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a student publication

The Montgazette

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The Students' Voice

September 99

Serving Montgomery County Community College and the Surrounding Community

October 2024



The So Much to Give Inclusive Café in Parkhouse Hall on September 25, 2024. Read on Page 3.

(Photo / Morgan Reyes)

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The Montgazette
The Students' Voice

from the Editor

Time's up!

Desdemona Guerra
The Montgazette Editor-in-Chief

Hello, hello! This semester had me anxious but excited, and I know I am not the only one, since a lot of us are getting close to the finish line. Although graduating can bring tranquility to some of us, I know many students have no idea what they are doing — myslef included. This might be just me, but it does not matter how long I have been in a place, the self-doubt and uncertainty always seem to hit me when I least expect them to. I would think these feelings would end once one's prefrontal cortex is fully formed, but if anything, it has made it worse. I have never been more scared of self-awareness in my life.

Am I failing already? Was this good enough? Will I live up to the expectations of everyone around me? Will I ever stop obsessing about the way I am being perceived? Good questions. I have no idea!

Summer was way too short this year. I was still trying to catch my breath, and that is when I realized, "Hey, this is just temporary." The voice in my head made an echo that sounded well thought out all over my body.

This is temporary; everything is temporary. Scary. Time does not stop for anybody. Yesterday, I was in high school, and today, I am writing this. Scary. How many times have you stopped and thought, "I am never going to have another day like this"? If we fall into the rabbit hole of time, we will never see the light. This semester, I told myself that I was not going to be stuck in this mindset anymore, reminiscing about the past and thinking about the future — and dismissing the existence of the present.

Everything is temporary: these experiences, the time here at college, this physical body, the thoughts we have today, all this will be gone without us noticing, and yes, this is a thing that frightens me but also makes me feel at peace because the mistakes that I am going to learn from are already gone and all I have now is the lesson learned, stapled in my brain. We have lived through so many things but seem to focus only on the things that "defeated" us and not the milestones we conquered during those times.

Feeling uneasy about the

future, and not knowing what is going to happen tomorrow are valid things to feel anxious about. Feeling is what makes us human, making mistakes is what makes us human, and failing and then succeeding is what makes us human. Time is just a concept for us to have a sense of control in our lives, like that pressure when 11:59 p.m. is getting close, and you still have to proofread that essay. You make the time; time does not make you. Embrace your progress, those little steps that nobody seems to acknowledge,

but you know that your efforts were worthy of applause. Do it for yourself.

Sorry for being Dr. Phil today, but this is a reminder for you — that everything is going to be okay, even if you are far from home, you are still tip-toeing about your career path, nothing seems to make sense in your head, you had a bad breakup, and the weight of failure has hit you so hard that it feels wrong to stand up.

Everything is going to be okay! Rush hour is over.

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Adults with disabilities have So Much To Give at MCCC

Melissa Ochabillo
The Montgazette Assistant Editor

The So Much To Give Inclusive Café has officially opened its doors at Montgomery County Community College. While offering students a convenient place to enjoy a delicious array of breakfast and lunch options, the café's mission reaches beyond the palate, aiming to give those with disabilities equal opportunities to work, dine, socialize, volunteer and learn.

This vibrant café can be found in Parkhouse Hall's atrium and Health Sciences Center, and operates Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. The eatery at the College is a satellite location of the So Much To Give Inclusive Café of Skippack, Pa., which opened in January 2023.

The breakfast and lunch spot operates through the 501(c)(3) nonprofit Pillars of Light and Love. It was founded by Kathy Opperman, Maureen Stanko and Tyler Kammerle. Stanko believes that "those with disabilities have so much to give to the world!" This mantra is heavily valued — making the creation of the café possible through donations and support from the community.

The discussion about a partnership with the College began at the Skippack location. Leaders from the College enjoyed a lovely meal there, to get a first-hand experience of what the café had to offer. They later met with the leaders of the café to discuss a location in Parkhouse Hall, so students on campus could enjoy hot food options.

