

SUMMER 2020

Vol. 6, Iss. 2

Pittverse

Quarterly Magazine



This Edition:

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Pittverse



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A MAGAZINE WRITTEN EXCLUSIVELY BY ADULTS ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM

About Pittverse Magazine

Pittverse Magazine is a quarterly publication that proudly represents the introspection and creativity of adults on the autism spectrum. Its goal is to educate and entertain the public while providing its writers, who are all adults on the autism spectrum, with skills applicable to future employment.

Pittverse is produced by Youth Advocate Programs (YAP), a national non-profit agency that comprises a multitude of services for families with not only individuals on the autism spectrum but also other at-risk youth and adults. Brian Kluchurosky, the director of YAP's

PA Allegheny County Adults with Autism Program, founded *Pittverse* in 2013. It began as a newsletter written by four of the adults in Kluchurosky's program.

This year, with generous funding from Edith Trees Foundation, *Pittverse* has grown from a newsletter into a magazine that commissions more than 40 adults with autism.

In each seasonal issue, readers can peruse a variety of topics through the unique perspective of its writers. Topics range from sports to restaurant reviews to local history.

On the Cover

Pittverse's own Elise Mote is credited with the stunning cover photo for the Summer 2020 issue. We are looking forward to your enjoyment of our hard work, our art, and our creative originality.

Grab a glass of iced tea and prepare to experience summertime *Pittverse*!

Letter from the Editor

As we adjust to our "new normal" and become accustomed to Zoom meetings and virtual release parties, it's very comforting to know that we are all experiencing the same sense of sadness and worry, as a result of the current pandemic. These feelings are reflected in this issue's articles and they provide the understanding that we are "all alone together."

I'm very proud of your efforts to make sense of an extremely uncertain time and your courage to write about the anxiety that you are feeling. We're all in this together.

Jennifer Pizzuto

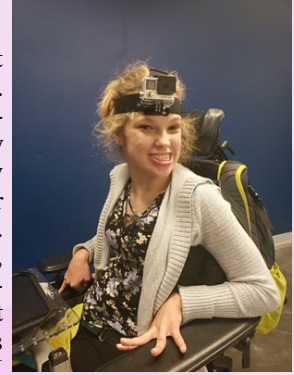
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My RMU Experience

By: Julia Fieldhammer

Last year I got a great opportunity for a job experience. I got to join Robert Morris University's social media team. I had a connection there because of my PT, Ms. Tracie. Her husband Ken worked there. I was really excited to see what this opportunity could turn into. The first day I went there was last February. Ms. Nicole, (my nurse),) Ms. Tracie and I went there for a visit. It was that day that I met Becky, my future boss, who worked with Ken. Ken showed me some of the things they do on their sports social media pages. We also went to a Lacrosse practice to take some pictures. Ken showed me how to work the camera. After we took pictures of the Lacrosse game, we posted them on Instagram. I got to pick the ones I liked and post them. I really enjoyed that day at RMU and I felt hopeful for my future there. It was fun getting to meet everyone and see what they do. A few weeks later I officially started working there. As soon as I started working with Becky, we got along great. She was really nice and I enjoyed spending time with her.



When I came to RMU I had a little experience in photo/video editing. But not as much as I have now. Becky taught me a lot about this subject. The first year I was doing more graphics than video work, but this year I got more into video editing. I started to do something called the Monday Minute. This was a recap of all the University's sports teams that played over the past weekend and whether they won or lost their game. I was given a video of each team and someone recorded the words. My job was to match them up. In other words when the recording was talking about a specific team, I made sure the video of that team was playing at the same time. It was hard at first but the more I did it, the easier it got. I also got to do some camera work. One day I wore a camera on my head and went around taking video of RMU's new building. RMU built a new recreation center not too long ago. It's really nice. Becky wanted to get a video of it to put online so people could see it. Becky was a great teacher and friend to me. Unfortunately, in November, Becky got a new job and left Robert Morris. I was really excited for her, but I was also a little sad because I wouldn't get to see her anymore. Becky and I are still friends today and talk sometimes. I'm so grateful for our friendship and for everything she taught me.



After Becky left, I got a new boss. His name is Ray. He is super nice. On my first day with Ray we talked about what I would be doing. I told him what I did with Becky, which was mainly sports. I told him I'd be open to doing other things. At first, I was still doing a lot of sports, but then I started doing new projects. I started filming interviews with different people. I interviewed a student about her leadership skills. I also interviewed Ray about his time working at RMU and how he got there. Filming interviews is one of my favorite things to do at my job. I think it's interesting to hear people's stories and views on life. Even though it can be hard to come up with the questions sometimes, I like that I get to come up with them on my own. Sometimes people will give me suggestions. After I decide on the questions, I put them in my dynavox and then I'm ready to rock and roll. The day of the interview, Ray will set up the camera then the interview will start. I first ask the interviewee what their name is and what year they are in, or what position they have at RMU. After the interview is done Ray has to upload it so I can get it on my iPad, then I can start editing. Editing isn't my favorite part of the job. I definitely like the actual interviewing part better, but in order to make the interview look good you're going to have to do some editing. Ray is working on a website for me to put all my videos on so people can watch them.



Another fun thing I got to do at RMU is to work one of the cameras at a girls basketball game. I got to go back into the control room and that was really cool. Becky was in the room and she was working the game with me. Becky told me which camera I'd be working and she also showed me how to work it. The control was a joystick, which I used all the time to drive my wheelchair. But still I was a little nervous because everyone that was watching online would be able to see my camera work. My camera was mainly for replays. Once I got used to the controls, it was pretty fun. I'm grateful to have had an opportunity like that, and I hope that I'll get to do it again.



Working at Robert Morris has been a great experience. I've learned so much and gained so many skills. I've also met some really cool people whom I made friends with. I'm so happy I get to be a part of the Robert Morris family and I hope to continue to work there for many more years to come. ~~

Autism and Pets in Pittsburgh

By: Andrew Joseph Olsavicky

One of the best things for someone on the Autism Spectrum to have is a friend or companion. Some folks on the spectrum may have few if any friends and usually don't have an easy time getting them and, in some cases, keeping them. This is due to the fact that no other people can truly understand what the thoughts and feelings of someone on the spectrum are. One of the best solutions to this problem is for them to get the one kind of companion that they can learn to take care of and will love them unquestionably: a pet. What kind of pet is dependent on the person who gets them and what their ability to take care of and support them are. One of the big reasons this is a good thing for someone on the spectrum is because pets and their "caretakers" tend to form a unique bond of mutuality between them. My personal experience with a pet, who is a female Pitbull/Boxer mix named Mia, starts at Pup Night at PNC Park in 2016. My parents, who were season ticket holders at the time, were at the game and they announced that they had dogs from the Humane Society there and showed Mia on the big TV screen. Once my Mom saw her and heard she was part Boxer she and my Dad went to visit her and basically fell in love with her, and thus decided to adopt her the next day. Granted, I was a bit hesitant about this at first and there was still a lot we had to do after we got Mia, such as housebreak her and properly feed and walk her each day. In the end, she and I formed a unique bond between us to the point that whenever she senses that I am not feeling so well, even emotionally, she comes and tries to cheer me up. Due to her kind nature to me I have done two unofficial things to my dog, Mia: first, I gave her the full name of "Mia Rogers Olsavicky" the middle name being after Fred Rogers of *Mister Rogers Neighborhood* because, just like Fred Rogers was always a source of calming love and support to a lot of young people and their families, so is Mia to me and my family. In some cases I can go as far as to say she is the reincarnation of Fred Rogers, but I don't have any official evidence to back that up and for the sake of avoiding any controversy I'll just keep it as my opinion. The second thing I unofficially did to Mia is to title her "PNC Parks Proud Pooch of the Pittsburgh Pirates," since the first time any of my family saw her was at a Pirates game. I wish to solidify her position a Pirates fan and show that even dogs can be fans of Pittsburgh's Bucs. My only hope in writing this is that I can help bring these thoughts to the attention of all those who wish to support the Autistic Community and also bring together people like us with the pets/family we deserve.~~

Hamilton: the Movie Coming to Disney+

By: Amelia Krzton

The latest streaming service, Disney+, is one of the greatest things to ever exist right now. We can watch old movies and TV shows from our childhood on the channel, as well as original programming the channel provides. Before the streaming service came to life, I wished that Disney+ would air a spin-off of the CBS sitcom *The Big Bang Theory* entitled *The Big Bang Theory in Eighth Grade* ever since the end of the show's run last year. But now that *Modern Family* has ended its run on ABC and *Fuller House* soon to be over on Netflix, I guess that idea was out of the question. There has been something else particularly special that I would have liked Disney+ to air, and that is nothing other than an animated historical fiction series, something similar to *Schoolhouse Rock*. I recently found out that the *Hamilton* movie will come to Disney+ this upcoming 4th of July weekend. It was originally supposed to air in movie theaters during late 2021 or early 2022, but got moved up due to the coronavirus, similar to how other Disney movies aired on Disney+ ahead of their scheduled release date, such as *Frozen II* and *Onward* since the coronavirus outbreak began back in March. This has made me incredibly happy because I will get to see a movie version of the musical, without having to pay a lot of money for it. Hopefully, for all of you people that have Disney+ out there, you will get the chance to view this amazing musical. I can't wait to see what other ideas Disney+ has in the future for original movies and shows, but hopefully, an original cartoon series based on American history will air, because that would be better for most of us to watch than most of the garbage shows on TV nowadays.~~

Productivity During COVID-19 and Protests

By: Nathaniel Geyer

Recently, my supervisor directed all the members of my department to work from home until further notice. During that time, I have completed at least two manuscripts, my Masters in Geographical Information System capstone project, and improved my relationship with family members who I have not seen on a daily basis. I have also read about ways to improve my health, so that I can continue to be productive in the future. During this time I have been a bit more aware of my surroundings, including how my actions to improve productivity, impacts others. Fortunately, I am not yet in poverty but in order to remain productive during this COVID-19 outbreak, there is a need for find creative ways to avoid being bored or impacted by the constant coverage of COVID-19 and protests.

As somebody who is non-Hispanic, White, and autistic, I also share concerns about the police being too biased against people who are different. I have developed a sense of adaptive empathy toward people who are different from me and hope to improve in appropriate ways. I am concerned about being different with an invisible disability. My former mentor, who valued productivity, was from South Africa and was falsely imprisoned, was a good example that there is a light at the end of the tunnel. I strongly recommend that all persons with autism reading this post aim to be more productive, not just in employment, but all parts of life, including how to appropriately socialize with different communities. I hope that once I get back to my office that I can improve my healthy eating habits in the hopes to be more of an indispensable employee in the future. As we move closer to the end of the pandemic, it is important to learn how to be healthier and productive individuals in all future endeavors.~~

Psychological Effects of Quarantine

By: Joshua Walburn

Given the exponential increase of COVID-19, President Trump wanted to order a quarantine for the New York region before recommending a strong travel advisory. But what are the psychological effects of quarantine?

Clearly, maintaining a social distance and staying in isolation for the good of society can take a significant toll. In response to the pandemic, psychologist Samantha Brooks of Kings College in London and her colleagues conducted a rapid review of the literature of the psychological effects of being quarantined. The following is a brief and selective summary of their paper as published in the *Lancet*.

Predictors of Psychological Impact Before Quarantine

Having a psychiatric history was associated with anxiety and anger four to six months after being released from quarantine. Moreover, quarantined healthcare workers showed more severe post-traumatic stress compared to the general public in quarantine.

Stressors During Quarantine

Longer periods of quarantine were associated with post-traumatic stress symptoms, avoidance, and anger.

Participants feared for their own health and/or fears of infecting others.

Participants felt frustrated and bored during quarantine, due to confinement, loss of regular routine, and diminished social and physical contact with others.

Having inadequate basic supplies (e.g., food, water, clothes, or accommodation) during quarantine led to frustration, and was linked to anger and anxiety four through six months after release.

Having inadequate information, including clarity around actions to undertake, purpose of the quarantine, and different levels of risk proved stressful.

Stressors After Quarantine

Financial loss due to the inability to work created serious economic hardship, with enduring psychological impacts. In particular, anger and anxiety persist for months after quarantine.

Stigma was prominently reported. Participants experienced rejection and avoidance by others and were treated with fear and suspicion.

Keeping a quarantine short as possible but scientifically reasonable. Studies show the longer quarantine, the poorer psychological outcomes tend to be.

Giving people as much information possible. Many quarantined individuals feared being infected, or sickening others. Thus, making sure that people who are quarantined have a firm understanding of the illness and the purpose of quarantine is key.

Provide adequate supplies quickly and have back up plans for what to do if those in quarantine are running out of them.

Decreasing boredom and improving communication. Clear guidelines on coping and stress management should be provided. In addition, remaining connected to one's social network helps guard against immediate anxiety and long-lasting distress. Furthermore, public health officials should be clear with those in quarantine about what to do if they have any symptoms.

Healthcare workers need special treatment. They often experience stigma and should be supported by their colleagues.

Altruism works better than compulsion. Reminders that a quarantine keeps others safe and that health officials are grateful to people for quarantining is recommended. It helps to increase adherence and decrease negative mental health effects of the quarantine. ~~

The 2009 Krippin Outbreak

From I am legend

By: Rachel Williamson

The beginning

In the year 2009, Dr. Krippin (a British scientist) genetically engineered the measles virus to cure cancer. 10,009 patients that all had different strains of cancer, miraculously all of them survived. Everyone thought it was the start of something great, but it would bring the world to its knees.

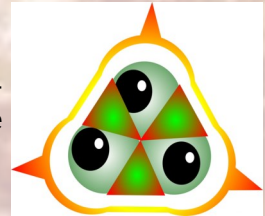
The outbreak of KV

Although the patients were cancer-free, they began to experience rabies-like symptoms which made them go berserk and bite anyone within reach, which caused the infection to spread. Shortly after the virus went airborne with a new strain that had a 9% mortality rate, 1% remained the same but the remaining 9% became strong killing machines that fed on the 1% of remaining humans.

New York City

The first known outbreak was recorded in NYC on Christmas Eve. There was panic every where as people fled to evacuation centers to evacuate out of Long Island on helicopters to Stanton Island and New Jersey. Others took boats across the Hudson to New Jersey, Stanton Island, or anywhere else they could go. Many were already infected, though, so the United States Air Force bombed the bridges in Manhattan that provided escape.

New York City authority (at least NYPD) presumably maintained the governance until 44 days after outbreak, but in that time, the NYPD (and maybe other security bureaus) could not gain full control over the city.



Public domain pictures.net
Cartoon germ virus

New Delhi

On Christmas Eve, the virus had mutated causing it to go airborne and spread around the world. New Delhi was one of the cities that had fallen to the KV outbreak. In India, it is assumed that nobody that in New Delhi was immune to KV as the city lies in ruins

Hong Kong

It is most likely that in this city that the Krippin virus wiped out most population and destroyed the city. ~~

Coping with the Covid 19 Pandemic

By: Zach Grabowski

The Corona Virus has really taken a toll on my life. All of my everyday activities have been canceled since March, including swimming, rowing, bowling, game day, working out at the gym, mall walking, and volunteering at the Carnegie Library for the Blind, the Rosedale Food Pantry, and the Pittsburgh Food Bank in Duquesne, as well as going out to eat. I really miss doing all of those things and am hoping to return to it again soon.

I don't like having to wear a mask every time I go out of the house. It is uncomfortable and hard to breathe with a mask over my face and covering my nose. I have never experienced a tragedy like this in my life. Who would have ever thought that this would happen!

Some positive aspects, as a result, are that I get to participate in virtual online group meetings on Zoom with Focus. I love Zoom because it is a source of being with several people at once and it feels as though we are all together in person. I have made some new friends while participating in virtual Focus Zoom meetings. The Focus participants are from different regions of Focus – northern, western, eastern, and central PA.

I have been exercising more often at home. I am doing a virtual yoga class two days per week which I enjoy. I am also taking a sign language class on Fridays. It is difficult for me because it is visual.

We are also doing virtual Pittverse meetings on Zoom. We had a virtual Pittverse Spring release party in June. Even though we weren't together in person, we were all together on Zoom and some of the writers got to present their articles and provide entertainment. I enjoy presenting about my articles and singing to the group.

I will get to go camping with my dad too. I am looking forward to getting out and enjoying the outdoors, fishing and sitting around the campfire.~~

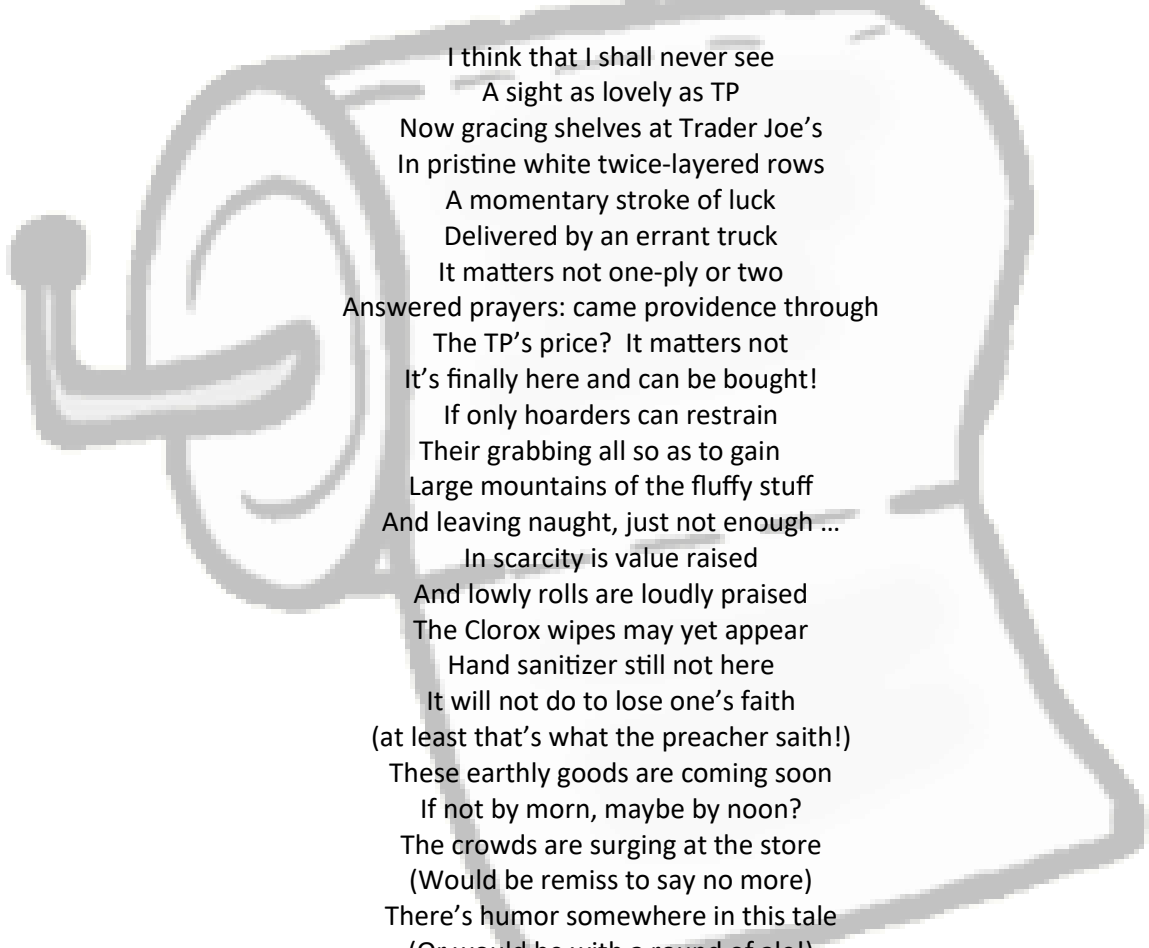
My Experience with the Coronavirus

By: Amelia Krzton

The coronavirus outbreak began in early December of 2019 in a Wuhan, China. In March of 2020, Allegheny County began to feel the effects of the virus. It has changed people's lives in many ways. The restrictions that that involved the coronavirus banned large gatherings of people and non-essential businesses; restaurants were limited to take-out and delivery orders. Pittsburgh has recently gotten into the yellow phase, and now the green phase, meaning that some businesses and services can operate on a limited basis. At first, I felt very apprehensive about this phase, but now I don't find it so bad. I would like to thank my vivid imagination and creativity for helping me get through these trying times. Some things that I have been doing to keep busy include taking walks in Highland Park when the weather is nice out, going on drives with my mom in the car listening to good music on her iPhone, and... you'll never guess... online working for Pittsburgh's Perfect Parties! Not to mention, I also spent a week at respite care in Swissvale where I had people to look after me and fun things to entertain me. Around this time was when I began to transition families from the Moser-Mifflin clan to the Moser-Gourley clan. The Mifflin family got a new house in Fox Chapel, so the Gourleys were moving a couple miles down the road from their house at the corners of Dallas Avenue and Beechwood Boulevard to the apartment building at the corners of Penn Avenue and Homewood Avenue, where Jenna and Jill Moser currently live. However, since the Friends Support Each Other program began a week or so after the outbreak began, we have moved into the Alcoma on the Green in Penn Hills, which is about 15-20 minutes north and east of Point Breeze and Squirrel Hill.~~

“Toilet Paper in the Era of Coronavirus”

By: Renee Skudra (in Greensboro, North Carolina)



I think that I shall never see
A sight as lovely as TP
Now gracing shelves at Trader Joe's
In pristine white twice-layered rows
A momentary stroke of luck
Delivered by an errant truck
It matters not one-ply or two
Answered prayers: came providence through
The TP's price? It matters not
It's finally here and can be bought!
If only hoarders can restrain
Their grabbing all so as to gain
Large mountains of the fluffy stuff
And leaving naught, just not enough ...
In scarcity is value raised
And lowly rolls are loudly praised
The Clorox wipes may yet appear
Hand sanitizer still not here
It will not do to lose one's faith
(at least that's what the preacher saith!)
These earthly goods are coming soon
If not by morn, maybe by noon?
The crowds are surging at the store
(Would be remiss to say no more)
There's humor somewhere in this tale
(Or would be with a round of ale!)
At least the TP's there to take
Be grateful y'all for goodness sake!
Let's not be ugly and complain
We've all got masks, so please act sane!
The nitrile gloves may soon present!
At Walmart? Well, they came and went –
The thing to do is stay the course
And keep from coming out in force
Buy only ONE of all these goods
And leave some for your neighborhoods.
If nature vacuums do abhor
Soon you'll see objects in the store.
For now I'm grateful for TP
(Please forget perpetuity).
Let's keep our heads about this mess
And doing so, extinguish stress.~~

How to be Calm and Safe in Hard Times

By: Maggie K. Jones

There are reasons why being calm and safe is so important, especially at home. Not as just a strength only, but, it will help you in hard times.

Coping is a big part of life, and so is patience, the other part of life that is important, too. That is not easy for all of us to do or even to understand as a concept. Anger, frustration, tenseness, confusion, and depression, when it comes to Covid-19 can have a big impact on your life, family, and friends.

It may not be easy, but I can help with ideas to deal with the pandemic, Covid-19, and the stay at home orders that are in place.

Here are some lessons on how to cope, deal with, and have fun with while at home:

- ◆ Have a good imagination.
- ◆ Make up words to a song.
- ◆ Arts and crafts.
- ◆ Write a story.
- ◆ Make up your own exercise.
- ◆ Take a short walk. Use common sense when going outside.
- ◆ Read a good book with a cup of tea or coffee.
- ◆ Drawing
- ◆ Listening to music
- ◆ Dancing to music

When you must go outside, make sure you are using common sense to not just keep others safe, but yourself and your family. Keep the social distancing to six feet from each other. Never go into large crowds of people. Using a facemask is a must when going outside. Take off shoes at the door and go wash your hands when you come inside.

