

Shared connections and shared concerns

By: **Lauren Campbell**, Staff Writer



The title wall for Shared Concerns in the Verostko Center of Art.
(SOURCE: CAMPBELL)

New year, new exhibition! The Verostko Center of the Arts at Saint Vincent College (SVC) has officially released its latest exhibition, Shared Concerns. The production features pieces of twelve artists from the Associated Artists of Pittsburgh (AAP), paired with selections from the Saint Vincent Art & Heritage Collections.

The Associated Artists of Pittsburgh, which has over 600 members, is an arts organization that showcases artists from residents of Pittsburgh through programs in the community and contemporary exhibitions at SVC. Featured artists and members of AAP include Sandra Bacchi, Tony Cavalline, Eun-su Kang, Clayton Merrell, Mary Kay Neff, S.C., Adalberto Ortiz, Marian Phillips, Patrick Schmidt, Nicole Renee Ryan, Evan Rumble, Silvija Singh, and Sarah Tancred.

The exhibition aims to show how artists have communicated to their viewers what is under threat and overlooked in our world, both yesterday and today. The pieces on display vary in art mediums, including paintings, sculptures, and photographs, all paired with a piece from SVC's collection that matches visually or in meaning. The official description reads, "Regardless of style or training, artists are compelled to make work that records the world, others to escape from it, and still others to identify alternative futures. Taken collectively, these pieces animate tradition, push the boundaries of abstraction, foreground the experiences of women and girls, and stress the mounting ecological crisis."

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Swift Serenades

By: **Elizabeth Van Pilsum**,
Arts and Culture Editor

What does Taylor Swift have in common with Saint Vincent College's Office of Student Affairs and Title IX Office? They all discuss the nature of healthy and unhealthy relationships. February is Dating Violence Awareness Month, and to raise awareness about the complicated dynamics of relationships, the Office of Student Affairs and the Title IX Office are hosting a series of small dinners to encourage student discussion. Each dinner will be inspired by a different music artist and examine how their music represents elements of relationships.

The dinner series kicked off with a discussion entitled "Swift Serenades: Nourishing Healthy Connections" and it centered around Taylor Swift's music. "Swift Serenades" took place in Anselm Hall on Feb. 5 at 5:00 p.m. and was a celebration of all things Swift. Attendees made friendship bracelets as is a custom of those attending Swift's Eras Tour and were treated to a Parkhurst-catered dinner of Swift's favorite foods, including her famous chai sugar cookies. Around 5:30, the discussion leader Angel Scalomogna, Residence Hall Director of Bonaventure Hall and graduate student pursuing a masters degree in Curriculum and Instruction, began to play six of Swift's songs and analyze the lyrics to initiate discourse on the relationship dynamics.

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ARTS AND CULTURE

Verostko Center Launches “Shared Concerns” Exhibit

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Helen Gerardia's piece Country Church from 1956 (left), paired with Adalberto Ortiz's Celestial from 2017 (right). (SOURCE: CAMPBELL)



A collection of photos from Sandra Bacchi's Watermelons Are Not Strawberries, 2022. (SOURCE: CAMPBELL)

“I’m interested in the ways artists adapt tradition as a means to navigate the present moment,” said Andrew Julo, director and curator of the Verostko Center. “While the artists featured in this exhibition live under very different circumstances, employ different methods of making, and entertain a range of concepts in their work, they’re building upon the creative efforts of those that preceded them. Shared Concerns is an opportunity for members of the Saint Vincent community to draw their own connections between objects from the past and those created by contemporary artists.”

Julo had high praise for the artists on display, who had met with him over Zoom last fall to discuss ideas for the exhibition. Julo also emphasized the importance of art evolution and invited viewers to see modern and contemporary art works through the pieces before them.

“It’s no surprise that contemporary art can sometimes be confounding to viewers. My hope is that by placing a recently completed work by a regional artist next to a different artwork from 50 years ago or even 500 years ago, viewers see art-making as part of a long continuum. What motivated someone to make something 50 or even 500 years ago is often not entirely different impulse for artists today,” Julo said. “Part of our mission at the Verostko Center is to invite folks to consider the motivations and concerns of artists. Shared Concerns is a way of having a conversation between creatives across time and geographic distances.”

Shared Concerns is on view from Jan. 25 to April 5.