Students at the College now have the opportunity to interact with a vibrant team of workers who bring their creativity and passion to every meal and beverage served. Shayna Cuiffitelli, an employee of So Much To Give Inclusive Cafe, says she loves her job "because of the family feel

and the camaraderie between the students and staff." She added, "We're just one cohesive group, working like a well-oiled machine."

Excitement has stirred among the students and faculty alike as the café thrives at the College. Many see the café as a step toward greater inclusivity on campus. "It's about more than just good food and drinks; it's about supporting each other and creating an environment where everyone belongs," said

Antonia Tucker, a student at the College.

With its commitment to inclusivity and community, founder Kammerle has hopes that the café and the College can "continue to support each other through community organizations in Montgomery County." The So Much To Give Inclusive Café is set to become a beloved spot on campus, where students and staff can have their stomachs filled with delicious food and their hearts filled with joy.

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Introducing La Hacienda – A new space for Latino and Hispanic students

Emilio Sigüenza
MSP 111 The Montgazette Contributor

This year, I am thrilled to announce the launch of La Hacienda – Latino and Hispanic Collective, a student-led club dedicated to celebrating the richness and diversity of Latino and Hispanic cultures. As the club's founder, my goal is to create a space where students from all backgrounds can come together to connect, learn and engage with the vibrant traditions of these communities. Whether you are Latino or Hispanic, or simply have an interest in learning more about the culture, La Hacienda welcomes anyone who wants to participate, grow and celebrate together.

La Hacienda is more than a social club — It's a collective centered around cultural pride, unity and mutual support. Our mission is to create a welcoming environment where students can explore their cultural identities, share their heritage, and build meaningful relationships. At the same time, by elevating Latino and Hispanic voices on campus, we aim to raise awareness about social, political and cultural issues impacting these communities, while also recognizing their important contributions both locally and globally.

The name La Hacienda was chosen to reflect the warmth,

hospitality and strong sense of community that defines Latino and Hispanic cultures. We hope that everyone who joins will feel like part of a close-knit family, coming together to celebrate the rich diversity of our backgrounds. Throughout the year, La Hacienda will offer a variety of events and activities to highlight different aspects of Latino and Hispanic culture. Some of the exciting activities we plan to host are major holidays like Día de los Muertos and Hispanic Heritage Month, exploring traditional customs, food and music. For Día de los Muertos, we will be setting up a paint desk where students can get candy skulls painted. We also plan to visit the Mexican Cultural Center's celebrations in Philadelphia at Love Park and the Penn Museum.

The club will also include activities like Taco Tuesdays, in addition to salsa lessons, cooking workshops featuring traditional dishes and movie nights showcasing films by Latino and Hispanic filmmakers. The club will be focused on giving back by organizing service projects that support Latino and Hispanic communities, fostering connections beyond the College campus. La Hacienda is a space for students to

find community and belonging while exploring their cultural identities. The club offers anyone who comes from a Latino or Hispanic background, chance to celebrate their heritage and connect with others who share their

experiences. For students from other backgrounds, this counts as a valuable opportunity to learn, grow and immerse yourself in the rich traditions of Latino and Hispanic cultures. Everyone is invited and welcome!



Sign outs de the res aurant Mal de Amor in Oaxaca, Mex co.

(Photo / Emilio Sigüenza)

New sanitary products in women's restrooms at MCCC

Desdemona Guerra

MSP 170 The Montgazette Editor-in-Chief

The women's restrooms on the College's Blue Bell campus had a recent change: from women struggling to find a quick and easy way to obtain menstrual products on campus, to now having said products within a hand's reach. This is a big step from last year's tampons and pads dispensers that were either empty or out of service and still charging 25 cents per product. Since the spring semester of 2024, almost every woman's restroom in the College now has a basket that contains free pads for anyone to use. "This is a surprise," commented Mercedes Rivera a Mass Media major. "We have been adapting to the situation — so, if you do not have a pad or tampon on you, then this is all you can hope for, and it is free," she added.

