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Update: Bi-weekly COVID-19 testing starting soon

KELLEN STEPLER
editor-in-chief

Asymptomatic, bi-weekly surveillance testing on-campus will begin this week – a couple weeks later than scheduled.

On Jan. 13, Duquesne issued an update about the Spring 2021 semester, noting that the university “will have required surveillance testing.”

The delay in testing, Duquesne spokesperson Gabe Welsch said, was due to “issues with support technology.”

“With the issue now resolved, testing will begin this week,” Welsch said.

The process will go something like this: Students will utilize a platform called SONA to schedule test appointments, track their results and relay other communication relevant to testing. Students will receive an email with a link to register when it is their turn for testing, according to a campus-wide email sent Wednesday afternoon.

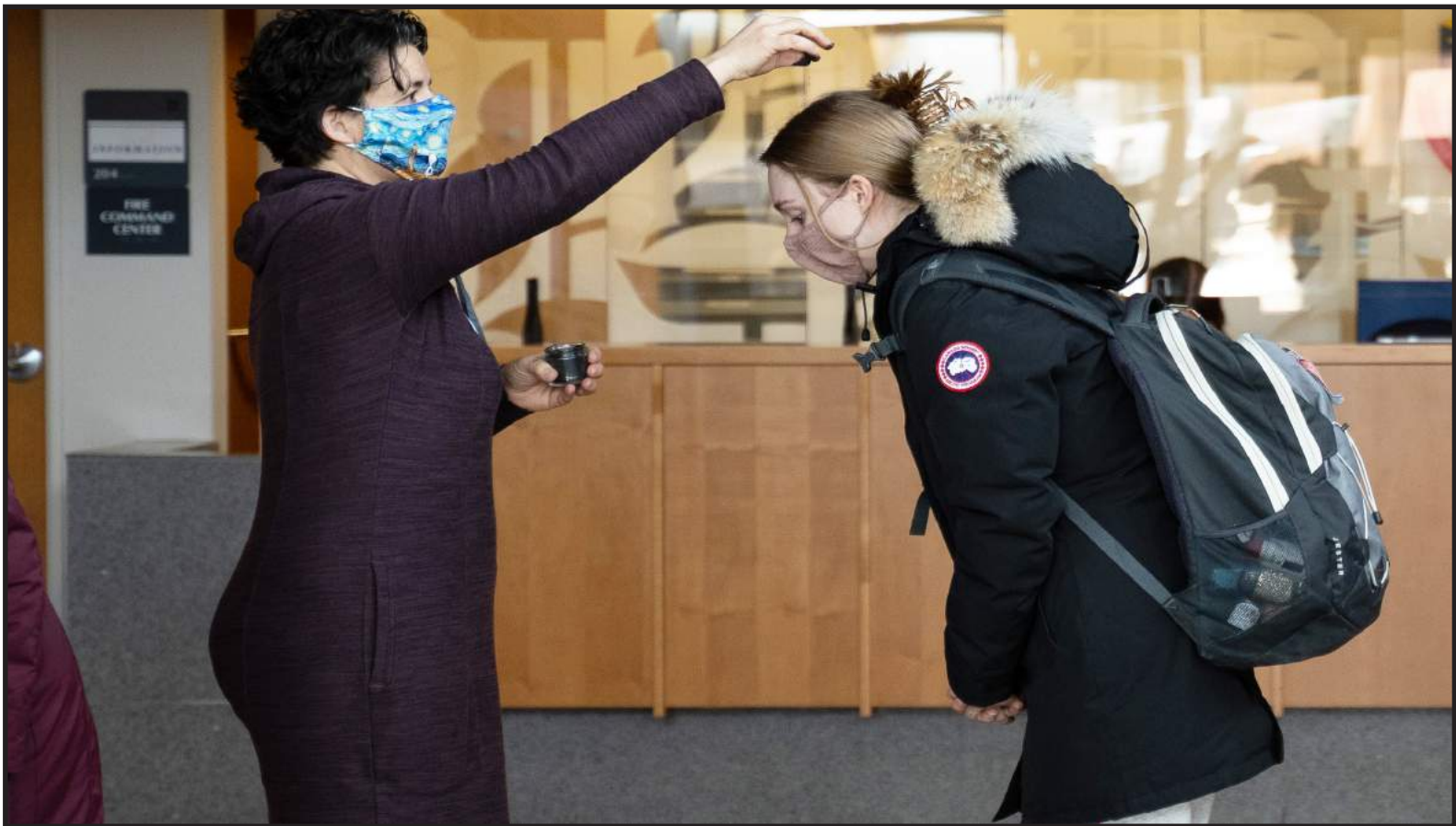
“Participation in Duquesne Testing is mandatory for all students who are on campus this semester in any capacity,” the email read. “Non-compliance will result in the student being prohibited from campus (including from residing in on-campus university housing) and having to complete all coursework remotely.”

Testing for each student will be required every two weeks, and will take place in the Genesis Theater. Duquesne will begin

THE DUQUESNE DUKE

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Ash Wednesday: A sprinkle of something new in COVID-19 times



KATIA FAROUN / FEATURES EDITOR

Although a dark, ashen cross on the forehead is the standard symbol of Ash Wednesday in the U.S., this year, the pandemic has led churches across the country to slightly alter the tradition. To avoid making physical contact, ministers have resorted to sprinkling the ashes on the recipient's forehead.

testing resident students first, and then will test commuter students and employees. Appointments for testing are required.

Even if a student has already received a vaccine, they still are required to participate in the testing, according to the email. However, students who have tested positive for COVID-19 are not eligible to participate until they have passed the required 90-day window from the date of diagnosis.

The tests will take approximately 15 minutes, but students should be reachable by phone in the event that they test positive.

“You will be contacted via phone within one hour in the event of a positive result and contacted by email in the event of a negative result,” the email read.

While this testing was delayed, Welsch pointed out that Duquesne has continued its

symptomatic testing program since the beginning of the semester.

“When coupled with pre-arrival testing, Duquesne has coordinated the administration of 7,300 tests (as of Feb. 16) since the beginning of the calendar year,” Welsch said.

Additionally, Duquesne displayed a new COVID-19 dashboard on their COVID-19 website this week.

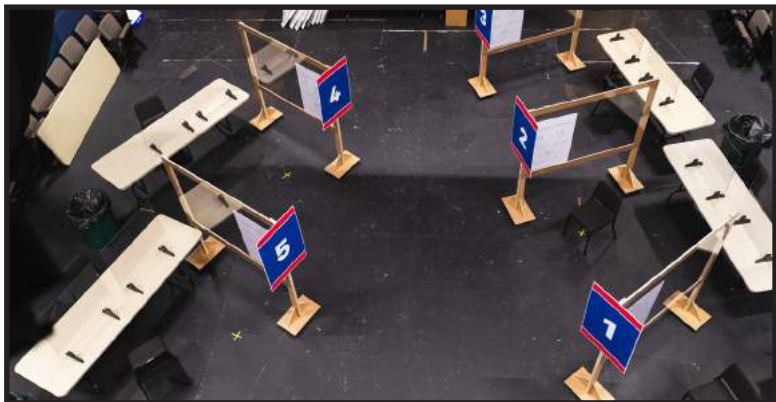
“To see the testing figures as well as a range of other information, people can visit the university’s significantly upgraded COVID-19 dashboard,” Welsch said.

The new dashboard offers an overview of average case data and weekly test data on campus. The information is updated Monday through Friday by a dashboard team comprised of seven staff members at Duquesne.

COVID-19 data across Allegheny County is also shown on

Duquesne’s website. The Allegheny County Health Department maintains the county dashboard, which is updated every day.

More updates on COVID-19 testing are to be made available in the coming days.



GRIFFIN SENDEK / MULTIMEDIA EDITOR

A view from the catwalk at the Genesis Theater shows the newly installed testing stations. For the remainder of the semester, all individuals who come to campus in any capacity will need to be tested here. While the infrastructure for testing has been in place since the start of the semester, university administration struggled to assure the proper technology to carry out their extensive testing plans.

POLICE BRIEFS

Here are the crimes reported from Feb. 8 to Feb. 15.

On Feb. 11, a Duquesne University employee reported a harassing phone call. A report was made and the case is active.

Also on Feb. 11, the resident director of Assumption Hall confiscated marijuana in the building. The student is being referred to the Office of Student Conduct.

COVID-19 NUMBERS

The new dashboard features campus COVID-19 data along with information from Allegheny County. The campus data dashboard breaks down COVID-19 cases, tests, isolation and quarantine spaces and vaccination information.

As of Feb. 17, there were four positive tests at Duquesne, and 494 tests conducted.

As of Feb. 17, three students are in isolation.

SCAN HERE FOR COVID-19 DATA



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If you're interested, email thedukeduq@gmail.com or stop by our newsroom located in the basement of College Hall (Room 113).

EMAIL TIPS

We want your input!