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Discussing healthy relationships with Taylor Swift

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Angel Scalamogna led the discussion analyzing Swift's lyrics to determine lessons on healthy and unhealthy relationships.
(SOURCE: SVC WELLNESS CENTER INSTAGRAM)

"I think having a talk on how Taylor Swift's discography represents healthy and unhealthy relationships is something that can be really helpful for students to connect to," Scalamogna said. "Her lyrical prose and the emotions she touches upon in her songs feature the beautiful aspects of relationships as well as the ugly sides. Taylor has been growing up alongside us, and her music serves as a reminder of how intricate and complex human relationships are."

Scalamogna chose the songs "All of the Girls You Loved Before," "New Year's Day," and "You are in Love" to represent healthy relationships. Scalamogna led discussion among attendees to discuss qualities of healthy relationships showcased in those songs, such as trust, sticking around for the rockier or boring parts of the relationship, and seeing one's partner as a best friend. The songs "All Too Well," "illicit affairs," and "You're Losing Me" represented qualities of unhealthy relationships. Attendees discussed the problems with feeling insignificant or unlovable in relationships and how hurtful it is to attach one's whole self-worth to a relationship. Scalamogna and Eileen Flinn, Title IX Coordinator, stressed that these lessons could be applied to any kind of relationship, not just romantic, and that it is important to understand these dynamics to have functioning relationships.

"Through her music, we are able to relate to the highs and lows of connections, reflecting on our own misfortune and losses—as well as our mistakes," Scalamogna said. "We are also able to experience the intense feelings of love and support expressed in words, which is something we are oftentimes unable to do."

Vincent Kaschauer, junior biochemistry major, attended the dinner.

"I really enjoyed revisiting songs I loved in a meaningful conversation," Kaschauer said. "Everyone brought something to the table, everyone highlighted different lyrics, but we still had a good understanding of what it means to have a healthy relationship."

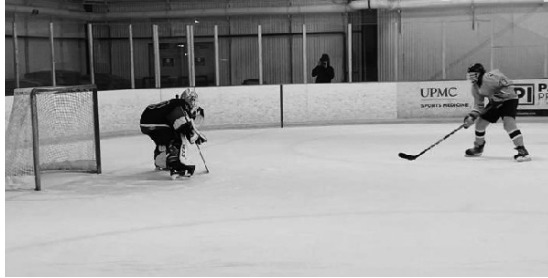
The dinner series has been successful so far, and has contin

ued through the rest of the month of February. On Feb. 12, there was a dinner on AJR's music titled "Entering and Examining Our Relationships with Boundaries," led by Perpetua Fischer, junior psychology and theology major. On Feb. 19, Flinn led a dinner discussion called "The Relationship Journey" that focused on the music of Darius Rucker and Hootie and the Blowfish. Dr. Anthony Kane, Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students, will lead the final dinner, which will take place on Feb. 26. That dinner is called "The Stages of Love and Relationships" and is focused on Beyonce's music. All students and faculty are welcomed and encouraged to attend.

SPORTS

Unstoppable on the ice

By: John Syms, Part Time Staff Writer



Nikolas Manolakas's game winning goal against RMU on Jan. 28. (SOURCE: SVCHOCKEY.ORG)



Goalie Vincent Amatucci blocks shot against WVU forward. (SOURCE: @SVCHOCKEY INSTAGRAM)

After defeating West Virginia University (WVU) 9-0 on Feb. 4 at the Palmer Imaging Arena in Delmont, Pa., the Saint Vincent College (SVC) Men's Ice Hockey team extended their winning streak to six straight games. As of Feb. 8, the Bearcats' record is 11-3, having won 10 of their last 12 games. They are second in the College Hockey East (CHE) conference.

In the fourteen games that SVC played this season, they scored 68 goals and only allowed 28, the lowest number allowed in the CHE.

Despite being in second place behind IUP, the Bearcats managed to defeat the Crimson Hawks 6-4 on Sept. 30, at the S&T Bank Arena in Indiana, Pa. That was the first game that SVC played as well. Unfortunately, the team would succumb to IUP on Dec. 1, when they lost to the Crimson Hawks 2-4, their last loss of the season so far.