The important thing is to keep calm and do what local and state authorities like mayors to governors say to do. And stay home. It may save lives if you just stay home and realize that things take time to heal and to mend. It may not be easy, but put things into a positive perspective. This will get better soon if everyone does their part. We will get through this together. Just be positive.~~

Autism and Adaption to COVID-19

By: Nathaniel Geyer

This season is quite unexpected and has given me time to reflect. As mentioned in previous stories, I am a full-time worker who has taken the time to do part-time studies. My philosophy in life is to be a lifelong learner who is constantly adapting to the changing environment. In the flight or fight mechanism in life, I almost always choose to fight and adapt to my surroundings. Therefore, I am not a believer in quitting. I am fortunate to have had a long life and had the support of my adoptive family for over 37 years. In addition, my adoptive sister give birth to two daughters, one of them during my dissertation phases of my doctorate and another one year later. My nieces show an ability to give me a second chance in being a better brother for my sister and an uncle to her children. Since the COVID-19 outbreak, I have gotten close to my nieces who see their grandparents up to five days per week. Since I choose to live with my parents, I do whatever I can to make these girls compassionate individuals. I have been living with my parents for 35 years and as they get older I try to be the best son possible. In addition, I am close to my paternal grandmother who lives alone and I help with mail and meals. I am fortunate to have a supportive family and there is nowhere else I choose to live than in Harrisburg, PA. I am also enjoying my time off and adapting to the changing environment. I hope to continue to be a bright spot in this challenging world. Although I am getting stimulus money, my goal is to remain financially independent and not rely on governmental assistance. I have been growing in my ability to be a better friend and family member. I look forward to be able to improve my ability to be a better person in this COVID-19 epidemic. I also have learned to stay positive and not worry about things that I cannot change. For people reading this article, it is possible to be a supportive family member and have a full life without a serious relationship and lean to be a supporter to people who have supported you throughout your life. Life is too short to practice flight and not fight for what you believe in and family is as close as I can get to having a good quality of life.~

Everything That I Have Eaten During the Coronavirus

By: Amelia Krzton

On our drives, Mom and I sometimes like to go out to get something to eat. These foods have included the world-famous Five Guys French fries, Chinese take-out from How Lee in Squirrel Hill, Mineo's Pizza in Squirrel Hill, and my personal favorite, ice cream cakes from Dairy Queen in my hometown of Natrona Heights! Of course, we have been getting ice cream cakes ever since my 28th birthday back in April. We also got ice cream cakes from Dairy Queen in New Kensington and Dairy Queen in Lincoln-Lemington-Belmar. I have also decided that I didn't want to cook TV dinners every night, so I cooked my own spaghetti for dinner. I would like to do that again because it is so much fun and I have recently considered cooking my own dinners as more of a treat for me than TV dinners and restaurant food. Something else that I have learned to make on my own is a fruit salad consisting of all of my favorite fruits, including apples, bananas, grapes, strawberries, blueberries, cherries, watermelon chunks, and pineapple chunks. Yogurt and honey are added on top to make a dressing. I have also made my own s'mores out of graham crackers, chocolate bars, and marshmallows. Mom told me that those were not the best thing to eat, however. I still find them rather delicious. I have also eaten snacks like microwave popcorn, Goldfish crackers, peanut butter pretzels, and Wheat Thins crackers. Mom and I also have our own beverages to drink. She likes diet ginger ale and I like Diet Coke. This is another one of the lucky things about my family is that in addition to a nice place to live, we have good things to eat. And of course, there are the imaginary treats from Pittsburgh's Perfect Parties, such as the Fashion Cookies shaped to look like fashionable items.~~

Things I Like in Pittsburgh

By: Daniel H. Ashkin

I have been living in Squirrel Hill for over 20 years. I am 59 years old. I have gotten an Associated Degree in Liberal Arts and Science at CCAC College in Pittsburgh. I enjoy studying astronomy and Earth Science. At home, I love to play quiz games on Encarta. In addition, I adore playing quiz games on highschoolace.com. I enjoy challenging myself with science quizzes on the chemical symbols, biology, and nutrition quizzes.

On the other hand, the coronavirus will likely destroy many of my other interests this summer in the City of Pittsburgh. I love watching the Pittsburgh Pirates play baseball during the spring and the summer. When a Pirate player hits a home run, I get extremely excited and emotional for a few minutes. Every year, I like going to the Three Rivers Art Festival and watching the artists sell their crafts to the public. For example, I appreciate the wood carvings of the toys trains by wood artists. Furthermore, I loved to watch the fireworks on television every year. I love to watch the sprinkles go up in the air with the sound of Neil Diamond's "America." Finally, I love to go the Three River Regatta at Point State Park. I enjoy watching the speed boats going over 140 mph around the river. The fruit cups and the lemonade taste delicious at the fair during the summer.

In summary, how many of you feel disappoint by lack of activities this summer...? Please express them in an e-mail ashkindaniel@gmail.com

Three Rivers Arts Fest Special: Complex Harmonic and Geometric Spaces of Middle Eastern Art

By: Joshua Walburn

In the Middle East, geometry is visible. It's found in mosques, madrasas, palaces, private homes and churches. This tradition began in the 8th century AD, when craftsman took plea of preexisting motifs from Roman, Persian, and Celtic cultures and developed them into a new form of visual expression. Many achievements of previous civilizations were further developed, resulting in fundamental advances in scientific studies and mathematics. Accompanying this was some sophisticated uses of abstraction from intricate florals of textiles through patterns of tile work that repeat infinitely, inspiring wonder of contemplation in natural and eternal order.

Despite the complexity of these 2D designs, they can be used with simple tools such as compasses to draw circles and rulers to apply lines to them. Both can emerge a kaleidoscopic multiplicity of patterns. Everything starts with a circle. Applied line segments divide each one into fourths, fifths, and sixths. Most feature stars are surrounded by petal-like shapes. Counting the number of rays or petals of each star explains the category it belongs to, a star with eight rays or $N = 8$, belongs to the fourth fold applied by the multiples of: (4, 8, 12, 16, 20, 24, ...).

An underlining scalar grid is the most essential tool for every pattern. It determines the vectors and compositional scale of each space before work begins. Each grid is also invisible and keeps one pattern mathematically accurate and that the spaces are equal, facilitating the invention of new patterns. A circle inside one square divided into eighths, for example, allows us to draw crossing construction lines. Exponentially, we overlay another two. Choosing a set of their segments forms the basis of many possible designs. The full pattern of multiple repetitions emerges in one tile under a process called tessellation. Same steps are to follow when developing sixth fold patterns. Dividing one circle into sixths, drawing construction lines, and tessellating them are key.

Fourth fold patterns fit in a square grid and sixth fold ones fit in a hexagonal grid. Fifth fold patterns are more challenging to tessellate because pentagons don't fill 100% neatly in a surface. Other geometric spaces have to be added to make them repeatable. This 1,000+ year old tradition has wielded basic geometry to produce works that are intricate, decorative, and pleasing to the eye. Craftsman can prove these possibilities throughout artistic intuition, creativity and dedication.~~

Will We Remember the Heroes?

OPINION



By: Megan Cunningham

Since the coronavirus outbreak has ravaged the United States and the world to the point that we're now confined to our homes, the term "hero" has been thrown around when it pertains to people risking their lives to keep our society going at this very distressing time. Also known, as "essential workers," they're people in your neighborhood such as healthcare workers, firemen, police, journalists, garbage people, postal workers, truck drivers, mechanics, public transport workers, repair workers, and more. However, many also work in low paying jobs that

neither offer benefits like health insurance or paid sick leave nor cover next month's rent. They're often janitors, cashiers, store stockers, restaurant workers, nursing home aides, gig workers, delivery drivers, meat packers, farm workers, and more. Now while these people are certainly heroes, they never really expected to be; rather they work to support themselves and their families.

Whenever there's a time of crisis, we're told to look to the heroes. I remember back on 9/11 when everyone showered praise upon the firefighters, police, and EMTs who went into the World Trade Center Tower rubble and an attack on the Pentagon to save their fellow Americans. In December 2010, I can recall Jon Stewart devoting an entire episode to secure permanent funding for the 9/11 Victims Compensation Fund because congressional Republicans struck down the Zadroga Act earlier that month, shaming them as "the party that turned 9/11 into a catchphrase." He then brought four of the first responders on the show. Though Congress passed the bill, it was up for reauthorization in 2015, when Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell struck down a deal to include funding for an extension to a spending package. Appearing as a guest since previously turning the hosting reins to Trevor Noah, Stewart relentlessly criticized the senator, stating, "What message does it send to our first responders if once we're done as a nation with them helping us that we forget about them? That's unacceptable." Later, the camera turns to a table where the four first responders sat in 2010. But this time there was only one with three empty seats. Eventually, the fund was extended to five more years.

During a hearing on extending the 9/11 Compensation Fund in June 2019, the former *Daily Show* host went viral for blasting Congress over their "callous indifference" toward the men and women who handled 9/11's aftermath. Angrily addressing the empty committee seats in front of him, Jon Stewart said, "I can't help but think what an incredible metaphor this room is for the entire process that getting health care and benefits for 9/11 first responders has come to. Behind me, a filled room of 9/11 first responders, and in front of me, a nearly empty Congress." He continued: "I'm sorry if I sound angry and undiplomatic. But I'm angry, and you should be too, and they're all angry as well and they have every justification to be that way. There is not a person here, there is not an empty chair on that stage that didn't tweet out 'Never Forget the heroes of 9/11. Never forget their bravery. Never forget what they did, what they gave to this country.' Well, here they are. And where are they? And it would be one thing if their callous indifference and rank hypocrisy were benign, but it's not. Your indifference cost these men and women their most valuable commodity: time. It's the one thing they're running out of." The Never Forget the Heroes Act was passed, extending funding till 2090.

When I think about these essential workers during this pandemic, I think about how the 9/11 first responders had to struggle for eighteen years to be properly compensated for the

harm they suffered while serving their community. During that time, a lot of them had trouble paying their medical bills due to slashed benefits along with supporting their families. Some have even died. And these were firefighters, police, and EMTs, people we hold in high esteem within our communities. While this is the case this time, we must also include millions of other people who keep our society running, many who work low income jobs that many don't hold in high esteem. And many that don't come with benefits or any form of paid sick leave. As with 9/11, many of these essential workers we call "heroes" will get sick and those who survive may develop long term health problems as a result of exposing themselves to the virus. And consequently, many will lose their jobs and possibly their health insurance. In addition, while there are hundreds of 9/11 first responders, there will be millions of essential workers who will be in need of compensation.

Another group we consider heroes are those in our nation's military, who we're constantly told to support during a time of war. Yet, once the war ends and the victory ticker tape parade is over, the men and women who served are forgotten, apart from Veterans' Day, Memorial Day, and political campaign rallies. Now while plenty of our veterans have little trouble adjusting to civilian life, there a great who struggle. They grapple with wartime injuries that will never heal and disabilities that will last the rest of their lives, particularly if they're missing a limb. Many contend with addictions and mental illness that take a toll on themselves, their families, and possibly their finances. Not to mention, many veterans end up homeless, hungry, and out of work. Of course, we have the VA but it's been long neglected for years and in very terrible need of reform. And while veterans often receive government benefits as they should for serving this country, a lot of people treat them like they're lazy moochers if they happen to live in squalor.

Yet, I am not sure if our lawmakers will treat these essential workers with the kind of esteem we bestow on these 9/11 first responders or our troops. Many Americans see low-income workers as expendable nobodies who don't contribute much to society. While a major crisis can bring out the best in us, it can also bring the worst. Not only are employers just giving these people a pat on the back and not much else, certain customers have shown up without masks, breathed on them, spat on them, and treated them terribly. Now rude customer conduct is one thing. But in this pandemic, obnoxious customer conduct that goes against CDC guidelines can cost lives. The least we can do is follow the CDC guidelines when we're in public, particularly at a grocery store. This is especially since their employers won't even give them any protective equipment, healthcare benefits, hazard pay, or paid leave that they desperately need. Yet, some customers won't even observe this courtesy.

Aside from following the CDC guidelines during this pandemic, we must enact measures protecting these essential workers and give them the compensation and benefits they deserve. Furthermore, we must build a better world in which their sacrifice is honored and their work is valued. But until we get to it by electing a better president this November to start, one question remains: when this pandemic is over and we return to our normal lives as before, will we remember the heroes? And will we honor them?~~

A Tale of Two Ducks

By: Nils Skudra

It has been my habit for the past two years when I am feeling particularly contemplative or melancholy to gather up a good book, a worn Irish cable knit sweater and my always ready-to-go canine companion Jackson for a walk on the Guilford College campus. I have the sense that I am walking on holy and defiant ground as we approach the lake near the woods. The ground rises slightly to reveal the water, shimmering in a late afternoon sun. There are small speckled frogs sunning themselves on small logs, impervious to Jackson's barks and a lone red-tailed hawk navigating a small patch of sky above. There waiting for us as always are a pair of Muscovy ducks encircling the lake. It gives me great pleasure to see them, the surety of their presence in an oft uncertain world. They are part of the fabric of my world, populated with gratitude for small things, the appearance of my beloved dogwood's blossoms, a neighbor's gifting me with a bouquet of wildflowers from his garden, another story being published in a small-town newspaper, an unexpected and cherished book.

I am happy for the silence about me, nature's capacious beauty, the fact that I can easily hear the song of birds and observe the rippling of small waves and the tiny minnows negotiating them. At the water's edge, the Muscovy ducks draw near me and I am delighted that they seem take no fear in this approach. One is discernably larger than the other and I remember that the male of the species is bigger than his female counterpart. I have named them Mack and Molly Muscovy and greet them as such each time I pay my visit. They seem unafraid of Jackson and I – rather my Bichon Frise is clearly intimidated by them and whines copiously and a piteous look now marks his visage. I've talked to him about how the famous Civil War historian Shelby Foote spoke of US Grant's having "four o'clock in the morning courage" and say "Old boy, you could do with a bit of that." But still, with quickly measured paces, he retreats signaling his undeniable defeat – the birds have gained this day. I have learned from my reading that these are dry-land water fowl who do not spend as much time in the water as other ducks. The name "Muscovy" means "from the Moscow region" although no one seems to understand why they are so named. Some refer to them as "goose-like ducks" which given their appearance makes imminently good sense to me. Muscovys (Latin name: *Cairina moschata*) are native to Mexico, South and Central America and have established populations in the United States, especially in the South with a substantial presence in Florida. These goose-like ducks whistle rather than quack and their rather unconventional looks make them for some reason endearing to me. Throughout my life, people have told me that I was an odd duck so this may be why I feel like I am now in the company of Confederate souls.

On this Wednesday past, attired in my Eddie Bauer jacket made in Bangladesh, I make another pilgrimage to Guilford College with reading material and my unstopably enthusiastic Bichon Frise in tow. All indicators point to a fortuitous trip: the car is still working and there is sufficient gas to drive the three miles from my home. Under a magazine is a \$5.00 bill I don't remember placing there but the unexpectedness of finding it magnifies my joy ten-fold. I park my car and as I walk to the lake, I have a sudden promotion: what if the Muscovy ducks are not there? As a person who likes structure and sameness, the thought renders me momentarily inconsolable. I run to the water, Jackson an appreciable distance behind, and there on the water is only one of the pair. My heart sinks: its mate is nowhere to be seen. I cannot quite describe the feeling that I had. I remember in an English graduate school class at the University of California, Berkeley the professor once mentioned T.S. Eliot's remark that sometimes language is inadequate to describe experience. That is precisely how I feel at this moment. Where is the other Muscovy? The sole creature approaches me and though surely this is a matter of anthropomorphizing a situation, this duck looks disconsolate – it has lost its better half. I feel acutely that sense of loss because in my life I have suffered this too. He (or she) regards me with a direct gaze and I have the strange sense of inter-species communication. "What are you to do?" I ask this fellow (or lass). A low hissing sound issues from its throat and musing, I wonder if that is an attempt to formulate a response. My heart is breaking, I am so accustomed to seeing the two and now, unaccountably, there is only the one.

Softly, I uttered my condolences to my friend in that poignant self-seeming twining of our souls. "I'm so sorry for your loss but you will be okay," I said, wishing devoutly that would be so. In a moment, a life can change dramatically, whether it be a human or an animal one. In a careful flanking movement, Jackson advances to the front of the lake, each creature eying the other, a mere 16 or so inches apart. There is absolute quiet with neither giving ground. Each makes a small sound as if in recognition of the other. A willful peace. A tiny change has happened almost imperceptibly in the world and we are there to record it. I am deeply moved by this duck's predicament but have no way to ameliorate it for the better. I think to myself that I am a better man for having shared a little part of these beautiful creatures' lives and am surprised at the rising surge of emotion in myself. As we leave, I say aloud "we'll be back soon to visit you." No one is around to hear these words, but neither would I mind if somewhere were who might perhaps think me foolish. I hope my Muscovy friend finds another to partner in life with because loneliness is really the greatest burden of all. I remember a saying an Irish friend in San Francisco once told me: "Better fighting than lonely." I feel the wisdom of these words deep in my heart and sincerely hope the world will always bend its arc towards providing lost or injured love with a new one. In the meantime, I am content to carry the memories of the Muscovy pair with me and commit them to writing such as the one I have penned here.~

The Back Porch. Contemporary and Timeless.



By: Kenneth Miller

There is nothing really going on except Black Lives Matter and Trump 2020 election engineering. Nothing. The call is to defund the police and replace them with healthcare. That healthcare is a human right. The best news I get is on www.DEMOCRACYNOW.org and email. www.InTheseTimes.org is good. I made a brief return to Facebook and it freaked me out.



I moved into a new house that needs a lot of work. It's so good for me to have perspective and to participate in this construction. I could rebuild the front and back porches here over the next two months. I have the time and they need doing. Then I could rebuild the basement window casings. That would be an immense pleasure. No one could help me do that like June could now. June is the homeowner. She turns 84 tomorrow, 17JUN2020. Congratulations June! It turns out that June was born in June. Go figure. I wonder if everyone named June is born in June. Some people are named after seasons, too. I've met people named Summer and Autumn.



There is a rush. Spirit Airlines is going to call me back for more hours in July. I should start the porch this week. Just go ape on it. Cement around the door frame. Scraping the painting. Ripping out the bannister and replacing it with something completely different.

A new metal post. The totally messed up door. Strip it down. It fits the frame well. A new screen door/fixing the screen door at the end. I've got the time and June would buy all of these supplies. When I finish the back, I can move around to the front.



All of these perspectives about home ownership and gentrification. There are people here to talk to. I'm learning the names of the people on this street.

I had to cancel my planned trip to Lima, Peru. Not because of Covid-19, but because my passport had expired. After arriving at the airport and finding that my passport was expired, I was sent away for a new passport. The State Department has not been processing passports during the pandemic. The fact that I have moved since submitting the application will surely complicate things... so between the pandemic and the sad passport application, I am not going to Peru anytime soon.



I could get a REAL ID and go to Saint Croix of the US Virgin Islands in October. That would be great. There are half a dozen great reasons to visit Saint Croix. No one knows about the pandemic. Someone I know is going to die of covid 19 and then we'll look back and reflect on our choices about where we went and what justified essential travel. How eager I am to eat at Red Lobster and take a leisurely stroll through a big box store.

The Rolling Stones show has not been canceled, it has been delayed... so they are sitting on the \$350 I laid out for tickets. I've started to alphabetize the two record collections I inherited.~~



BLOOD TIES, CHAPTER VII PT. 1



By: Jordan Watson

He clocks in for his evening shift at the Frowning Elk. Still in distraught by what occurred a couple nights ago, he opens the countertop to start cleaning out the remaining mugs he has left. Before he has time to mull over how much of this will be taken out of his own paycheck, two well stocked men in dark tailored suits approach the center seating of the bar. The first is a white man with dark brunette hair in a braided ponytail, and a dark violet suit. The other is a black man wearing an azure suit, and sporting a shaven head with an intricately braided beard and jeweled earring arrangements. The bartender glances over them before going back to his mug cleaning, giving a halfhearted sense of sarcasm.

"The NAOS already coming for me based on my browser history?" The former speaks up toward the bartender as he's looking over the menu specials for the day.

"Edward Monaco, you have been summoned by Mr. Solomon for pressing matters in regard to your establishment."

Eddy could feel his stomach drop.

"It's that serious?"

"We've taken the liberty of reserving your meeting exclusively with him. As per the request, we have taken the liberty of calling in your co-manager to tend to the bar's remaining shift."

"Uuum, and what about th—"

The latter gentlemen then interrupts on Eddy's behalf in a rather dulcet, olden English tone.

"We'll also see to it you are paid handsomely for your time with Mr. Solomon as well. Consider this as an investment, to see your establishment's furnishings are fully covered from the prior damages."

Three minutes later, after confirming with his coworker's time slot, Eddy is escorted in an elaborate black limousine, in route to the central building within downtown Steelsvania. Its presence towers amidst the rest of the urban metropolis's forefront. The pristine glass-filled, monolithic exterior conveys the 72-floor skyscraper's appearance as both refined, yet brutalist in form. The circular S insignia illuminates the building's top as a conspicuous beacon, letting all know whose enterprise they bear witness to. As the guards travel alongside behind the rather wary Mr. Monaco, they signal him to stay behind them. They then activate a slot within the middle of the elevator console's for a rather queer means of hand printing. The pony-tailed man then puts his right hand onto the visual display. While showing a slight winch in pain, the device begins to read his palm. It then confirms his signature by giving the yellow light to head upward in the elevator. In slight confusion, Eddy nervously speaks up.

"Man, they're really upping security in this place, ain't they? What, with hand print scanners, and the like. This guy must really be serious about his company."

The man then helps to elaborate the bartender's curiosity.

"Mr. Solomon believes in the utmost security of his staff. And with a new form of integrated bio-metric scanning, we have eliminated the need for fingerprints. We use a more nuanced, conventional means."

"Aaand that would be?"

"Company trade secret. My apologies, Mr. Monaco, But you would need to be part of the staff to garner access to that information."

As Eddy shrugs off his statement, the elevator doors open and they gesture him to enter first, with them following soon after. The gentlemen with the braided beard then implements a specific elevator button combination. To Eddy's eyes, he's just playing with various elevator floor numbers. But to the other, he inputs it in a very specific set of numerics.

1-6-4-1-7-2.

With Eddy's perplexed expression, the pony-tailed gentlemen helps to explain.

"You see, we here at Solomon Enterprises take great pride to innovate ourselves, even among security measures. You'll notice that despite the sequencing in numbers my college here has inputted, the elevator's au-

tomated pulley is still taking us upwards.”

“Sooo, what? You got a code to take us to some kinda secret room?”

The man then smirks in astonishment at his response.

“An astute statement, Mr. Monaco. While there are approximately 72 floors within the complex of Solomon Enterprises, there are of course, studies to which Mr. Solomon cannot be bothered to deal with his secondary, as well as his tertiary affiliated companies, to which he has procured since the founding of this organization since 1979. Even their subsidiaries need to be able to handle with great care as to how they are able to converse with Mr. Solomon directly. To put it simply, Mr. Monaco, he is *quite* the persevering man of his business.”

“Eh, fair enough then. If I were in his shoes, I'd tell other people to piss off, as well. Then again, that's not saying much, given *my* form of business.”

As the elevator comes to a halt, the doors begin to open outward. The two gentlemen raise one of their arms out to have him go forward. They both say in unison, “Your floor, Mr. Monaco.”

The pony-tailed gentlemen then finishes their conversation with this message. “And do not worry, we will stay close behind, to ensure you your visit with Mr. Solomon is a pleasant one.”

“Yeeeah, thanks.” As Eddy walks out, feeling a sense of suspicion, now more than ever.