The Duke's news section would love to hear from you about stories that you want to see in print. Know a talented professor or accomplished student? See something on campus that just doesn't make sense? You can send your tips and story ideas to News Editor Colleen Hammond at hammondcd@duq.edu

Celebrating Darwin Day: A closer look at biology in the age of the pandemic

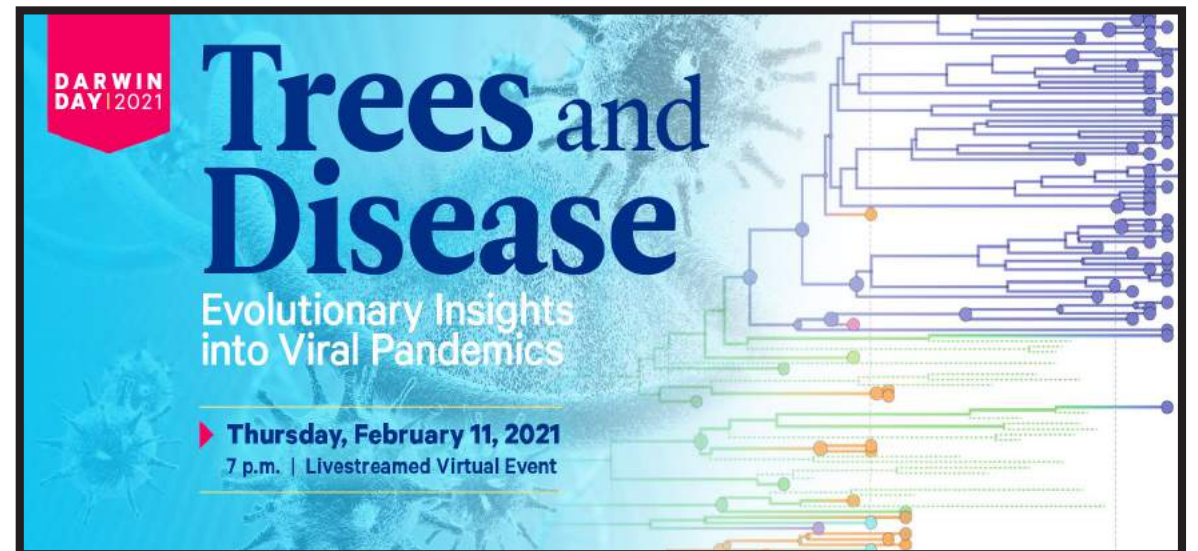
PEYTON HARRIS
staff contributor

The beginning of a life that would drastically change the way the scientific community and the world as a whole believed it functioned started on Feb. 12, 1809. This date is the birth of English naturalist Charles Darwin, who fostered the theory of evolution by natural selection, which since has become the foundation for everyday evolutionary studies and works.

Two hundred twelve years later, Duquesne University and many educational institutions across the globe paid tribute to the man whose work is still being put into practice today, and in relation to current events: the study of COVID-19.

Annually, Duquesne hosts an event called "Darwin Day" in which one facet of Darwin's vast studies are expanded upon to a wider audience.

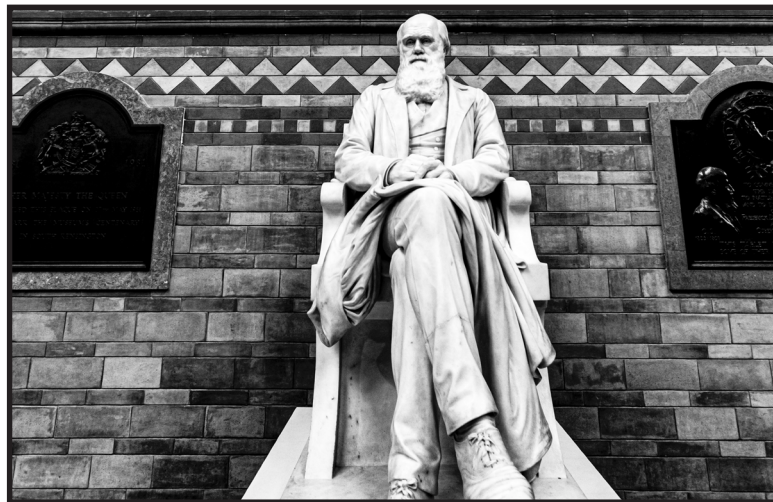
"The Department of Biological Sciences, with support from the Bayer School of Natural & Envi-



COURTESY OF DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY

The program logo for "Trees and Disease," presented for Darwin Day 2021 at Duquesne, seemingly fits the year's theme: a discussion about viruses.

ronmental Sciences, has held a public talk to celebrate Darwin Day for nearly 20 years. Dr. David Lampe started this event at Duquesne in 2003, and now he and co-coordinate the annual event," said Duquesne University professor Michael Seaman.



COURTESY OF UNSPLASH.COM

A statue of Darwin sits outside the Natural History Museum in London to serve as a reminder of his momentous contributions to the field of science.

Seaman said that while the topic varies from year to year, a discussion about viruses was "a perfect fit" for this year's Darwin Day.

"Although back in July and August, when we were making these decisions, we were afraid that by February 2021 people would be sick of talking about COVID, but clearly we aren't," Seaman said. "This year, being virtual, also made some things easier. We didn't have to fly the speaker in from far away, which I think made it more likely that our speaker, Dr. Michael Worobey, would agree to give our annual talk."

This year's discussion was held virtually due to the pandemic

and included a variety of universities across the country. The main discussion, titled "Trees and Disease: Evolutionary Insights into Viral Pandemics," was led by Seaman. The featured guest speaker was Worobey, a

professor within the University of Arizona's Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology. Seaman opened the discussion with a few remarks on Darwin and the ensuing talk, saying "nothing in biology makes sense except in the light of evolution." He then quoted renowned evolutionary biologist Theodosius Dobzhansky, saying, "Nothing in biology makes sense, except in the light of evolution."

"This is as true today as it was when he said it nearly 50 years ago. Evolution is the single unifying principle in biology," Seaman said. "The fact that humans share a common ancestor with mice, fruit flies and bacteria is what allows us to use these species in our research as proxies for human biology. No field of biology is not directly impacted by Darwin's theory of evolution."

Upon turning the discussion

over to Worobey, Seaman dove into how genomic epidemiology is working to track and discover different strains of COVID-19, all while sticking to the basic Darwinian principles of evolutionary theory. While the first diagnosed case in the U.S. was at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport on Jan. 15, 2020, the work done by Worobey and his colleagues, as well as those at The Seattle Flu Project, concluded that since multiple genomic sequences were being found in Washington state, COVID-19 had been in the area for quite some time prior to the first official U.S. case.

"In retrospect, based on analyses of viral genome sequences using evolutionary trees, we now know that the first COVID case in the U.S. did not lead to an outbreak in Seattle," Seaman said. "This was probably the result of swift action to isolate the patient and prevent contact with other people. This was the first good evidence, way back in January of 2020, that aggressive public health measures could be essential in preventing the spread of COVID."

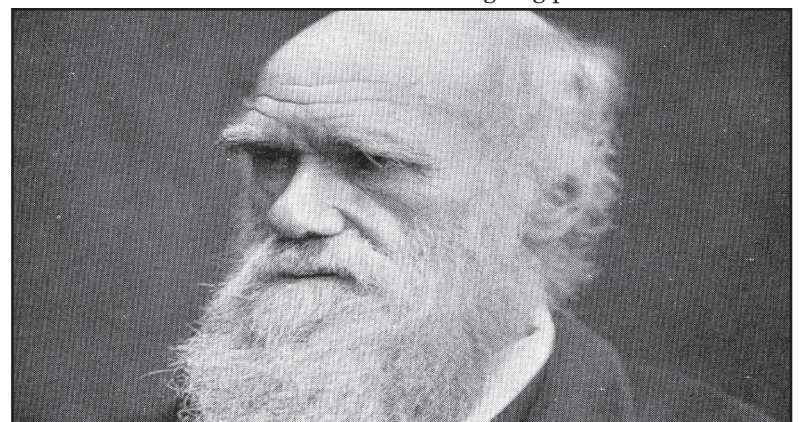
The discussion explored different ways in which Darwinist theories played a role in determining disease origin. The speakers discussed the likelihood that the COVID-19 U.K. variant, known as B.117, was around for quite some time with an unknown ori-

gin as early as November, but was first recognized by the U.K. a short time later. It is also likely that B.117 will become the variant most prevalent in the U.S. by this March, due to its potent transmission rate.

By the end of the discussion, questions that had been blindly submitted into the chat feature were answered by Worobey, who was optimistic in the efforts of mitigation as well as the vaccines coming to the forefront and noted that "the escape-hatch of vaccinations" would bring about a large change in transmission and furthering of the disease. Most questions had been answered before Worobey experienced technical difficulties and was disconnected from the talk, leaving the rest of the discussion to Seaman.

Seaman directed the discussion to apply the works of Darwin to science today, and believes that Darwin's discoveries continue to be relevant today.

"It is easy to mistakenly think that evolution is only relevant for understanding the distant past," Seaman said. "But everything that we have learned over the last 150 years of evolutionary biology, including the nature of mutations and natural selection, is directly relevant for combating the ongoing pandemic."



COURTESY OF WIKIPEDIA CREATIVE COMMONS

A portrait of Darwin Day's leading figure, Charles Darwin.

A traditional, Catholic take on a new pandemic problem

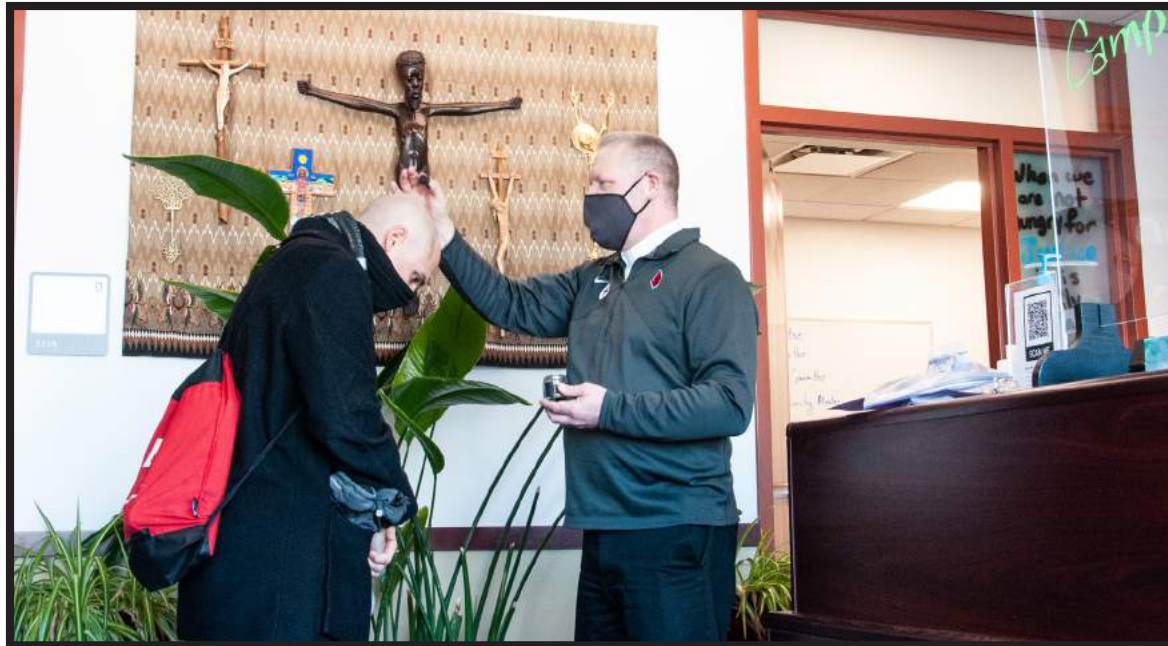
COLLEEN HAMMOND
news editor

Just like every other momentous occasion and celebration for the past 11 months, Ash Wednesday is looking a little different this year.