At first, there was no clear information about why the College decided to take a turn and start including free menstrual products in the women's restrooms. Though no announcement was made in any media run by the Student Government Association or the Wellness Center, the information provided comes from the label on the basket containing the menstrual products, which reads "Free menstrual products brought to you by the Wellness Center in partnership with the Student Government Association and the Stock-Up program." That said, students have voiced before that this was an issue that needed to be taken care of. "I walked out of the stall, and the little basket with the pads was there, so I imagine somebody had said something," commented Morgan Reyes, a Mass Media major.

As a result of menstrual products being free of charge now, the majority of women at the campus can walk around worry-free of any incidents or unexpected visits. Three out of five women interviewed agreed feeling more comfortable now that the campus offers this option. "Now I

do not have to panic if I do not carry any pads (or quarters) on me," concluded Reyes. The College brought a sustainable solution that is accessible to every menstruating person on the campus. After all, "menstrual hygiene is a basic human right and should not be compromised due to financial constraints," according to the Menstrual Equity Movement.

When questioned about the situation, the Wellness Center stated that free menstrual

products are now provided across both campuses and that they plan to keep this option available to students for years to come. The Wellness Center took the initiative to see that these products were available because of their lack at menstrual stations within restrooms currently, making this issue a priority. Currently, the menstrual products are provided by the Mitzvah Circle, an outside company that the Wellness Center partnered with to make this plan possible.



Free menstrual product bin in the Advanced Technology Center restroom.

(Photo / Desdemona Guerra)

Pennsylvania Auditor General Timothy DeFoor visits Blue Bell campus

Isabelle Voight
The Montgazette Contributor

In September, Pennsylvania Auditor General Timothy DeFoor spoke to students and faculty at Parkhouse Hall about his decision to open up commonwealth careers in business, accounting, data analytics, math, finance, economics, and corresponding fields. DeFoor highlighted in his presentation how his department expanded career pathways to individuals with an associate's degree. Those with associate degrees in the fields mentioned here, from accredited institutions, are now eligible.

Beginning the event, the president of Montgomery Community College, Dr. Victoria L. Bastecki-Perez made opening remarks welcoming the Auditor General. Shortly afterward, DeFoor took to the podium, speaking about the news. In the audience were faculty and students alike. After noting the opportunities open in his department, he mentioned the Intern to Hire program. The Intern to Hire program is available to those who have completed 60 credits in the accredited fields with a 2.5 GPA or higher. In addition, students who have already graduated can apply for an internship within six months of receiving their degree. Having started higher education for a bachelor's or master's degree also qualifies an applicant. The program is a gateway to a full career opportunity, permitting the candidate to have completed 900 hours of work or six months in the internship program.

Both career jobs and internships have virtual and hybrid options, which adds to the appeal of applying.

The Auditor General brought to the audience's attention how he is a community college graduate – from Harrisburg Area Community College, and he recognizes the potential of a student at a community college. In the Commonwealth, employees who have worked for 20 or 30 years are retiring. There is a need for new blood in the workplace to replace those who are leaving. When asked what characteristic is most important for working in his department, DeFoor responded, "Critical thinking ... we need critical thinkers" He was asked about the availability of these jobs in two or three years down the road, for those who are only first-year students. He responded, "Yes, there will be this opportunity years down the road."

Takisha Mundy, the College's

Director of Career and Alumni Engagement, made closing remarks. The Career Department at Montco is available to help students and give them more information about the jobs and internship opportunities in the Auditor General's office and many other areas

and businesses. The department will help students apply for interviews, and it is highly encouraged for Montco students to leap at this chance. Students should take up this opportunity and have the Auditor General's department "Hire a Mustang."



Sign at Parkhouse Hall building.

(Photo / Melia Ochabillo)

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ESL 005 HYBR The Montgazette Contributors

Dr. Nichole Kang is the Director of the Wellness Centers on both the Blue Bell and Pottstown campuses of Montgomery County Community College. The Wellness Centers offer support for all students, with services such as the food pantry stock-up and mental health issues counselors. With her team, Dr. Kang works to help students get all the support they need. And she is a very nice person, too. She goes by Dr. Nichole, Dr. Kang, or just Nichole.