When he walks forward, he takes in the lavish view of Mr. Solomon's office. The entire room shows the upper skyline of the whole city in near full view, all from the glass encased exteriors. The carpeting shows of a geometric circular formation within the center of the room, inscribing five rather familiar points of interest. Within it, is a singular, artistically made leather chair placed directly in the center between the carpet formation, and the exuberantly sculpted table. It depicts ancient leaders from eons past to hold its support, topped off with a handcrafted mahogany tabletop, etched with olden languages and scriptures across the lining of the hard wood. Standing beside the left and right of its formation are two meticulously sculpted murals of what looks to be angels ascending the ceiling, symbolizing their gateway to ascending the heavens. These two pieces depict their wings as the sculpted walls, while their articles of cloth such as laurels, long transparent drapes, and fig leaves, are painted of pure gold. To the right side of the room is a gramophone that is playing Tartini's Violin Sonata in G minor, beginning with Allegro Moderato. The desk shows of a large computer monitor, a newton's cradle clacking away, and a glass bottle of a rather expensive brand of whiskey. Beyond the opulence lies a large, gold velvet royal throne, with what appears to be the crest of Solomon's family name. On the right of the arm-rest is a hand twirling his drink of choice. Both of the gentlemen take a bow, as the one in the braided beard speaks towards his superior.

“Mr. Monaco has arrived as per your request, Mr. Solomon. We shall leave you two to your business.”

They both vacate the room as the door behind them opens forth, then closes as soon as the two are completely alone. Eddy is aware of the stories that were told about Solomon, and what he has granted for the public to know of him. How he has revolutionized the landscape of military safety measures, given jobs to those in economic circles, even donated to help the fight against super viruses the world has been plagued for centuries. He simply just cannot believe what he's witnessing. A man, who considers himself a rather private individual, has allowed him to bear witness to his appearance. In his own officespace no less. Attempting to make small talk, Eddy goes ahead and helps break the awkward silence, as he leans on the central leather chair facing Solomon's direction.

“Sooo, damn. Nice of you to bring me here on such short notice, eh Solomon? I uuh...I gotta say, it's a pleasure you just scooped up some schmuck like me from the ratty side of town. Though I do gotta ask, why right now when my shift just started about 40 minutes ago?”

He is met with the man's right hand, still swirling his whiskey in a rather odd goblet, and a discernible sigh before he speaks in a rather sultry, baritone tone.

“Do feel free to sit down and get comfortable, Edward. There's much on my mind.”

To be continued in Pt. 2...

Animal Crossing: Myths, Tips, and Events

By: Elise Mote



On March 20th, the third and newest installment of *Animal Crossing* was released. From Gamecube (2001) to Switch, this game has a very loyal fanbase. In this article, I going to talk about some of the myths, tips, and events that I have come across so far. Since the game is still developing, the following information is relevant as of now and can possibly change in future updates.

One of my favorite myths that I heard was about alien contact in the game. Every Saturday morning at 3:33 am turn your TV on and watch as it changes from static to an alien. There's no achievement for it, but I still think it's fun. If you can stay up that late try it with friends and make it a fun little virtual sleepover.

One of the biggest issues a lot of people seem to have is to not get villagers they like in the beginning. With the game being random on who you start with, finding the fastest way of getting rid of villagers has become heavily data mined. Amiibo cards are the easiest way to get the villagers you want. Unfortunately, though, it can also be the most expensive way as you can only use amiibo cards from the previous game that are no longer made. You can buy them off of websites like Ebay for anywhere from \$5 to \$600 for one card. It really depends on the character and the popularity of the villager. Even a pack of unopened cards or a full sell can be in the thousands! Since most people don't want to pay that much, rumors on how to get rid of them have spread. Some people think that ignoring them, giving them trash, hitting them with a net, or even complaining to Isabel gets rid of them faster, but unfortunately, none of these ideas work as the game is coded so they will randomly decide when to leave.

Rumors of different ways of "flirting" with Orville have been spread around on Twitter and TikTok. One of the rumors is that if you clap until he blushes you are supposed to be sent to a rare mystery island. Unfortunately, after many people have tried and even data mined, they have concluded that none of them work.

Some flower hybrids are easy to breed while others, not so much. One of the most sought-after hybrids is gold roses. If you want to breed gold roses you need to have a gold watering can and a bunch of black roses. You can make one if you have the DIY or have one made for you if you have yet to get it. To make it you need a watering can and a golden nugget. To get a golden nugget you need to keep hitting rocks until one pops out. You can hit each rock up to eight times but you're not guaranteed to get eight items like stone, clay, and gold. Sometimes you might only get six or seven. Once you have a can, you only have to water them once as they retain the memory of being watered. The black roses might not breed a gold rose right away, but it will at some point so keep watering them until they do. Also, when you water them with a gold can, water them one by one as for some reason it only works on the one in front of you. If you want to raise your chances of getting gold, have five people water them every day. On rainy days if you have a ton of flowers you don't have to worry about watering them as it counts as if you did! If you want to decorate your beaches you can also plant your grown flowers in the sand, but don't pick them as they don't grow back and stay as buds. Fake art is common when buying from Redd (see my article on visitors). If you accidentally buy one, don't worry because if you have Blathers look at it you will get an achievement for it.

The entire month of June is dedicated to Wedding Season. Harvey, aka "Harve" will invite you to help him take wedding and reception themed photos for Reese and Cyrus's anniversary. You only get to help once per day, but during the first six days of the event you get eleven Heart Crystals from Reese that you can turn to him for wedding themed items. After seven days it goes up to fifteen. You also get a free item the first six days as well. You will have gotten a bench, table, flower stand, head table, pipe organ, and an arch.

On May 1st Tom Nook hosted a May Day event to thank everyone for their hard work. Once you talked to Tom, he would send a special ticket to the airport and you had until the 7th to redeem it. Once you decided to redeem it you would go to the airport and turn in any items you have. You then fly to an island where you would have to find a way out of a maze by only using the materials in the maze. If you do it correctly you are rewarded with bell tickets that can be redeemed at Nooks.

Blathers even gets to run his own event at the museum for International Museum Day. The event ran from May 18th until May 31st. The first day it started Isabelle made an announcement of a Stamp Rally for Blathers. After announcements, you would start the event by speaking to Blathers then collect stamps by touring searching the Fish, Bugs, and Fossils galleries where you would find three stamp stations with an owl logo. Once you had all of the stamps you would then talk to Blathers and he would give you a reward for each galerie finished. Each day they are in a different spot, so you'd have to make sure you checked every room. I recommend only doing it once as you only get plaques after that.

This game has been a huge success and has become what I believe to be perfect timing as we are still dealing with this pandemic. I am excited to see how the game evolves with every update and I hope that it continues to bring people together and provide the social interaction we need while social distancing. If you have yet to get a copy, I highly recommend it. I think that it's a great way to interact with your family, friends, or even make new friendships.~

Price	Name/Months Active/Time
2,000	Giant Water Bug/ April-September/ 7pm - 8am Saw Stag/ July and August/ All Day
2,400	Jewel Beetle/ April-August/ All Day Orchid Mantis / March-November/ 8am - 5pm
2,500	Madagascar Sunset Moth/ April-September/ 8am - 4pm Peacock Butterfly/ March-June/ 4am-7pm Rajah Brook's Birdwing/ December- September/ 8am-5pm Wasp/ All Year/ All Day
3,000	Agrias Butterfly/ April-September/ 8am-5pm Atlas Moth/ April-September/ 7pm-4am Dung Beetle/ December- February/ All Day Great Purple Emperor/ May-August/ 4am-7pm Rosalia Batesi Beetle/ May-September/ All Day
4,000	Emperor Butterfly/ December-September/ 5pm-8am Queen Alexandra's Birdwing/ May- September/ 8am-4pm
4,500	Banded Dragonfly/ May-October/ 8am-5pm
6,000	Rainbow Stag/ June-September/ 7pm-8am
8,000	Cylommatus Stag/ July-August/ 5pm-8am Goliath Beetle/ June-September/ 5pm-8am Horned Elephant/ July-August/ 5pm-8am Tarantula/ November- April/ 7pm-4am Scorpion/ May-October/ 7pm-4am
10,000	Giant Stag/ July-August/ 11pm-8am Scarub Beetle/ July-August/ 11pm-8am Giraffe Stag/July-August/ 5pm-8am Golden Stag/ July-August/ 5pm-8am Horned Hercules/ July-August/ 5pm-8am

Animal Crossing Bug and Fish Guides

Compiled by Elise Mote

Animal Crossing New Horizons: Northern Hemisphere Bug Guide 2k bells and up

I put this guide together to help players figure out what their bugs are worth. especially when you want to sell to Flick who will randomly visit your island till 5am. The only exception is for the Bug Off (on the third Saturday of every June-September) where you get an announcement that day from Isabelle. Flick gives you **150%** more than the original value at the Nook's Cranny. Also, Flick makes really cool free sculptures when you give them three of the same bug and it arrives the next day! Happy bug hunting!~

Animal Crossing New Horizons: Northern Hemisphere Fish Guide(2k and up)

If you have already read about Flick you have to get to know his partner C.J. He will buy fish for **150%** more than you normally get from Nook's Cranny. He also hosts the Fishing Tourney from 5am-5am. If you want a fish model made, C.J has Flick make you one when you give him three of the same fish, and it will be in the mail the next day. You will have to complete a challenge first thought during his random visits. Also, if you decide to visit someone's island during the Fish Tourney you can sell you fish, but you can only get a model when he's on your island or sell fish when he's not holding an event. The best part in doing the tourney is the more fish you get the more points that can be turned in for prizes. You can even get trophies as well (mailed the next day). This so far is my favorite event.~

Price	Name/Months/Active Time
2,000	Mitten Crab/ September-November/ 4pm-9am Moray Eel/ August-October/ All Day
2,500	Betta/ May-October/ 9am-4pm Footballfish/ November-March/ 4pm-9am Piranha/ June-September/ 9am - 4pm & 9pm - 4am
3,000	Angelfish/ May-October/ 4pm Ray/ August-November/ 4am-9pm Red Snapper/ All Months/ All Day
3,750	Soft-shelled Turtle/ August-September/ 4pm-9am
3,800	Char/ March-November/ 4pm-9am
4,000	Koi/ All Months/ 4pm-9am Ocean Sunfish/ July-September/ 4am-9pm Saddled Bichir/ June-September/ 9pm-4am
4,500	Giant Trevally/ May-September/ All Day Ranchu Goldfish/ All Months/ 9am-4pm
5,000	Barred Knifejaw/ March-November/ All Day Blowfish/ November-February/ 9pm-4am Snapping Turtle/ April-October/ 9pm-4am
6,000	Gar/ June-September/ 4pm-9am Mahi-mahi/ May-October/ All Day
7,000	Tuna/ November- April/ All Day
8,000	Hammerhead Shark/ June-September/4pm-9am
9,000	Oarfish/ December-May/ All Day
10,000	Arapaima and Arowana/ June-September/ 4pm-9am Blue Marlin/ November-September/ All Day Napoleonfish/ July-August/ 4am-9pm Sturgeon/ September-March/ All Day
12,000	Saw Shark/ June-September/ 4pm-9am
13,000	Whale Shark/ June-September/ All Day
15,000	Barreleye/ All Months/ 9pm-4am Coelacanth/ All Months/ All Day (Rainy Days) Dorado/ June-September/ 4am-9pm Golden Trout/ March-November/ 4pm-9am Great White Shark/ June-September/ 4pm-9am Stringfish/ December-March/ 4pm-9am

CELEBRATING AMERICA'S CONGRESSMAN JOHN LEWIS



Story by Robert Hester

On February 21st, 1940, John Robert Lewis earnestly started his journey to seek justice for America when he was born as the third of ten children of Willie Mae and Eddie Lewis in Troy, Alabama. His parents were sharecroppers in rural Pike County, Alabama. As a kid, Lewis was so moved to become a preacher, he was preaching to his family's chickens on the farm when he was just five years old. In 1955, Lewis first heard of a young preacher from Atlanta, Georgia named Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on the radio. Later that same year, he began to follow Dr. King's Montgomery bus boycott later that year.

Here are some other interesting facts about John Lewis, a legendary civil rights leader who began his civil rights legacy in his teens:

- He preached his first public sermon when he was 15.
- He first met Rosa Parks when he was 17.
- He first met Dr. King for the first time when he was 18.
- He received a bachelor's degree in religion and philosophy from Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee.
- He became an ordained minister after graduating from the American Baptist Theological Seminary in Nashville, TN.
- He helped organize sit-ins at segregated lunch counters in Nashville, Tennessee and took part in many other civil rights activities as part of the "Nashville Student Movement", a movement that was responsible for the desegregation of lunch counters in downtown Nashville.
- He was arrested and jailed several times as a result of this nonviolent movement to help desegregate Downtown Nashville.
- He became one of the 13 original Freedom Riders in 1961.
- He was elected to take over the role of chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, the SNCC.
- He was one of the founding members of the SNCC.
- He coordinated the SNCC's efforts for "Mississippi Freedom Summer", a campaign to register black voters across the South and expose college students from around the country to the perils of African-American life in the South in 1964.
- He was also instrumental in organizing bus boycotts and other nonviolent protests in the fight for voter and racial equality.



Along with Dr. King, Whitney Young, A. Philip Randolph, James Farmer and Roy Wilkins, he was one of the "Big Six" leaders of groups who helped organize the "March on Washington" on August 28th, 1963—the event that was eventually highlighted by Dr. King's "I Have a Dream" speech on the steps of Washington, D.C.'s Lincoln Memorial. The 23-year-old Lewis also spoke at the march on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, and he was the youngest speaker at the March. He joined the aforementioned "Big Six" leaders at the White House when they met with President John F. Kennedy on the same day that the "March on Washington" took place, August 28th, 1963. He helped lead the peaceful-turned "Bloody" Sunday march for Alabama



voting rights for blacks from Selma, Alabama to Montgomery, Alabama across Selma's Edmund Pettus Bridge on March 7th, 1965. This was a march in which Lewis, and other marchers, were beaten by Alabama State Troopers with night sticks. Despite successfully crossing across the bridge, Lewis's skull was fractured, and as a result, he would bore scars on his head from that incident for the rest of his life.



In 1986, five years after first serving on the Atlanta City Council, the people of the state of Georgia helped elect Lewis, a member of the Democratic Party, to Congress in the U.S. House of Representatives for the first time. Ironically, the district he represented includes the northern three-quarters of the hometown of one of his mentors, Dr. King, Atlanta, Georgia. Congressman Lewis would go on and serve that district in Washington for 34 years, and 17 terms. His length of service allowed him to become the dean of the state of Georgia's congressional delegation. As an elected official in Washington, Congressman Lewis served from 1991 as Chief Deputy Whip, and from 2003 as Senior Chief Deputy Whip. In February of 2011, Congressman Lewis received the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Barack Obama.



On July 17th, 2020, Congressman Lewis passed away at the wise age of 80-years-young. Three days after his passing, I was on a treadmill as part of my weekly workout outing at a gym near where I live in Monroeville, PA. As I was working out on the treadmill, I watched FOX News and CNN on the different TV's they had on at my gym. What astonished me was that they both aired coverage of the start of a session of the U.S. House of Representatives from the U.S. Capitol in Washington. The session started with a moment of silence honoring the life of Congressman Lewis. Prior to the moment of silence, some of his Democratic and Republican colleagues on the U.S. House floor celebrated his life and career. He was remembered as such a bona fide pioneer as a politician, and a humanitarian. I was so emotionally moved by all of the events that took place before and during that moment of silence; not only I stopped my treadmill to join in on that moment of silence, but I went into the men's locker room to re-gather my focus without feeling sadness over America losing such a prominent and beloved champion of justice, for not just African-Americans like myself, but for all minorities all across America. I was really moved that part of his funeral procession in his birth state of Alabama included his body being carried over the Edmund Pettus Bridge one last time in Selma. The same bridge that served as his worst foe when he crossed over it as part of the march for black voting rights in Alabama 55 years earlier, was his best friend when his life and career as a civil rights activist and United States Congressman were celebrated 55 years later. Ten days after his passing, on July 27th, his body lied in state inside the building that served as his best friend for 34 years, the U.S. Capitol in Washington.

If there's anything that can be learned from this story, it comes from some of the quotes that Congressman Lewis spoke during his time on earth; "When you see something that is not right, not fair, not just, you have to speak up. You have to say something; you have to do something." Congressman Lewis also once said this about people making mistakes in their lives, "When you make mistakes, when you're wrong, you should admit you're wrong and ask people to forgive you." And whenever your life feels hopeless, always remember this quote from Congressman Lewis, "Be hopeful. Be optimistic. Never lose that sense of hope."~~



A Fashion Print Advertisement Discussion: 15 Questions

By: Joseph Cepek

Businesses which sell clothes like the Lee Jeans Company use very visually attractive elements to potentially gain customers. This 2012 magazine print advertisement is non-verbally saying that woman of a similar body type as are the featured models will look as good as they do. The yellow and black waist measurement band type indicates that there are women (and there are) who saw or will see this image may very well do anything that they can through stricter diets and increased drastic exercise so that they may possibly look like these professional models. As with just about everything in this life, there is absolutely no guarantee of any kind that these hardworking women will eventually be able to physically resemble these advertisement models. If it does not come to fruition, some women may be very disappointed and could wrongly start to value themselves less than they should. Yet, they (as is also true of men) do not have to feel this awful way about themselves. The world would be a dull place of men and women were the same height and body shape. This is in addition to skin color, ethnicity, plus hair and eye color. Diversity is special in this mindset. I have interviewed Laura Pechersky, an employee of Hanlon Therapy Associates, LLC. I have asked her how she views the underlying messages that this print advertisement possibly conveys to the general public, especially to women. I wanted to ask her a few questions about the actual featured twilled trousers on the print advertisement. So, therefore, I want to focus specifically on the article's potential impact and on the quality of the advertised pants.



Questions:

- Do you believe this advertisement makes for good promotion of Lee's featured denim product for women? For today's (2020) standards, I would say no.**
- Do you believe the waist tape measurement band around the Lee Jeans Brand logo in the upper righthand corner could be saying to women that they also could look good in these same pairs of advertised five-pocket style stretch jeans? No. I think it's quite unappealing to most women. Basically, the ad is promoting slender/slim/thin body types, which can be seen as discriminatory and size-ist. It could be triggering and unhealthy for young girls or women to view.**
- Do you believe a print advertisement similar to this one, yet instead using plus size models wearing the same type of jeans for women would send a (complimentary) equality message for women of all body types? Perhaps it would send a more inclusive message, I would think. However, the whole message from the verbiage to the photo angle would need to be rethought and reshot for it work in 2020.**
- Would you agree that this image that is using both a black and white model together is great for better race relations? I don't know?**
- Would this pants/jeans image be deliberately discriminatory towards anybody who does not resemble these featured models? As I stated in above answers, I don't think it's an all-body friendly, inclusive ad.**
- If yes, why? From the measuring tape, to the words "slender", "slim", this ad seems to objectify women.**
- Do you believe the models looking back at photographer's camera lens with smiles on their faces are interesting? Actually, they don't seem to be looking at the camera lens; in fact, they are looking at something off camera. I would like to know what!**
- Why do you believe the white model's image is closer to the camera lens? I'm not sure, but to me it appears she was the featured model in this advertisement. I'm assuming there were many photos taken, and this was the one that was chosen for whatever reason.**
- Why do you believe putting the model in an outdoor staircase climbing environment was used for this print advertisement? Perhaps to show the jeans in motion?**
- Why do you believe the slogan "Make Every Side Your Good Side" was added into this color image? What is the visual emphasis for this in your opinion? It goes along with the "slender secret" style denim. The visual emphasis is the back of the jeans.**
- Why do you believe the description "New Styles that instantly slim fit, and flatters" was also used to create this particular technicolor print advertisement? I believe it was the description of the style denim they're trying to sell here: "Slender Secret."**
- Would you see yourself possibly wearing these jeans? No.**
- Does this 2012 print advertisement appear to an effective non-verbal influence for visual sensuality in denim pants in your personal opinion? To me, it just shows the denim in motion. So, no, not in my opinion. I don't care for the ad and find it quite outdated and objectifying.**

References:

JCPenney website, Lee.com jeans website

The Next Right Thing

By: Maggie K Jones

I know that life has changed. Nothing ever seems to be the same anymore.

Life changes, and so does mine.

Over the time that I've grown, I know for a fact that life is hard sometimes to handle.

It can mentally pull you down and before you know it, you're crying. But,

There can be change only if we let it happen not just with a voice, but action speak louder than words.

Show that you care for your fellow neighbors, by doing the next right thing's in life's hardest ordeals and circumstances

Showing acts of kindness and showing that you truly care is something that we all should have. Working together in times that are unknown in the end result can be hard.

But it is important that we look ahead, and ask, why we are meant to be here. Why is it important to help not only yourself, but other people, too.

Life is too dear to not to do the next right thing.

It's very hard, I can tell you. I've been there with hard times. It is important to understand that,

When we fall, we rise up, and trying to do the next right thing.

It may be hard to forgive and forget.

But doing that right thing is a must to forgive and forget and move forward with our lives trying to do our best. And when we don't succeed, try harder. And accept the things we cannot change but do the best we can with what we have inside us.

We have a God given potential given to us to use wisely. Each of us has a unique way of reaching out and giving your all, especially when it comes to hard work, determination, and courage to do the next right thing in our lives.~

Pittsburgh's Perfect Parties Day Camp

by Amelia Krzton

Many of you remember the article about Pittsburgh's Perfect Parties from last issue. The three slumber parties following the January slumber party: Isabella Black's Spa Night Sleepover on February 29, Alex Bullyun's Fashion Friends Fest on March 28, and Breanna Mazur's Rock Star Sleepover on April 25. Well, due to the coronavirus's potential possible effects heading into the summer, Pittsburgh's Perfect Parties has decided to sponsor a summer day camp for families involved with the company who cannot send their kids off to regular camp this year due to the coronavirus. The Gourley children, Jake, Kate, Lily, and Breona, and Jenna and Jill Moser, have been regular participants at this camp. The best part about this summer camp is that it is for kids and adults alike. Activities have included something different from each of the monthly slumber parties for this year, such as Taste the Rainbow Race from the Traditional Slumber Party in January, Guess that Scent! from the Spa Night Sleepover in February, and Songwriting Competition from the Rock Star Sleepover in April. By the way, upcoming slumber parties for the summer months include Emily Grey's Super Fan Sleepover based on my band, Angel Kitty on May 30, Rachel Luster's Food Fest Sleepover on June 27, Abigail Mifflin's Totally '80s Sleepover on July 25, and Hannah Mifflin's Hollywood Glitz and Glam Sleepover on August 29. What do you know? 2 of the former Point Breeze residents hosting a sleepover at their new house in Fox Chapel! Meanwhile, the remaining 4 "support group" slumber parties are now going to be hosted by Breona, Kate, Jill, and Lily. These could be hosted on the Saturdays when we have a break from the Saturday Intern.~~

The Conspiracy of the Lizard People

By: Megan Cunningham

To some extent, there are two types of conspiracy theories. There's the harmful propaganda type that's meant to mislead, create distrust among the public, demean public figures, and firehose journalists, which you'd see on Fox News or InfoWars. Such cater to people who subscribe to a certain worldview, individual, or any other entity. Now that they're being spread by the White House and believed by white supremacists, we must take them seriously. Alex Jones has put Sandy Hook parents through hell when he stated that their dead six and seven-year-old kids were child actors in a false flag operation. Some families had to move a few times because people were giving them death threats over what Jones said. Another was Pizzagate which claimed that several high-ranking Democratic Party officials and US restaurants were involved in a human trafficking and child sex ring. This led to a North Carolina man firing a rifle inside a Washington D.C. pizzeria.

The other type of conspiracy theory is significantly less harmful than the first as long as people don't take them too seriously. Since these contend with more pop culture stuff you'd see on *The X-Files* like aliens, cryptid sightings, urban legends, the paranormal, and notions so ridiculous that people would swear you've watched too much of The History Channel if you believe any of it. One of the most ridiculous and least known of these concerns lizard people. Like the Cardassians in *Star Trek*, they're cold-blooded reptilian humanoids except they can shapeshift into human form and have had their claws in humankind since ancient times. They're also said to be behind the Freemasons and Illuminati as well as include many world leaders and celebrities in their ranks. Though the notion of lizard people sounds completely bonkers outside the realm of fiction, a 2013 Public Policy Polling survey found that 4% of Americans believe in this while another 7% were unsure. Now since this might be a trolly poll, we should take the results with a grain of salt.