In the last six games that the Bearcats won, they managed to score thirty-one goals, with Nathan Loughner, freshman business administration major, leading the team with seventeen goals. Loughner additionally scored four goals during the Bearcat victory against the Mountaineers.

The hockey team has three games left in the season before they enter the CHE tournament. They face off against Duquesne on Feb. 9, Case Western on Feb. 16, and Pitt Johnstown on Feb. 18, all teams which they have beaten this season.

Logan Connelly, senior psychology major, has said that the season has been going very well.

"We have played well and really bonded as a team, and we really are a family and that shows in our play," Connelly said.

Connelly has scored eight goals for the Bearcats this season and

felt good about the victory against WVU.

"Throughout this year our team struggled to put teams away after getting a lead, but I thought our team kept our foot on the gas and finished the game well with a 9-0 victory."

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

Nothing but net

By: Alwyn Jimmy, *Part Time Staff Writer*



Fans look on as Taylor McNeal takes a free throw
(SOURCE: JIMMY)

They say it's the fine margins that separate the losers from the winners, and this was proven once again as Saint Vincent College (SVC) found a way past Washington & Jefferson (W&J) to clinch the 18th 20-win season in program history.

In a game that was far from comfortable for the Bearcats, it ultimately came down to the final moments as the visitors piled on the pressure. A collective gasp of relief accompanied the final buzzer as W&J missed a three-point attempt with the last throw of the ball.

Irrespective of how they got there, this was an important win for SVC. With it, the Bearcats have secured at least the two-seed, along with an extremely important home advantage for the semifinal game, in the upcoming Presidents' Athletic Conference (PAC) championship tournament, scheduled to start on Thursday, Feb. 22.

Led by Head Coach Don Paul Harris, the Bearcats have set their sights on the fast-approaching playoffs. Regarding the W&J game, Harris felt it was good game throughout.

"I thought we started the game well against W&J. We always like to see our seniors go out with a win. Fortunately for us, we will be hosting a game for the playoffs. It came down to the wire, but we expected that from W&J as we eliminated them from playoffs."

In his second season in this stretch in charge of the team, Harris believes that this has already been a successful year and points to the team's home atmosphere as a big advantage.

"This year's season has been one of the most successful in the history of the program by wins. We broke the school record of 17 straight wins. We are still a very young team. One of the key contributors has been our attendance. The games have been very popular, and we have added some fantastic giveaways to bolster student support and have some fun on campus. We hope to do this with all other sports on campus as well."

When asked about his team's chances in the playoffs, and whether they will be able to go all the way, he said, "Yes, we feel strongly that we will

make a deep run into March. We have hit our goal of winning 20 games. We are in a close race to win the PAC with Geneva. That is the best team Geneva have had in 30 years, so we are proud of the season that we have had. Our strategy won't change – we're going to stick with what has worked with us. We may tap deeper into our bench to rest some of our main guys the next two games, but that is about it."

Finally, when asked about the biggest challenge his players will have to overcome in the playoffs Harris says he feels it is about controlling emotions and playing together.

"When we make it about 'us', and not about 'me', we are extremely good. However, with the young team that we have, sometimes it gets difficult to get past yourself. I am very proud of our players' accomplishments, but we still have work to do. Our biggest advantage is our students. We have the loudest gym in the PAC and the best fans – we would love to continue growing it."

With excitement building and the days ticking down, one thing is certain. Regardless of what happens, the Bearcats are ready to give their all, leave everything on the court and try achieving a dream ending to this spectacular season.

Team Standings

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Team	W	L	Streak
W&J	22	2	W13
Chatham	21	3	W6
Allegheny	13	11	L1
Bethany	13	11	W4
Geneva	12	13	W1
Westminster	12	11	L1
Saint Vincent	12	12	W1
Grove City	11	13	L1
Waynesburg	5	19	W1
Franciscan	4	20	L6
Thiel	0	24	L24

SCHEDULE: RESULTS PENDING

MEN'S BASKETBALL

Team	W	L	Streak
Geneva	22	3	W2
Saint Vincent	21	3	W3
Chatham	16	8	W6
Waynesburg	13	11	W1
Grove City	13	11	W2
Westminster	10	13	L3
Bethany	8	16	L4
Thiel	8	16	W1
W&J	8	16	L2
Franciscan	8	15	L2
Allegheny	6	18	L1