Kang studied psychology at Penn State to earn her bachelor's degree and then went to West Virginia University to earn her master's and PhD in Lifespan Development Psychology. She enjoys working with students, but she has not always worked in this field. She has worked at a bank and a toy store. Dr. Kang also spent 14 years working at a nonprofit in Philadelphia, and one of her duties was to lead a fatherhood class to prepare people to be new fathers.

Here at Montgomery County Community College, Dr. Kang usually interacts with students, attends three to four meetings each day, and reaches out to community support. She likes to arrive early at 8:00 a.m., when it is still a little quiet. When she leaves at 4:30 p.m., she often goes to the gym on campus. She enjoys talking to students as part of her job because they make her life interesting. One challenge her job has is the slow pace of change.

A person in her position needs to

be patient and flexible but also needs to set strong boundaries. Otherwise, she would end up working 24 hours each day. She recommends building relationships with colleagues to be successful in her work. She works closely with the Student Life office. Her advice for a Montco student is to learn about all the types of support available to them, including the Tutoring Center and Student Life.

Dr. Kang and her team will work with a student on a one-time problem or work with a student long term. She gets a lot of support from her team, which includes Alexandra Arthur, Manager of the Wellness Center; Dominic Ciccimaro, Peer Support Specialist and Marjorie Taylor, Research Coach. Dr. Kang also has a husband and son who support her. After a long day, she likes to take a walk or play a video game. Both these activities help her to "get out of her head" and relax.

Right now, Dr. Kang is very happy at Montgomery County Community College. She says that any future plans will always include helping people. Students can find Dr. Kang at one of the Wellness Centers. On the Blue Bell campus, it is in College Hall, Room 225. On the Pottstown campus, you can find it in North Hall.

The one thing that Dr. Kang wants everyone to know about the Wellness Centers is that they are open to all students. She suggests that students come, learn about the support and tell other students.



Dr. Kang at the innovation fair, September 16, 2024.

.(Photo / Donnell Peak)

Beabadoobee kicks off North American tour at The Met Philadelphia

Melissa Ochabillo
 The Montgazette Assistant Editor

Alternative pop rock sensation Beabadoobee delivered an electrifying performance at The Met Philadelphia on Sunday, September 8, 2024. The concert kicked off her North American tour, showcasing hits from her newest album, "This is How Tomorrow Moves."

Beabadoobee, whose real name is Beatrice or Bea Kristi, instantly engaged the crowd with her distinctive voice and catchy melodies. The sold-out show opened with "California," setting the tone for an exhilarating night filled with high energy and emotion. The setlist included fan favorites from older albums like "Beatopia" and "Fake It Flowers," while also showcasing her popular singles, "Glue Song" and "Coffee."

Throughout the show, Bea displayed her talents on the many guitars she had in rotation. As she dominated her guitar solo in "Cologne," the crowd, dazzled by her talent, reacted with screams and cheers. Fans were saying it felt like they were at a rock concert.

One of the highlights of

the evening occurred during the performance of "Beaches." As Bea approached the chorus, the hanging white backdrop was dropped, revealing wreath-like greenery and warm-colored lights. This contrasted with the all-white and warehouse-like set design that occupied the space prior, making for a softer and warmer second half of the show.

The intimate venue provided a perfect setting for Bea's heartfelt performance. The stage design was minimalistic, focusing attention on her dynamic presence and interaction with the audience. Bea's captivating performance had lasting impressions on another young fan, Chloe Ravasco, who said, "It was more than just a concert. It felt like a shared experience with all of us."

The concert was a memorable showcase of Beabadoobee's talent and playful yet edgy attitude. As fans left the venue buzzing with excitement, it was clear that the singer-songwriter's unique style and engaging performance had solidified her status as a rising star in the music industry.



Beabadoobee concert is on outside of
 The Met Philadelphia on September 8, 2024.

(Photo / Melissa Ochabillo)

Opinion: Dungeons & Dragons can teach coping skills for social anxiety

Maren Donahue
The Montgazette Contributor

An estimated 24 million U.S. adults have a form of social anxiety. For those afflicted, the vicious cycle of being afraid to interact with others prevents them from practicing strategies to lessen their anxiety. But what if you could practice your social skills without leaving your comfort zone?