Of course, aside from people's paranoia, lizard people are aliens. Yet, there's some debate on where they came from, whether it's the Draco constellation or from systems like Sirius and Orion. While some believers think that they've been visiting Earth and breeding with humans since ancient times resulting in more lizard people and more humans with the potential to be lizard people. And I honestly don't know how that works. So what's their reason for being on Earth? Well, world domination obviously. But why? There are lots of reasons, with the most prominent being our gold and alternatively they feed off our negative human energy, particularly when we're afraid, angry, or just generally anxious. Thus, they want to create an Orwellian government system in order to more easily stoke our collective emotions for their sustenance.

While there's no documented evidence of reptilians affecting anything, a guy in Minnesota submitted "Lizard People" as his write-in-vote during a highly contested US Senate election in 2008. Though this was more of a joke since he wasn't a true believer and didn't care for either of the candidates. Anyway, alleged lizard people usually consist of A-Listers that include Barack Obama, Donald Rumsfeld, Katy Perry, Angelina Jolie, Bill and Hillary Clinton, Queen Elizabeth II, Donald Trump, Mark Zuckerberg, Betty White, and Madonna. Though I would also like to add Trump White House aide Stephen Miller (just kidding, but please google him and you'll see what I mean).

Anyway, for a conspiracy theory that's only recently been in the public pop culture radar,

the reptilian conspiracy theory is surprisingly old. Sentient reptilians have existed in human legend since we, well, became human. One of the earliest modern references to lizard people was in Robert E. Howard's 1929 story "The Shadow Kingdom." The story revolves around shapeshifting reptilian humanoids with elaborate underground homes who work in the shadows to rule humanity, including through infiltrating various groups and using mind control to influence world politics. The concept caught on in science fiction and has showed no signs of stopping since.

However, the concept of lizard people as a conspiracy theory didn't really catch fire until 1990, thanks to British conspiracy wackadoodle David Vaughn Icke. A former BBC sportscaster and prominent Green Party member, his life changed when he started feeling a presence that led him to a book, *Mind to Mind*, by psychic healer Betty Shine. Icke sought her out and allegedly told him that March that he was placed on Earth as the instrument of the spirit world and they'd contact him to use as a conduit to help humanity. After leaving the Green Party the next year, he held a press conference alongside his wife and girlfriend, announcing to the world he was the "son of Godhead" and described the Godhead as "Infinite Mind."

So what does he have to do with the lizard people conspiracy theory? Well, they're at the center of Icke's vast conspiracy, which basically forges elements from almost every prominent conspiracy theory into one master theory to rule them all. Though he's rehashed many ideas from the earlier sci-fi stories that kicked off this idea, he's also added some original elements to the narrative. He claimed that the lizard people use as a spacecraft and interdimensional portal to project a holographic reality to aid in controlling humans (later Saturn's rings sending the signals with the moon merely amplifying and projecting them onto Earth). Oh, and he's basically the guy to save the world as the son of Godhead, making his grand conspiracy theory like some badly written Matrix fanfiction. Though according to Icke, the only way we can help him defeat the lizard people is to starve them of our anxieties, fear, and anger, and only give them the positive energy of love (this just gets more ridiculous).

Thus, the concept of lizard people may be ancient enough for their own *Ancient Aliens* episode (yes, I found an article about it on a Google search). While the modern incarnation began in science fiction before conspiracy nuts like David Icke popularized it into a full-fledged conspiracy theory that too many people take way too seriously. Though people might believe we're being ruled by evil reptilian humanoid, it's highly unlikely. Yet, the conduct of many powerful people within our society sometimes makes us wonder whether there is a cold-blooded lizard inside them as many seem so detached from reality, prey on people's fears and anxieties, and have no interest taking responsibility in any current situation.~~

The Home System

By: Ginger Reynolds

You're probably wondering, what in the world is a "home system?" Well, you're about to find out. Let me start by saying that before I made the home system, my life was hectic. My emotions were like an amusement park ride. The home system was all my idea. The point of putting together the home system was, and still is, to get my behaviors under control. I started putting this system together about two years ago. A lot of work went into this and I'm so excited to share it with all of you. The home system includes all sorts of helpful items such as charts, posters, rules, time out boxes, information about myself, and so much more. Some of the charts include hygiene, chores, skills, and even a toilet training chart.

Some of the rules that are included are, for example: no electronics on outings, listen and follow directions, and be safe. I also have consequences for when rules are not followed such as: no dessert, loss of privileges, and no video games. I love having my dessert and playing video games, so when I know I can possibly lose those due to lack of behaving correctly, it helps me do what I need to in order to keep having my dessert and video games.

There are also rewards for when there's an extra chore completed. An example of a reward could be, for instance: s'mores night, pick a movie for movie night, or even a chore pass. Some of the chores I have are as followed: vacuum bedroom, clean my room, complete seven chores, and push in my chair all the way.

Also included in the home system is a very specific food, snack, and drink schedule. I have a lot of allergies and things I'm sensitive to. Following the very specific schedules helps me avoid the items that my body has a reaction to. I also have posters I use to manage money and boundaries.

I found out while making this system that if I stick with a list when I go, for example, grocery shopping, I don't go over my budget. I also found out that working on myself is extremely important. Before putting together this system, I was fighting, running away, and disobedient to every rule possible. Now, I'm getting along with my parents. I'm also doing my chores and I'm more social. My life has dramatically changed since I started putting together the home system. Not only have my behaviors changed, but my mental health has improved as well.

In conclusion, my whole life has improved. My thoughts are more positive now and it's not just because I started to work on myself. My life is better because I stopped fighting life and started accepting help.~~

Beyond Blessed

By: Jacob Leavell

IN MY OPINION...

Blessed... to some ...it is a word. To others...it is a code. A code that means you are loved, you are cherished, you are meaningful in life. At the time before Christ, those who have lived in the church, the pharisees, were blessed by their own delusions. They believed that no matter what they did, they would always be blessed because they were above God's law ...such nonsense, such utter nonsense that the pharisees both believed and promoted. I knew of a man, Judge Claude Frolo. He believed that "no matter how heinous, no matter how cruel my actions are, all that I do...I do for the greater good of the LORD's will is my justification". Frolo couldn't be any further from the truth back then, and here now. This is because Frolo committed every single sin that was written in the LORD's Bible. He still believes that he is God's holy warrior. Not all men of religion are driven by noble pursuits, the trick is to find what is in their hearts. To do that, one must look at both words and actions to see if they really are blessed. If the man of God imitates the best of Jesus, that is when he is beyond blessed. The man of God is beyond blessed because of his love, his compassion, his courage to fight those who do wrong. A pacifist who runs away from a fight and lets the victim suffer is not a blessed person. They care more about their code rather than what the code stands for. One who is beyond blessed is one who is cherished or rather still cherishes a life and that is why I fight, that is why I am stubborn, that is why the anger I have is not a childish tantrum, but the anger of a gentle soul.

What do we know of generosity? It starts with sharing. That is the first thing that we need to learn as a child. Sharing is being generous. As we grow older...we learn that if there are poor people suffering...we give as much as we have (not every penny), or can spare. Sometimes, you must make a choice; give what money you have available to someone in need or use the money to buy something that someone precious to you will love. There is one way to satisfy both longings, you could decide to split the money. By giving half to each, you will be a generously blessed soul, using generosity and wisdom. The will to be kind to your fellow man, that is what God wants us to have while helping others. Greed tends to manipulate the concept of money to its advantage, and it is more terrible than it sounds. However, if you have love for the person instead of love for self or money, then with God and Jesus's help along with friends and family...you can defeat greed and be beyond blessed in generosity.

A beyond blessed soul that has faith in Jesus and God, being forgiven will go to heaven when they die....you just have to be willing to go the distance and see how far you get .~~

Jerry

By: Garret Mathews

Going through my cabinets the other day, I uncovered a folder with “Jerry” scrawled on the front.

Sometimes I can forget for a few hours that I have Asperger’s. But it always comes back to me. I’ll see something, or feel something, or hear something, or say something and -- bingo – I realize that this thing that rides hard on my life has no intention of letting go.

When I made the discovery, my first thought was, “Boy oh boy, I’ve been looking for the Jerry File for a long time. Might need the info for a future project. Sure am glad I found it.”

Not, “Boy oh boy, it’s been forever since our paths crossed. Wonder how Jerry is doing?”

Human touch? Nope.

Jerry is a file. Not a friend. That’s just the way it is.

In ninth grade, Jerry moved to my hometown from the Virginia coalfields. His miner father didn’t want to live in the shadow of the tippie, so he relocated his family 90 miles away. I hung out at his house a few times, but we weren’t close. I’m an Aspie. I don’t get close.

Fast forward to a few years ago.

I hadn’t seen my high school classmate since graduation in 1967. Didn’t know if he was sick or well. Happy or sad.

That would be getting personal. I have Asperger’s. I don’t get personal.

But I needed something. And I knew Jerry could help.

Selfish. That’s how many of us on the autism spectrum roll.

So I send an email to our class president. “Will – old buddy, old pal – sure would like to get hold of Jerry. Pretty important.”

No doubt convinced I wanted to check on the guy’s well-being, Will quickly responded with telephone and address information. I shot back that I didn’t want all that, just the guy’s dot com handle.

I was writing a play about a hardscrabble family from Appalachia that has to deal with the aftermath of an underground mine accident. To flesh out the characters, I needed to know more about growing up in a coal camp. Was your father paid in scrip? Was the mine superintendent -- and de facto chief housing honcho – a good provider? Did you enjoy camp life, or was it confining?

Jerry answered all my questions in a series of long emails that must have taken hours to write. He told me about the outdoor toilet and taking baths in a tub with water heated on an ancient wood stove, and how management could send the family packing for being just a few weeks in arrears at the company store.

I thanked him profusely from my safe distance. I’m good at that.

With Jerry’s notes next to my keyboard, I finished the play. And put the material into a folder with his name on it.

At long last, I located the thing I needed.

The important thing.

The Jerry File.

Not the human being behind it.

I don’t think this Aspie mindset makes me a bad person.

Or a good one.

It’s just the way it is.~~

LOTS A LUCK

By: Jake Ziesche

There are numerous superstitions throughout the world
A black cat can be good or bad depending on the culture
The numbers seven, eight, and thirteen and four
Horseshoes
An owl appearing in the daytime
And possibly, an owl calling your name
Opening an umbrella in the house
The Shakespeare tragedy that must not be spoken aloud
Rainbows
Chopsticks that are standing straight in a rice bowl
(Japan)
A sparrow entering a house
Mirrors and taking someone's picture can steal their soul
Possessing a cat's eye gem
Some people believe they're real, while others think it is
nonsense
I've seen them happen on TV,
But I think it was just for drama
In real life, I would think if something happened,
It could be brushed off as a coincidence
I think their power is in the eye of the beholder.~~

Review: *A Beautiful Mind*

By: Nils Skudra

One of the movies I've recently watched is Ron Howard's 2001 biographical film *A Beautiful Mind*, starring Russell Crowe as the acclaimed mathematician John Nash. I felt this film would be a perfect candidate for a review since Crowe's portrayal conveys some traits that characterize Asperger's Syndrome. A plausible case could therefore be made that while John Nash suffered from paranoid schizophrenia, he may have also had Asperger's Syndrome.

The film opens with a young John Nash beginning his graduate studies at Princeton University as a co-recipient of the Carnegie Scholarship for mathematics. Upon meeting his classmates, he immediately displays a tendency to speak his mind directly, telling fellow co-recipient Martin Hansen (portrayed by Josh Lucas) that he has studied Martin's thesis essays and found nothing original or innovative in them. With this diminishing statement, Nash quickly alienates Martin, sparking a rivalry that lasts throughout their graduate studies. This early example of Nash's lack of social etiquette could conceivably be construed as a sign of Asperger's Syndrome since Asperger's individuals, due to their different neurological functioning, often lack inhibitions about speaking their minds directly, even though this might manifest itself in inappropriate or offensive statements that could potentially alienate other people.

During this early point in the film, Nash also meets his roommate Charles Herman (portrayed by Paul Bettany), a literature student who practically becomes Nash's only close friend at Princeton due to his social awkwardness. While they are having a conversation on the roof of their dorm building, Charles observes, "Maybe you're just better with the old integers than with people," to which Nash replies, "The truth is I don't like people much, and they don't much like me." This admission lends further support to the likelihood of Nash having Asperger's Syndrome since aversion to social interaction is often found among individuals with Asperger's Syndrome – although there is a misconception that they don't want to engage with other people, most Asperger's individuals are in fact interested in social interaction but struggle with the expected social etiquette. Consequently, many individuals with Asperger's are introverted due to concerns about how others will perceive them.

Nash's overriding goal is to come up with an original idea for his graduate dissertation, and in pursuing this goal his idiosyncrasies further come into play, earning him ridicule from his classmates. For example, when they observe him studying a group of pigeons, one asks, "Making a reverse constitutional?" to which Nash replies, "I'm hoping to extract an algorithm to define their movement." Martin then challenges him to a game of checkers, during which he taunts Nash about the possibility of failure to devise an original idea. Nash's visual orientation and attention to detail is demonstrated in this scene as he keenly observes the alignment of the black and white checkers – upon losing the game, he remarks, "You should not have won. I had the first move. My play was perfect." This ability to think visually, with a strong orientation toward detail, is another Asperger's trait that will later be a great asset to Nash, but at this point it only contributes further to the ostracism and bullying that he suffers at the hands of his peers.

The bullying that Nash's peers inflict upon him also manifests itself in taking advantage of his social awkwardness and goading him into situations that will have an embarrassing outcome. For example, when Nash and his classmates are in a bar, they point out an attractive female student sitting at the counter and prod Nash into approaching her and asking her out. However, when Nash sits next to her, he is completely silent for a few minutes until she asks him "Maybe you want to buy me a drink?" Nash then answers, "I don't know exactly what to say in order for you to have intercourse with me, but could we assume that I've said all that, I mean, essentially we're talking about fluid exchange, right? So, could we just go straight to the sex?" She then abruptly slaps him and walks away saying, "Having a nice night, asshole!" while his classmates laugh at him.

During this period, Charles proves to be a source of comfort for Nash as he despairs over his struggle to find an original idea. At one point, Charles convinces him to simply shove the table with all of his notes out the glass window of their dorm room, providing comic relief that temporarily lifts the

burden from Nash's mind. His search for an original idea finally bears fruit when he and his classmates see a blonde female student arrive with her friends at the bar. His visual orientation comes into play at this moment, as he visualizes the different scenarios that could play out, and he devises a solution that would benefit everyone: "If we all go for the blonde and block each other, not a single one of us is going to get her. So, then we go for her friends, but they will all give us the cold shoulder because no one likes to be second choice. But what if none of us goes for the blonde? We won't get in each other's way and we won't insult the other girls. It's the only way to win." This gives Nash the idea for his dissertation, and subsequently he formulates the Nash equilibrium, an original concept of governing dynamics that finally wins him recognition and respect among his peers.

After completing graduate school, Nash becomes a professor at MIT and is recruited by the Pentagon to crack encrypted Soviet telecommunications. In this capacity, Nash's orientation toward detail and visual thinking proves highly valuable, as the numbers appear and form a visual pattern in his mind until he finally determines which numbers will crack the code, enabling him to plot these points on a map and provide information on where Soviet messages are arriving. For many individuals with Asperger's Syndrome, visual thinking and detail orientation are unique skills which enable them to find information that may not be immediately clear to other people, something which is also demonstrated by Shaun Murphy in *The Good Doctor* miniseries. In addition, since Asperger's individuals tend to focus very narrowly on their field of specialization, these skills are especially helpful when applied to that particular area of interest.

Nash also displays a lack of empathy in his social interactions, which is another common trait of Asperger's Syndrome. During a classroom scene in which Nash closes the window due to the loud drilling by construction workers outside, one student asks, "Can't we leave one open, professor? It's really hot, sir," to which Nash replies, "Your comfort comes second to my ability to hear my own voice." This lack of concern for the students' comfort exemplifies the difficulties that Asperger's individuals often have with showing empathy as part of their social awkwardness, and therefore this scenario lends further credence to the case for Nash having Asperger's Syndrome. However, when student Alicia Larde (portrayed by Jennifer Connelly) opens the window and convinces the construction crew to temporarily work somewhere else so that the students can have air without disruption, an impressed Nash observes, "As you will find in multi-variable calculus, there is often a number of solutions for any given problem."

Nash soon falls in love with Alicia and begins dating her, finally mustering the courage to make an awkward marriage proposal. Alicia is moved by his directness and happily accepts. However, their marriage takes a dark turn when Nash is hospitalized in a psychiatric institution by Dr. Rosen (portrayed by Christopher Plummer), who informs Alicia that her husband suffers from paranoid schizophrenia, characterized by delusional episodes in which Nash talks to figures who only exist in his mind – it is thus made clear that Charles Herman and Nash's Defense Department supervisor William Parcher (portrayed by Ed Harris) are merely figments of his imagination. From this point onward, Nash's condition takes a toll on his marriage, as the medication makes him groggy and unresponsive, and the delusions reassert themselves when he neglects to take it. Alicia thus struggles to support her husband while trying to maintain her sanity in coping with his potentially dangerous behavior.

A Beautiful Mind is undoubtedly one of Russell Crowe's most outstanding performances, as he brilliantly captures John Nash's idiosyncrasies, intellectual genius and mental instability. Jennifer Connelly also superbly conveys Alicia Nash's endurance and resolution in helping her husband gain a measure of control over his mental health challenges so that he may lead a successful career. Crowe makes a compelling and plausible case that Nash may indeed have had Asperger's, in light of his social difficulties and his unique intellectual skills. But the film also profoundly illustrates the importance of providing compassion and strong family support for individuals with paranoid schizophrenia. By receiving such support, these individuals can thrive as productive members of society while managing the challenges of their condition, just as John Nash demonstrated in his life.~~



Foodie Call

Shopping Adventures and Quarantine Cooking

By: Delaine Swearman

In March of 2020, the arrival of the Coronavirus Pandemic and stay-at-home orders turned everyday life upside down. One of the most significant changes in my life relates to obtaining and preparing food.

Before hunkering down, I attempted a last-minute grocery run, only to discover empty grocery shelves with limited bread products and canned goods. I decided to try the grocery delivery services and signed up for Instacart. The first order went through flawlessly, but as Instacart became overwhelmed, I discovered the earliest delivery times either a week into the future or no availability at all. I went ahead and scheduled for a future time slot, but on the day of delivery some of the items I requested were not in stock. I chatted in real time with my shopper and was able to find substitutions for some items.

After four weeks of lockdown, I ventured into the Aldi's grocery store on my own. I went on a Sunday, which I had heard was one of the less busy days of the week. Upon arriving, I donned a face mask and gloves and took only my keys, phone, grocery list, a small hand sanitizer, and credit card into the store. The employees were outside of the main entrance sanitizing carts, and I obtained a clean cart as I went into the store. Signs were posted along the aisles indicating that they were one way and reminding people to "socially distance" and stay six feet apart. The store was not very busy and everyone was very mindful of rules. I only saw one person (a customer) not wearing a mask. I found all but two items on my shopping list. I had to wait behind one person at the checkout line, and there were colored pieces of tape on the floor marking every six feet where people should stand. At the register itself a large plexiglass window separated me from the cashier. I removed one glove to take my credit card out of my pocket and tapped the screen to pay, then immediately put my card away. After leaving the store I removed the other glove and threw them both in the trash. I unloaded all my groceries into the back of my car and sanitized my hands after returning my cart. After getting home I washed my hands, put things away, washed my hands again, changed clothes, washed my mask, washed my hands again...

Living alone, I have never been much of a "cook" and my preferred cooking appliance is the microwave. It is easy and quick. But now that I have so much extra time on my hands during the day, I have plenty of time to prepare food before I'm ready to eat. So I pulled out my crockpot and cookbooks. I enjoy eating home cooked "real" foods and since I do live alone, making a single recipe means that I will have leftovers for several additional meals and this is a big bonus. I've made chili, crockpot stuffed cabbage, fried cabbage and mustard pork chops, Tuscan chicken, and Tuscan chicken with whole wheat pasta. I used to get takeout or fast food a few times a week, but now I'm making almost all my meals at home. One of my favorites which I'd like to share with you is the Tuscan Chicken recipe.~~



Creamy Tuscan Chicken

Servings: 4

Prep Time: 15 minutes

Cook Time: 20 minutes

Ingredients:

2 Tbsp butter
½ cup chopped onion
3 cloves garlic, minced
1 tsp red pepper flakes (optional)
1 pound boneless skinless chicken thighs
4 cups baby spinach
1 cup sliced mushrooms
1 cup cherry tomatoes, halved
1 tsp Italian seasoning
1 tsp black pepper
½ tsp kosher salt
1 cup heavy whipping cream
¾ cup grated Parmesan cheese



Photo by Delaine Swearman

Directions:

HEAT a large skillet over medium-low heat; add the butter. Once the butter is melted, add the onion, garlic, and red pepper flakes (if using). Cook, stirring until the onions are coated, about 30 seconds.

Add the chicken, spinach, mushrooms, tomatoes, Italian seasoning, pepper, and salt. Mix well.

Pour in the cream and stir to combine. Cover and cook until the chicken has reached an internal temperature of 165 degrees F, approximately 15 minutes.

Stir in the Parmesan and serve alone or over pasta.

Notes:

Go easy on the red pepper flakes! Feel free to add extra vegetables, eliminate the cheese, or substitute a different cheese.



Calico Bean Casserole

Foodie Call

By: Andrew Olsavicky

In this time of virus-based social distancing, we often find ourselves having to make more and more home cooked meals for both ourselves and our families. One of my favorite dishes to make for my family regardless of the situation is “Calico Bean Casserole.” This is the recipe for the dish:



Calico Bean Casserole:

- 1/2 lb. burger meat (cooked)
- 1/2 lb. bacon (cooked) *note: it is a half-pound before it is cooked
- 1/2 cup chopped onion (cooked *optional)
- 1/2 cup ketchup
- 3/4 cup brown sugar [dash regular sugar(optional)]
- 1 tsp. dry mustard [squirt of regular mustard {preferably Golden’s brown}(optional)]
- 1: 15 ounce can red kidney beans (light, dark, or regular) [drained]
- 1: 15 ounce can butter beans (can use other white beans ex: great northern, white kidney) [drained]
- 1: 15 ounce can Baked beans [not drained] (preferably Bush’s)
- 1 tsp salt (ionized, sea salt, kosher, ect.)
- 2 tsp vinegar (white, apple cider {preferable})

Mix in large bowl

Bake at 350 degrees for 40 min.

Granted, this dish was originally meant to be a side dish. Since it is such a hearty casserole, my family and I choose to eat it as a main dish and usually have biscuits of some sort with it (usually oven-ready Pillsbury Biscuits). Some of the good things about this recipe include the fact that it makes for great leftovers, especially if you make a double batch. That, and if you do make a double batch, you can have a few variations such as using one can dark red kidney beans and one can light red kidney beans; it is also possible to use only one can of butter beans and one can great northern beans. Other variations include cooking time for onions (or using raw). My mother, who always needs the onions to be cooked, as raw onions don’t mix well with her digestive system, will usually cook the onions in the grease leftover from cooking the bacon. Since I don’t usually cook the onion, I usually use the bacon grease to cook the burger meat, which enhances the meat with the bacon flavor. To finish off the onion part of this recipe the ingredient list says to use yellow onion, which I always do, but one day I think I might try making it with red onion since I prefer it in terms of flavor. This recipe is good for leftovers and given the fact that having food like this around in times like these is a good idea, so hopefully I have given all of you a recipe that will be useful to you in the future and I hope you like it if and when you make it.~~

Improvised Hot Oatmeal Recipe



By: Joseph Cepek

Foodie Call

2 (43 or 46 gram-dry instant oatmeal pouches based on flavor and brand)

1/4 Cup peanuts (honey roasted or plain)

1/4 Cup walnuts (chopped or up to 5 unchopped ones)

1/4 Cup raisins and/ or dates (optional)

1/4 Cup bran flakes and/or toasted oats dry cereal

Generic products are also good.

