

Left to right: Iness Rabah, Ricardo Montero, Advisor Lew Wheaton, Jessica Rodriguez, Director John O'Brien, Adrian Yllatopa, Gabe Wanissian, Blair DeLong, and Noura Dakka proudly accept their awards at the New Jersey Collegiate Press Awards ceremony.
Henry Fowler//The Torch

Torch Ignites 2015 NJPF Awards

HELEN MAFINEJAD
STAFF WRITER

The New Jersey Press Foundation held their 2014-2015 college newspaper contest award ceremony to scores of four-year and two-year colleges in the state, which honor the skills of their student staff members in journalistic writing, photography and design.

The Torch received awards in news writing, feature writing, biography/personality profile, editorial writing, column/opinion, sports, arts and entertainment, enterprise/investigative reporting, photography, overall website, layout and design, and general excellence. Specifically, the Torch took home six first place awards, five second place awards, and four third place awards. This year was very rewarding for the Torch staff as they won 15 awards from the 18 award categories, making them the two-year college to win the most awards that night. This year they were victorious, winning more awards than any other two-year paper in the state.

Gabe Wanissian, Joe Cirilo, Ricardo Montero, Nomi Eijkenaar, Blair DeLong, Noura Dakka, Zach McDevitt, Jessica Rodriguez, Valerie Batista, Domenica Pazmino, and the rest of the Torch staff were the winners of these much appreciated awards.

The most prestigious award that the Torch staff and their advisor Lew Wheaton took home first place in overall General Excellence for a two-year college as well as the Sweepstakes award, for the college winning the most awards. It was a very exciting and overwhelming feeling because it showed that all of their hard work, precision, dedication, and pride to this paper was finally getting recognized to the highest level.

Current Editor-in-Chief Blair DeLong, former Editor-in-Chief Ricky Montero, and current Co-editor Jessica Rodriguez all went home with first place awards. They shared their experience and the emotions they felt that day knowing they are making a difference and that they are on the right path.

Blair DeLong won first place in Enterprise/Investigative reporting for his story on BCC's locker rooms and facilities and second place in opinion/column writing for his Uncle Blair article on BCC's carelessness with money. This was DeLong's second time attending and has won a first place award at last year's NJPF ceremony in editorial writing with his article, "Time to Lead by Example". DeLong said, "This year was actually a big deal for many of us at the Torch. We had a lot riding on the competition. Not only is a journalist's writing important, but they have to be able to produce for whatever publication they are writing for."

"I was proud to bring journalistic prestige to Bergen Community College. After last year, it was a battle with the administration almost every month to get them to enact changes through accurate, and sometimes blunt, reporting. Some changes were made, but now that the school sees that its Journalism program is the finest in New Jersey among two-year colleges, maybe the administration will start to listen," DeLong stated.

DeLong was asked how it felt winning an award. DeLong said he doesn't feel he needs an award in order to validate his work, he feels validated when a story makes a difference no matter how small it may be. "If people don't like you for telling the truth and are trying to get you to shut up, you've done your job. Knowing that makes me happy," said DeLong.

(continued on pg. 5)

An Interview With One of America's Best Two-Year Students

GELBER CASTILLO
STAFF WRITER

The nationally-recognized star pupil, Rhonda Richardsen.
Photo courtesy of bergen.edu

Bergen Community College student Rhonda Richardsen has been recognized as one of the 20 best nationally-ranked two-year college students by the All-USA Community College Academic Team. This title is complemented with a \$2,500 scholarship. Richardsen will also be featured in USA Today.

President B. Kaye Walter commented that, "There is no more prestigious national award that a community college student can earn than being named to the All-USA Community College Academic Team."

Richardsen has called her stay in Bergen Community College "an amazing opportunity." She is reputed for her community involvement, for being a high-profile honor student, and for being president of Alpha Epsilon Phi, BCC's Phi Theta Kappa chapter.

"My team and I did some awesome things this year," said Richardsen, when asked about her involvement in the society, "We won 5 international awards and 13 regional awards. We also had 2 history breaking inductions. We packed the gym with over 1,000 people this spring!"