Dungeons & Dragons, known as D&D, is a fantasy Tabletop Roleplaying Game. The game is played using the core rulebooks, character sheets in pen-and-paper or digital, a set of twelve dice of different amounts, and the improvised roleplay of all participants. At its core, D&D is an excellent gateway for those with social anxiety to take steps toward engaging in group activities.

With many individuals expressing their struggles with socializing in large groups, D&D creates a welcoming community where shy individuals can grow more comfortable and practice building friendships. Initiating a game of D&D can be a great way to make friends. Long-running D&D games, also known as “campaigns,” do not always start with a group of familiar faces. Many games begin with school clubs or strangers meeting. A structured group activity, like D&D, allows players to engage in collaborative storytelling and role-playing social scenarios that can prepare them for social situations away from the table.

With the added risk of dice rolls creating opportunities for things to not go as players plan, players learn to think fast and exercise their problem-solving skills. Sometimes the result of a failed dice roll can create a more entertaining outcome than initially planned. Lim (they/them), a D&D player of almost ten years, says, “What first interested me about D&D was the way that characters and stories took a new life during dice rolls and in-person games. I would have one idea about a character action and then something else made a new path seem more like the proper action.” Practicing these skills through D&D can translate to life away from the table.

Michael J. Sargent relayed in his master’s thesis for the Smith College School of Social Work that playing D&D decreased players’ social anxiety and allowed them to interact with their emotional content in an experience that meant something and often was only perceived to be possible in a fictional world. Players reported how trauma during childhood was in part successfully navigated through playing D&D and how gaming experiences helped them cope with personal stress. Players felt that experimentation through their characters led to improved real-world social skills and the development of new relationships.

With preliminary evidence supporting the psychological benefits

of D&D, those who may not feel well-practiced in socialization could consider D&D as a way to become more confident in themselves and their ability to make friends. Experienced players are doing their part and helping new players get out of their shells and feel comfortable at the table. “People will remember the fun and the silly parts much more than any small awkwardness or any clarifying questions you may need to ask. Better yet, veteran players usually love being asked questions about the world of characters!” Lim says.

The interactive aspect of D&D can open many doors for new players who experience social anxiety. From practicing social skills to gaining confidence to forming new friendships, and becoming more social outside of the game, the positive impacts on players can be plentiful. “I have been fortunate to make some of my longest adult friends because of D&D,” Lim says, “We’ve gone from table friends to people I make plans with you to see movies and go to other events, and will hopefully have as friends for the rest of my life.”



A group of friends get ready to start a game of D&D

(Photo / Maren Donahue)

Review: Beetlejuice Beetlejuice, a rollercoaster to hell and back

Spencer Gee
The Montgazette Contributor

Halloween is coming up, so it is time for some spooky movies. “Beetlejuice Beetlejuice” was released at the beginning of September, but now is the perfect time to see a film like this. Tim Burton’s return to the world of one of his most famous stories certainly fits with the trend of so-called “legacy sequels” that currently dominates the cinematic landscape, but does this movie justify its existence? The answer is a bit complicated. Tim Burton has not directed a film since the 2019 release of “Dumbo,” one that did not do so well with critics or fans. Perhaps going back to something the 66-year-old director understood more was the best move.

“Beetlejuice Beetlejuice” is a sequel to a movie from 36 years ago, though, and what worked once does not always work the same way after that much time. But as a longtime fan of Burton’s work, I was delighted with how proudly retro the movie feels. The film is almost entirely devoid of the sardonic sense of humor that most movies

have these days, “Beetlejuice Beetlejuice,” instead, opts to entertain with a twisted sense of whimsy that had me belly laughing for almost the whole runtime, with every cartoonish use of gore and every inappropriate advance or comment from the movie’s titular demon. Michael Keaton shines in this movie as much as he did in the 1988 original “Beetlejuice.” Much like his reprise of the role of Batman in last year’s “The Flash,” it feels like he never left the role of Beetlejuice.