SCHEDULE: PAC 2/22 7 PM (CHECK WEBSITE FOR OPPONENT)

WOMEN'S SWIMMING

Team	W	L	Streak
Grove City	6	2	W4
Saint Vincent	8	2	W5
Franciscan	8	2	W1
Westminster	3	6	L3
W&J	3	7	W1
Allegheny	2	7	W1
Chatham	1	7	L6
Bethany	1	9	L8

SCHEDULE: @KENYON COLLEGE 2/24

MEN'S SWIMMING

Team	W	L	Streak
Grove City	6	2	W4
Saint Vincent	5	4	W4
Westminster	3	6	L3
Chatham	1	6	L5
W&J	2	7	W1
Allegheny	1	7	W1
Bethany	0	7	L7

SCHEDULE: @KENYON COLLEGE 2/24

MEN'S WRESTLING

Team	W	L	Streak
Thiel	4	2	L2
Saint Vincent	4	7	W3
W&J	5	10	W2
Waynesburg	2	17	W1

SCHEDULE: @REGIONALS 3/1 - 3/2

RESULTS: @PAC CHAMPIONSHIPS, 1ST OF 4

*Correct as of 2/16/24

NEWS

Free will and belief in God

By: Elizabeth Van Pilsum, *Arts and Culture Editor*



Dr. Hochschild visited SVC from Mount St. Mary's University to speak on free will and belief in God. (SOURCE: BRINGMAN)



This lecture was SVC's Thomistic Institute's second lecture ever and it had a good turnout. (SOURCE: BRINGMAN)

Since the founding of Saint Vincent College's (SVC) Thomistic Institute chapter in 2023, the chapter has aimed to host guest speakers. On Feb. 6, the chapter welcomed its second lecturer, Dr. Joshua Hochschild, philosophy professor at Mount St. Mary's University in Emmitsburg, Maryland.

Hochschild's research primarily focuses on medieval logic, metaphysics, and ethics, and he also is widely consulted on matters of Thomism, which is the study of Thomas Aquinas. He frequently travels across the country to give lectures on these topics, and SVC was one such college that provided him with a platform. Sophie Bringman, junior philosophy and politics major, is the co-president of SVC's Thomistic Institute chapter and said that the Institute provided the chapter with a list of approved speakers that give lectures from Thomistic perspective. It is the chapter's job to select speakers that will generate the most interest on campus, and they have been planning on hosting Hochschild since 2023.

"As our second lecture, it means a lot that we were able to schedule him and that we got such great turnout as well," Bringman said. "We send attendance reports back to our supervisor at the main branch, so being able to report such a successful event is important for our stability at SVC."

Hochschild's talk was titled "Free Will and Belief in God: Understanding Human Action and Divine Providence." He opened with discussing how mankind has a love of desirable things that is planted into our nature. Mankind cannot stop ourselves from wanting things, but the fact that we can control our behavior when we want things points to the ability to exercise free will. Hochschild said that he thinks the will's orientation to good is from God, freedom is the power to fulfill the orientation to good, and that judging what is good depends on exercising reason.

Hochschild indicated that there are problems modern thinkers take up with free will. Thinkers like Sam Harris consider the notion of free will incompatible with reality because for him, free will would imply that we could control our thoughts and actions as well as all their influences. Hochschild considers perspectives such as

those to be reductionistic, and that classical questions of free will create a richer discussion. In classical thought, free will and human reason were thought to come from God.

"Once we attend to human rationality, it is a natural step to assume there is a divine rationality which bestowed us with reason," Hochschild said.

"Is free will compatible with belief in God? Historically, a conception of God has made it easier, not harder, to conceive of human beings as having free will because it allows a notion of causality which is shared or participated in and according to reasoning is a distinct kind of power," Hochschild said. "Without this conception of reality, the only imaginable metaphors for human agency diminish us to amoral animals [or] passive puppets.... Freedom of will depends on intelligibility of action. When action is no longer intelligible there is no place for free will, only for randomness and the illusion of choice."

Hochschild's final point was to touch on Aquinas's view of free will, as viewed through the lenses of scholars. Scholars concluded that Aquinas believed free will and human reason work together. Hochschild concluded by reiterating that having a conception of causality where free will is compatible with God allows for more interesting understanding of human nature where we participate in free will as opposed to being mere puppets.