Among several projects, the team in Alpha Epsilon Phi prioritized mental health activism. "That's been the point of all of the events we have held this year," said Richardsen, "Based on what the officer team and the members are passionate about or saw a need for, we found ways to help."

"Mental illness and the stigma it holds is something that is held very near to my heart as well as many officers. The current system and people's perspectives only hurt the people suffering from these illnesses even more. It's about time for a change and we can all do something."

Despite being recognized as one of America's best two-year college student, she was not named valedictorian of BCC's class of 2015. "I am confused about how I can be one of the top 20 students in the nation but not BCC's valedictorian," said Richardsen, "That still doesn't make sense to me."

Richardsen believes this award is not just a personal victory, but also a testament to just how



invaluable our stay in BCC can be. "I hope it lets the students know that with hard work, the right people to surround you, and the right activities, Bergen can take you places you want to go," she stated.

After graduation, she aspires to follow what she is most passionate about. "Your dream can be your reality while letting your passions guide you," she says, "I want to change the mental health care system for the better through law, medicine or maybe business. I also want to be a pilot."

When asked if BCC has changed the way she will approach her future, Richardsen said, "It helped me truly find my way and what mattered most to me."



Students with Terry Tempest Williams, third from the left. Noura Dakka/The Torch

Spring Literary Art Series: Terry Tempest Williams

NICOLE ACOSTA
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Terry Tempest Williams, Bergen Community College's Keynote Speaker of Women's History Month, is an American author, environmentalist, activist and animal-lover from Salt Lake City, Utah. The special guest read a segment of her famous book *When Women Were Birds: Fifty-Four Variations on Voice* for the audience and shared in a question-and-answer discussion format at Ciccone Theatre on March 27.

Williams reading her personal stories first-hand was a humbling experience for anyone in the audience. She spoke of heartbreaking moments in her life, such as her dying mother leaving journals for Terry with specific instructions to open them after she had passed. Terry had waited a month after her mother died to open the journals, only to find out that every beautiful intricate journal her mother collected was empty.

"I felt like it was like a second death...what was she trying to say to me? It was like a cruel joke, I was so devastated, I just quickly gathered them up, put them in the back of my car, drove home, put them on the shelf, and through the years I just wrote in them unceremoniously," said Williams. Terry admits that her mother was a "deeply private person" and although her

final request left Terry confused, she says, "I will never know, I can only speculate...but what I can tell you is it made me evaluate my voice." Since her mother's empty journals, Terry had taken into deep consideration what it means to be human, and, as humans, how we affect the world we live in socially and environmentally.

During her reading, Terry blushed as she remembered nerve-wracking moments she faced as an elementary and middle school science teacher in Utah. She expressed her ultimate desire to teach and inspire children, but was constantly persecuted by strict school management for embracing natural science and introducing it to young minds. Terry's scientific knowledge and vision of social reconstruction collaborate flawlessly in her books. In the question-and-answer discussion, Terry was disappointed to announce that the Oxford Junior Dictionary had made the decision to remove a list of about 50 'nature' words from the dictionary -- such as "almond," "peach," "dandelion," "cauliflower," and many more -- and replaced with more technology-based words like "chat room," "voicemail," "MP3 player," and "blog." "This to me is an environmental accident... the attempt to control language is an environmental

calamity," said Williams. Imagine what we lose without these words in our regular language, we would be murdering the sensibility of our future generations. Terry's viewpoints bring realization to how things have changed and how they continue to change in our society. She elaborated on her fascination with birds and water. Utah draws several different types of birds; Terry has studied and watched birds since she was a young child and feels that they are a "mediator between Heaven and Earth."

The Great Salt Lake is an important landmark for Williams; she mentioned that the West Coast is facing a major environmental crisis with lack of water. "In terms of water as symbol, you know, we are made of water... water is the unconscious, and I think Great Salt Lake, this body of water in a desert that no one can drink, and yet it is this beautiful mirror that calls birds down like a mother and it's the breeding grounds for hundreds of thousands of birds. Water is a paradox. Water is life... and there is too little of it," she said. The relation between water, the body, birds, and her mother is a connection that Terry depicts passionately for her listeners.