Winona Ryder’s return as Lydia Deetz, on the other hand, is a bit different; unlike in “Beetlejuice,” Lydia has matured, but she still shows the same embrace of gothic aesthetics and remains as strange and unusual as ever. I was impressed, as I had grown accustomed to Ryder playing a more typical mother on “Stranger Things.” Jenna Ortega is the new blood of this movie, and she fits right into the world of “Beetlejuice,” which was no surprise after her work on “Wednesday.” Of course, Catherine O’Hara, Willem Dafoe, Arthur Conti and Monica Bellucci bring a

ton of fun to the adventure. Sadly, though, while the performances are great, the humor is on point, and the visuals are as imaginative as ever, this movie could have used more time to focus on a single narrative.

This movie has a massive cast, and it seems everyone has their own little story, but these stories are barely connected. It’s so overstuffed that a few plotlines seem abruptly cut short before moving on to the next set piece. This observation even applies to the movie’s actual ending, which does not feel like a closing scene at all. The central theme of the movie seems to be that people should cherish and focus on their families because letting our loved ones grow apart from us can make us isolated and miserable. Still, the movie spends too much time isolating its family of characters and fails to emphasize what the audience should be trying to do. Maybe we are not meant to look so deeply into it. While it is a great throwback to Tim Burton’s career, with Easter eggs referencing the original film and many of Burton’s other classics (and diehard fans

will no doubt enjoy this), this story felt like it had stretched itself thin. Most viewers will get a kick out of watching this

one, but it does not quite take a spot among Tim Burton’s best works. I give the film a 6 out of 10.



Beetlejuice Beetlejuice poster
at Regal Cinemas in Warrington.

(Photo / Spencer Gee)

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Report: Phillies win National League East for first time since 2011, compete for record

Patrick Hennessy
The Montgazette Contributor

[Editor's Note: This article provides a snapshot of a moment in time and is not meant to provide an up-to-date news piece on the Phillies' standings.]

The Philadelphia Phillies have clinched the National League East division title for the first time since 2011 and are in competition for the best record in Major League Baseball. After a 6-1 victory over the 80-win Chicago Cubs, the Phillies' 93-64 record made it mathematically impossible for an opposing team to overtake them in the division standings. The Los Angeles Dodgers, with a 93-63 record, currently have the best record in the league by a slim margin, although the Phillies and New York Yankees are close behind, with records of 93-64 and 92-64, respectively. With momentum heading into the final stretch of the season, Philadelphia appears to have its sights set on the city's first World Series title since 2008.

This Phillies' season has been defined by overcoming expectations. Before and even during the season, most pundits predicted that the Atlanta Braves would be the NL East champions, and this belief was reinforced as the Phillies' bullpen suffered and the team dealt with several injuries.

Following a loss in London against the Mets, the Phillies went 24-31 in the next 55 games of the season, which is more than 1/3 of the entire season. However, it did not matter, as the bullpen recovered, and players returned from injury. Philadelphia ended up clinching a playoff spot and now has clinched their division for the first time in 13 years. The team is now playing for the best record in the league and, ultimately, a World Series title.

The NL East title means more to Philadelphia than other cities. The Phillies' so-called "Golden Era" lasted from 2006 and ended in 2012. During that time, the city won their last World Series, in 2008, against the Tampa Bay Rays. Philadelphia made it back to the World Series the following year — but fell short against the Yankees. The team struggled from 2013 to 2018, at that time considered by some to be one of the worst teams in baseball. However, the team has improved dramatically in recent years. Although they were a wild card team, the Phillies advanced to the World Series in 2022, but then lost to the Houston Astros, who many consider to be an MLB dynasty. Now, the Phillies have won their first division title since 2011 and have a strong cast of

players, including Bryce Harper, Alec Bohm and Brandon Marsh.

According to ESPN, at +450 the Phillies have the third best chance to win the World Series this

year, compared to the Dodgers' +325 and Yankees' +425. In 2022, Philadelphia lost the title to the Astros, who are struggling in 2024 and have +900 odds.



Phillies hat and a baseball bat.