Ash Wednesday, the annual Christian holy day of prayer and fasting, marks the beginning of the Lenten season. This day, preceded by a usual slew of Mardi Gras and Fat Tuesday celebrations, has been transformed by dioceses across the globe to accommodate the new COVID-19 health and safety protocols.

"This year, our Ash Wednesday has to be different," said Rev. Bill Christy, chaplain of Duquesne in a video addressed to all students.

In the years before the pandemic, Christians around the world were marked on the forehead with a highly recognizable cross of ashes. However, since physically touching each recipient would exponentially raise the risk of transmitting the virus, church officials have reevaluated



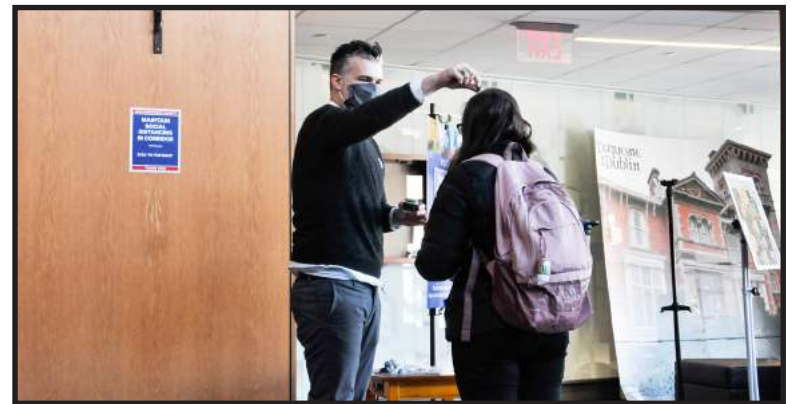
ALEX LAFONTAINE / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

In the Spiritan Campus Ministry Office, Fr. Bill Christy and other lay ministers administered ashes by sprinkling them on the penitents' foreheads to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 through physical touch.

and sections of the church.

"This is common in other parts of the world and actually has a lot of biblical connotations in it," Christy said. "We're just not used to doing this here in the United

"[Ash Wednesday] tells us that spring's coming, Easter's coming. New life is coming. Resurrection is coming," Fr. Bill Christy said. "And I don't think that I've thirsted for that so much as I do this year."



ALEX LAFONTAINE / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

While uncommon in the U.S., the tradition of sprinkling ashes on the forehead is not unusual across different parts of the world. The ashes are made from the burnt remains of the blessed palms from Palm Sunday of the previous year. In the Catholic tradition, blessed and holy objects can only be discarded by burning or burial. To dispose of the palms properly, they are burned to make the following year's ashes.



KATIA FAROUN / FEATURES EDITOR

Before receiving their ashes, students, staff and faculty gathered for a group prayer in the Student Union.

how this sacred ritual will be performed.

"This year we are going to be taking the ash and instead of thumbing it and imposing it on the forehead, the priest or the lay minister is going to take a pinch of the ash, and as the penitent bows their head, the minister is going to sprinkle just a bit of the ash on the top of their head," Christy said.

While this may seem strange and out of sorts to American Christians, Christy noted that this is customary in other regions

States."

Although it has not been standard practice in the U.S. in previous years, congregations across the city — and nation — are quickly adopting it to protect their parishioners from COVID-19.

"It's how we're going to celebrate Ash Wednesday this year. We're going to bow our heads. We're going to accept the ash. And we are going to know that this year is different," Christy said.

Christy, who celebrated the final in-person mass in the diocese of Pittsburgh before lockdown



ALEX LAFONTAINE / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Fr. Bill Christy (right) administers ashes and a blessing to students in the Campus Ministry Office in Towers.



KATIA FAROUN / FEATURES EDITOR

Students had the opportunity to receive ashes at 11 different services throughout the day, and at three separate masses.

began last March, stated his understanding that the struggles of the pandemic and the sacrifices typically associated with Lent run deeply parallel. He said he views the COVID-19 protocols as an extension of Lenten sacrifice.

"This year's ash symbolizes something different for us," Christy said. "Because it signifies hope in a new life, a new beginning, a new spring, a resurrection like we haven't had before."

Despite Christy's hope in the Easter season and a conclusion to the pandemic in the spring-

time, strong precautions are still being taken by Duquesne's Campus Ministry to ensure the safety of all students and service attendees.

In addition to the sprinkling of the ashes, Duquesne's Chapel is currently operating at a fraction of its in-person capacity. While virtual services are available to the public, those who wish to attend in person must sign up in advance on the Spiritan Campus Ministry webpage. Services are limited to 25 people for the time being.

"As is our custom, we will be

all over campus," Christy said. "Look for us. Come. Receive the ash."

The distribution of ashes was offered in 11 different locations during the day with full masses offered at 7:45 a.m., noon and 9 p.m.

"I don't think I have ever anticipated an Ash Wednesday like I am anticipating it this year," Christy said.

While the holiday may look different to practicing Christians, Christy remains hopeful in its symbolism and the necessary time of Lenten preparation.

"[Ash Wednesday] tells us that spring's coming, Easter's coming. New life is coming. Resurrection is coming," Christy said. "And I don't think that I've thirsted for that so much as I do this year."

Duquesne's Lenten Activities List

Weekly Mass Times:

- Weekdays 7:45 a.m. and noon
- Saturday 5:30 p.m.
- Sunday 11 a.m., 6 p.m., 9 p.m.

*A fish fry was offered in the Student Union by the brothers of Phi Kapp on Ash Wednesday. Similar events are yet to be scheduled for the Lenten season.



Scan here to sign up
for in-person mass

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Pittsburgh, PA 15282

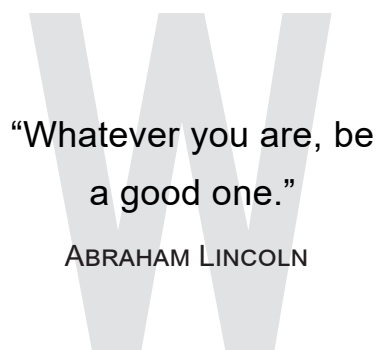
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"Whatever you are, be
a good one."

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You just read | Now tweet
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Readers should report any story or photo error to *The Duke*. All legitimate errors will be corrected in print the following edition.

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OPINIONS

What value does social media actually have?

Close to 18 years ago, the world was introduced to none other than the revolutionary social networking site, Myspace. The first of its kind, this innovative platform is arguably responsible for sparking the meteoric rise of social media that has taken place over the past two decades.

Now, with nearly 4 billion people across the globe using social media to some degree, it is reasonable for me to infer that this "meteoric rise" is, in fact, nothing less than a social phenomenon.

Since 2015, social media use has grown by an average of 12.5% year-over-year with the current count of worldwide users almost doubling from five years ago. In the U.S. alone, over 75% of the population owns at least one social media account — an increase of more than 70% since 2005.

The overwhelming evidence clearly indicates that the advent of social networking has truly changed life as we know it and is now deeply rooted in our everyday lives. As a consequence, the decisions and actions we make on a daily basis — whether it be in a professional or social setting — are intrinsically influenced by this external force.

Think about it. How many memorable moments can you recall with friends or family where you spent more time in pursuit of the perfect pic for the Gram rather than actually living in the moment?

Don't worry, I'm not calling you out. I am just as guilty as the next for succumbing to the societal trend of "doing it for the gram." All jokes aside, you must admit that our society's social networking dependency is unmistakably apparent even without all the arbitrary statistical verbiage.

Supporters of social media's rapid ascent into the spotlight emphasize the fact that these platforms create value for society by enhancing communication, providing easy access to information, offering opportunities to grow professionally or simply to meet people with similar interests, and last but not least a place where creativity and self-expression is

encouraged. Albeit, most of these "supporters" are the notorious Zucks and their disciples of the tech industry.

I'm not necessarily suggesting that the vision of these entrepre-



NOAH WILBUR

opinions editor

neurs is inherently flawed. Much research confirms the benefits society derives from platforms such as Facebook, Snapchat, Twitter and the like. However, I am of the opinion that the negatives outweigh the positives. As luck would have it, my point is also validated by empirical evidence.

From social displacement and increased anxiety, to FOMO and feelings of inadequacy, there are a growing number of academic studies confirming the direct relationship between social media usage and diminishing mental health.

The issue at hand ultimately boils down to the notion of social image and humanity's desire to construct an outward appearance that breeds gratification from our peers and colleagues — a socioeconomic paradox that social media has indisputably accelerated. Social networking platforms are specifically designed to activate the pleasure department within our brains by triggering the release of dopamine — our "feel-good chemical" — and thus establishing a dependent relationship where users crave constant satisfaction from followers, likes, retweets and shares.

Most importantly, research is

supporting our worst fear that social media is adversely impacting younger generations. In a 2018 study by Pew Research, 45% of American teens between the ages of 13 to 17 stated they are online "almost constantly" — a 21% surge from 2015. What's important to note here is that reports of depression, anxiety and low self-esteem have also risen considerably during this same time period that social media usage has increased among teenagers.