Cooking Note: Please, don't add the dry cereal ingredients before microwaving the instant oatmeal in a microwave safe bowl. This is to prevent the dry cereal pieces (ingredients) from turning soggy due to the internal microwave heat.

More water or milk mixed into the oatmeal will cause a more liquified product while less water or milk will cause a thicker hot cereal product consistency. Recommended heating time should be up 2 minutes for a bowl containing 2 1.52 or 1.62 ounce (oz.). This covers 1 minute for each pouch such as Cinnamon and Spice or Maple and Brown Sugar flavors. The instant oatmeal can be the classic Quaker brand or a store bought generic version such as Essential Everyday, Shopper's Value, or Millville.

Warning:

To prevent mouth, lip and/or tongue scalding, let the microwave instant hot oatmeal stand at room temperature (68 degrees Fahrenheit) for at least 1 minute.

A True Fact:

Numerous studies have been conducted over the years, which prove that eating a daily diet, which is low in saturated fat and bad LDL (Low Density Lipoproteins) cholesterol, plus being greater in HDL (High Density Lipoproteins) good cholesterol, is beneficial for good heart (cardiovascular) health.

This is courtesy of the American Heart Association (AHA).

The following food concoction fulfills these AHA daily nutrition recommendations. This is provided that the added nut, date, and/or dry cereal ingredients are an average serving size (approximately 1/8 Cup, or 2 ounces).~~



Chipotle Review

Foodie Call

By: Zach Grabowski

For this *Pittverse* issue, we have chosen foods that mean a great deal to us for the Foodie Call, whether it is a home cooked meal or takeout from a restaurant. One of my favorite meals for takeout is Chipotle. I like their bowls and always get steak with brown rice, black beans, sautéed peppers and onions, queso, corn salsa, tomatoes, shredded cheddar cheese, and sour cream. It is so good and quite addicting! I love Chipotle and could eat there every day!~~



Cinnamon Bread Recipe

By: Elise Mote

Ingredients

- 2 cups warm water
- 1 TBL yeast
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 5 cups bread flour
- 2 tsp salt
- 1/4 cup vegetable oil
- 1/2 cup powdered sugar
- 1 TBL cinnamon

Instructions

- Pour water into a mixing bowl.
- Sprinkle sugar and yeast over water and let it stand for 5 minutes.
- Add flour, oil, and salt and mix well.
- Knead 2 minutes with mixer, or 5 minutes by hand.
- Let rise till doubled in size, about an hour.
- Divide dough in half, roll each half 9x15 inches, or as wide as your bread pan.
- Sprinkle generously with powdered sugar and cinnamon.
- Roll up tightly and place in greased bread pans, seam side down.
- Let rise till nearly doubled, about 30-40 minutes.
- Bake at 350 for 30 minutes, or till golden brown.

Note: Make sure that you make it thin enough so that you get a cinnamon swirl when cut. Cover bread with plastic wrap or place in bag when you're not eating it so it won't get stale.

Recipe from aranchmom.com~~.com



Sara Brooks' Gluten-Free Cookies



Top 10 Dry Cereals

By: Joseph Cepek

1. Post Great Grains with Dates
2. General Mills Honey Nut Cheerios
3. Kellogg Frosted Mini-Wheats
4. Quaker Oatmeal Squares
5. Kellogg Raisin Bran
6. Kellogg Corn Flakes
7. Post Blueberry Morning
8. Post Cracklin' Oat Bran
9. Kellogg Frosted Flakes
10. Kellogg Crispix

Generic (Millville, Essential Everyday, Shopper's Choice, Real Value, Market Pantry, etc.) versions of these dry cereals are equally tasty.

Hey Now! The Career of Howard Stern

By: Dmitry Harmon

As people grow up, they stray from the children songs and books they delve into the world of radio and adult level reading. In my case, I did not read a ton but am educated enough to read fairly substantial novels written by people such as Stephen King and James Patterson. But where the change really occurred for me was in the radio side of things. That was when I discovered The Howard Stern Show.

Howard Stern is a radio shock jock who became really popular by the late '80s and was consistently popular throughout the country. He was born in New York in 1954 a couple weeks after the New Year and grew up really enjoying listening to radio and music. At an early age, he knew that he wanted to get into the radio business. As he moved forward to college and adulthood, he got various radio jobs in several states and by the early 1980s, he established his show as The Howard Stern Show and a legend was born.

By the 1990s, he was very popular and was a well-known shock jock who obtained the best ratings, crushing any other radio host most notably, Don Immus, who happened to be the reigning king when it came to ratings. Howard Stern's show has a ton of material and to say people were shocked would be an understatement. He covered a lot of areas when it came to interviewing people, world events and talking about personal life. Along with himself he had a cast of people that were part of his show and several stayed for decades, and some have stayed with him since the beginning.

Of the people that stayed since the start were Fred Noris, Robin Quivers, and his producer Gary Dell'Abate. Fred is the man that does all of the sound effects and has taken on the role of voices and puppeteer for the TV show. I have gathered that Fred is a comedian that clearly utilizes his talents when needed. Since I have been listening, he has used the many voices he is able to create when the comedic timing seems right. It does not always work out; however, more times than not, it works very well and has helped the Stern Show become what it is today. The show used to have a man named Jackie Martling but I am not well versed in what happened and he is no longer in the show. Although occasionally hints are passed on through some of the shows.

Robin Quivers has a very unique voice and a distinctive laugh. She also does the news bit at the end of every show. What is more important to me from a show standpoint is she's a highly intelligent woman who came from an unfortunate childhood. She is living proof that people with a childhood like hers can make something of herself and become one of the most recognized voices in radio by today's standards. She is also not afraid to speak her mind and I believe that is one of the main reasons why Howard Stern has so much respect for her and was willing to quit the show when a serious medical issue became a major obstacle for Robin and harsh realities were brought to life for the staff in regards to the medical situation.

Greg Dell'Abate is the head producer on the show. He is in charge of creating a show for each day. Such tasks include getting interviews for the show, going out in the field and obtaining clips for the show and overall making sure the show runs smoothly. He loves his job and there is a reason why Howard Stern keeps him even though at times can be driven crazy by him. However, a lot of times I feel it's all good nature. There are many other team members that make the show what it is today such as Sal Governale and Richard Christy. Those two are hilariously good at producing phony phone calls and believe me, they are hilarious.

However, The Howard Stern Show is not for everyone. There is a lot of material that people would not be able to handle. Even I sometimes have to turn off the radio because of how weird some of the clips are; most notably, some of the pornographic conventions that some of the staff attends to obtain clips for the show. Sometimes the interviews with porn stars are a bit much when they get into graphic detail about their films. But that is a portion of

the show that occurs in moderation.

He also happens to be an excellent interviewer and there is a video on YouTube where he spends over two hours interviewing Hillary Clinton. The reason why I believe this interview was so good was because even though he is a shock jock, he understands the importance of asking the right questions and staying on the topic with his guest. He released a book titled *Howard Comes Again*. This book is not meant to be read from beginning to end; rather look at the table of contents and find an interview of interest.

I have a lot of favorite things about the show, most notably some of the recurring guests he has. These people are called the “wack pack” and they are less fortunate people who know why they are a part of the show and feel honored to be on it. Some of them are even what we call “Superfans” of the show. They listen to him all day every day and they do not care what the cost is. The reason for the cost is in the year 2006 he signed a contract with Sirius XM satellite radio, where the FCC was no longer involved. It is essentially cable but for radio.

Some of the most notable characters from the wack pack are: High Pitched Eric, who has an affliction where his voice is constantly in a falsetto range who is not the brightest bulb. Then we have Bobo who tends to write his questions to Howard down on paper and then reads them from the paper. To give him credit, he has been a driving instructor for a long time. Last, but not least, we have Marian from Brooklyn who has a scratchy voice and a thing for Howard. She gets quite carried away with her true New York self and gets loud and overly excited quickly. Over the years there have been some that have moved on from this world. But it is always entertaining to hear them and have them be part of the show.

The other portion of the show that is pretty frequent from day to day is Howard talking about his parents. They are true New Yorkers and just like anyone else would say, they drive him crazy at times. When Howard does his mother and father’s voices, it is spot on given his vocal range and reminds me a lot of how my grandparents talked. This in effect warps me to memory lane and reminds me of a lot of the conversation I had while my grandparents were still alive.

He has a unique way of mimicking the speech pattern of his mother with such quotes as “Liiisten” and “And beeeelieve you me!” A classic way he would do this is as such, “Liiisten. If I ever found a stray cat on the doorstep it would be sent straight to a shelter. Beee-lieve you me! I don’t need a filthy animal coming to my house, I mean, what is this? With all its dirt and filth? I mean, What is this?” And he does it perfectly. Overall, it is pure entertainment and I get excited when I hear it.

He took a lot of crap during the early years, but he persevered and stuck to his guns and has a show like no other. I do not think anyone could even get close to a show like his if they tried. He has gotten me through some of my down moments and always puts a smile on my face at some point in the show. Others still may not like him but I have learned that outside the show, he is a caring person who doesn’t mind helping people out, but at the same time wants to keep his private life private unless he is talking about it on the show. I have told people that if you listen to the show long enough, you will eventually be able to read between the lines and realize that he is a genuine, caring person and that he wants to give people comedy and something they can talk about with friends.~~



Living the Monroeville Life

Story and Photos by Robert Hester

New Year's Eve of 2019 not only marked the final New Year's Eve of the decade of the 2010's, but the final day that I lived in the only hometown I ever lived in, Braddock, Pennsylvania. Unlike a lot of people, moving was such a brand-new experience for me—at 38-years-old. And like most people who go through this experience, especially those who do so from the only home they've ever known, moving from the only home I've ever known all of my life was a very emotional and fearful experience.



When I first settled in to my new (and first) apartment on the night of New Year's Eve in Monroeville, PA., less than a half-hour drive from my previous and longtime address on Corey Avenue in Braddock, I—unlike most of America with the start of the New Year and decade—felt very sad and afraid. In a shameless manner, I confess that I spent most of the minutes before the end of 2019 and the minutes after the start of 2020 simply, as I have so eloquently put it over the years, sobbing my eyes out. I kept saying, over and over again, with my eyes filled with tears, “This is no joke, this is no joke.” I repeated that as I sat down at my computer chair that made the move to Monroeville from Braddock, looking at one box after another that were filled with all the other things that made the move with me. I didn't just cry over the fact that I literally brought my entire life and career to Monroeville from Braddock—albeit the explanation of those boxes filled with my life-filled stuff—I cried over the fact that unlike my old life in Braddock, my new life in Monroeville is filled with a lot of responsibilities, mostly and importantly, financial/tax-paying responsibilities.

In spite of that aforementioned “sob” story, and as the title of this story goes, I'm living the Monroeville life mainly because of my new job as a server of Progress City's biggest-ever venture, and the venture that gave birth to the Autism Employment Network, SpectroDolce Confectionary. You're already aware that SpectroDolce is a pioneering confectionary store whose employees are on the Autism spectrum. What you may not be aware of is that SpectroDolce's location, 3926 William Penn Highway in Monroeville, is less than a 20-minute walk from my apartment complex in Monroeville. As much as I'm financially thankful for that new venture in a new town, I'm spiritually thankful that I'm not a part of this new venture in a new town alone. My mother, who I've spent every single day within Braddock for the 38 years I lived with her there, came along with me on this journey. And now, she and I are now neighbors of the same multi-building apartment complex we both live in. Despite living in separate apartment buildings in the same complex, I've accomplished a lot of personal goals at her apartment in the times that I've visited there since she relocated; like being taught me the responsibilities of paying bills, maintaining a budget to help make sure my bills are paid, help cook dinner after work, watch TV—like this past year's Super Bowl between the San Francisco 49ers and the game's eventual champion Kansas City Chiefs, and all other accomplishments that have made sure life as an independent apartment resident in Monroeville is the best life I've ever lived so far.

As for the Monroeville life itself, it's a very special life in a very special community that I've quickly grown accustomed to as a resident. Before I became a resident, I've always known that Monroeville has been nationally and even internationally known for its legendary Miracle Mile Shopping Center and Monroeville Mall. But ever since I've moved to Monroeville, I've also grown accustomed to taking advantage of choosing from so many other options in terms of finding places to shop, dine, work out, enjoy live entertainment, and all of the other options that allows me—and every resident who lives here—to live the life that Monroeville has been known for ever since this special community was first established in 1951. When I accepted this prestigious and rare opportunity of working in a confectionary store with Autism spectrum employees—a first of its kind—I never knew in any imagination of mine, wild or otherwise, that this opportunity would end up giving me other opportunity to allow me to give away the only life that I've ever known and lived, the Braddock life, for a life that I never thought I'd ever live, the Monroeville life. It still hasn't sunk in that I'm now a resident of Monroeville. I don't know when it will that feeling will sink in, or if it ever will. But what I do know this in terms of now living the Monroeville life: I've come a long way from living the Braddock life.~~



City Girl to Country Lady

By: Ginger Reynolds

I have never been a country lady. I moved from the city to the country on June 8th and at first, I didn't like it, because of the big environmental change. It's only been a few days and I'm loving the country life more and more every day.

I went into town yesterday and I was so happy to see other buildings. Up until a few days ago, I was focused so much on ending my life that I didn't realize how much there is out there in the world.

When I was in the city, I had other things to do, but I was always on the internet. Now that I'm living in the country, there's not much internet, but there's lots to do. I love circling the outside of the house when I'm bored. There's lots more around the house to do. It just takes a little encouragement and imagination.

When I was living in the city, I felt like my actions made me a girl and not a lady. I was always getting into trouble or running away. But now that I'm living in the country, it feels like I have more time and energy to think about what I need to do. I'm used to acting on impulses, instead of thinking things through. Now, I'm trying to make my future worth watching as if a higher power was helping me along.

In conclusion, I don't really miss the city life as much as I thought I would have. Country life is more relaxing than I thought as well. I always thought country life would be boring, but it turns out to be the exact opposite. So, it just shows you that if you try something but don't get a positive vibe from it, stick around and maybe your negative thoughts will transform into positive thoughts.~~

37 and Single

By: Nathaniel Geyer

Recently, I had my 37th birthday, which was a time of great reflection on my life. Although I am still single and living with my adoptive family, my life has been very full. I am currently in the process of completing my third terminal degree in geographical information systems this summer. I am going to be president of the Capital Region Civitan Club in Fall, 2020. I recently reached my 10-year mark working full time at the Penn State College of Medicine. In addition, I am financially independent. Although I cannot pinpoint the exact reasoning for my successful career, I am writing to thank everybody who helped me along the way. Life is a journey and each person needs to take the time to reflect on the process. I have no regrets on still being single at 37, when many adults are married with kids and moved away from home. I am thankful to have a productive and influential life. I also learned to avoid focusing on the wrong things, like finding a soulmate. Life has a funny way of finding the best person for you when you least expect it.

For example, my paternal grandfather was 38 years old when he married my grandmother and raised her son has his own. I've known him for 32 years until he passed away, but he has more influences than my dad's biological father who moved to California at a young age. My grandfather told me that marrying at an older age allowed him time to do what was important to him, yet still help to better the next generation. He was a very private man who liked to cook, but never shared his recipes. For 32 years he was a second father figure for me and taught me the importance of balance between family and work. He worked for 30 years at the Harrisburg Home Builders Association, which was in decline into the number one rated home builders association in Pennsylvania. He started the Home Builders Association at the Farm Show Complex in Harrisburg and was an avid craftsman. He died two months before the birth of his first great-granddaughter. Although I am not a craftsman or cook, my hope is to find somebody at an older age that can be a father figure for the next generation. Even if that does not happen, I still have two nieces to help out whenever they need my help.

In the future, I still have not given up hope for a wife and children, but I learned to appreciate my successes. Although, I struggle with occasional negative thoughts, but it is more important to stay positive and do whatever it takes to live a productive and fruitful life. I also suggest that individuals reading this post make short- or long-term goals that are achievable, in a reasonable timeframe. I also want people to take a stronger effort to reach out to family and friends to see if they need any help.~~

Blood Ties, Chapter VII Pt. 2

By: Jordan Watson

In light of his dulcet request, Eddy takes his seat, feeling comfort far beyond what his bar stools could match. He nods his head, a smirk scrawling across his face feeling up the leather, paying compliment to Solomon's taste in furnishings.

"Holy hell, Solomon, you gotta knack fer riches! How's a guy like you land paradise like this?"

His chair still faced away from Eddy's sudden eagerness, Solomon continues to make his irritation nigh undetectable.

"Paradise does not come without a price. In lieu of this endeavor, one must make sacrifices to ensure such a reality is met. Like any story of a man who wishes for a successful, capitalist venture."

As his chair revolves to face Eddy's direction, the darkness shadows his appearance. What shows within the suite's lighted fixtures, is a dark silver lapel suit, embroidered with uniquely patterned tapestry, overlapping his dark satin button shirt. His cuff links comprise of big esoteric symbols, shimmering in lighter silver that looks to be handmade. He takes a sip from his goblet before continuing his train of thought. "These precarious occurrences can be found within a handful of history's most notable leaders. Though their leadership came in question of others' loyalties."

"Heh, you mean guys like Guy Fawkes? Yeah, I've dabbled a bit." As Eddy crosses his legs to look within the shadows to where his employer's face would be.

"Aaah, of course. History's greatest misunderstood man, labeled as a supposed terrorist. Alas, that is not what I called you here for, Mr. Monaco. Before I go into the matter, allow me to tell you of history's most notable blunders. Do you know what comes with having the positions of power one does?"

With a relaxed waggle of his right foot over his left leg, Eddy briefly ponders on the question.

"Mmm, fans? Some authority, and a hot wife?"

"They all come with the responsibilities of being ever vigilant, knowledgeable, and above all else, in favor of his or her people. Vigilance is key, because averting one's gaze over their society, can lay waste to thousands upon millions. Knowledge is power because without exercising the human mind, it is an attempt in futility to rely on others less intelligent than one's self. And of course, to be in favor of the people..."

"Because they'll get pissed at 'cha if ya say somethin' they don't find truthful."

Solomon continues on his previous statement. "All of this, sadly, can be scenarios that can work against the people as well. Namely those that can be close to their leaders."

Solomon leans in on his desk, with his fingers wrapped together, to elaborate on the conversation.

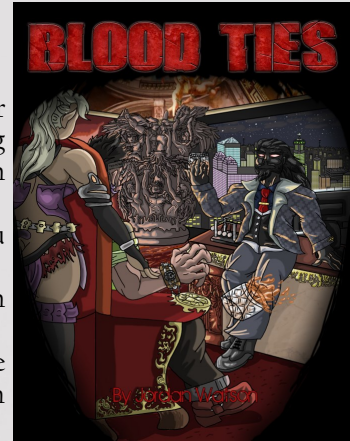
"Take for example, Ephialtes of Trachis. His treason against the Spartan army is infamous throughout all of Greece. He showed a passageway to king Xerxes, located in the coastal line of Thermopylae, behind Greek lines. While the Spartans held their own for two days against Xerxes' unending army, it was through that compromise, that even with the deaths of the Spartans, Ephialtes died by the Persians' hands soon after. Another would be Wang Jingwei. As a left-wing member of the Kuomintang, he was loyal to their cause, even in his fallible pursuit to power over Chiang Kai-shek. Though once the Japanese invaded in 1937, he betrayed his people by setting up a puppet government to take down Nanjing. Lastly, there's the most infamous of all, Judas Iscariot. After the Last Supper, he sold Jesus Christ to the Sanhedrin for 30 pieces of silver, regardless of Jesus's message to the people around that table. He then betrayed him to the soldiers being led to his garden. The rest, as you know, is history."

"That's all flowers and sunshine, Mr. Solomon, but is there a point to this story?"

Solomon slowly rises from his revolving throne, bringing himself to the light. His eyes, piercing yellow. His hair, jet black as the shadows he emerged from. His face, given a Balbo beard, and a slightly elongated goatee to match. He is a rather large individual, with an indifferent scowl to suit his demeanor. He looks down upon Eddy, uttering in silent disgust, the very point he would get across to the simpleton in front of him.

"The point, to this whole conversation, dear Edward, is this. How do I know *you* are not the same as the rest of these wretched traitors that have hid themselves within their leaders?"

Eddy quickly goes silent, shock quickly painted over his face. Soon after, he stands right out of his chair, challenging Solomon's word.



“Look! If this is about me giving away the info to those assholes, I did *exactly* how you told me to do it! Far as I know, they ran the trail on it, smacked around s'more and it came out cold! I *know* you got some guys from the SPD on your payroll, so get them to throw these freaks off your back! Don't blame *me* because it was *your* words to throw them off track!”

Solomon's ever-glaring sight stabs into Eddy's enraged gaze. Solomon then turns his steely grimace, into a smirking chuckle.

“HAHAHA! Mr. Monaco, you're very well the spitting image of your establishment! I commend your act of courage to even argue with me! Most others would've soiled themselves by my demeanor alone, but *you* are a fine example of anarchism in small bursts! For that, I want you to drink with me!”

Perplexed, yet relieved, Eddy takes his words to heart, falling back into his chair.

“Not gonna lie, I was gonna mess the cushion on that one. I could use it after that!”

Solomon grabs the decanter of his finest whiskey, with a spare glass conveniently next to it. Delicately pouring it in, he hands it over to Eddy, letting him breathe it in before taking a sip.

“Mmmm, I know that taste. Dalmore, 62 years, right?”

“Indeed. Quite the palette you have, Mr. Monaco.”

“My grandfather used to study the Scots. It's crazy what you find out.”

“Please, do indulge me, Mr. Monaco.”

“See, my dad, who helped fund The Frowning Elk, he used to tell me this story about how Dalmore got its name, all while drinking the stuff himself. Guh, I can still remember the smell of his breath. Anyway, this dude name Colin of Kintail helped save the life of Alexander III of Scotland from a stag about to turn him into shish kebab. The king was generous enough to give Colin some land near Eilean Donan. The distillery was made in 1839, with a 12-point stag as the Mackenzie family symbol, and its motto. “Luceo Non Uro.” or “I Shine, Not Burn” fer short. Who'd have guessed I'd be in this shining moment?”

He takes another sip, as Solomon strolls back to his throne.

“Fitting that your establishment should keep your birthright. Tell me Edward, do you enjoy fables?”

“Y'mean like the nursery rhymes we use to know as kids?”

“Well yes, but what of Aseop's Fables?”

“Heard of 'em, yeah.”

“Well, I find myself particularly vested with the simplicity to their stories, as well as their moral teachings. Care to hear of one?”

Eddy can already feel himself slipping into a comfortable stupor.

“Shoot man, lay it on me.”

“This one is known as ‘The Thirsty Pigeon.’”

Right as Solomon says it, the room begins to swirl for Eddy.

“There was a pigeon who was oppressed by an excessive amount of thirst.”

Eddy soon realizes, he's having a hard time picking up his glass.

“It saw a goblet of water painted on a signboard.”

His vision spins evermore.

“Not believing it's a picture, she flew towards it, thereby crashing into the signboard.”

He cannot speak, nor bring out a singular cry for help.

“She had broken her wings, fallen to the ground, shortly caught by a bystander.”

Eddy had been numbed by his tainted drink. From the shadows behind him, a feminine hand rubs down onto his right shoulder. She meanders around from behind his chair, bending down to look him right in his glassy eyes. She has pure white hair, and purple, perpetual eyes. Her skin is tanned like an Egyptian queen. She dons a revealing top with silk, transparent sleeves, and a unique, yet equally revealing lower dress. She giggles, revealing her gleaming, sinister smile, as she looks down hungrily on Eddy.