"I think the event went well," Bringman said. "We had a great turnout, an active 'Q and A' period after the lecture, and we received a lot of positive feedback from the attendees."

Those interested in attending future Thomistic Institute events may visit thomisticinstitute.org for more information. To be involved in SVC's chapter, one can email sophia.bringman@stvincent.edu or silvana.rocco@stvincent.edu.

Council of club presidents develops

By: Tanner Adomaitis, *Staff Writer*



The Wall of Clubs in the Carey Student Center near the Wellness Center. (SOURCE: ADOMAITIS)

Saint Vincent College (SVC) has many student-run clubs covering interests from ping pong, to beekeeping, to nursing. At the beginning of every fall semester, students can tour the Involvement Fair (formerly known as the Club Fair) and learn about and sign up for clubs that interest them as well as other aspects of life on campus. Now, on the wall near the Wellness Center in the Carey Student Center, there is the Wall of Clubs where students can see all of the clubs on campus as well as who to contact to get involved with a club no matter the time in the semester.

Gabrielle Bricker, the Graduate Coordinator of Student activities, is in charge of all clubs and works closely with Deanna Wicks in the Campus Life office to run Activities Programming Board (APB) and Orientation events. Bricker graduated in the spring of 2023 after earning a Bachelor of Science in psychology and is now pursuing her master's in counseling education with the goal of being a School Counselor. While earning her undergraduate degree, Bricker was heavily involved with APB and was an Orientation Leader along with several clubs.

Bricker continues the legacy of the Council of Presidents (COP), which is a group of students who are the presidents of their respective clubs, whether they started their own club or are continuing an existing club.

"We have about 60 clubs on campus, give or take a few depending on the semester as they fluctuate. The Council of Presidents is where all of the club presidents come and meet once a month and we go over important information, like Spring Family Weekend, and it is a way for them to collaborate with other clubs," Bricker said.

Bricker also pioneered the idea for the Wall of Clubs as a way for

students to learn about all the opportunities and maybe gain inspiration to start their own club.

"Here in the Campus Life hallway, we always say it's important to be involved in at least two things," Bricker said. "Whether that's a sport and a club or two clubs. We have so many options and ways for students to get involved and sometimes students don't know that's the case."

There are new clubs that rise every semester, but there are also some clubs that go away for a little bit. Bricker encourages students to start their own clubs to fulfill an interest or niche that they don't feel is represented. By going to the Clubs and Organizations page on the portal, students can find the New Club Authorization form, fill it out, and slide it under Bricker's door in the Campus Life hallway to get started.

"It's a way to find your home here at Saint Vincent and I know that a lot of students feel that they have found a similar passion among people in their club," Bricker said. "If you don't see a club that you're interested in, make a club that you're interested in. There's a fast turnaround in how long it takes to make a club."

Bricker recommends getting involved through clubs, sports, and attending APB events, emphasizing that you don't have to be a club president to be involved but it is a great way to lead a legacy.

"There's so many ways and outlets to find your little family here. Being involved is how you make the most of your time in college."

Gold to dollars to treasury

By: **Tanner Adomaitis**, *Staff Writer*



Dr. Joshua Hendrickson gives a guest lecture for CPET.
(SOURCE: ADOMAITIS)

On Feb. 7, Dr. Joshua Hendrickson of the University of Mississippi visited Saint Vincent College (SVC) to give a talk for the Center for Political and Economic Thought (CPET). Hendrickson's talk, titled *The Future of the U.S. Dollar*, follows his line of work as an associate professor of economics and chair of the Economics Department at the University of Mississippi and his research focus within monetary economics and historical economic development.

Hendrickson began by offering the term 'treasury standard' to describe the monetary system of the United States (U.S.) and how the U.S. uses the position of the U.S. dollar as the reserve currency to issue bonds in exchange for goods and services. His talk would focus on the costs of the treasury standard and predict the implications for the future of the dollar, before branching off to discuss the origins of the system.

"The Federal Reserve has a monopoly over the supply of currency," Hendrickson said. "This is true of central banks around the world, and this is true around the world. This government monopoly over money actually dates back to Ancient Greece. The system is not new, it's been around a long time."