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ALWAYS ON



The Meadowlands Expo Center is a hub for congested events, like Bronycon. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

Graduation Location Announced

ADAM GRASSANI
STAFF WRITER

Ever since the announcement of the Izod Center, home of Bergen's graduations, would be closing down, Student Life has had many troubles and issues with the new graduation. Concern and mystery aroused since there was no clear date or venue to host the graduation. Thankfully, everything is now set in stone.

"The graduation will be held on the 21st of May at 10 a.m. at the Meadowlands Expo Center in Secaucus New Jersey," Gregory Fenkart, Coordinator of Student Life, confirmed. "Furthermore, The Graduation Salute will be May 6th all day in the Student Center."

While it is not as well known as the Izod Center, the Meadowlands Expo Center is a very solid host site for the Class of 2015, being measured at 61,000 total square feet. Ever since the Center opened back in 1990, it has housed many events, most of which being trade conventions.

The Meadowlands Expo Center has often been praised for its convenient location. It is only five miles away from Manhattan, and mere minutes away from Newark Airport. The Expo Center is also close to many major New Jersey highways, such as the New Jersey Turnpike and Garden State Parkway. With this convenience of location, parents of their graduating son or daughter will have no trouble getting to the Center.

While some students would have preferred having their graduation at a historical arena such as the Izod Center, the Expo Center should still satisfy them nonetheless. Congratulations to the class of Spring 2015!

Corrections to stories that appeared in previous editions of The Torch:

April, 2015: Typographic error; banners above pages 14 and 15 should have read "Features", not "Opinion".

March, 2015: Informational obsolescence; Much of the information contained in the Mars One centerfold has, since the publication of the article, fallen under investigations of validity.



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NEWS

The Torch



Ministers of foreign affairs of France, Germany, the EU, Iran, the UK and the US as well as Chinese and Russian diplomats discuss the Iranian nuclear program in April. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

U.S. and Iran to Negotiate On Sanctions

HELEN MAFINEJAD
STAFF WRITER

On Friday April 17, President Barack Obama left the table open to “creative negotiations” in response to Iran’s demand that punishing sanctions be urgently lifted as part of a nuclear deal, the initial agreement calls for the penalties to be dealt with overtime.

At a White House news conference, President Obama was asked if he would definitively rule out lifting sanctions at once as part of a final deal aimed at keeping Iran from developing a nuclear weapon. He said he did not want to get ahead of negotiators in how to work through the potential sticking point. His main concern is if Iran violates an agreement, sanctions will quickly be reinstated.

Obama stated that Secretary of State John Kerry and the representatives of five other nations are working to reach a final deal with Iran by June 30.

Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and President Hassan Rouhani insisted last week that they would not sign any deal unless it lifts all sanctions on its first day. Obama initially portrayed their comments as a reflection of internal political pressure, he pointed out that the initial agreement reached earlier this month allows the sanctions to be phased out once international monitors verify that Tehran abiding by the limitations.

Obama also said he would sign the legislation expected to pass the Senate and House, giving Congress a say on the final deal, calling it a “reasonable compromise” that addresses his previous actions over Congress interference.

The legislation would block Obama from waiving any Congressional sanctions against Iran for at least 30 days after any final agreement; it would give lawmakers enough time to weigh in and

make a decision. Obama still has major concerns that some of the lawmakers are going to stomp on his one-sided power as president to enter into a political agreement with another country, but the bill has language that makes it clear and concise that lawmakers’ review will be limited to the sanctions imposed by the Congress.

Mohamed Javad Zarif, Iran’s foreign minister, said on April 17 that the United States had diverged from the framework agreement reached on April 2 by publishing what United States called a fact sheet about its basic provisions. Zarif said, “There would be no phased removal of sanctions to ensure Iranian compliance.” In his first extensive interview with a Western news organization since the agreement was reached, Zarif raised the prospect of unlimited enrichment of Iranian atomic fuel if the talks did not

achieve a final agreement by June 30, with all sanctions dropped.

“We can have the path of confrontation, or we can have the path of cooperation,” Zarif said, speaking in English. “We cannot have a little bit of each. If we take the path of confrontation, the United States and the United Nations will continue with their sanctions, and Iran will continue with its enrichment program. Without any limitations.”