“The moral of the story, Mr. Monaco? Zeal should not outrun discretion.”

What is left is a collective cavalcade of sickly, snapping noises, accompanying an unholy, screeching snarl, with an orange tint of visible light. The sounds of moist sloshing, and resounding bones broken fill the air. Solomon witnesses all, as the chair ignites, and descends within the hatch of the floor.

To be continued...~

The Story of Slender Man

By: Megan Cunningham

When it comes to monsters, most of them have very unclear origins, usually spanning from generations of urban legend, local folklore, or mythology. Most of the time, they just seem to always be there. Many of them have taken earlier forms with traits that might contradict how we remember them, nor conform to an image that we had in our heads.

The story of Slender Man is a notable exception. It first appeared on a SomethingAwful forum on June 8, 2009 under a photoshop contest thread called "Create Paranormal Images."

It was created by a Florida man named Eric Knudsen who posted under Victor Surge, he is a tall, out-of-focus figure who appears in places we'd rarely frequent today like abandoned buildings, deep forests, or the occasional rickety playground where kids can't enter. Knudsen's first image had him standing next to a tree with a caption reading:



"One of two recovered photographs from the Stirling City Library blaze. Notable for being taken the day which fourteen children vanished and for what is referred to as "The Slender Man". Deformities cited as film defects by officials. Fire at library occurred one week later. Actual photograph confiscated as evidence." - 1986, photographer: Mary Thomas, missing since June 13th, 1986.

Given that this is the Internet, it wasn't long before other posters added their own interpretations to the material, creating a backstory stretching out to 16th century Germany and even 5000 B.C.E. Knudsen added more photos while visitors created their own. Two years after the original Slenderman posts, he became established as a supernatural creature appearing as a normal human being but is often described as 8ft tall shadow entity with sword-sharp extra appendages and a missing face. Clad in a simple business suit, he's known to stalk humans and cause many disappearances. When he appears, havoc follows. Though he doesn't directly kill his victims, he encourages others to do so in order to please him. He has no motivation. He can't be placated. And witnessing him often results in a death sentence.

But why is it about Slender Man that captures the imagination? One Reddit user wrote: "I like him because most creepy pastas try to scare you with blood, gore, and if you're lucky hyper-realistic blood. Slenderman scared me with psychological horror, making me scared of fields, trees, and sometimes nothing. He has made me as paranoid as I've been in my life and I love the thrill. His design is simple and terrifying because it can make him visible in a field or invisible in a forest. His humanoid figure makes him seem real like him stalking you can happen. I think the biggest thing that makes him interesting is that nobody has any full idea what happens when he gets you." Another states: "Slender Man hunts you, but he doesn't bang on your door, claw at your walls or howl at the moon. He's just there, standing, waiting in the corner of your eyes. It's bogus, you know it. You're just seeing things 'cause you're tired as shit. Or it's Jake, pulling your leg. Then it gets real, you have to get away. Despite your best efforts, Slender is still there. Always standing, always waiting, always watching."

Yet, Slender Man didn't become a household name until 2014 when two 12-year-old Wisconsin girls stabbed a schoolmate in the woods, allegedly to please this internet boogie man. Thankfully, the victim survived. But the incident made international headlines, fueling parents' fears that the internet's dark corners turning their precious children into violent, socially isolated monsters. Sometime later, a 13-year-old girl in Ohio attacked her mother with a knife while wearing a hood and a blank, white face mask. After that, a 14-year-old Florida girl set fire to her home by lighting a rum-soaked sheet. Both of these also had a connection to Slender Man. Thanks to relentless TV news coverage that always latches on to these stories, what was once a harmless online boogeyman was now a cause for serious parental concern.

The fact Slender Man was mentioned in connection with these real-life violent acts is troubling, especially given that the attackers all had underlying mental health issues. Yet, when a teenage commits a crime having some pop culture inspiration, the media tends to jump on it. As a result, moral panic sets in with freaked out parents assuming that Slender Man's inspiring teenagers to murder, which seems about as likely as violent video games causing school shootings (as in not at all). But we must take into account that Slender Man hasn't been the first to cause such outcry, nor will he be the last. Nonetheless, regardless of what people think, you might just as well see Slender Man in an old photo lurking in the shadows. And what he'll do next is anyone's guess.

Picture courtesy of Cosmopolitan Magazine.

Jake's Jokes

By: Jake Ziesche

What do you call a clock with no sense of direction?
Lost in time.

What fruits are always in a bad mood?
Sour grapes.

What do you call a tent that wears a hairpiece?
A wig-wam.

What's a crow's favorite hairstyle?
Corn-rows.

What did Cinderella wear to the orchestra?
Brass slippers.

What do houses made of wood come down with?
Cabin fever.

What do you call a flamingo on cloud nine?
Tickled pink.

What famous spy has more fun than others?
James Blond.



Artwork by Melissa Mozaruk

Skallywags

By: Rachel Williamson

Pirates on Skallywag's ship
Captain Red Beard
Larry Labbery Caster
Right Hand Master Swabby
Bruce Baller
Edward Jones Scallord



On this pirate adventure, I went there with Deb Todd.

The first thing we had to do was sign in for the adventure.

We took a look at the merchandise in the little building where we purchased our tickets, how cool that the little store was, then there was a little pirate ship wooden plank where Deb took a picture of me with that, then the ship docked into the dock!!

I got excited!! Deb reminded me to cool it, I waited like every one else, when everyone abandoned the ship, I sat in the front where I felt the most comfortable, after the captain greeted everyone with an “arrgghh,” I came up with my best “argh,” bruise, shook and said “you got to warn me about the next time you do that,” while the skit was going on swabby (but I was wearing my mermaid hat so this freaked me out because Swabby was coming toward me saying, “where’s a mermaid?” That’s why I freaked out.)

Swabby walked toward me saying “where’s a mermaid” while Edward Jones pointed at my direction (not at me) which I thought he was. It made my heart pound fast, I was saying to myself, “Is this a coincidence? Are they picking on me because of my hat?”

As Swabby leaned beside me, hovering over the side of the ship, I was relieved. After the skit was paused, I went over to swabby and showed him my hat, just because I want to know what he would say. He said, “you’re a real mermaid?” I said nothing, but grinned and shrugged shoulders.

Then it all spilled out. Edward Jones came in a small boat spraying water on everybody. Deb was in the ring of fire; she was getting sprayed a lot I thought it was funny. She ran up to top on the balcony with me. Suddenly, there was a bad guy was on the boat! The kids went and used water guns and sprayed the bad guy and got the map and pictures with the bad guy. We all got goodies and sang a pirate song all the way back to the dock. I even got a picture with Edward Jones, Bruce, Swabby and another pirate that was very cool looking. That was such a fun day!!!~~

Dumbledore and Grindelwald Part 2

“The Friendship”

By: Michelle Middlemiss

Dumbledore and Grindelwald met during the summer at Goblet’s Hollow; they were neighbors. Dumbledore had just graduated from Hogwarts and Grindelwald was kicked out of his school, Durmstrang. Dumbledore shared with Grindelwald what happened between the Muggles and his family. Dumbledore’s sister, Ariana, accidentally presented her magic when she was three years old. Three Muggle boys saw this and began to try to have her do magic on command. When she couldn’t, they called her a freak and beat her up.

Magic in the Harry Potter Universe is not really controllable because it is instinct-based, not really spell-based. Hogwarts was where you went to school to learn how to focus the control of your magic. Dumbledore's parents hid Ariana so that she would not be institutionalized. However, his father got mad one day and beat up the three boys, getting himself a life sentence at Azkaban. Dumbledore and Grindelwald didn’t really like Muggles for their actions and felt they needed to be controlled and dominated.

Dumbledore and Grindelwald also both believed in the myth of the three brothers. The myth is that there were three brothers who beat Death. Death gave them three objects: a wand that can’t be beaten - The Unbeatable Wand, The Resurrection Stone -which brings back a dead loved one, and an Invisibility Cloak -no one could see them, not even Death. The eldest brother ended up getting his throat slashed and the wand stolen; the middle brother tried to resurrect his dead fiancé, but she wasn’t happy about this; and they both committed suicide. The youngest brother stayed under the Invisibility Cloak until he reached old age, then welcomed Death openly. It is said that if all three items were brought back together by one person, they would become “the Master of Death.”

Dumbledore and Grindelwald spent many hours on the myth - researching and tracking down the family members who owned the valuables, which they found out were Slytherin, Voldemort, and the Potters (the only family that knew about the myth’s truth). Dumbledore wanted to travel the world with Grindelwald to find the items, but couldn’t because of Ariana’s condition. Grindelwald and Dumbledore got into a fight because Aberforth, Dumbledore’s brother, reminded him that it was his job to take care of Ariana. He felt she was a burden because of the lack of control she had over her magic. Ariana stepped in the middle of the fight between Dumbledore and Grindelwald and one of the two cast a spell and accidentally killed her; but no one knows who actually cast the spell. This began their rivalry.~~

Perspectives on the Brain and Emotions

By: Joshua Walburn

The brain holds up to billions of neurons in which are cellular structures that sends messages throughout the body. Nerve cells are interconnected with electric circuits which allow one neuron to talk to another. Exponentially, the total number of these cells range from trillions through quadrillions of synapses. In autistic brains, neuron wires often overlap, taking up more space, leading to behaviors such as uncontrollable violent outbursts.

From my observational perspective, I believe that many people on the autistic spectrum often lose control more easily because they have disorganized brain wires that overlap in areas that regulate emotions. The prefrontal cortex is a part of the brain's frontal lobe that in charge of some of the most important cognitive tasks such as decision making and planning. In my brain, those neurological events occur when I get overstimulated by when another person gets frustrated and talks at the same time. Those forms of stimuli increase my level of violent behaviors; it can get worse quickly until it gets to the emotional spectrum up to one hundred percent on the number line one through ten.

As it gets up to ten, the outburst begins bringing me into self-conflict. One of the brain's aggressive chemicals known as adrenaline is sent from the frontal cortex to the muscles, showing off its flight and fight responses. It happens at the same time when someone makes a wrong decision by presenting aggressive actions such as injurious behaviors. It also interacts with words that get released from the mouth that are being spoken, which includes swearing.

My evidence indicates that autistic brains, including mine, show a large shortage of serotonin in which leads to the same difficulties in regulating emotions. A lack of serotonin in any brain causes: depressed moods, low energy, negative thoughts, and irritability such as violence over corrections.

Many of these personal lifelong conversations date all the way back to when I was three years old. I knew what I wanted. I struggled to have the skills in expressing needs properly. I also had difficulties in processing change. These things that happened in the big picture around me triggered what I was going to do. Every time that happens, it always caused me to communicate my emotions by throwing out a series of tantrums every day, which have continued to get worse. When applying those actions to the structural aspects of my brain, wires between my frontal cortex and amygdala were a lot more disorganized at the time. As I get older without getting exposed to antipsychotics or distance running, my brain tissue in those areas would've gotten overlapped and disconnected enough that they're tangled up together, making it less capable of controlling emotions. These structural abnormalities can be one of the causes of serotonin deficiency leading to the brain to lack its emotional regulation ability.

Active physical exercises, meditation, and antipsychotic prescription drugs are some of the essential solutions to those problems. Meditation focuses on the mind to get focused on its own things with rather infinite or several possibilities of spaces and the body to regulate feeling on physical surfaces. In regard to physical activity, I'm able to run in longer distances. I use it to demonstrate self-control in which is something that I logically need to teach myself. Mindfulness is key to being aware of one's consciousness and feelings. It teaches coping skills and creates a sense of calm. It helps the ability to manage emotions. When performing these tasks, the brain using chief inhibitory neurotransmitters called Gamma Aminobutyric Acid or GABA. These bio-chemicals are located in the synapses of each brain connection, inhibiting the aggressive impulses and each neuron gets calmer during this period. The nerve cells talk to each other with fewer of the same messages. For most of the time when I'm in my free tasks, I can learn from my mistakes by being mindful more often no matter where I am.

Hopefully within the future, I'll be able to make enough progress that I can help create more knowledge of and for people with mental health problems by assisting them to develop their coping strategies, teaching them the importance of mindfulness, ways to receive energy through their minds, and ways to relieve the stress out of their nervous systems.~~

Foreign Coins

By: Mark Sulkin

My article is all about foreign coins; coins that come from many countries all over the world. Coins are small, flat, round pieces of metal or plastic used primarily as a medium of exchange or legal tender. Each country has a different kind of coin.

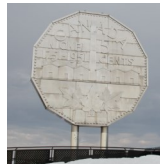
Euro coins come from a lot of different countries in Europe like Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, the Netherlands, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Portugal, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, and Vatican City. There are eight different kinds of Euro coins ranging from one cent to two euros.



In Canada, they have coins kind of like the ones they have in U.S.A. only different. They have pennies, nickels, dimes, and quarters in their own way in the country of Canada.



At the grounds of the Dynamic Earth science museum in Sudbury, Ontario, there's a 9-meter replica of a 1951 Canadian nickel call the Big Nickel.



Canada also has special tokens like Blacksmith tokens, Bouquet sous, Habitant tokens, and Vexter Canadiensis tokens.



If you want to have a collection of coins, foreign coins are always the best. ~~

A Love Letter to my Family

By: Maggie K. Jones

My Dearest Family,

I came a long way in life to understand and appreciate my life. No matter what is thrown at me. I realized my full potential in my life, being a good worker at *Pittverse Magazine*. I feel ready to take the next phase of my life writing for *Pittverse* now, being happy, and who I was meant to be. Me, myself, and I.



The way I've grown, in so many ways has made me stronger and a more confident person. You have taught me how to be a loving, responsible, intelligent young woman, that never ever gives up or gives in.

I also learned to forgive and let go in a way that I can move on with the rest of my life, being happy. There are some sad dark times like Covid-19 that got me depressed. You didn't give up on me, not for the past 30 years of my life. And I didn't give up hope yet for a better day.

My sister, Stephanie, would always correct me; she just wants the best for me because she truly loves me and wants to protect me, too, because she cares. She doesn't want me getting hurt in any way, because she loves me. And I trust her. And I will always know that she is by my side always. And I help her out when she needs help the most. She is my idol to look up to. She is my rock of support filled with being a funny, cute, very talented, very highly educated, loving and a very good sister.

Mom, you gave me a chance to prove myself that I can do anything I put my mind to, even when it's hard. I know now to listen to you about how important it is to be happy with who you have. I believe you changed me in a way that I can see better ways to help people. You gave me courage to do what is right and never look back, to look forward. Life may not be easy sometimes, but when you look up you see the brighter side of life. Always be positive for when you think negative, you will be worse off mentally. And finally, I love you for who you are, being my mother.

My dad teases the heck out of me because he loves me. He taught me how to be a strong responsible woman. He brought me up to know the difference between right and wrong. I help him when he needs help the most. He would always tell me stories of the past; he told me about my grandfather's stories of World War II. My grandfather was a medic in the 28th Infantry Division during WWII. He passed in November 1, 1983 from lung cancer from smoking. My dad told me he would go fishing with him always until he passed.

Dear family of mine,

I love the way you helped me grow over the years. You gave me hope in my life to look at for the future. You made me see that I am capable of being a successful woman in my lifetime.

Being a good writer for *Pittverse Magazine*, a volunteer for the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, with 308 hours completed at the main library in the children's department. For that, I love you as my family always.--



Autism National Network

An Inside Look at Communication for Individuals on the Spectrum

Compiled by Michael Kurland

Communication may be second nature to most people, but sometimes it's just not the case, and it could lead to an eternal struggle with loneliness and isolation. But how could anyone begin to make sense of it all? The journey began in 1983, right as *Star Wars Episode VI: Return of the Jedi* was released. That's when we found out about how good at communicating C-3PO actually was. He said, "I am fluent in over 6 million forms of communication." That very same year, the TOBII DynaBox was introduced as a device to assist individuals who are unable to communicate reliably with their own voices due to cognitive, language and physical impairments. It was the very first speech-generating device with touch-screen technology, and a precursor to today's iPad. Interestingly enough, the DynaBox was created as a student project at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, PA. I did a little hands-on research with the actual device to learn how it functioned. One thing that surprised me was that it was able to tell jokes, ask questions, and even help others communicate their feelings.



Meet Robon, a two-foot tall robot currently residing in the Canon-McMillan School District. She was specially programmed to help those with Autism learn social cues and communicate successfully with others. She's also capable of a wide range of expressions and behaviors from facial expressions to full body movement and having simple conversations. (She's been known to throw tantrums and sneeze, as well.)

A distant relative of Robon could possibly have been this fictional character. "I am C-3PO: Human-cyborg relations." Despite no facial expressions, 3PO is definitely easy to understand in terms of the emotions he's feeling. Not to mention he was easy to talk to as shown in both the films and an electronic talking toy first released in 1978. In a way, he helped set the stars in motion for Robon's creation. However, 3PO's language barriers much more advanced, being fluent in over 6 million forms of communication. But the impact for someone who is non-verbal is just as infinite as our galaxy.



On March 3, 2020, I attended a webinar presented by Tech Owl (Technology For Our Whole Lives) and the Institute in Disabilities at Temple University. The discussion covered the topic of Assistive Technology. The Assistive Technology Act of 1998, defines an Assistive Technology Device as "any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capacities of individuals with disabilities."

Assistive Technology Devices range from Low-Tech, which are inexpensive, easy to learn, readily available (off the shelf), and are easy to make, maintain and replace.

Mid-Tech, which require some training, are specially designed, may need a power source and are more costly than the low-tech options.

High-Tech are those devices which are expensive, require specific training, may require in-going support and are often customized to fit an individual's needs. The potential of Assistive Technology has no limits. Some current capabilities include: communication, power and manual mobility, seating and body positioning, mobility modifications, vehicle modification, assistive listening, play, recreation, home modification, worksite modification, learning aids, vision aids, self care, and daily living.

In the state of Pennsylvania, exists the Pennsylvania Assistive Technology Foundation. "PATF"'s Mission is to provide education and financing opportunities for people with disabilities, to help them to acquire assistive technology devices and services that improve the quality of their lives. For example, in Pittsburgh, residents are fortunate to have an Assistive Technology Device Lending Library. This is a free program available to Pennsylvanians with disabilities regardless of age, disability, income, service system, or place of residence, which would like to try assistive technology. There are also Assistive Technology Resource Centers that have equipment to borrow as a way to try before buying.

The scope of Assistive Technology continues to widen with advancements being made each day. The

future is looking brighter for those in need. Think of it this way:

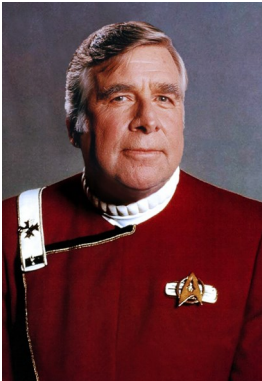
For people without disabilities, technology makes things easier.
For people with disabilities, technology makes things possible!

I recently spoke with Chad Toia, Communication Assessor for Temple University. We discussed the past, present, and future of technological options for people on the Autism Spectrum. He provided a wonderful perspective into the world of where we have been, where we are now and where we are going!

In the past, communication was primarily through verbal interactions. Cultures tend to have their own way of communicating their thoughts, feelings and emotions within their population of people. In the past, that was more prevalent than today. Vast advancements in technology have been introduced into our lives to make them more manageable.

According to Chad, advancements in technology have made it easier for anyone who's non-verbal to express himself or herself. Even if you aren't familiar with today's tech, it's still user-friendly, enabling anyone to learn how to use it. As Chad put it, the tech seems to work better with the younger generation, possibly due to the fact that they're more willing to try something new.

Additional material:



Gene Roddenberry had a lot to comment about in the days of the 1960s, but television audiences wouldn't allow for a direct approach on those issues. When he created *Star Trek*, despite saying to the network executives that it would be mainly a space western, he actually used the futuristic setting as a lens to focus on contemporary issues. He managed to slip the basic problems of today that he wanted to comment on past the network censors because of the science fiction setting.

However, even though the audiences got what he was trying to comment on, he felt that humanity still had a ways to go to make our opinions known to everyone. In his opinion, despite all of the technological breakthroughs that are still coming and evolving, "The Human Adventure is Just Beginning."

Special Thanks

Chad Toia
Carnegie Mellon University
Canon-McMillan School District
Lucasfilm, Ltd.
CBS/Paramount Studios
And
Susan Spisak

"Star Trek" Created by Gene Roddenberry and is TM & © CBS Studios

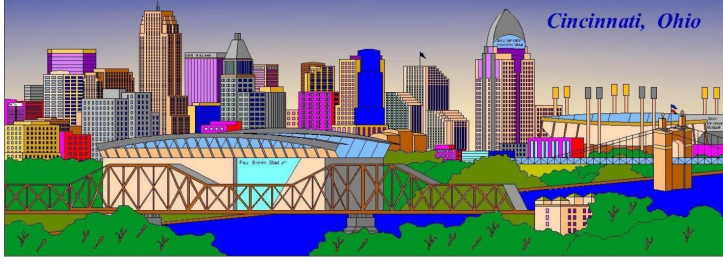
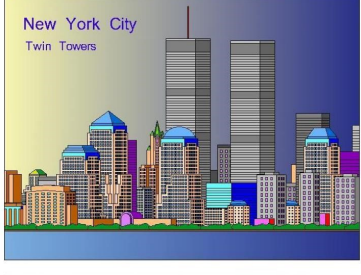
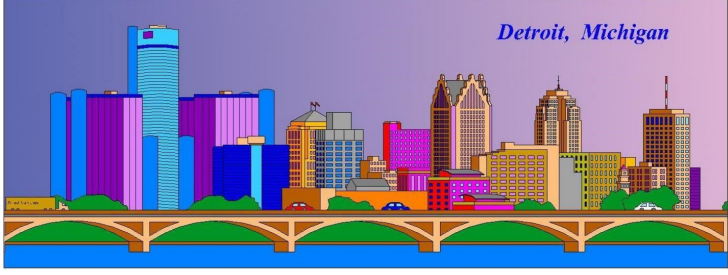
"STAR WARS" Created by George Lucas and is TM & © Lucasfilm Ltd.

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Cities Drawn in 2020

By: Mark D. Lizotte

<u>City</u>	<u>Date Completed</u>
<i>1. Columbus, Ohio</i>	<i>February 10, 2020</i>
<i>2. Boston, Massachusetts</i>	<i>February 15, 2020</i>
<i>3. Hartford, Connecticut</i>	<i>February 18, 2020</i>
<i>4. Charlotte, North Carolina</i>	<i>March 26, 2020</i>
<i>5. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania</i>	<i>March 29, 2020</i>
<i>6. Detroit, Michigan</i>	<i>April 7, 2020</i>
<i>7. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania</i>	<i>April 9, 2020</i>
<i>8. New York City (Two Parts)</i>	<i>April 13, 2020</i>
<i>9. San Francisco, California</i>	<i>April 17, 2020</i>
<i>10. St. Louis, Missouri</i>	<i>April 20, 2020</i>
<i>11. Cincinnati, Ohio</i>	<i>April 28, 2020</i>
<i>12. Dallas, Texas</i>	<i>May 4, 2020</i>



Menhera and Yami Kawaii

By: Alicia M. Bonus

Warning: In this essay, I will be discussing several issues relating to mental health, which may be considered to be graphic and disturbing for some readers. Please, read with caution.

The fashion style known as “Menhera” can be considered a sub-style in “Yami Kawaii,” though menhera is an activism focus, and as a result, follows stricter rules. Menhera is a slang term for “mental health issues” in Japanese, especially for those who are facing mental health issues themselves. Yami Kawaii is a creepy cute fashion that is meant to represent both the kawaii fashion styles of Harujuku (a colorful shopping district in Japan) while giving it a unique twist by adding elements of sickness. It has been described as an anti-kawaii movement by most people. “Yami,” meaning sick or connection to the hospital, is a “sick-cute” aesthetic that has been protruding out of Tokyo’s streets and manifests through accessories such as wearing and dressing up with fake guns, syringes, gas masks, pills, and bandages.

