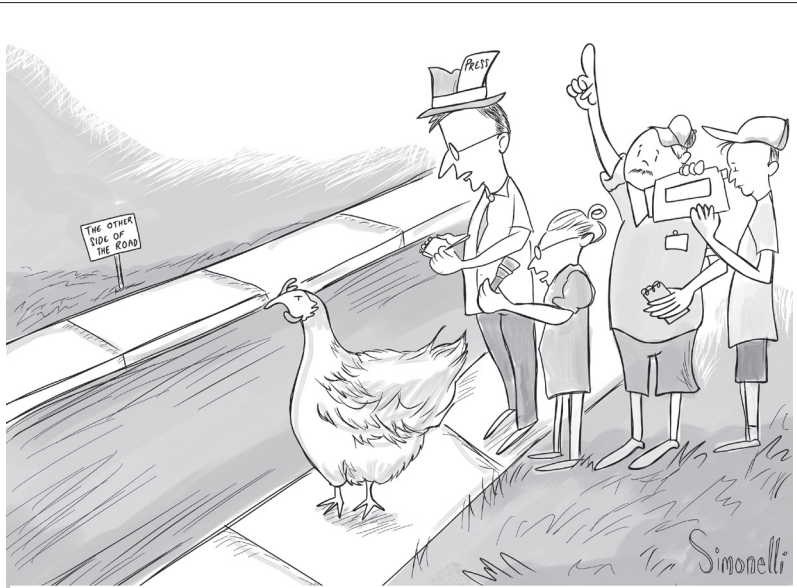
You just reached your peak period of the year, and you're coming down from a serious high. Keep the momentum, but don't let your head fall. Ride your optimism!



Sagittarius

Nov. 22 - Dec. 21

It's your season! You have everything going for you, but be careful not to take this for granted. Remember where you came from wherever you end up!



"Sir, could you please answer the age old question for us?"

SUDOKU

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7					6			4
	5		4				8	
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		4		7			1	
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Place a number in the empty boxes in such a way that each row across, each column down and each small 9-box square contains all of the numbers from one to nine.

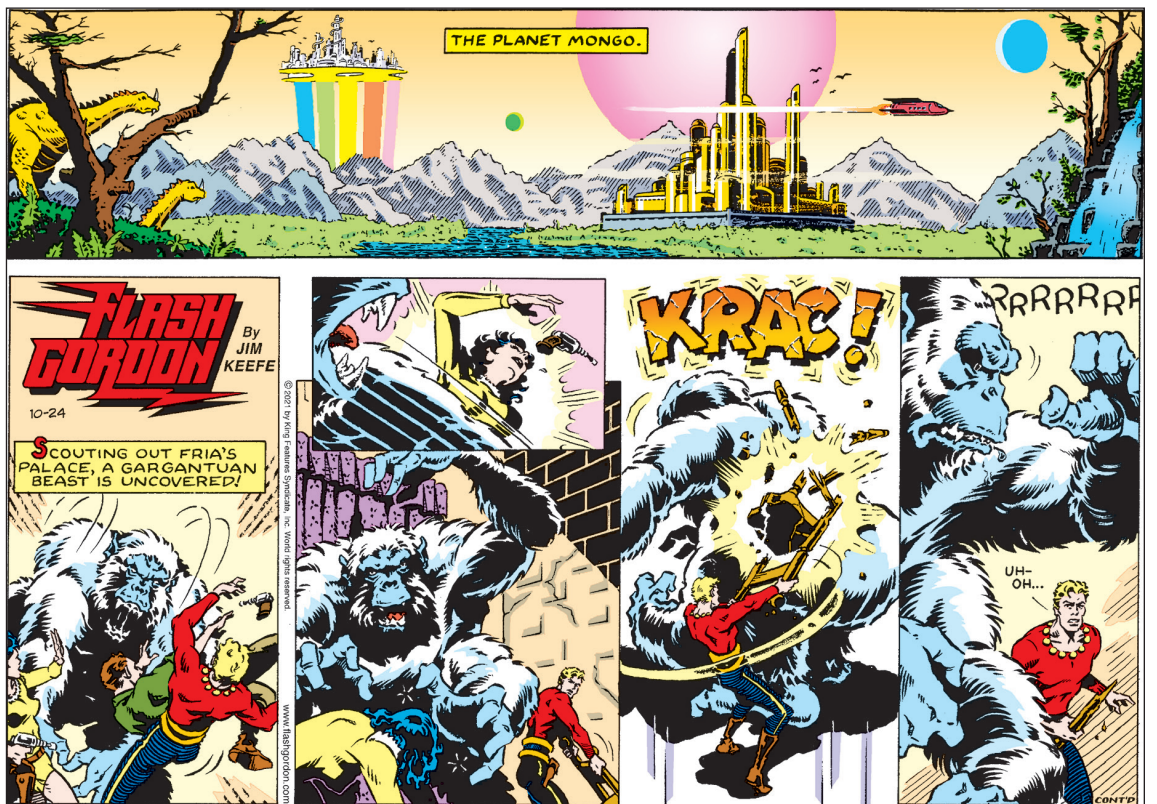
DIFFICULTY THIS WEEK: ♦♦

♦ Moderate ♦♦ Challenging
♦♦♦ HOO BOY!

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

Answer

FLASH GORDON



GET FUZZY