(Photo / Patrick Hennessy)

SPORTS



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Opinion:

Despite the ups and downs – Be a superhero!

Nesive Bell
The Montgazette Contributor

I think we can all agree that the ups and downs of life shape and mold us into who we are today, whether that be positive or negative. Looking back on their life, people can always point out big events that had an impact on them: from the joyfulness of the birth of a child to the trauma of the loss of a loved one. When I look back on my life, there was a positive time when I really displayed tremendous character and genuine care for others, two traits I did not even think I had. However, at times life has a weird way of showing a young man who he really is, and what I am is a superhero . . . yes, I said it. Most people are familiar with Superman and Batman, but then there is me: full-on spandex tights. Ok, maybe not the spandex tights, but the point still stands, and to fully explain how I came to be a full-on caped crusader, I need to tell the whole backstory.

The year was 2016. I was a freshman in high school, eager to learn and continue through my academic career. Moving up from middle school to high school was an overwhelming experience. There were different clubs and sports to take part in, as well as different people to get to know, ranging up to the 12th graders, who seemed like adults at the time. It is funny how time works

because it seems like yesterday I was looking up to those 12th graders as if they were superheroes.

The fall semester of 10th grade had officially started, and I was in history class getting ready to hear my teacher cover the tragic events of September 11th for the 100th time. It may sound disrespectful, but in this class, a boy named Kevin was the poster child for nerds. He almost fit the description a little too well. He was a scrawny kid who always wore collared shirts and tan pants that had to be from the clearance section in Walmart. He was quiet, but as soon as “Pokémon” or any cartoon network show was brought into the conversation, he had a lot to say.

Everyone goes through their own trials and tribulations in life, and the same reasons that Kevin would be considered sweet or kind are the reasons he was subjugated to immense bullying during the 10th grade. I believe that many people have seen or taken part in some form of bullying in their lives, but when I say that the treatment of Kevin was the most teen-flick-version of bullying, I mean it. I am talking about him being shoved into lockers and having balled-up pieces of paper thrown at his head. Looking back,

it almost hurts to admit now, but I did not try to stop the bullying. I did not go to a teacher or confront the bullies at all. I know this was not very heroic of me, but little did I know at the time that my heroics were right around the corner.

One day there was a certain rumor going around that, shockingly, involved me. I heard my name being called by someone down the hall, and to my surprise, it was one of the people who bullied Kevin on a daily basis. He approached me and said, “Hey, bro, my bad, we were messing with your family. We didn’t know Kevin was your brother.” I responded with a confused, “What do you mean?” Long story short, I found out that Kevin had been going around the school, telling teachers and students alike that I was his brother. He was doing this in an attempt to stop other students from bothering him every day.

Once I figured out what was going on, I immediately went to find him and confront him. “Kevin, why would you bring your negativity over to me simply because you can’t stand up for yourself?” To my surprise, he apologized and told me how he felt as if he had no choice. He said, “I look up to you. I admire

how you can have a conversation with the most popular guy or girl in the school and then turn around and have the same conversation with someone like me.” Now, I was just a regular high school student being called a role model for the first time, learning that I was actively inspiring someone. Honestly, it was a little weird, and for a second, I did not know how to respond, but I knew I needed to get past this problem. From that point on, I embraced the rumor that nerdy Kevin was my brother, and I ran with it.

For the entirety of my high school career, I had a brother who “I’d always known and just never talked to anyone about.” Over time, Kevin and I would develop a strong bond, and what started as an excuse to prevent him from being shoved into the nearest locker turned into a genuine friendship. He would often tell me how much easier and overall enjoyable school was for him, and I changed that for him. Our little lie made school something he looked forward to attending because I didn’t allow it to become a hunting ground for kids who are a little different than everybody else.

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The joy found in Northwestern Stables

Antonia Tucker
The Montgazette Contributor

Northwestern Stables, in Philadelphia, is a cherished nonprofit organization dedicated to enriching the community through equine lessons, camps and engaging events. Established in 1929, the barn has a rich history, originally serving as a home for the Philadelphia mounted police. Over the decades, Northwestern Stables has evolved into a beloved center for horse enthusiasts of all ages.