Hendrickson discussed the two competing theories of the emergence of money with one being that money came about spontaneously for the ease of trade and for trust, while the other argues that money would not exist without the government. He followed this with why the state would choose to monopolize money to generate revenue rather than other materials due to such monopolies failing after a short time compared to a monopoly over the production of currency.

"How and why is this monopoly so durable? My argument is that it has to do with emergency financing," Hendrickson said. "All these other forms of monopolies can get you revenue, but the monopoly on money can generate revenue for the government quickly. Why would you want that? In case you are in war. Historically governments have discovered that this is a way that they can pay for war."

Hendrickson also noted the additional benefit of a monopoly over money is the protection against a revolution from a competitor within the industry due to the swift revenue generation. He also touched on the crime of counterfeiting, which is considered a form of treason, and how the crime

can only be considered treason if the monopoly over the production of currency is necessary for national security and defense.

Throughout his talk, Hendrickson discussed the gold standard, governmental control over inflation and deflation in war times, and the volatility of alternate options to the dollar, such as Bitcoin. Hendrickson also returned to his term the 'treasury standard' to explain the U.S.'s foreign relations.

"The real birth of the treasury standard is when they want their gold back, the United States starts using diplomacy and argues that since the U.S. is offering protection, they should hold onto the dollars," Hendrickson said.

Hendrickson began to conclude his talk by explaining how the U.S. achieved its goal of holding the global reserve currency but as a result, incentives have been created that lead to unsustainable debt levels, and how such debt levels lead to steep economic costs. Hendrickson claimed that the death of the dollar is long in the future, and that even with the unsustainable system of the treasury standard, it does not mean that something is imminent of that the problems can't be solved.

Hendrickson's talk concluded with questions from the audience regarding the treasury standard. For those interested, the next CPET lecture will be held Feb. 21, and will feature Dr. Stephen Knott giving a talk titled *Coming to Terms with John F. Kennedy*.

OPINION

We cannot forget children in the school choice debate

By: Sean Callahan, *Editor-in-Chief*

From second through sixth grade, I was best friends with a boy I will call Jim. Jim did very well socially. He had an inner circle of friends, both in our neighborhood and at the elementary school we attended. We also had several mutual friends and hung out as a group on many occasions. Truthfully, I would have even considered him much more popular than I was at the time. Whereas I struggled to fit in and appear ‘normal’, Jim had no problem just being himself. Then, sometime in third grade, I couldn’t find him at recess, at lunch, or at gym class. After visiting him that week, I discovered the truth: Jim was now being homeschooled.

At the time, the concept had puzzled me. How do you do school from home? I discovered Jim’s parents helped him learn the different school subjects, and if he chose to continue homeschool beyond the elementary level, he could consider an online homeschool program. Jim had not been forced into it. He and his parents had talked with each other and with school staff. From what I remember, Jim struggled to focus in general, especially academically. He and his family had nothing against those who decided to pursue public or private school. But Jim did not feel like teachers were helping him be successful, and he was not a fan of school itself. Furthermore, his family did not have the money to commit to private tutors or private school itself. By third grade, Jim agreed with his parents that a change was needed.

Although he ultimately transferred back to public school for high school, Jim and his parents saw another option that they felt was most beneficial for his education and took it.

I could never envision myself in Jim’s position. Homeschool sounds scary to me, even now. How do you envision your parents’ as your ultimate teachers of everything? Perhaps, one could argue my belief of this comes down to how I was raised. I mostly disagree. I don’t think I would like how much power my parents had, and how constrained I would feel

being at home for everything—fun, mealtimes, sleep, and socialization and education. I thrive off structure but also freedom, and occasional changes in environment. I think homeschool would drive me crazy. It has nothing to do with my parents—whom I love very much. It has everything to do with me, Sean the person. But Jim the person is not Sean the person. What he needed was very different from what I needed.

My order sister had attended a high school in our hometown, Hagerstown, called Barbara Ingram School for the Arts (BISFA). People often mistake it for a private school. But it is a public school, free and open to enrollment for any 8th grader. The catch is: you audition for a specific art you enjoy to be eligible for enrollment. Then, you must be accepted to the program to be enrolled at BISFA. My sister was accepted for dance. Other options were various forms of theatre, vocal performance, visual arts, instrumental, and creative writing. For these reasons, it is a small high school that can be extremely competitive to get into.