Not to mention, bullying is also widely prevalent across social media. As cyberbullying continues to grow increasingly mainstream, young adults, teenagers and adolescents are more than ever at risk of online harassment. According to the American Psychological Association, a recent survey found that almost two-thirds of teens indicated that they "often" or "sometimes" stumble upon "sexist, homophobic or religious-based hate content in social media."

The truth of the matter is that social media is undeniably reshaping the way the world thinks about politics, commerce, education, culture and other aspects of life by influencing relationships as well as individual behavior. With this change accelerating every passing day, and only further expedited by the arrival of COVID-19, the future of social order hangs in the balance.

With awareness growing and humanity becoming more informed, I am of the opinion that new research will soon emerge that further validates social media's negative influence on our globalized and modern society. That being said, I also believe there is hope and even an opportunity to change our habits and use these platforms in a way that is valuable and useful.

Last week, I urged people to put down the cellular devices, disconnect and throw on a vinyl record. This week, I am urging each of you to make an effort to live in the moment as I can promise all the Insta pictures and tweets in the world will never amount to the pleasure of experiencing the moment in real time.

Donald Trump's acquittal breeds disappointment among Americans

ALYSE KAMINSKI

staff columnist

Over the weekend, former President Trump was acquitted on impeachment charges dealing with his involvement in the deadly insurrection at the Capitol Building on Jan. 6.

This came as no surprise to me.

When I logged on to Twitter after seeing headlines of the acquittal, my feed was filled with users writing as though they were shocked that this is how it all ended. I personally cannot fathom why anyone would be surprised by this.

Going into the vote, it had already been confirmed that the needed number of Republican votes to convict was not going to be reached.

Of course this news is disheartening, but it does not really change anything other than confirming what we already know to be true: that Republicans once again chose their party over their country.

I will be crystal clear in saying that Donald Trump was 100% guilty in helping to cause the breach of the Capitol. This would not have happened under anyone else's leadership, and the evidence

shown at the hearings completely proves that. Mitch McConnell, who voted not to convict President Trump, even said so. In a tweet from CNN White House Correspondent Kaitlan Collins, she confirmed that Senate Minority Leader McConnell said, "There's no question — none — that President Trump is practically and morally responsible for provoking the events of the day. No question about it."

If that does not prove my point, absolutely nothing will.

All of the evidence present-

see ACQUITTAL— page 11

STAFF EDITORIAL

Newsflash: Ableism isn't cute, especially when there are misconceptions regarding neurodivergent representation in mainstream media.

Australian pop artist Sia has tried her hand at directing, but the results, thus far, have been poor.

Just released on Feb. 10, *Music* follows a now-sober girl taking care of her half-sister who is on the autism spectrum.

This movie is supposed to explore themes such as "finding your voice" and "creating family," but instead leaves a sour taste in the mouth when you remember former *Dance Moms* actress Maddie Ziegler is not, in fact, on the spectrum — which is what her role in the film requires.

According to ABC News, Sia said that Ziegler cried on the first day of rehearsals, afraid that her acting in an autistic role might seem like she is mocking, or making fun of those on the spectrum. Thus, Sia said that she "wouldn't let that happen," but now realizes that she can't actually protect her from that ridicule because that is the position she put this young teenager in.

Although Sia has researched autism for the past three years while also getting approval from the Child Mind Institute, this does not consider the individual emotions of each person on the autism spectrum.

Autism is referred to as a spectrum because it is just that: a wide array of cognitive abilities, each unique to the individual. A broken leg is a pretty universal experience, and can be represented with accuracy and ease with a mere set of crutches and some wincing. Autism? How can a movie define such a vastly differing experience?

But it's not just about "getting it right" — it's also about giving acting opportunities to performers on the spectrum so they can represent the adversity they personally face, knowing their cognitive disability and portraying it in a thoughtful way that isn't like bullet points on a check-list.

When Sia announced the production of this movie, fans on the spectrum took to social media to express their concerns, feeling misunderstood or underrepresented in the acting industry, though no commentary has been made on Sia's end.

The movie already has even lower Rotten Tomato ratings than 2019's *Cats* — which is saying something considering how heinous that adaptation was.

Clearly, including autistic actors in the ensemble won't cut it. Why was there not a casting call for a woman on the spectrum to play the lead role? Do we always need a big-name, neurotypical role in the spotlight?

This calls to mind Leonardo DiCaprio's performance in *What's Eating Gilbert Grape*. So many people were amazed by his performance, shocked to find out that he

see STAFF ED— page 11

Letter to the Editor: Student Government disagrees with DU decision

Members of the Student Body,

I address you today concerning the decision regarding Mr. Gary Shank. In the days leading up to the release of this decision, I saw and heard your pain and outrage. As president of the Student Government Association, it is my responsibility to ensure that all students feel represented and heard at this university. That is why this past Friday, Feb. 12th, I went before the University Board of Governors to express the students' distress. The following highlights several points I addressed.

First, however unpleasant it is, we must honestly see and admit that racism is still deeply rooted across America. It is much more wide-spread than is often apparent. Second, that the university's Action Plan for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion has experienced "white backlash." This is a concept in which positive steps forward were taken on the question of racial justice and equality, but then certain backward steps were made at the same time. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said that the greatest obstacle to overcoming racism in America is those who like to say they are committed

to racial equality and justice but quietly slip into silence and complacency when the fight for racial justice requires real action.

It is the belief of some that this decision makes clear that conduct of this sort is not acceptable or tolerated in any context and will be subject to immediate termination. But that is not what this decision does. This decision makes clear that conduct of this sort is acceptable and you will not be subject to immediate termination but rather remedial diversity training. This opens the door for other slurs such as LG-BTQIA+ slurs, ethnic slurs, and religious slurs.

We need to take proactive action on behalf of justice and push for the changes that will have the greatest impact on our students, both now and in the future. We must move to the high grounds of a firm dissent based upon the mandates of conscience and the reading of history. If we do not act, we shall surely be dragged down the long, dark, and shameful corridors of time reserved for those who possess power without compassion, might without morality, and strength without sight.

That is why the Student Government Association is taking ac-

tion by calling upon the Faculty Senate to make specific changes to ensure that this type of conduct does not happen again. We, the 49th Senate and Executive Board of SGA on behalf of the entire student body of Duquesne University urge the Faculty Senate to revise the Faculty Handbook on multiple fronts.

First, the Faculty Handbook must be revised to make clear that this type of conduct by a faculty member will be condemned. Conduct that disregards and harms students through inappropriate words or actions that display discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, age, disability and/or genetic information will warrant the strongest possible sanctions, including termination from tenure-track or tenured faculty positions. Second, the Faculty Handbook must be revised to ensure that the Faculty Grievance Committee houses greater diversity in its membership. Finally, the Faculty Handbook must be revised to mandate that the Faculty Grievance Committee consults with appropriate experts in the campus community, particularly when disciplinary hearings involve accusations

of discrimination, to ensure committee members have all the facts and evidence surrounding the circumstance.

Furthermore, according to student testimony that I and others have received, this was not Mr. Shank's first offense and thus cannot be labeled as "a moment of extremely poor judgment." However, the Faculty Grievance Committee cited that there were no other "officially reported" instances regarding Mr. Shank. That my colleagues, ends today. If you see misconduct, if you hear misconduct, if you experience misconduct – Report it! Granted, there is currently no official portal for students to anonymously report these instances; however, SGA is beginning to work with key stakeholders to make this procedure possible. In the meantime, I would encourage all of you to file reports directly with the dean of your school or college.

The time is always right to do right. That time is now. Now let the message of this university be one of commitment, hope, and solidarity with our students. In doing so, the mission of the university will be fulfilled.

Duquesne SGA
Kallie Crawford, President

Duquesne President Ken Gormley provided *The Duke* with the following response to SGA's letter:

"I appreciate the SGA's thoughtful statement, which advances campus discussions on equity and inclusion. The recommendations SGA makes are excellent, and are worthy of consideration. The review of policies and procedures at the University is an ongoing process. It can, and should, dovetail with our new Action Plan for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. Right now, we are in the process of hiring a consultant with extensive experience in the DE&I field to help with that effort. I will request that consultant to confer with the Faculty Senate's officers to review the existing policies and practices that may hinder the inclusivity we seek to foster at Duquesne. I appreciate the SGA's timely and productive suggestions."

Society's youth continues to struggle as positive role models face extinction

TROY SMAJDA

staff columnist

Who are some men you look to as role models? Since I'm limited to my immediate family due to the pandemic, I couldn't go out and ask some of the young men and women around campus this question, so instead I asked my immediate family.

I asked my little brother what men he looks up to and I was flattered when he answered that my dad and myself were two. I asked my dad, and he answered his father and his best friend (oddly he didn't mention me). I asked my mother, and she also mentioned her father.

So the answer I kept getting to my question was either fathers or immediate family or friends. But then I followed up my initial question with this one: What about out in the world? Are there any men in society you look up to?

And the answer I got from everyone in my family was no. There aren't.

The reason for this could be that everyone in my family is a misanthropic weirdo (hopefully that's the case and you don't have to read any further), but I suggest you ponder my second question and try to come up with a man that's not close family or friends that you truly

look up to as a role model. If you have more success than me and my family ... great, but I'll assume for argument's sake you might've struggled with the question.

And I believe that's because there simply aren't many positive male role models in today's society, and the ones that exist aren't highlighted enough. In the past they seemed to be more obvious: Presidents like JFK or FDR or Lincoln come to mind, Dr. King is one I personally hold in highest esteem and Barack Obama was one that influenced much of my young life. But lately I've been trying to look for some in today's society, and honestly I'm not finding much.