The style may be traced back to the 80’s, but the clothing was recognized and developed in the late 90’s. In the early 2000’s, a host of different offshoot styles emerged, including punk and princess lolita all wrapped up together. “Kawaii Girls” are girls that dress according to a specific aesthetic. They wear lots of bright, colorful, and frilly clothes, such as balloon shorts, giant bows, and patterned overalls. Yami kawaii has similarities to the original kawaii culture and the creepy kawaii trends that were popular around the mid-2010’s. The color scheme of yami kawaii is similar to sweet lolita kawaii that are decorated and presented in pastel colors, especially in pastel pink, dominating the style. Darker colors like black or dark blue can be used occasionally, but are much less prominent. Yami kawaii clothing does not have strict rules. It only needs to be “kawaii” or cute, and have yami aspects.

People in Japan use menhera to share their experiences regarding mental health in the form of vent art. Soon, those works would become popular online, resulting in the depiction of menhera in manga and in anime. Mental health in Japan is still considered a taboo subject by many of its citizens. It is seen as a weakness to discuss or receive medical help for a mental illness. Yami kawaii was created to bring such issues to light. It is also seen as a way for its wearers to express their own struggles with mental health issues. Beliefs, harmony, order, and self-development are many values that underlie Japanese social interaction. Basic ideas about self and the nature of human society are drawn from several religious and philosophical traditions.

Menhera and yami kawaii was popularized by the artist and fashion designer, Kuua Oyasumi, who is also in charge of the designs for many indie brands. The outfits usually consist of an oversized top or well-fitting dress that is featuring the art, which may consist of bandage gear, medical accessories, printed fishnet tights and platform shoes. An excessive amount of blush gets applied under the eyes as it is associated with translucent skin, making the wearer look fragile and in need of medical attention or care.

Yami kawaii is considered to have their very own mascot known as Menhera-Chan. Her mascot was created by the designer, Ezaki Bisuko, as an expression of his mental anguish, fear, and stress. What started as a personal illustration had quickly become embraced by a larger community as the representation mascot for those suffering with mental illness. Menhera-Chan is a young girl who wears a pink Japanese school uniform and pink twintails. She has a bunny friend named Usatan, and his ears are designed to resemble medicine capsules. She also has two close like-minded friends, Sabukaru-Chan and Yumekawa-Chan. And, the three together are called the Wrist Cut Warriors. Illustrations of Menhera-Chan presents content and images, depicted often carrying a small snap-blade knife, as she is supposed to suffer from self-harm.

Although yami kawaii is meant to bring attention to mental illness, it is all done in good fun. It is often seen as a silly or light-hearted way to bring attention to a serious topic. The style is also seen as a way to empower those who feel they have been silenced on the topic, even though the topic itself may be difficult to deal with. However, some who wear the fashion, especially those who claim the term “menhera,” can tend to place their mental illness as their sole identity.~~

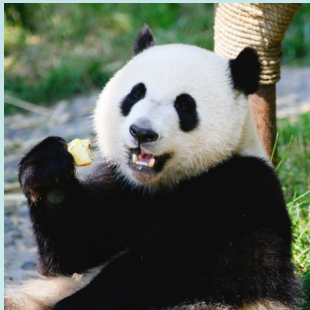


Different Types of Bears

By: Daniel H. Ashkin

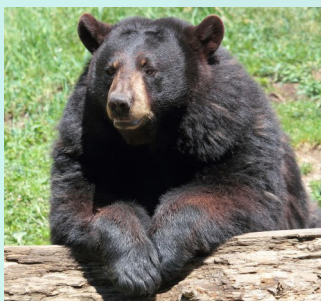
In this article, I am going to discuss several different species of bears around the world. The reader can find many different types of bears in America, Asia, North Pole, and Africa. A bear can weigh up to 1760 lbs. The material comes from Encarta Encyclopedia. The public has been fascinated by bears for many years by fairy tales and folk literature. Some of the stories are Smoky the Bear and Goldilocks' and the Three Bears. I love the adventure of the *Golden Compass* Novel by Philip Pullman. I strongly recommend that you read the *Golden Compass*. It is about a girl who travels to the North Pole and faces many perilous adventures with a bear that tries to save the villagers' lives.

The first type of bears is the Polar Bear. They are carnivorous. They eat seals and walruses. During the summer time, they wander to different islands and eat berries and bird eggs.



The Giant Panda Bear lives in Asia. There are only 1000 of them left in the wild today. They eat 12 to 14 hours a day. Sun Bears live in the Asia Rain Forest. They feed on nuts, berries, and insects. They can reach a weight of 1,760 lbs.

Grizzly Bears are very common throughout the northern Rockies Mountains and Northern Canada. Grizzly Bears love to hunt for fish, sheep, and cattle on the ranch. Unfortunately, they are a threat to cattle ranchers.



The next common type of bear is the Black Bear. You can find the information the information from the National Geographic Magazine Website. The most common features of the black bears are the following: they are manual, omnivorous, and can weight up to 200 to 600 lbs. Black Bears commonly live a life span up to 20 years. They can grow up to a height of 5 to 6 feet in length. Black Bears love to eat grass, roots, berries, and insects. In addition, they love to eat people's garbage near campsites. During the day in the summer, they may wander 5- to 80 square miles from their home. During the winter time, the female cub gives birth to two or three cubs. The mother will nurse the baby's cubs for about two years.~~

KAYLA CROMER—EVERYTHING’S GONNA BE OKAY



By: Robert Hester

In late January of 2020, I was shopping for a dinette set for my new apartment in Monroeville, PA at Big Lots (yes, Big Lots sells furniture of all kinds, including dinette sets!) not too far away from my new apartment in Monroeville. While I was waiting for an assistant to help me, I was on my Instagram's news feed section when all of a sudden, I saw a photo of a magazine article that featured an actress and model by the name of Kayla Cromer. In that mag-

azine article, two words stood out: "I'm Autistic." Intrigued, I then looked up Kayla's Instagram page: @kaylacromerofficial. And the very first post I saw on her page was a video post of her being not just an actress and model who has Autism, but an historic actress who just landed an historic role as an Autistic character named Matilda Moss on the Freeform TV network series, *Everything's Gonna Be Okay*. Thus, making Kayla the first-ever actress with Autism to play a character with Autism on a major primetime TV program.

"It's important to represent characters with Autism," Kayla said in her post, "Because, frankly, we [people with Autism] exist; we are a part of the population, you can't deny that we are here." And if you've seen one or more episodes of *Everything's Gonna Be Okay*, you can't deny that Kayla has done young woman service representing the Autism community playing Matilda. Matilda is a senior student at a high school in Agoura Hills, CA, just outside of Los Angeles. She lives with her half-sister, Genevieve, played by actress/comedian Maeve Press, and her brother Nicholas, played by the show's creator, Josh Thomas. What stands out about Nicholas is that he takes on the role of the legal guardian of Matilda and Genevieve shortly after their father, Darren Moss, played by actor Christopher May, said to Nicholas that he had a form of quick-spreading cancer that wouldn't allow him to survive past the pilot episode – which, sadly, was the case. Ironically, the day he got the sad news of his father's terminal illness, Nicholas was on his way to fly back to Australia to be with his mother, Penny, played by Vivienne Walshe. Instead, the death of Darren meant that Nicholas had to stay in the United States to take care of Matilda and Genevieve as their legal guardian and end up in a relationship with his boyfriend, Alex, played by Adam Faison.

Anyway, speaking of which...like most TV "dramedies" on television today, *Everything's Gonna Be Okay* tackles some topics that are the "controversial" talk of our generation; some of





those topics are so controversial, this writer asks you find out what those controversial topics are for yourself by watching episodes of *Everything's Gonna Be Okay's* first season of this show on-demand on Hulu, on Freeform's on-demand section of your cable or satellite provider, and on Freeform's website: freeform.com However, there are reasons to watch this show that have topics and situations that are contrary to the aforementioned. Other than having Autism, another thing that stands out about Matilda is that she shows off an Autism diagnosis by writing and composing her own music as a musician who plays piano. In real life before she started playing Matilda on *Everything's Gonna Be Okay*, Kayla had to learn

to play several songs on the piano just for the series' pilot episode. Like Matilda, there are some other characters who are part of the fabric that shows off the success of *Everything's Gonna Be Okay*. Jeremy, played by Carson Werner, and Genevieve's friends Telluah, played by Ivy Wolk, and Barb, played by Lori Mae Hernandez. And then there's Matilda's friend, Drea, played by Lillian Carrier. Like Kayla, Lillian has made such a positive impact on the Autism community nationwide and worldwide; but not just as actress with Autism, but as an advocate for Autism as a co-founder of the Autism/Asperger's Syndrome advocacy and activism organization called OurTism. OurTism, which is based in Redondo Beach, CA, is a lot like Autism/Asperger's Syndrome advocacy and activism organizations in the greater Pittsburgh area; they work with individuals, families and professionals to help people with Asperger Syndrome and similar autism spectrum profiles build meaningful connected lives. Their website is: ourtism.com



Alex Faison

The first season was such a success that in mid-May of 2020, Freeform announced that it would renew *Everything's Gonna Be Okay* for second season in 2021. That means we'll get to see another season of what's next for the Moss family and their friends. And with everything going wrong in this world lately, with COVID-19 and all, it's nice to know that a TV series like *Everything's Gonna Be Okay* can serve as the mantra that our world needs today. And if there's a poster child that's filled with hope, it's Kayla Cromer and her *Everything's Gonna Be Okay* character, Matilda. In her video promoting the show, she boasted that Matilda not only going to be an important character, but a character destined to "...change the [acting] industry." Kayla also mentioned that there are various forms and degrees of Autism, and that Matilda, nor Kayla herself, "...represent[s] everyone on the planet who has Autism." But contrary to that narrative, Kayla and Matilda, and even the aforementioned Lillian Carrier of this show and OurTism, all have represented the Autism community well enough to give all people with any special need – let alone Autism – three important inspirational tools: Hope, confidence, and the assurance that like the subject matter of this story: *Everything's Gonna Be Okay*.~~

Live and Let Spy Part 2

By: Jake Ziesche

It looked like we struck out on our quest to find the host, but I was not ready to give up. Just then, I noticed a figure heading upstairs. I informed my fellow undercover spies, sotto voce, and we followed posthaste.

When we reached the top, the four of us found a bunch of doors lining both sides of the hall. I knew what we had to do and it was possible that things could get ugly. "It looks like we need to play door roulette," I told my friends.

"Barbie, what exactly is door roulette?" Thomas inquired. "I've never heard of it before." Violet and Guido sided with him. "Tell us about it."

I started to explain the gist of it. "It works like this; our informant's friend is behind a door. In order to find him, we need to open every door until we do."

"And I thought it would be difficult," Violet remarked. "What could possibly go wrong?" Upon saying that, Violet realized she made a faux pas. "Can something go wrong, Barbie?"

"It's entirely possible. We have no idea what's behind the other doors and we might stumble onto something disturbing," I informed her. "We should be on our toes."

We started down the hall, kept opening doors and ran into a few surprises. We accidentally walked in on someone taking a shower, saw Simba and Nala feeling the love that night, witnessed the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles having a weird wrestling match, found Sailor Moon and Tuxedo Mask playing seven minutes in heaven, and even Tony Manero wearing headphones, singing and shaking his groove thing to a song by They Might Be Giants. His dance moves were rather suggestive. The worst thing happened when the Wicked Witch of the West said she would get us.

Things started looking bleak, and my friends' hope was waning. "This feels like a wild goose chase," Violet complained. "We should just scuttle the whole thing. What do you guys think?"

Before anyone could respond, we heard the sound of footsteps on the stairs. My friends and I panicked and ducked into a random room. Initially, it looked as if we were alone. However, we quickly learned there was someone dressed as Scooby-Doo in the room with us.

"Holy underpants!" we all shouted in unison. As soon as those words left us, we all realized what a gaffe we just made.

Suddenly, Scooby-Doo started laughing. "I was wondering how long it would take for you to find me. I take it you have my special delivery."

It sounded like this was who we were after. "Are you Mr. Mystery?" I asked, wanting to confirm that we had the right person. Scooby-Doo simply nodded.

We all sighed in relief. At last, we found the rightful owner of the suitcase. "Here it is," I said, handing the package to him. "This sure is some party you have going on. I love your costume."

"Thanks. You look truly outrageous," Scooby-Doo, joked. This earned a laugh from everyone, but the host suddenly stopped. It looked like he just saw a ghost. Suddenly, I had the strangest feeling someone was watching us. We all turned and saw someone dressed as The Grinch approaching us.

"Is that Dr. Homewrecker?" questioned Guido. He looked to Scooby-Doo for answers, but the canine was speechless. Mr. Mystery looked shocked by the intrusion.

I too wondered if this was Dr. Homewrecker. Then I realized the other code phrase would give me the answer. "I'll never find a love!" I shouted. The Grinch looked aghast at my exclamation. "Was it something I said?"

"How dare you say that to me?" the Grinch responded.

"You can't talk to her like that," Violet shot back. "Do you know what love is?"

The Grinch looked taken aback. Then he started to explain. "I was in love with a woman, but we had a messy break-up. Since then I've been rather jealous of other happy couples, and I may have

interfered in their relationships.”

“Is that why they call you Dr. Homewrecker?” Thomas inquired. The Grinch nodded sadly. Thomas had hit the nail on the head.

I felt sorry for him and attempted to make him feel better. “You know doctor, I’m sure there is a woman out there for you. When the time comes, you will know love again.” My friends all agreed.

The Grinch pondered this for a few moments. Soon he had an epiphany. He thought our notion was true, and that he would eventually find his special someone. “Thank you everyone.” Then he turned to Scooby-Doo. “Sorry about trying to meddle in your big plans.”

Scooby-Doo forgave him and thanked us again for helping. It felt like things were wrapping up nicely. Then the door opened and we gasped at who was there.

I walked Sandy Duncan and my doppelganger, the latter I realized was the spy I impersonated. Sandy waltzed over to Scooby-Doo while my double walked over to us with her gaze locked on me. I had a feeling I was up a creek.

“How do you do?” the spy asked in a thick Russian accent. “I am Agent Ivanna. Thanks for your help with the mission.” The four of us exchanged confused looks.

Guido was the first to speak. “You mean you’re not mad at us for taking over your assignment and pretending to be spies?”

“Not at all,” Ivanna answered. “I think you did a splendid job, despite not having a license to spy.” Ivanna giggled at her little joke.

“We were happy to help, right, Barbie?” Thomas asked me.

“Of course, we were. Sorry about the whole mistaken identity thing though,” I apologized.

“Do not worry,” Ivanna assured us. “The resemblance is quite uncanny. Both of us are five feet two inches, and we are both blonde-haired women with brown eyes. Are you my long-lost sister, or possibly a clone I never knew about?”

“There’s only one Barbie,” Violet interjected. “She is one of a kind, and she knows how to find adventure. Say, what exactly did she deliver anyway?”

It turned out the suitcase contained a wedding ring, and Scooby-Doo, whose real name was Zeke, proposed to Aqua, a.k.a. Sandy Duncan. We all offered congratulations, even The Grinch.

As we rejoined the party, Scooby-Doo, a.k.a. Zeke wanted to croon a tune in honor of his fiancée. So, he sang, “You’ll Never Find Another Love Like Mine.” Not only that, Dr. Homewrecker found love sooner than expected. He caught the eye of a guest dressed as Catwoman and renounced his evil ways. My posse and I felt we had triumphed in our spy venture. Ivanna threw us a curveball by inviting us on her next spy job, though. “What do you say, Barbie? Would you and your compatriots like to come spy with me?”

At first, I was concerned that too many cooks would spoil the broth, or in this case, there would be too many spies on the quest. However, Ivanna admitted that she needed a team for her next undertaking and that our quartet had the skills she was looking for. Thanks to this new information, Thomas, Violet, Guido and I all agreed that one mission was not enough. The four of us were ready to spy another day.~~

A Tale of Braveheart Everfaith

Book one: The Tales that Really Matter.

By: Maggie K Jones

Chapter One: Why is there hope, all was lost?

“When I see something that reads all was lost, is there still hope for a better day, or do I keep searching for the truth? Does it truly mean I have to give up?” Lily said.

Then she keeps walking until she finds something interesting in a book lying in the middle of woods in the place she called home, the shire. The book was titled, *There and Back Again* by Bilbo Baggins and the *Lord of the Rings* by Frodo Baggins. Hmmmm....Lily was thinking to herself that maybe it had to do with her past?

So, she went back home to her father and said “what is this book doing on the dirty and wet cold ground in the woods in the shire? There wasn’t anyone around that saw it laying in the path on which I was walking.”

Then her father said, “Well, I can tell you found it in fairly good condition. Where did you find it?”

She said she found it near the end of the shire on a path near a familiar house, but, she didn’t know how it would end up at a home near the shire like this one? Who does this belong to, she wondered.

But, in her mind she wanted to go back, but It was getting dark out and late.

Then her father replied to her strictly, “don’t go back there, I forbid you to go back to that house.”

Then he sent her off to bed in an upset mood.

Later that night, over some tea and cookies, The father and mother of Lily, Frodo Gamgee, said to his wife, “Mary, I just don’t know what to do, it’s too dangerous for someone like Lily to wonder off like that when I told her not to. She just doesn’t listen. I’m more worried about her safety. She could be in danger one day if she doesn’t listen. Yes, dearest, you’re right. Maybe we should get her to find things that normal women in the shire would do instead of adventuring off in the mist of danger. Especially, no no no, Mary, do you want her to know about that prophecy in this red book,” he warned. Mary agreed to keep it silent until Lily understood what it meant to be a responsible person, as coming of age is coming up for Lily. For it would be her 30th birthday next week.

The next morning, Lily was up and ready to go for an adventure when, her mother came in and said, “don’t you know how to grow up and take responsibility for yourself! Do as I say or else stay in your room.” She barked at Lily to do what she was told. And as the next week came, Lily was tired of her so-called parents telling her she was a little brat. And her birthday came, and her parents wanted her to celebrate with her family. “It would be like a boring tea party,” Lily said. Her mother told her to act presentable and be appropriate; it made her feel depressed. So she was depressed all that day. For she felt she didn’t belong in this family. Then she went to her room closed the door, and wept for the rest of the evening, then she went to sleep.

Later that night, she was busy sleeping away, when, a big gust of wind came through the window of her bedroom. She woke up from a sound sleep. She got out of bed and suddenly a familiar voice came from a distance and voice got closer and closer until it was behind her. She didn’t notice until they bumped each other.

“Hey,” she said bravely but quietly, “go back where you came from!” Then the voice became cheerful. “Lily Gamee, I know your father because I met him before when he was an infant child himself, before you were born, Lily...or should say Braveheart. She had a sister too before the Gamgee family grew big. And your grandfather was my dearest friend, his name you shall find out for yourself. My name is Frodo,” he said as he pulled back his hood for her to see who he was. “I wrote in that red book you’re carrying there, so did your grandfather and me and my uncle, Bilbo Baggins.” Then she noticed a brooch he was wearing was the one that her grandfather had before he passed into the grey havens years ago.

He returned to Middle Earth because it would become something that he would have to defend once again, he said. There was something lurking in Middle Earth that has a dangerous power. Long ago, it was after the ring was destroyed, he met someone besides Sam that...

“What!” she interrupted. “Why are talking about a no-good piece of jewelry for?”

“It not just jewelry my dear, it’s something that took over me when i was your age. It was passed down from my uncle, Bilbo. His mind was poisoned by this piece of jewelry called ‘the One Ring of Power.’ I saved the shire once but yet it has returned to Middle Earth to destroy all that lays in its path. The sprit had been reborn to the world with bigger vengeance than ever to destroy the magic and power of the valor. You must come and join me on an adventure to Rivendell to see the king of Rivendell to meet the council of our fellowship birthplace. Will you join me or stay here? Consequences await if you don’t come.”

“Or else what?” said her father. “She’s NOT GOING ANYWHERE!”

“Then I guess Middle Earth shall fall I guess? No, wait a minute!” Then he gasped in shock and was amazed, for he saw his father’s best friend, Frodo. He said, “Is this really Frodo Baggins? How did you come back? Why?”

Frodo said, “don’t be afraid to let your daughter come with me to meet the council of Elrond.” He told Lily’s father that is was perfectly fine for her to go to Rivendell. They agreed to let Lily go with him to Rivendell to meet the council of Elrond.

They went on their way to Rivendell. ~~

ROLLING MEDDOWS
RANCH TRAIL RIDING
MAY
2016

FRIDAY

BY: RACHEL WILLIAMSON

DEB AND I TOOK A TRIP INTO THE COUNTRY TO A HORSE RANCH IN BRIGEVILLE PA. WHEN WE ARRIVED, DEB AND I GOT OUT OF HER CAR AND ONLY TOOK OUT WHAT WE NEEDED TO PAY FOR TO RIDE THE TRAIL, WE WENT TO THE STABLES AND GOT THE GUIDE'S ATTENTION. I ASKED FOR A REAL EASY HORSE, THEY GAVE ME FORBAS AND THEY GAVE DEB JAKE. WHEN IT WAS TIME TO GET ON, I WASN'T SCARED, BUT WHEN I TRIED TO SWING MY LEG AROUND THE SADDLE, I MISSED. "UGGH," I SAID. THEN I TRIED AGAIN WITH SUCCESS!! NO SCARDINESS WHEN I WAS PUTTING MY HANDS ON THE REINS LIKE I WAS TAUGHT, THE INSTRUCTOR TOLD ME DIFFERENT, I IMMEDIATELY FROZE, IN FEAR, THEN I ARGUED WITH MY EDUCATED MEMORIES AT WHAT I LEARNED AND WHAT I DIDNT. THEN I PRAYED. ALL AT ONCE, I DESIRED TO GO ON THE TRAIL, IT WAS EASER THAN I THOUGHT, WHEN GOING DOWN A STEEP HILL I HAD TO SIT LIKE IF I WAS STRAIT NOT BENT, AND I WAS HOLDING MY SADDLE FOR ADJUSTING, WHILE I WAS RIDING DOWN HILL. FOR AWHILE WE WERE FINE, THEN THE GUIDE HAD TO GO GET MORE PEOPLE OUT INTO THE FIELD, THEN THIS HAPPENED...OUR HORSES WOULD NOT BUDGE ONE BIT!!! NO MATTER WHAT WE TRIED, WE TAPPED OUR HORSES WITH OUR FEET ON THEIR SIDES, NOT A MOVE. WE DID EVERY THING, NO BUDGE. FOR 12 MINUTES WE WERE STUCK IN THE MUD AND FLIES, YELLING HEY WE'RE STUCK!!! THEN WE HEARD VOICES, FINALLY WE STARTED TO YELL. THE GIRLS ASKED ABOUT HOW LONG WE WERE HERE, AND WHAT HAPPENED TO BE STUCK. WE EXPLAINED, THEY DID TELL US THEY ONLY FOLLOW THE BOSS IF THE BOSS SAYS TO GO. DEB AND I WERE SO RELIEVED TO BE FOUND, A HALF A MILE A WAY FROM THE BARN, BESIDE THE HIGHWAY, I WAS ENJOYING MY RIDE, IN HARMONY, WHEN ALL OF A SUDDEN FORBUS STARTED TO GET EXCITED? I YELPED AND I STARTED TO FREAK OUT. THEY SAID WE USUALLY LET THEM RUN TO THE BARN. I DIDN'T LIKE THAT, I DROPPED THE WAY I WAS HOLDING THE REINS AND GRABBED THEM AS I WAS TAUGHT AND PULLED THEM BACK! DEB GOT OFF QUICKLY AND GRABBED FORBAS' REINS. SO I WALKED MY HORSE TO THE CLEARING. THE TOUR GUIDE CALLED A DRIVER TO PICK US UP, BECAUSE IT WAS TOO HOT TO WALK BACK TO THE RANCH. TOO FUN FOR A REAL HOT DAY, AND TO SIT IN AN AIR-CONDITIONED CAR FOR A COUPLE HOURS TILL HOMEBOUND ARRIVAL!~~

Definitions of the Mind

By: Joshua Walburn

The mind is the series of faculties such as: thinking, perception, thoroughness, emphasis, imagination, judgement, reasoning, memory, etc. There are non-cognitive aspects such as emotion and feeling. Psychologists usually define it as the universal faculty of an entity's consciousness, thoughts, and languages. Under physicalist interpretations, the mind is housed at least in part of the: brain, cosmos, energy, genomes, central nervous system, celestial regions, botanical environments, nature, and the non-physical realm that's beyond the known senses around us.