Looking back, I can safely say that I was not scared into applying for creative writing at BISFA because of some social fear of regular public schools. In fact, I was afraid I was not good enough for art school, and I was afraid of missing out at a regular high school. Although I was not fond of many sports, I was considering my local Catholic high school, because I knew I could be a good runner. That school had a great track and cross-country program. Additionally, my other sister and several friends I knew were attending my regular local high school. There was a lot at stake, and my parents were not shy in expressing similar concerns. However, I am thankful for how this conversation of school choice went because it centered the important question: Did I like to write that much? In other words: is this the education that best fits Sean the person?

I could write on forever about why my high school was the best choice. But instead, I want

to drive home the point in telling these two stories.

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in an irreversible, undisputable shakeup regarding the education system. Multiple experts cited in news sources agree that homeschool rates have increased dramatically and have remained steady since the onset of the pandemic. The Washington Post claimed, via an Oct. 2023 graphic, that homeschool enrollment has increased 51 percent nationally, while a Fox News 2022 article claimed that this number had reached as high as over 60 percent.

The Post article explains that prior to the pandemic, even as early as 2012, homeschooling was still largely a movement dominated by religious people who leaned politically conservative. But it has slowly gained popularity with people outside those groups, and now, it is equally as popular with liberals as it is conservative.

The Post describes parents across the political spectrum realizing that homeschool is more beneficial for their children’s education than public school, especially when it comes to children with disabilities, attention deficits, or dealing with perceived inefficient public schools.

However, other reasons for the homeschool increase still include a perceived narrative of ‘public schools indoctrinating children into being liberal’, and dissatisfaction with strictness of COVID policies. This pertains primarily to many conservative religious parents. But an examination of Hillsborough County, Florida, homeschool capital of the United States, shows how complicated the reasons for homeschooling can be. According to the Post, there are parents in Hillsborough who view the public schools as liberal indoctrinating, but there are also parents who feel Florida’s Governor, Ron DeSantis, is treating the public schools too harshly, therefore they are afraid to send their children to public school.

Continued on page 11

I believe that the pandemic, overall, has resulted in parents and children examining the education system more closely. Research across different news outlets has shown that most American attitudes towards homeschool have become more positive, less politically motivated. Most importantly, it has become more about what the child wants, and protecting children. On a moral level, the country seems to agree on two things. Firstly, homeschooling needs more regulation and guidelines to make it consistently effective and safe. Secondly, public education needs lots of changes. What we do not agree on is what those changes and regulations should be.

I am glad this conversation of school choice is starting to be more centered on the children. I am glad children as young as five and six spoke as loudly as their parents did, and recognized what they needed to succeed.

I am upset that this conversation feels as if it is only happening now. I am upset that we have been living in a world where public school is seemingly never questioned, and homeschool has long been branded in the media as a place for only religious or conservative families. I am frustrated that still, today, there are parents ‘deciding’ what their child’s education will be, without giving them a say in it. I wish there was more media coverage about average stories like those of Jim and I, or just as much coverage about the children with disabilities or families during the pandemic who found a lot of peace in transitioning to homeschool. I also wish there was more coverage on children who found a lot of freedom in public school, and the teachers that changed their lives. I wish there was less coverage today about ‘schools brainwashing kids’ or ‘schools going woke’, and more coverage on the experiences of average children in America.

I do not believe there is a perfect answer to school choice, or a perfect education that works for everyone. I know there is more to this discussion than blindly listening to what children say. Parents and those in the education system do have a duty in making important calls to protect children. But children are people as well, and we as the adults of America have a responsibility to engage with them as they grow and develop. We have to be willing to consider school a choice a conversation, and to trust the child’s responses. We have to be willing to ask the question: What educational environment serves you the best?

Editor Note: The views and opinions expressed in this piece are solely the author’s. Publishing of any opinion piece does not represent endorsement of the piece by The Review staff or Saint Vincent College.

The great problem facing Oakmont, Pennsylvania

By: David Collins, Contributor

No town is without flaw. Whether it be something like crime or lesser quality education available or discrimination, it takes not a magnifying glass to locate a problem (or more likely several problems) within any given community.