Obviously, I'm being histrionic and there are plenty of amazing men doing meaningful things: Terry Crews, Neil DeGrasse Tyson, Lin-Manuel Miranda, Harry Styles, Stephen King, Bill Gates, Neil Patrick Harris, Elton John, George Takei, Kevin Love, LeBron James, every athlete that is fighting for social justice, Drake, Bo Burnham — you get the point (and that list is not at all exhaustive). And hopefully you thought of some of those men when I originally asked the question and think maybe I'm being redundant now.

But let me then ask this: When's the last time you absorbed something from these men that wasn't simply for entertainment or pleasure? Exactly. These powerful role models are subjugated to entertainment while trivial role models like Joe Rogan, or Barstool, or sports (or sports betting), or video games, or social media, or far-too-often pornography are where most men receive their real influences. And sure, that's a generalization, and those things I guess are acceptable nowadays, but I would argue that ultimately they are moral dead ends.

Maybe I sound like some weird, contrarian hippie dude, but all I'm really trying to say is that we could all benefit from a serious realignment of what men are continually viewing/absorbing/focusing on. And again, hopefully you do read, listen, and watch actually important content featuring men doing impactful and meaningful things, but I'm going to assume again that is not always the case.

I will close this lengthy, testosterone diatribe with a personal anecdote.

I love playing basketball. Months before the pandemic I was playing with my best friends, and we got into the perennial Michael Jordan/

LeBron debate (as most overly competitive men do). And I made the point that as a basketball player, I'd much rather have LeBron on my team simply because he seems like a good teammate, and after watching *The Last Dance* Michael Jordan seemed the opposite. This point was met with vitriol, and they all asked, "Who cares? MJ won six rings."

And for a second I could tell that they thought the point I was making was completely stupid and nonsensical (much like you might be reading this article) and of course they're my friends so I knew it wasn't personal, but their reaction was disheartening to me. I realized then that men have a

slightly flawed version of what it means to be the "best." Sure MJ has six rings, but LeBron is an amazing person, teammate, activist, philanthropist and leader, and is probably one of the most important men of the last 20 years.

My point is this: Men should focus more on positive role models like LeBron and all those other great men I listed above. Their focus should not be on other men's achievements, but on the content of their character. That way, instead of constantly being focused on winning and "being a man," me and all other men can focus more on being good teammates to everyone around us.



COURTESY OF WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Smajda encourages men to find role models, like LeBron James.



DUKE SERIES: MINORITY-OWNED BUSINESS SPOTLIGHTS

CAKE IT 'TIL YOU MAKE IT

Mel's Magnolia owner brings passion to reality with bakery

GILLIAN FITZGERALD
staff writer

Just about everyone has that one thing they are passionate about and instantly makes them feel better. For some, it might be sports or meditation. For others, maybe it's painting or playing an instrument. For Melissa "Mel" Montalvo of Mel's Magnolia Boutique Bakery, it's baking.

Montalvo bakes anything and everything one could come up with — she loves trying new things. She is always hoping customers will randomly ask her to make something she's never done before so she can try it out. Whether it be cakes, cookies, biscotti, brownies, macarons or muffins, Montalvo will do research on anything a person wants because she knows she can do it.

"I'm the type of person that doesn't give up until I master it," Montalvo said.

Montalvo began baking when she was just 8 years old as a way to not only get out her emotions, but to also pass the time when she couldn't sleep. Her insomnia kept her up when she was young, so she would go into the kitchen at 1 or 2 a.m. and find new recipes to make for her mom and dad.

different means to cheer herself up, and baking was the way for her to get her out of her down state.

"Whenever I say baking saved me, baking has literally been my savior. I bake whenever I'm down, I bake whenever I'm happy," Montalvo said. "And I don't do it because I want to make money; I genuinely like to do it and I like to make people happy with the things that I bake."

It's her journey as a changed person that inspired the perfect name for her business.

Google offers various different meanings for the magnolia flower, but for Montalvo it signifies what she's gone through to get to who she is now.

"I'm all about love, and I'm actually a very changed person. If you knew me in my past, I was always really rowdy, I was angry and I couldn't figure out why," Montalvo said. "Now that I know more about myself, I'm all about peace and love, and the reason why I chose 'Mel's Magnolia' is because of the meaning of the 'magnolia' flower. From my understanding, it's about strength, rebirth, and renewal — and that's what I'm about. I'm such a changed person and I wanted to include that into my bakery."

However, her business' unique



COURTESY OF MEL'S MAGNOLIA BOUTIQUE BAKERY

As a Black business owner, Montalvo feels she has to step up more than other businesses to escape stereotypes and prejudices.

until she's able to open a Mel's Magnolia Boutique Bakery storefront.

Her friendliness and the exposure from customers both in and out of state has allowed Mel's Magnolia to grow, just as her understanding of supporting small and Black-owned businesses has grown.

After becoming a business owner, Montalvo realized the importance of giving support in any way possible to local and community businesses.

"I noticed that I should have been supporting more friends and more family, because a lot of the time Black-owned businesses get put to the side because a lot of people think that they're maybe not as professional or that their standards aren't as high," Montalvo said. "But more often than not, their standards are much, much higher because they have a lot to prove — we all do. We have so much more to prove."

Black-owned businesses often have to step up 10 times more because of the judgment that people have, according to Montalvo. And when living or being in a predominantly white area, that biased view causes false and ignorant perceptions for businesses and their owners who have to work harder to prove themselves, their products or services.

"It really shouldn't be that way but unfortunately, it is," Montalvo said. "I have to present myself a certain way so they don't think that I'm a different type of way ... I don't want anyone to think that I'm ghetto, I don't want anyone to think that Black businesses are ghetto, or that they're using the cheapest means possible to make their products, because it's just not the case."

Researching and going out to

support small and Black-owned businesses puts purpose behind every cent, especially during Covid-19. However, support doesn't just mean spending money, especially if one doesn't have the means to do so.

For Montalvo, support also means sharing business cards and social media posts, and also attending events in the community to shop at Black-owned businesses. Supporters can use hashtags to find out about certain businesses, or when looking for a specific product, and word of mouth still proves its effectiveness.

"I encourage everyone — no matter who you are — looking to support Black-owned businesses to do their research and try to find events to go out and support," Montalvo said. "There are families right now really struggling in this pandemic, so if you have the means, please support these people ... they need it. We all need it."

As a new baker and a small business owner, she's experienced the challenges of first starting out, especially managing everything herself during a pandemic. But she prides herself on the customer service she

provides, having worked in that area her whole life. Montalvo has learned from the bad experiences she's had with other businesses to know what she doesn't want to have in her own.

It's things like the detail she puts into her cakes, owning up to infrequent mistakes and being willing to fix them that allows her to show customers the kind of person she is.

"I want people to know that when they buy from me, that is what you're getting. I'm someone that was raised in the south, very nice, respectful of culture and beliefs ... and that is what they're gonna get," Montalvo said. "They're gonna receive something that is tailored towards them and that is tasty, and if I ever mess anything up you can call to let me know and I will fix it as soon as I can."

Montalvo's individual style and the twists she puts on all of her sweets reflects the hard work and detail she puts into her business. Although she is only in the first year of Mel's Magnolia Boutique Bakery, the Pittsburgh community will be seeing many more of Montalvo's signature cakes and hearing her trademark salutation — "peace, love, and magnolias" — online and soon in her own storefront.



COURTESY OF MEL'S MAGNOLIA BOUTIQUE BAKERY

Montalvo uses baking to cope with the emotions resulting from her bipolar II disorder.

Now 29, Montalvo has turned her passion into a small, Black-owned business with her online and social media-run store based in Pittsburgh that officially began on Instagram last year. Just as baking was a way for Montalvo to take how she felt and put it into something she loved when she was a kid, it remains a means of transforming her emotions today.

Montalvo was diagnosed with bipolar II disorder three years ago, and she decided not to take traditional medication because of the way it made her feel. Instead, with the help of her husband, she tried

name isn't the only reason it stands out from other bakeries.

Montalvo rarely ever makes the same thing twice — and when she does, she makes sure to tweak it and make it more interesting. Not only is she always looking to make her items better and unique, but she also asks her customers about themselves first so she can tailor goods specifically for them.

And since Montalvo does everything herself — the shopping, baking, decorating and packaging — every cake, pastry and cookie contains a personal touch from Montalvo herself



COURTESY OF MEL'S MAGNOLIA BOUTIQUE BAKERY

Until she opens a storefront, Montalvo adds a personal touch to each baked good.

Duquesne volleyball squad drops first game to VCU, 3-0

BRENTARO YAMANE
staff writer

The VCU women's volleyball team got its brooms out and swept off Duquesne's new court Friday, beating Duquesne 3-0 in the Dukes' first-ever game at the newly-renovated UPMC Cooper Fieldhouse.

Last season, Duquesne played its home volleyball matches at PPG Paints Arena and Mt. Lebanon High School while the Fieldhouse was being renovated.

Duquesne had not played a home game on campus since Oct. 28, 2018, prior to Friday's match against the Rams.

Duquesne Head Coach Steve Opperman knew how excited his team was to play in the new arena, and the team had been looking forward to it for a long time. It had been a full 464 days since the Dukes last played a game on their Bluff campus.

"It was awesome for our team to play in the new arena. The kids were excited to play," Opperman said. "Our freshmen and sophomores have never played in this facility. The juniors and seniors have. It was a great experience for the younger kids to get in here and enjoy the atmosphere and basically get back on the court to compete."

Things looked good for the Dukes in the early stages, scoring the first two points of the first match. Duquesne outside hitter Morgan Kelly recorded a kill, then an attack error was made by VCU. At one point in the first set, Duquesne was leading 18-14, but the Rams were able to come back to win the set 25-19.

The Rams took over after the first set.

The fact that VCU was able to come back in the first set after trailing by four points seemingly gave the team all the confidence it needed against Duquesne. VCU would win the second set 25-15 and the third set by a count of 25-14.

Duquesne scoring less in each match as the afternoon went on might appear concerning to the naked eye. Opperman, however, liked what he saw from his team after the first match.