One half or at least 60% of the mind is divided up into a broad spectrum of consciousness and its levels; the state of being awake and aware of oneself's surroundings. Scientists question about its pervasion of the universe and is a fundamental feature of it.

"You are a beloved of the universe. You have intentionally incarnated into this time and space to assist with the evolution of consciousness. You carry within your soul the wisdom of the ages. Shine on, dear one. You are precious. You are loved. You are supported," quotes Illuminating Souls. In relation to the Christian Bible, this might be one the words that's housed within the image of God. Universes are few out of many aspects within the conscious mind, regardless of endless points throughout time and space from my observations along with faith. Consciousness is related along with the night sky and the heavens above.

The opposite side of it is like what's under an ocean, and earth below. That's unconsciousness; the state of being unaware or uninformed. In medicine and clinical psychology, causes are linked by epilepsy, diabetes, and head injuries such as concussions. The unconscious mind can help a person to perform some tasks. The hypnotic might dictate to subjects what to do at a time. The unconscious mind is full of misconceptions and myths. Language that's unaware can prevail deconstructive criticism that harms against some properties of consciousness. When a certain topic is being more understood, states of being aware prevails along with the philosophies of education, lectures, and facilitation.

The primary competitors to the physicalist interpretations of the mind are idealism, dualism, and some lights of materialism. There are lengthy traditions in philosophy, psychology, religion, and cognitive science about what constitutes a mind and the questioning of its distinguishing properties.

One other open question is 'mind-body problem,' which investigates relations of the mind to physical brains and rest of the nervous system. Older viewpoints such as dualism and idealism consider the mind as non-physical. Modern perspectives that center around functionalism and physicalism holds that the mind is roughly identical with the brain or reducible to physical phenomena such as neuron activity.

A language-thorough mind uses sensory information to narrate more details within the same topic. It forms new abstract concepts that are rather analogy-based or symbolism. Abstractions are formed by language. The mind that's recognized for verbal memory is housed in certain fields that are related to banking, specialized sales and pricing.

Systematic minds are full of patterns that are expressed spatially, auditorial, and conceptional. They apply theses sets along with mathematics, physics, and scientific related studies. Some people with this type of thinking can move to Cape Canaveral to work for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. Visual minds are rather photo-realistic or spatial. They contribute to themselves as art, industrial design, and skilled trades (e.g., auto mechanic, electrician, plumbing, heating, air conditioning, and welding).

Important philosophers of the mind include: Plato, Patanjali, Descartes, Leibniz, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Searle, Dennett, Fodor, Nagel, Chalmers, and Putnam. Psychologists and computer scientists develop influential theories about the mind. The possibility of nonbiological minds are explored in fields like artificial intelligence, works closely in cybernetics and information theory to understand ways in which information processing by nonbiological machines is comparable to mental phenomena in human thoughts. The mind is also portrayed as the streams of consciousness where sense impressions and mental phenomena are constantly changing.~

My Favorite Teacher

By: Nathaniel Geyer

Recently, I found out that a former teacher who was a great influence on my life died at the age of 93, Ms. Evelyn Ben-Ami. I first met her when I was 30 years old and I was attending a special needs program elementary school. She was one of the first people who saw that I was smart and was not destined to live differently from other people with special needs. She saw that I was good in the Math and Music and allowed me to take these classes in a regular second grade classroom, prior to the signing of the Americans with Disability Act of 1990. She was married to a Rabbi who was not afraid to teach us about Jewish traditions. We often spent the days watching hour-long Sesame Street, singing, and learning to be better people. I believed that after she had taught me she decided to retire for the first time, but she found retirement to be boring and decided to go back to teaching at the school district where she lived, where she continued to make a difference in other people until her 80s. I greatly admired her for her strong work ethic and ability to bring the best out in her students.

After the 1990-91 term, I transitioned to mainstream elementary school. My first regular schoolteacher is now a superintendent of a small school district, who also credits me for helping her along the way. I lost contact with Mrs. Ben-Ami and saw an occasional news clipping or interview on her teaching style and her ability to help students find their potential in life. Although I found music to be not for me, I found a career that used my math skills to better the world, and I list her as an early influence.

Years later, when I was pursuing my Doctor of Public Health degree, I was fortunate to see her at a local park with my parents and niece. My mother was the first to point her out and she brought me over to her sitting on a bench alone. I talked to her daughter who told me that she had dementia and had difficulty remembering people, but the memories of the earlier years came back to me and I had the chance to say my final goodbye. I praised her for seeing my potential and not my limitations. Something that I aim to do with my various outreaches, including being a writer at *Pittverse*. She will be greatly missed, and I wish her family the best in the upcoming days.~~

Trip into Vacation

By: Ginger Reynolds

My mom asked me if I wanted to go on a family trip. At first I was hesitant, because in the past family trips have just been an opportunity for someone to argue and fight. But I decided to go because it could possibly be my last family trip. The family trip was to my brother's house, in South Carolina. The drive down there took eight hours and was extremely uncomfortable.

The drive itself wasn't bad, just annoying. We left the house in the afternoon and got to my brother's sometime after 11 p.m. My brother has four boys under the age of 13 and they were already asleep by the time we arrived. By the time we got to the house there were four kids, five adults, three cats, a dog, and two cows.

I spent most of the trip with the animals because everyone else ignored me. I am used to being alone, but when family ignores you, it hurts. The cats are outside cats, so if I wanted to see the cats, I needed to go outside. After the first day sleeping in my brother's house, my anxiety rose and I didn't want to ruin the trip, so I slept in the hot truck most of the nights. After I had a mental breakdown and my mom saved me, my brain helped me realize that maybe I was the problem. Maybe all the trips that ended in disaster was my fault. Then I decided to include myself in family activities, but it was hard because I was sick the whole visit.

After turning the negatives into positives, the family trip became a fun vacation. I had to push my mental health needs aside for almost a week, but in the end, I had a lot of fun.

In conclusion, my family trip turned into a fun vacation in the end. I finally enjoyed visiting my brother's house. Frowns turned into smiles and laughter. When it was time to go back home, I cried because I was going to miss my nephews. The ride back was rough because everyone was tired. In the end, I realized family at times are extremely annoying. But that doesn't mean family is incapable of love.~~

Sea world/Navarre Beach Trip

By: Rachel Williamson

This is when I went on a trip to Sea World and Navarre beach in September, 2014

When we arrived at the Sea World's parking lot I hadn't finished my water (wasn't a good choice). We headed to the gates, I felt thirsty, I was feeling guilty for not finishing my water, immediately I asked mom for water, she said wait, I begged, both my mom and dad said, they wanted to look at the map first, and we had got a free eating pass. Dad and Mom had to get that first before heading out into the park. I got upset, I tried to ignore my thirst, worked for awhile, but then the heat got to me, I got in the line for the viewing tower. No wind no clouds or shade, sun beating down on me like a cooking fire, then I started to get lightheaded. I felt dizzy and felt like I was going to pass out, but none of that happened, as soon as I got into the shade where the entrance to the ride was, I felt better, then when we were on the ride there was air conditioning, so refreshing and a place to sit!!

When it was over, the symptoms came back but I thought I was going to get a drink, but mom saw a show she didn't want to miss. I groaned. After that show, we finally went to get something to eat, I guzzled my drink, mom said to slow down, I couldn't, I was that thirsty, and I did eat, too. After we ate, I was walking and so was mom and dad, I saw something in the distance, a dolphin nursery!! I tried not to run too far from Mom and Dad, I was amused, almost in tears, I saw one dolphin play peek-a-boo!!

Then we went on our first ride, Lost Atlantis water ride!! I had to sit with someone else. Mom and Dad sat with each other, the person was a boy, his name was Daniel, I promised him I wouldn't scream, and I kept my promise too!! After the ride was over, we ate again, I didn't I wanted to ride the Manta, Mom had me wait for her, so I did, then mom and I went on the Manta roller coaster, it was a flying coaster, when we were on the ride, going through the track, I saw the people down below, I kept saying "Hello down there!!"

Then we went to the dolphin show, it was beautiful, birds acrobatics and especially dolphins and bullet whales then we ate one more time, and had some little flat rides, then it was time for the "Believe One Ocean" show (the orca show). I had my DS with me, of course, I wanted to tape the show, but my parents were paranoid about my DS getting wet, it did (but a few years later it started to work again). Splash Time was my favorite part of the orca show. We sat in the Splash Zone seats, I heard a little girl got scared because of that part, I was sad that she didn't like the splashing from the orca's pool tank. After the show was over, we went to the tank where the non-show orcas were. I took pictures and then we left toured the hotel, I was so tired...I slept on the way to the hotel. At the hotel I took a bath in the jacuzzi and crashed in the bed.

The next day, we had to go to Navarre Beach to see some family members, I was excited, because of the beach part!! At 8:00 am the next morning, my mom got me up to get ready for the drive to Navarre beach, we ate at a restaurant unknown because it was a restaurant not familiar to us originally where we usually eat at all the time, I took pictures from my iPod. When we got to a toll booth to a bridge, I had a Sirius XM station on called "Electric Area," a song played it was called "Ocean" by Paul Van Dyke. The bridge was seven miles long and the song apparently was as long as the bridge, which was cool, while we were on the bridge I actually told my parents to turn on my song, they did, and liked it!! When we made it my aunt and uncle's neighborhood reminded me of a scene off of earth to echo the movie. I got to sleep in the sunroom, which in Florida they called the sunroom the Florida room, and it was so pretty. When we went to the beach, a parachuter man flew above us, I missed it and couldn't see it without my glasses and it was too fast anyways, also a big military helicopter passed and I waved hard, guess what they did? They started to hover and waved back!!!

I stayed in the water six hours straight, from 11am -4 pm that day. Between those hours I was going underwater and looking at things, and I saw one thing that caught my eye, a blue scaled tail swiftling in the water, too far away to tell what it was, I surfaced the water to catch my breath, I thought I knew what I saw, couldn't say it, but I believe what I saw was rare. Then it was time to head back. We had steak for dinner and then in the small TV room, I watched *Transformers*. The next day, we went to the Air Field base where my uncle was working, I had to go by some strict rules while I was in the air base, so did my parents.

When my uncle had time to show us the sitting planes, I was amazed, my favorite was the black hawk helicopter, that one was off of the beginning of *Transformers 2007*. That's why I liked it so much. The other planes were cool as well. When we got back to my aunt and uncle's house, we ate dinner and got stuff ready to go home for tomorrow, and went to bed, because it'll be a long trip towards home. We stopped at a hotel near Pigeon Forge for the night.

When we left for home, I cried, because I didn't want the vacation to end....~~

The Elusive Mountains of Kong

By: Megan Cunningham

Throughout the 19th century, a high mountain range running from the Niger River and into the Gulf of Guinea had captured European imaginations. Discovered by Scottish explorer Mungo Park in his 1798 expedition to chart the Niger, it's a magnificent, impassable string of blue snow-capped sierras. Geography books told of its gold-dusted slopes and credited it as a river source for the Niger, Gambia, and Senegal Rivers.

Except that there's one problem. Despite being featured on almost every commercial map of Africa for nearly a century, the Mountains of Kong don't really exist.

The first map of the Mountains of Kong was created in 1798 by English cartographer James Rennell to accompany a book by Mungo Park about his first journey to West Africa. In it, Park recounts gazing on a distant range, and "people informed me, that these mountains were situated in a large and powerful kingdom called Kong." Since aerial photography didn't exist yet, Rennell took the brief observation and, based on his own theories about the Niger River's course, drew a map showing the mountain range that he assumed was the river's source. We're not sure why he depicted them. Park didn't actually visit this area, nor did he explain why they're called the Mountains of Kong. As said, this area doesn't have any mountains. Just a series of low hills and plateaus in some places separating West Africa's inner plains from the coast. And none of them don't reach 700 feet above the surrounding country akin to the mighty mountains of Illinois. It's possible native guides told Park about this hill chain, which he later relayed to Rennell and probably exaggerated as a towering and impassible mountain range. Park might've corrected this error had he not died on the Niger in 1806. With Park's death, Europeans wouldn't explore the Niger and its surrounding area for several decades, mostly due to fear of the malaria-carrying mosquitos and no knowledge of quinine.

For decades, the Mountains of Kong's existence wasn't questioned. Even explorers who spent time in the area believed the mountains existed. Though they might've just glimpsed the hills and plateaus from a distance took them as the range's foothills. Some even claimed they crossed them. Yet, there were many disagreements on how they appeared, which is a red flag concerning geological features. Writers began describing them as, "lofty," "barren," and "snow-covered." Some depicted them as rugged, granite peaks, others as limestone terraces. Their elevation ranged from 2500-14,000 feet. While as the 19th century wore on, the Mountains of Kong experienced a general southward drift in location. While on some they range far enough east to connect the equally mythical Mountains of the Moon.

Though some geographers not surprisingly casted doubt on the range's existence as time went on, the Mountains of Kong kept appearing on maps until French explorer Louis-Gustave Binger's 1887-1889 Niger River expedition, after which he declared the range's definitive nonexistence. So the Mountains of Kong began dropping off maps, though Kong still appeared as the name of the region, which was appropriate. The place actually existed along the Ivory Coast since the 12th century and served as a trading center and later capital of an empire until the French colonized the area. By the early 20th century, the mountains were gone for good, though there were a few hangers on. Bartholomew's Oxford Advanced Atlas still contained them in its 1928 edition. While Goode's World Atlas of 1995 also had them for some baffling reason.

While the Mountains of Kong was a great moment in bad mapmaking, it's hardly the only one, especially in Africa during the early 19th century. Yet, it demonstrates how much faith we put into maps even when they don't reflect the physical world, particularly in regard to places most people will never visit. Normally the western perspective sees the early mapmaking process as intrinsically linked to the process of discovery. Well, discovery as far as white people were concerned since people were already living in those areas. But as the Mountains of Kong show, sometimes to make a map, you need to *undiscover* places as well.



Picture courtesy of Wikipedia.

Review of *Silver Linings Playbook*

By: Nils Skudra

During this quarantine period I have found time to watch a lot of movies at home, and this past weekend I watched David O. Russell's 2012 film *Silver Linings Playbook*, starring Bradley Cooper and Jennifer Lawrence. I felt that this film would be a great topic for a review since it relates to issues of mental health, some of which members of the autism community can relate to.

The film revolves around Pat Solatano (portrayed by Bradley Cooper), a Philadelphia man who struggles with symptoms of bipolar disorder. Having spent eight months in a Baltimore mental hospital after assaulting his wife Nikki's lover, Pat is released and taken back home by his parents (played by Robert De Niro and Jacki Weaver) who expect him to comply with the court-issued restraining order that bars him from contacting Nikki. However, Pat intends to rebuild his life and reunite with her since he has developed a positive life philosophy during his time in the mental hospital. According to this philosophy, he should see the good in everything he experiences, and there is a "silver lining" waiting in store for him if he works really hard to improve his situation. Consequently, he fails to heed his parents' admonishment against trying to reconnect with Nikki.

Pat's efforts at self-improvement are significantly affected, however, by his bipolar symptoms, which take the form of aggravated and paranoid behaviors that often provide comic relief throughout the film. For example, after reading Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*, Pat exclaims "What the f***!" and tosses the book out the glass window, breaking it and waking his parents in the middle of the night. He then unleashes a tirade about why the book is so depressing and how he can't understand why Nikki would choose such a book for her class. In a subsequent scene at the psychiatrist's office, Pat goes into a fit of paranoia upon hearing a Stevie Wonder song playing in the waiting room, frantically tossing magazines about the floor in an effort to find the music CD. When he meets with his therapist Dr. Patel, it is revealed that the song in question was Pat's wedding song, which he found playing at home the day that he discovered Nikki's infidelity, and therefore it is a trigger for his behavior – he explains that he can hear it in his head even when it is not playing, and this can prompt his mood swings, which he must take medication for.

Things take a turn for Pat when he meets Tiffany Maxwell (portrayed by Jennifer Lawrence), his friend Ronnie's sister-in-law, during a dinner party. Tiffany also struggles with mental health challenges – although these include depression, her diagnosis is not identified. Pat and Tiffany's dinner conversation focuses heavily on the different medications they take for their respective symptoms, which makes Ronnie and his wife Veronica very uncomfortable since this does not fit their idea of a normal dinner talk. When Veronica tries to change the subject by bringing up Tiffany's dance practice, some of Tiffany's behaviors come to the forefront, including a swift transition to a belligerent attitude and a tendency to speak very directly, as she abruptly tells her sister, "Stop talking about me in the third person!" When Tiffany asks Pat if he's taking her home, he replies that she has poor social skills, to which she retorts, "I have a problem? You say more inappropriate things than appropriate things. You scare people."

This exchange between Pat and Tiffany is something that many people on the autism spectrum can relate to. While the two protagonists are individuals with mental illness, the tendency to speak their minds directly is a common trait among individuals with autism, and for people in both groups, this can be a social challenge since it is often manifested in making inappropriate statements. For most people who are neurotypical or sane, psychiatric medication is not a suitable topic for casual dinner conversation, nor are personal issues, for that matter. Since individuals like Pat and Tiffany or those on the autism spectrum view the world through a different lens, they tend not to have the same inhibitions against speaking directly what is on their minds. This is further attested to by Tiffany while walking home with Pat, as she notes the feeling of attraction between them and tells him, "You felt it, I felt it, don't lie. We're not liars like they are."

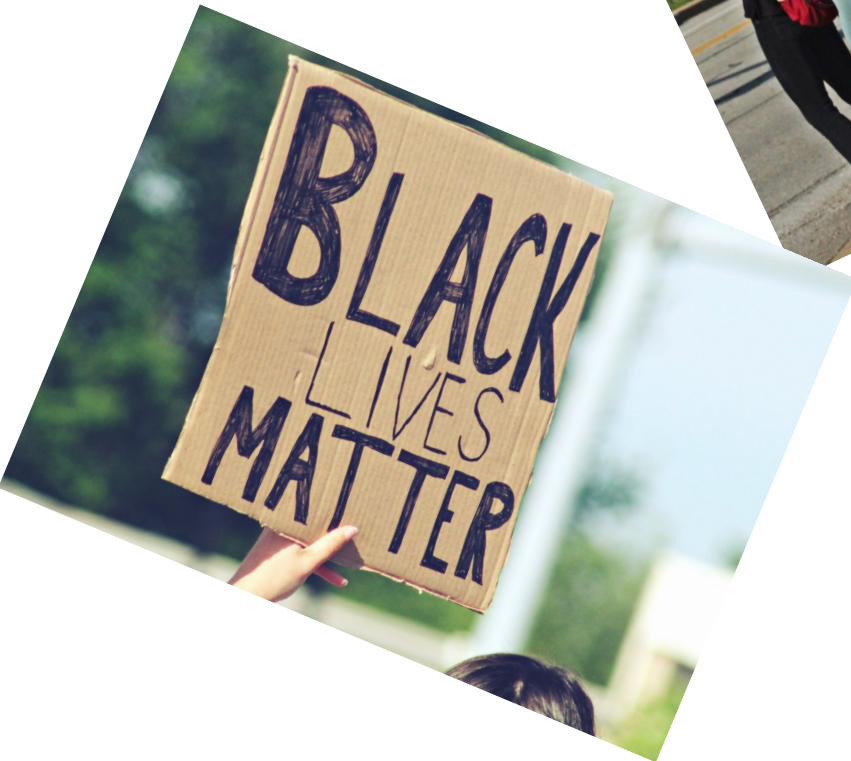
Following his first meeting with Tiffany, Pat undergoes another bipolar mood swing due to the neglect of his medication. He frantically searches for his wedding video, screaming in agitation and waking the whole neighborhood. When his parents try to calm him down, he knocks his mother down and exchanges blows with his father until Officer Keogh, the policeman assigned to Pat's case, arrives at their house after receiving complaints from the neighbors. While this scene is undoubtedly one of the most hilarious moments in the film, it also reveals much about the ways in which bipolar disorder can manifest itself. In addition, although the violence between Pat and his father took place in the heat of the moment, it nonetheless demonstrates the importance of having a supportive family which shows compassion and empathy in helping bipolar individuals to cope with their symptoms.

Following this episode, Pat agrees to take his medications and engages in a regular running routine in order to improve his self-discipline. On several occasions, Tiffany abruptly joins him while running and engages him in conversation about his mental health, bringing it up in a highly uncomfortable manner, saying "Calm down, crazy!" when he responds in an agitated manner. Her lack of social etiquette is further displayed when Pat asks her about going out for dinner at a local diner, and she curtly answers, "Pick me up at 7:30," instead of expressing delight over the prospect of a date. During their subsequent meal together, it is revealed that she engaged in promiscuous behavior due to depression following the death of her husband, resulting in the loss of her job. When Pat makes a judgmental statement about her, she goes into a mood swing of her own, telling Pat to forget her offer of helping him contact Nikki "because I'm so much CRAZIER than you!" and sweeping everything onto the floor before storming out.

When Pat rushes after Tiffany, she delivers a harsh rebuke: "You might not have experienced the shit that I did, but you loved hearing about it, didn't you? You're afraid to be alive, you're afraid to live. You're a conformist. You're a hypocrite. You're a liar. I opened up to you and you judged me!" This commentary resonates significantly since there are some individuals with autism who are judgmental toward other people who share their diagnosis on account of being differently functioning or not having overcome the associated challenges of autism to the same degree. Since everyone with autism faces certain challenges that vary based on their level of the spectrum, the accusation of being a conformist is something that many would throw at autistic individuals who display a condescending attitude toward other autistic people who may not be as socially integrated. In the case of the film, this rebuke helps bring about a change in Pat's attitude toward Tiffany and his own disorder, particularly after she calms Pat down when he starts hearing the wedding song in his head, telling him, "You going to go your whole life scared of that song? It's a song. Don't make it a monster."

Following this scene, Pat gradually develops a closer relationship with Tiffany, agreeing to practice with her for an upcoming dance competition. He finds this new routine highly beneficial since it instills a new sense of purpose and discipline, but he still retains his long-term goal of reuniting with Nikki, which Tiffany promises to help him with in exchange for the dance practice. When he loses faith, however, she and his parents concoct a white lie – that Nikki will be attending the competition – in order to convince him to go. When this white lie unexpectedly becomes true, Tiffany and Pat are forced to confront their feelings for each other and reach a decision that will be determined in the aftermath of the competition.

Both Cooper and Lawrence deliver superb performances, conveying often comical but very serious and convincing portrayals of individuals with bipolar disorder. Furthermore, *Silver Linings Playbook* articulates a profound message about the challenges of mental illness, the importance of family support for individuals with mental health issues, and how two people can connect on the basis of a shared mental health condition and improve each other's lives through their relationship. People with mental health issues have long been stigmatized by society, and this film makes a compelling case not only for their social acceptance but also for giving them support and encouragement so that they may lead productive lives. This message will hopefully resonate among members of the disability community as well.~~



**Photos by
Robert Hester**



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Pittverse Magazine is made possible in part due to the generous donations from the Edith L. Trees Charitable Trust. Through the grant provided by the Edith L. Trees Charitable Trust, the Pittverse writers are able to be compensated for their submissions, creating work experience and greater independence, as well as a productive and diverse environment for adults with autism in the Pittsburgh area and beyond.

Get Involved!

Pittverse is open to submissions from writers, illustrators, photographers, poets, etc., on the Autism Spectrum.

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