The stable is well-known for its comprehensive year-round lesson program, available every day except Sunday. Riders aged eight and older can participate, ensuring that people of varying skill levels can find their place in the saddle. Each lesson provides a hands-on experience, allowing participants to tack up their assigned horses, learn proper riding techniques, and develop a deeper understanding of equine care. This immersive approach fosters not only riding skills but also a bond between rider and horse, creating lasting memories.

In addition to lessons, Northwestern Stables hosts a vibrant summer camp that caters to nearly 40 campers (ages 7 to 13) per week. The camp includes an hour-long riding lesson paired with an hour of barn instruction, offering a well-rounded experience. Beyond structured learning, campers enjoy a variety of fun activities, making it an unforgettable summer adventure.

For those who may be hesitant to commit to regular lessons or are simply looking for a fun day out, Northwestern Stables organizes a range of community events throughout the year. Highlights include Haunted Horses, Hippity Hoppity Horses, spring cleanup days, a Summer Hoedown, and a festive Holiday Bazaar. Each event is designed to engage the community and share the joy of horses with everyone.

One of the standout events is Haunted Horses, which takes place this year on October 26, 2024. During this unique occasion, students dress up their horses and decorate their stalls in creative and whimsical themes. Past favorites have included

knights in armor, spooky characters like Eleven and the Demogorgon from the Netflix show “Stranger Things” and a bunch of magical unicorns. Attendees are invited to trick-or-treat around the barn, enjoying candy, refreshments, spooky games and even pony rides. It’s a wonderful way for families to experience the joy of the stable and create cherished memories together.

As a nonprofit organization, Northwestern Stables relies on the support of the community to sustain its operations and care for the hardworking horses and dedicated students. For more information about events, tickets and lesson schedules, please visit northwesternstables.com. Join in to celebrate the spirit of community through equine education, and have some fun!



Antonia Tucker on one of the Northwestern Stables horses

(Photo / Antonia Tucker)

Be a superhero!

Continued from page 13.

I often think about what would have happened if I had denied we were brothers on that day. What came over me to even help him in the first place? We were not friends before our confrontation; I barely knew him at all. I cannot say what I did was the right thing to do because the right thing to do was get a teacher involved, and the fact that no one thought to help this poor nerd by reaching out to an adult in the school is concerning, but I guess everyone was more worried about their own problems.

My senior year of high school finally rolled around. Kevin was a whole different person. He became everything he said he admired about me. He's joined the chess club, got more comfortable conversing with others, and befriended multiple people around the school. One day he pulled me to the side and randomly thanked me. Confused, I said, "Why?" He replied "You gave me an opportunity

like no other. It was the chance to start over, the chance to take on high school headfirst and not be held down by fear." He was a new man. I was jokingly going to brush him off when he said, "Hey man, I'm being totally serious right now when I say this. You were my hero coming up in high school." There it is, just like that, I went from being a regular student to becoming the savior of Metropolis.

I wish I was able to stay in contact with Kevin today. I want to tell him just how much he impacted my life. He saw me as his hero back in the 10th grade, and I want to tell him he's been my guardian angel ever since, from treating others how I would like to be treated to never discrediting someone just because of how they look or act. There has been a plethora of characteristics I have developed from Kevin, and if there is one thing everyone should take from this story, that is to take charge and lead by example. Who knows? Even you may very well

be looked up to as a hero in someone else's eyes.

Now all good superhero stories always come to a happy ending, where the hero saves the day, but I want to end mine on the topic of self-reflection and the art of putting oneself in other people's shoes. Having the patience or an open mind to hear someone out and help others can go a long way. I know it sounds like a cliché, but if people behave fairly, many people will look up to them and take inspiration. On that same note, it is important to keep an open mind because, at the end of the day, we don't know what people are going through. Looking back, I'm glad I was able to be open-minded enough to help Kevin through his troubling times. The small fib that we were related changed the trajectory of his high-school experience, the type of person he became, and, ultimately, the other people he has gone on to help as well.



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