And this is no different for Oakmont, Pennsylvania. Oakmont is a small suburb about an hour from Latrobe and maybe 20 minutes outside of downtown Pittsburgh. We are perhaps best known for our country club, which casually hosts the U.S. Open every few years. Western Pennsylvanians may know us for our acclaimed bakery as well. Or maybe rock and roll enthusiasts know us as the home base to Whitesnake guitarist, Reb Beach.

There's a lot to love about Oakmont, including if not especially me. But we have problems too. The Allegheny River runs by Oakmont. I haven't done any research or anything, but I'd imagine that the river isn't clean. We are also all convinced that the Mattress Warehouse on Hulton Road is a money laundering front. We've never really seen anyone inside, and there are these signs that say like everything must go or 65% off store-wide that have been up for as long as we can remember. I want to focus my attention, though, toward an issue that is overlooked but is unmistakably injurious to our community as a whole. At our local park in Oakmont- Riverside Park- the basketball hoops are not quite 10 feet tall.

In basketball, the rim is standardly 10 feet off the ground. It's like how an endzone is always 10 yards long or a hockey goal is always 6' by 4'. James Naismith invented the game of basketball in 1891, hanging peach baskets on a railing at a YMCA gym in Springfield, Massachusetts. The railing was 10 feet tall, and the rest was history.

Now there was the one game in 1954 where the NBA raised the hoop to 12' for a single night because 6'10" George Mikan was dominating the league and they sought to level the playing field. And then of course Dwight Howard rolled out a 12' tall hoop in the 2009 Dunk Contest, but- other than that- 10 feet across the board.

At Riverside Park, each hoop is between 8'6" and 9'9" by my personal and imprecise estimation. And they aren't even consistent either. There are six hoops and minimal uniformity.

And Riverside Park is otherwise wonderful. George M. from Yelp agrees with me on that much. He offered the following rave review on January 10, 2016:

The track is made out of that high end rubbery firm but soft on your knees material that's awesome to run on. It's right by the river and is usually not crowded for running or walking. There are basketball and tennis courts in the middle of the track. There are also bathrooms open during the day.

I took a girl to Riverside Park one time on a first date. We raced on the track- the one with the high end rubbery firm but soft on your knees material that George M. articulately detailed- and I let her win. Then as a joke I pretended to be a reporter, holding my fist to my mouth like a microphone and I said something charming like I'm here with this girl after she defeated David in the race. What was going through your head down the stretch? And then I held my fake microphone to her mouth. She clearly didn't understand the bit, though, and instead of answering my interview question into the mic, she just fist bumped my fake microphone.

And it wasn't just that she didn't understand that it was a microphone. It was that she then answered the question, as if assuming I would ask her something like that unironically- like I was legitimately curious what was going through her head as she beat me in our fake race. We haven't communicated since that night. But anyway, the hoops

I was able to locate a study which looked at the impacts of a shooting program on a hoop with a reduced rim diameter. Nine male hoopers were the control and nine others were the experimental group, and each underwent a 10-week training program.

The study ultimately concluded that training with a reduced rim diameter significantly does indeed improve shooting performance in young basketball players. The is interesting but unfortunately is irrelevant to my issue because the problem is height, not diameter.

Putting on my investigative journalist hat, I went to Riverside Park to investigate. I proceeded to shoot just 4-10 from the free throw line, proving that the hoops are not regulation. Now I could have measured just how tall the hoops were had I brought a step-ladder and a tape measure, but I brought neither.

So I surveyed some local hoopers to get their thoughts. One called the heights of our hoops "disrespectful, inconsiderate, and disproportionate to the community that uses it."

Others were less moved by the issue. I asked another hooper if she had any thoughts on the hoop heights. She replied with confidence, "not really."

A third suggested that they never really noticed the heights not being regulation, and a fourth had some insight, proposing "maybe they should fix it."

As is painfully evident from the anonymous interviews I conducted, this is a flagrant and explosive issue that- if unchecked- could stir mild inconvenience in half dozens of hoopers to come through our town.

And to anyone that suggests this issue is of negligible consequence- to anyone that suggests the reason that this issue is overlooked is not because no one knows but because no one cares- to anyone who suggests that the short hoops accommodate the dreamers, serving as nothing more than a charming wrinkle in a park ideal for a bad date, a dunk attempt, or a potential run-in with Reb Beach, I offer you this: you are probably right. And there are also bathrooms open during the day too.

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