"We showed some really good signs of what we can do. Overall, it wasn't a great performance by any means, but it was a nice start to see things that our players have the potential of doing," Opperman said. "The tough thing that we went through is that it was our first matchup of the season while it was VCU's seventh matchup. However, I thought we fought hard even though the score didn't show it."

One of the most vicious plays of the game was in the third set when VCU's Jasmine Knight recorded a kill, spiking the ball so hard on Duquesne's side of the court that the ball ricocheted off the ground, onto the basketball backboard on the baseline and circled around the rim. The explosiveness of that play was one of the reasons why VCU looked like more of the dominant team in the game.

VCU led the game in many notable categories, including kills (51), assists (45), hitting percentage (.360), block assists (18) and digs (four). VCU's Qairo Bentley led the game with kills (12) and points (13). Her 12 kills in the game is a new career-high. VCU's Dani Jo David and Duquesne's Hailey Poling led the game in assists with

22 each.

VCU now owns a 12-6 all-time series lead over Duquesne, with the Dukes losing their seven straight matchups against the Rams.

For Duquesne, its next game is not until Feb. 26, when the Dukes travel to take on Dayton. Until then, Opperman and his staff will work on some things that he thinks his team can improve upon after

watching his team play against VCU.

"One of our first things that we are working on is our first touch or our first contact. I think that we did a decent job with our ball control. We need to adjust our in-game strategy, and I had advised the players to be more aggressive and more assertive when attacking regardless of the situation that we are in," Opperman said.



GRIFFIN SENDEK / MULTIMEDIA EDITOR

Members of the Duquesne volleyball team warm up prior to its Feb. 12 match versus VCU. The Dukes fell, 3-0, in their first-ever match at the newly-renovated UPMC Cooper Fieldhouse. The team's next home game is set for March 5 against Atlantic 10 foe Saint Louis.

DU set to face Florida State during 2022-23 football season

ADAM LINDNER
sports editor

The Duquesne football team played its first Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) opponent in 2014, falling to Buffalo, 38-28.

It wasn't until the 2018 season that the Dukes played another FBS opponent, faltering against both the UMass Minutemen on Aug. 25, 2018, and then the Hawaii Rainbow Warriors on Sept. 22.

The team was slated to face both Air Force and Coastal Carolina — the latter of which spent much of last season ranked in the AP Top 25 — in 2020, only for the Northeast Conference to postpone its football season until the spring.

The Dukes' non-conference games were scrapped, as was their typical fall slate. For the first time since 1968 — the year before Duquesne revived its football program in '69 — an autumn passed with no football to be found on the Bluff.

The team's abbreviated, NEC-only schedule — announced Feb. 1 — will see the team play four regular-season games, beginning on March 7 against Sacred Heart and ending March 28 at Bryant.

The league will host a championship game at a currently-undetermined date in April to crown its conference champion. Per usual, the NEC's victor will receive an automatic bid to the FCS playoffs, which begin April 24.

The NEC's — and, by extension, Duquesne's — goal is to return to normalcy by the coming fall, when the league will presumably permit its teams to resume competition during its typical autumn time-frame. A full NEC schedule and non-conference slates, following a one-year hiatus, are set to return.

The Dukes' opponents, though?

Those will be anything *but* typical.

Duquesne — yes, the same program with three FBS matchups to its name — will open the 2021 (fall) season at Big 12 linchpin TCU on Sept. 4 in Fort Worth, Texas. The Dukes' matchup with TCU will mark the first time since Duquesne joined the FCS — short for Football Championship Subdivision — level in 1993 that the team will face a Power Five (ACC, SEC, Big Ten, Big 12 or Pac-12) conference opponent.

Duquesne is also scheduled to face FBS member Ohio a week later, on Sept. 11, at the Bobcats' Athens campus.

The school announced Tuesday that it would open its 2022 season at Florida State on Aug. 27, 2022; additionally, it will make a return trip to Honolulu to face Hawaii on Sept. 17, 2022, about four years after its initial trip to The Aloha State in 2018.

The date with Florida State, a traditional powerhouse program in the collegiate football ranks, presents a unique opportunity for a Duquesne program unaccustomed to

competing against marquee opponents.

A reported 2023 matchup at Big 12 pillar West Virginia will do the same.

In 2018, before the Dukes departed from Pittsburgh for its season-opening UMass game, Head Coach Jerry Schmitt told *The Duke* that the opportunity to play an FBS opponent wasn't something the program took for granted: "The fact that it's an FBS opponent is great, for our guys to play in that environment against a bigger school."

"We know it's a tough challenge for us, but we're looking forward to it," Schmitt continued.

It's abundantly clear that Duquesne is

making a point of scheduling high-level competition for its non-league dates in the coming years. The program already does a phenomenal job of recruiting FBS transfers, boasting a roster littered with power conference transplants.

Future schedules marked with dates against some of college football's biggest names figure to only advance the Dukes' gridiron profile.

It will provide the team with opportunities for upset wins and big pay days, too.

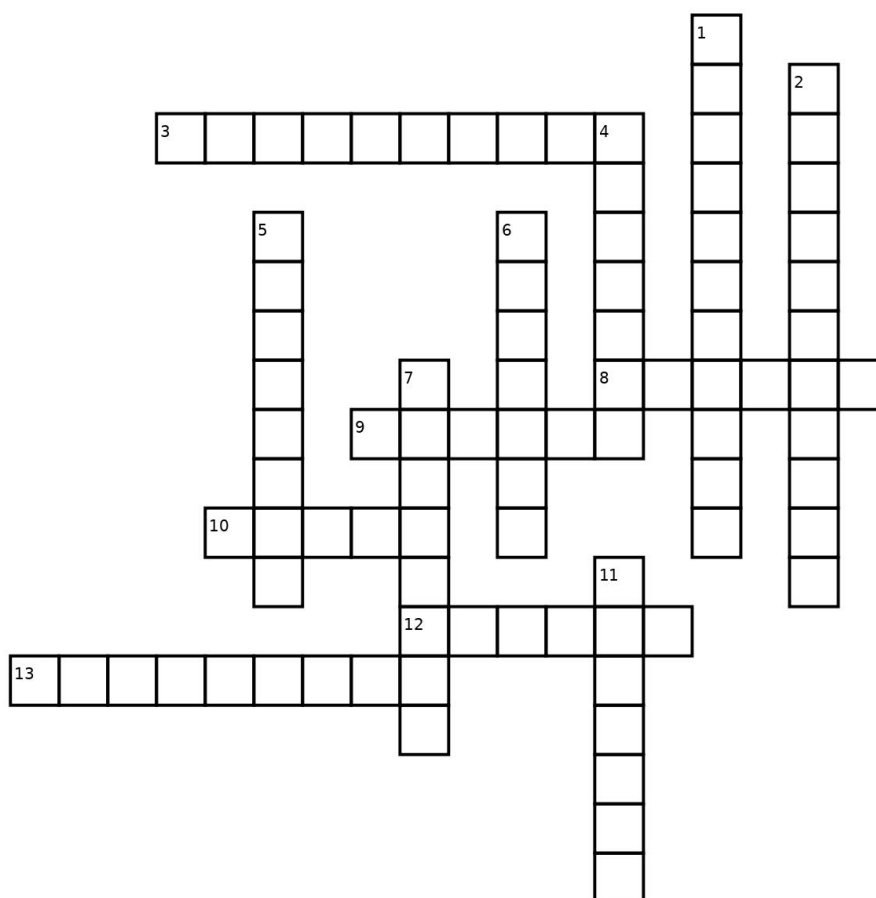
The Dominion Post (W.Va.) reported in 2018 that Duquesne's 2023 game at WVU will pocket the Dukes \$425,000.



COURTESY OF DUQUESNE ATHLETICS

Senior defensive back Spencer DeMedal prepares for a play last season against Long Island. Duquesne beat the Sharks, 21-14. Duquesne is set to host LIU for a home game on March 21.

Duquesne Basketball Crossword Challenge



Down:

1. DU WBB HC Dan Burt played college basketball at this D-II school in West Virginia (two words)
2. Name of Duquesne alum and the first Black man to be drafted into the NBA (two words)
4. Former Duquesne guard Aaron Jackson played for this NBA franchise during the 2018 playoffs
5. Last name of DU MBB's coach the last time it made the NCAA Tournament (in 1977)
6. This MLB team drafted DU men's hoops and baseball star Willie Somerset in 1966
7. Sport MBB HC Keith Dambrot played in college at Akron
11. Last name of DU WBB guard named to 2020-21 Preseason Atlantic 10 First Team

Across:

3. The DU women's hoops team has beaten this intra-city rival nine times in its last 11 meetings
8. West Coast-based school that former Duquesne standout forward Eric Williams Jr. transferred to in 2019
9. First Atlantic 10 opponent the DU MBB team defeated during Keith Dambrot's tenure
10. Last name of DU WBB all-time leading scorer... This player went on to enjoy a WNBA career
12. Duquesne left this athletic outfitter for Nike in 2017
13. Last name of former standout DU MBB player who eventually transferred to Arizona and now plays for the NBA's Indiana Pacers

Duquesne professor publishes full collection of poetry

CAPRI SCARCELLI
a&e editor

College life often keeps you from your creative pursuits, but it's never too late to put your name out there.

Matthew Ussia, a teaching associate professor at Duquesne University since 2013, has since shifted gears from his UCOR, creative writing and literature theory courses to publishing his own book of poetry, entitled *The Red Glass Cat*.

Ussia described the book as “juxtaposing beauty and ugliness without either apologizing to the other.”

At age 16, Ussia and his friends were in the process of getting a band together, where he would soon find his love for lyricism and then poetry. Getting to college and graduate school, however, Ussia said he did not make the time for his writing – taking a 20-year gap.

Now, however, Ussia has been named Allegheny County's Poet of the Week in City of Asylum's Sampsonia Way magazine as of Feb. 3 – his grand return to the world of creative writing.

“This poem I wrote when I was 36 finally came out right,” Ussia said. “There were two stanzas. The first person I showed [the poem] to was my Duquesne office-mate, who told me to cut the second stanza. I spent about five years trying to make that second stanza work. So when I was submitting it to City of Asylum's ‘All Pittsburghers are Poets,’ that was the moment when I realized that he was right, and now it's the poem of the week.”

Ussia said it felt like a “level-up” when his work started to get published; this sparked Ussia to go back and refine his past works, adding a new level of maturity and professionalism to the poetry.

Though getting back into a rhythm of writing was challenging, Ussia said that submitting his poems became “part of the process” of getting the ball rolling again.

“I took this long, meticulous route to doing it. I started sending some

poems out here and there to different websites, and it became the next step,” Ussia said. “And honestly when I started taking creative writing classes at Duquesne, I found that this counts as research toward professional development, so I thought ‘oh wait a minute, this is a part of the job? I can justify spending more time on this?’”

Ussia has a binder of over 100 poems that he, at a time, has only shown a few people close to him. When he found that there was an open call for Alien Buddha Press, he chose 70 of those poems to bring with him.

“I did it, and I did it without thinking too much about it,” Ussia said. “After red-shirting myself for long enough and putting this on the backburner, I thought, let's just send it in and see what happens, and no matter what, I will have what I consider to be a proper manuscript. And they liked it – I got it on the first try.”

According to Ussia, Alien Buddha Press has a reputation for fast publishing. Lo and behold, his poetry book was published a week and a half after introducing his manuscript – an unheard of feat in the creative writing profession.

“I think it's because I've ruminated over this collection for so long, the need for line-editing, revision or any of that was very little,” Ussia said. “I didn't necessarily even need to call someone in to review the work because I've done all of that over the years, and I think it's still abnormal and awesome that we've moved as quickly as we did.”

Putting it into perspective, Ussia said that he submitted a short story that took five weeks to publish, along with an anthology sent to Penn State on Jan. 15 that won't come out until 2025.

Ussia, with his recent success, was furthermore recommended to a poetry group that he considers to be a “meeting of minds,” giving opportunity for collaborative editing and workshop models for future works, giving him added exposure to the publishing world with Facebook



COURTESY OF MATTHEW USSIA

Professor Matthew Ussia's newly published poetry collection brings color to writing.

groups that share calls for submission. The group meets on Zoom once a month to compare and contrast their work.

“It's an interesting little roundtable. A friend ushered me in and honestly, I'm so honored to be surrounded by successful writers,” Ussia said. “You should always surround yourself with other creative people who want to do things and want to make things happen, because even when you're in a moment where you're uninspired, or you don't know what to do, you can look over and somebody whose art you like is making something happen and you can learn from it, it can drive you for-

ward. Writing is not solitary.”

Ussia emphasized how to “reflect on the process,” of poetry, saying that it takes time to adapt to writing anytime, anywhere, whether alone in a noiseless room or writing in crowded diners.

Giving advice to aspiring writers, Ussia said to “make time for your art” and “realize you are only racing yourself.”

“Have fun. It should be fun,” Ussia said. “And if it's not fun, make it somehow rewarding.”

Ussia's *The Red Glass Cat* can be purchased on Amazon or in a bookstore near you.

WEEK'S EVENTS

Lenten Fish Fry
Feb. 19 @ 11 a.m.-6p.m.

Go to the second floor of the Union for a full, \$12 meal including fish sandwich, coleslaw, mac n cheese, chips and a drink. All money goes toward the Children's Miracle Network Hospitals, courtesy of Phi Kappa Theta.

DPC DUNite: Epic Bingo
Feb. 19 @ 9 p.m.

Sign up for virtual bingo and pick up your bingo cards on the second floor of the Union! Prizes could include gift cards, game consoles and more!

UPCOMING RELEASES

I Care a Lot
Friday, Feb. 19th

A legal guardian appointed by the court defrauds her clients, but all actions have consequences.

Body Brokers
Friday, Feb. 19th

Two drug addicts from Ohio are brought to Los Angeles for treatment, but soon discover that rehab is actually a multi-billion dollar fraud operation that recruits addicts and offers them a small fortune in return for help in scheming.

CAPRI'S COMPLAINTS

I have too much free time and I don't think it's my fault

Duquesne used to be booming with on-campus events - and now there's crickets.

It's very hard to keep myself occupied in a pandemic, I'm so bored I'm running out of things to complain about.

I'm ahead on my school work and it's too cold to go safely explore Pittsburgh some more, so what now?
Sit in my dorm and rot?

I've been enjoying the few virtual events that pop up every once in awhile, and I would truly like more of those; they're silly and make me happy.

Bring more food to the NiteSpot!
Bring more crafts! More bingo!

-Capri Scarcelli

Final chapter of 'To All the Boys' franchise excites fans

BRAYLYN BRUNO
staff writer

On Friday we reached the final chapter in the *To All the Boys* franchise with the much anticipated release of *To All the Boys: Always and Forever* on Netflix. The third movie, starring Lana Condor (Lara Jean) and Noah Centineo (Peter), determines Lara Jean and Peter's future, post-graduation. The movie is bound to please fans as they get a deeper insight to Lara Jean and Peter's relationship and the intimate details that come with young love.

To All the Boys: Always and Forever is by far the most realistic movie in the franchise, making it more relatable for fans who have gone through high school romances and had similar experiences to

the on-screen couple. The practicality of the movie makes it less cliché than the first and second movies, strengthening the overall quality of the movie and plot.

This installment of the franchise has a more mature feel to it, as the characters are faced with tough decisions regarding their futures.

We say goodbye to the cheesy love triangles, instead bringing the attention to Lara Jean and her journey to self-discovery. Lara Jean must determine what she wants her life to look like after experiencing thought-provoking trips and events that make her question what her future has in store for her. The audience watches as Lara Jean prepares for adulthood, and thinks beyond the boundaries of high school. This shifts the direction of the movie from being about

boys, to being about a woman who is finding herself.

Due to the change in narrative, *To All the Boys: Always and Forever* is much more pleasing to sit through than the previous installment, *To All the Boys: P.S. I Still Love You*. The second movie painted Lara Jean as indecisive and unfair to those around her because she was too self-absorbed, and lost momentum for many fans of the *To All the Boys* films. It is nice to see Lara Jean no longer messing with the hearts of numerous boys for a change.

To All the Boys: Always and Forever has gotten the franchise back on track, capturing moments and characteristics the audience has not seen before. Peter displays vulnerability that was not evident in the other movies by putting his

emotions on full display, and the audience is able to see a more personal side of his family dynamic. Lara Jean's character is also developed more to show depth as to who she is and honing in on her decision-making process.

Teen rom-coms have a tendency to fizzle out when they try too hard to have numerous installments that do not hit the mark. However, the story of Lara Jean and Peter has kept the audience invested since day one, and by sticking true to the roots of the original story, they show that teen rom-coms can be successful as long as the story is delivered correctly.

The bittersweet ending to the franchise says goodbye to the characters and audience in a way that does justice to both, serving as a final love letter from Lara Jean.

Pittsburgh Ballet brings new, astonishing experience

GRIFFIN SENDEK
multimedia editor

Pittsburgh Ballet Theater captivated a live audience in the Carnegie Museum of Art over Valentine's Day weekend, in a brief, yet strikingly beautiful 15-minute performance.

Boléro, both the title of the show and the music piece chosen, was first open to Pittsburgh Ballet Theater (PBT) subscribers with each live performance limited to 25 people. Included with the tickets were passes to the rest of the Carnegie Museum of Art and Natural History.

Within the Carnegie Museum of Art, the showcase took place in the Hall of Sculpture -- a stark, yet elegant white marble room bordered by large marble statues along the second level balcony. Not only was this room gorgeous in its own right, but sur-

prisingly well-equipped for hosting a socially-distanced performance.

The audience, masked, stood spread out among the sculptures as the dancers performed on the floor below.

This setting made for an angle of viewing that is uncommon and in most cases impossible in a traditional theater. Witnessing the show from above was a new and unique experience that afforded the artistic director and choreographer, Susan Jaffe, to develop something truly unique.

While the show was safely distanced, this was still a far closer look at the dancers than most audiences would ever get the chance to see back at the Benedum Center. Being able to see the subtle movements and expressions of the dancers, even though their masks, was a key element to *Boléro*.

The men were dressed in pitch

black jumpsuits, followed by the women in a deep red. The costume's contrast with the bright white floor was absolute, helping to create impeccably striking images and movements within the choreography.

The main feature of the show was by far its soloists and duet couples. With *Boléro* being a Valentine's Day special, the heavy emphasis on the duets made fit perfectly. The couples continuously glided across the marble floor intertwined like lovers. They performed with sensuality and power. The show was romantic: evocative of love without being cutesy.

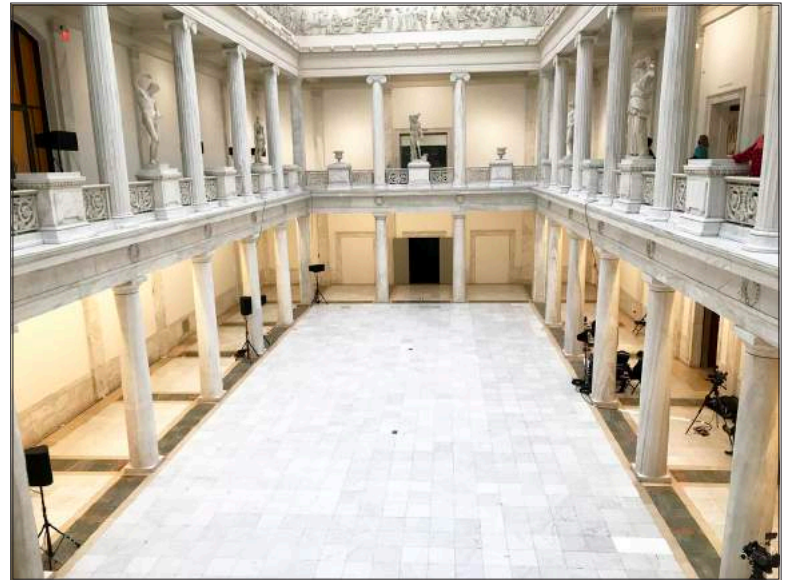
The way PBT's men lift their partners through the air as if they were as light as a feather is always a sight to behold and was on full display in *Boléro*.

The Hall of Sculpture not only had an impact on the viewing of the performance, but heavily influenced the choreography as well. The smooth marble floors were far too slippery for the dancers to wear their traditional pointe shoes and ballet flats; instead, they were in tennis shoes.

The change of footwear didn't diminish the quality of dance, but rather inspired different choices made with the steps performed.

The show was but a brief 15 minutes, but didn't feel short: The performance was completely enrapturing as the music continuously built to a crescendo and subsequent fiery finale. As the dancers scrambled off the floor and the speakers blared their last note, the show had come to a worthwhile and satisfying conclusion.

There was no room for excess in *Boléro*; every choice with the choreography needed to be deliberate and necessary, and that was presently clear with every step the dancers took.



As PBT adjusts to the venue, they give audiences a brand new viewing experience.



COURTESY OF KELLY PERKOVICH

Duet couple Lucius Kirst and Hannah Carter take center-stage in the Hall of Sculpture in the Carnegie Museum of Art.

Pittsburgh Ballet Theater has done well to adapt to the pandemic - from keeping their dancers conditioned with Zoom rehearsals through the summer, prerecorded online showcases and building outdoor stages, PBT has found ways to keep the art of ballet alive in the city.

Boléro, however, is a new first for PBT through COVID. Previous shows remained within small groups, mainly consisting of duets or groups no greater than five. *Boléro* consisted of 14 dancers: two soloists, three couples, three ladies, and three gentlemen. Dancing in groups and in front of audiences is such a crucial piece of what makes ballet, ballet, and has been so deeply missed by the dancers of PBT.

Though this show is still far different than anything PBT had produced in previous years, company-member Christian Garcia Campos described performing in *Boléro* as a refreshing

return to form.

"It was definitely such a rush. After the first performance and we were like bowing to the audience; I definitely felt teary-eyed" Garcia Campos said. "I definitely could feel that audience was also excited to be watching a show again."

The open-standing setting of the audience area allowed for a little girl to do what all little girls must dream of when watching the ballet. No longer confined to a seat; she had room to dance and sway her red and black checkered dress back and forth, blissfully daydreaming of being a ballerina just like the dancers below.

Eventually, the girl's mother put a stop to her daughters dancing out of fear of the girl being a distraction. Slight distraction it may have been, but an endearing moment all the same that proves the magical moment's art like *Boléro* can create.

Duquesne alumnus entertains with historical podcast

RIO SCARCELLI
staff writer

For anyone familiar with Comedy Central's "Drunk History," there is excitement to be had for a similarly-styled podcast made by Duquesne alumnus Zachary DeBacco: "Drinks with Great Minds in History," or DGMH.

The podcast made its debut online April 9, 2020 and has been producing bi-weekly uploads ever since.

The show, which is recorded, produced and scripted by DeBacco, takes its time to highlight individual members of history under a listener-friendly and wittier scope. All the while, the show is christened with "a cocktail of history, sarcasm and... cocktails!" as listed on the podcast's Instagram.

Pursuing a Master of Arts in History at Duquesne in 2014, DeBacco spent his college years simultaneously working late hours as a bartender in Pittsburgh. In growing a passion for history, he was also a master of his "craft" in finding a love for mixing drinks.

"My love for cocktail making,

for that industry and for history go hand in hand. I would come home from grad school at 8:30 p.m. go to work at 10 till sometimes 4 a.m.," DeBacco said. "They were simultaneous loves of my life at the time and I wanted to take that with me."

In what Zachary called his "simple philosophy," the aim of the podcast was clear and the ideas were in place ever since his time as a graduate student. He felt history should be fun for everyone, and so it took on the sophistication of a show that scholars and the average person alike could understand and enjoy.

As a history teacher in South Florida, the dream to educate people was possible, but the schedule to do so was not so lenient. This is why the podcast started around the first COVID-19 quarantine.

"It was born out of the pandemic because teachers have no time for podcasts. I was able to get started with it now, it's the one where I can manage it on a weekly basis," DeBacco said.

For an average script of one episode, DeBacco estimates that the paper would be 10-15 pages

in length. Aside from writing the script, the amount of research and specificity that comes to recording and editing that goes along with podcasting makes for a large time commitment, considering the relatively bi-weekly uploading schedule.

Regardless, this is a project made out of passion. This podcast sees viewers from America, Canada, Britain, Australia and even Malaysia. By getting the word out and entertaining people through something he loves, DeBacco finds the most pride in his work to teach.

"It sparks joy and passion for history and people that never knew they could have it," DeBacco said.

Within DGMH's content, the show spans history's greatest minds from Joseph Stalin to Alexander Hamilton. Episodes tend to take a more subjective and detailed analysis on the way that these people both existed and were portrayed.

"I teach people to not take history at face value. It is an intricate web and should be treated as such," DeBacco said.

One of DeBacco's loves is pre-

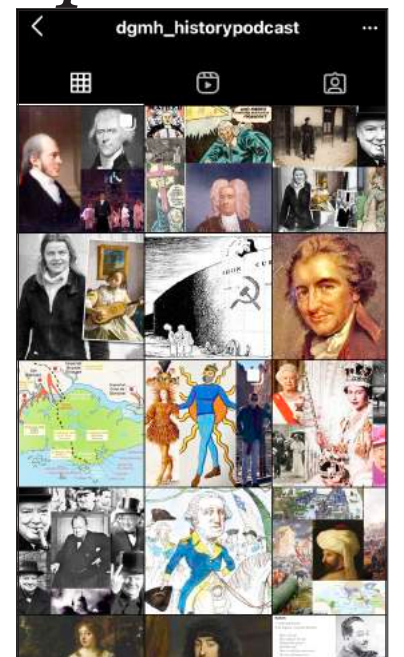
sending stark opinions through his many show segments such as "The Piece of S**t Curve," "A Twist of Psych" and "A Shot Heard 'Round the World." All of these episodes provide variation in the content and a different viewpoint on the way that history has portrayed such infamous people.

While DeBacco's work is mostly done alone, he has done many collaborations with some of his own former teachers, historians and even best-selling authors: all in hopes to do more in the future. By getting a collaborative perspective, DeBacco felt it made for much more interesting conversation.

Banter does not solely exist within the episodes for DeBacco, but also on his social media accounts.

"Social media is the best way to interact with viewers and I find it really important to help stimulate my growth," DeBacco said.

DGMH can be found on Instagram @dgmh_historypodcast, Twitter @dgmhpodcast as well as the Facebook group Drinks with Great Minds in History. The



COURTESY OF ZACHARY DEBACCO

DGMH makes history fun for listeners.

podcast itself can be streamed on Apple, Spotify, Google and Podchaser. For more information go visit <https://www.podpage.com/drinks-with-great-minds-in-history/>.

Trump's acquittal not surprising

from ACQUITTAL— page 4

at the hearing confirms that Trump was responsible — and it did not begin with the rally on Jan 6. To me, one of the most compelling pieces of evidence was the time that Trump applauded, via Twitter, the people who attempted to run a Biden campaign bus off an interstate.

Or what about the time Trump retweeted a video in which a man said, "The only good Democrat is a dead Democrat?" You can tell me all day long that that man's words were taken out of context. I will not believe you. Whether he meant a dead person or a dead party, it is unacceptable, and the fact that Trump had the audacity to retweet it speaks volumes about his maturity and his capability to ever take office again.

Speaking of violence to Democrats, we all know that is why those insurrectionists broke into the Capitol. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to understand why the man who sat at House Speaker Pelosi's desk had a stun gun on him. Or why a gallows was set up outside the building.

Of course this was planned in advance. But it was planned in advance due to the culmination of Trump's fear

mongering, pushing of baseless conspiracy theories and violent remarks that caused his followers to do what they did.

He should have been held accountable, but once again he was not.

And that is thanks to the Grand Old Party, which is composed of nothing but spineless politicians who are supposed to protect this country from exactly what happened on Jan. 6. They are too concerned about the fate of their dying party, and the rising feeling among young people in this country that they are on their way out.

I applaud the seven Republican senators who did what was obviously the right thing. It is brave to break apart from something so toxic when the majority is doing something else, but these seven exercised their civic duty by doing what they could so the corruptness, ineptitude and evil that is Trump may never make his way back into the White House.

Instead of doing what is right for the people of this country and protecting us from another siege of what has been deemed ours for the past 245 years, the rest of the Senate Republicans chose to protect their party, and the leader who made this all happen.

May it never happen again.

Ableism in the film industry

from STAFFED -- page 4

You can't make everyone happy. That's known in the film world. But if the target audience is autistic teenagers, why not listen to what they have to say? There's been backlash on this movie since film production started, which would've given Sia ample time to make modifications to her work, or reconsider her casting — maybe even consider that she put a young actress on a pedestal for backlash,

knowing that this could hurt her career.

It must be difficult for neurodivergent performers to put themselves out there if they aren't considered for neurotypical roles, whilst also not being casted in neurodivergent roles that they would be much more qualified for than the same go-to actors and actresses.

Hopefully Hollywood continues to diversify the film industry; however, that should include those on the spectrum, too.

Oh, and Sia: Stick to "Elastic Hearts."

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- Text "PA" to 741-741
- Get Help Now: 1-800-662-HELP (4357)

Duquesne Resources

- DU Cares: gittinsd@duq.edu
- Counseling & Wellbeing Center: 412-396-6204
- Health Services: 412-396-1650
- Campus Ministry: 412-396-6020

Message brought to you by DU Cares with funds from the PA Dept. of Drug & Alcohol Programs (DDAP)

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