Negotiators will meet in Vienna next week to resume talks aimed at forging a final deal. Apart from the sanction issue, there are other areas of dispute include how much leeway international inspectors will have to visit suspected nuclear sites, including ones on military bases and how forthcoming Iran will have to be about any past work to design nuclear weapons.

BCC Students Feed New York City

MELISSA PEREZ
STAFF WRITER

*Charitable Bergen students, hard at work to make sure mouths are fed.
Keion Best//The Torch*

No one seemed up for driving all the way to the Bronx at 8:30 in the morning. The day started out frigid and dreary with a dark sky, further depressing the mood. It was not until the vans pulled away from the Anna Ciccone Theater curb that it fully dawned on the sleep deprived college students what they would be doing for the day; feeding the hungry.

The Food Bank for New York greeted the 18 Bergen student leaders with a speech, detailing how their work will touch so many lives. To really get the message across, the group watched an inspirational video produced by the non-profit organization. The video tugged at heartstrings by interviewing patrons that lined down city blocks to obtain food. Hearing the stories of how just a bag of rice is a battle to obtain fueled the volunteers, shocking them into a realization that for so many people, food is survival.

The video seemed to have struck each and every single BCC student. From the minute they were allowed to start, they scrambled into an excited coverbelt, dozens of boxes lined at the ready for packaging. At first a little chaotic and confusing, the packing was a little overwhelming; making sure that each box was five pounds or which produce goes in which category. Though the group got the hang of it in no time, they became a team in a matter of minutes.

“...I am very surprised that we walk in here, not really knowing what our job is going to be or how to store food but as soon as we received the directions we were able to follow them, we were able to work as a team even though many of us do not know each other. We are getting the work done for a good cause,” student government President Laura Hoyos elaborated.

“... I feel like it is a really rewarding experience... Just being aware of other people’s needs makes you more appreciative of the things you do have. It is a great experience, and I highly recommend for others,” President Hoyos added during the lunch break after about three hours of packing food.

The process was just as tiring as it was fun; the cold storage room was blasting with music and filled with laughter. Though on



their feet all day running around, people were dancing and posing for pictures. What began as a room full of strangers became a handful of friends that cleared pallets of boxes and food.

The group of individuals sorted through high stacks of food in minutes and at some points it seemed as though the workers of the food bank could not refill the pallets fast enough. When the forklifts replaced the pallets, the boxes piled high soon disappeared behind a swarm of enthusiastic students, eagerly tearing tape off, and walking off with boxes under their arms. The room was cold and the food that was handled was even colder, numbing people’s hands and fingers but they still packed with energy and passion.

The six hours seemed to fly by in the

storage room and despite protests, the team had to call it a day. In total, they had packed 7,146 pounds of food, equaling into 5,955 meals. “[I feel] amazing, I actually did not want to leave the food bank, I had a lot of fun. The experience really made me appreciate what I have more because I have never realized how many people go without less everyday.” Nicholas Scales stated.

The event was magical, humbling the individuals from BCC. There is no experience like packing hundreds of boxes until your hands go numb for the less fortunate. Each box was handled with care and made with love. It was such an uplifting experience that changed not only BCC students, but many more people’s lives.



The new members of Bergen's feminist club at their first meeting.
Iness Rabah//The Torch

The F W.O.R.D.:

BCC's Own
Feminist Club

"We do not want to be known as the Hate Club," Vice president Niatia Gonzalez joked at their first meeting.

MELISSA PEREZ
STAFF WRITER

Every Thursday in Room C-318, you can find a new club discussing civil rights, civil moments, gender stereotyping and much more. The F W.O.R.D is an acronym representing the word "feminist" that catches some off guard and everyone's attention. In just their first meeting alone the club has made their intentions very clear; to educate and gain equality.

The organization is not a band of bra burning, anti-shaving, angry, self-proclaimed extremist feminists. Their ideals are not to scream about who opens a door first, but to spread proper facts and make a difference. "We do not want to be known as the Hate Club," Vice president Niatia Gonzalez joked at their first meeting.

The meetings are full educational discussions where essays and articles on the subject are deliberated on an objective view. The editorial board gets personal and asks members to individually write a response about what feminism is with research from reliable sources. Also, they debate how, as an organization, they can get

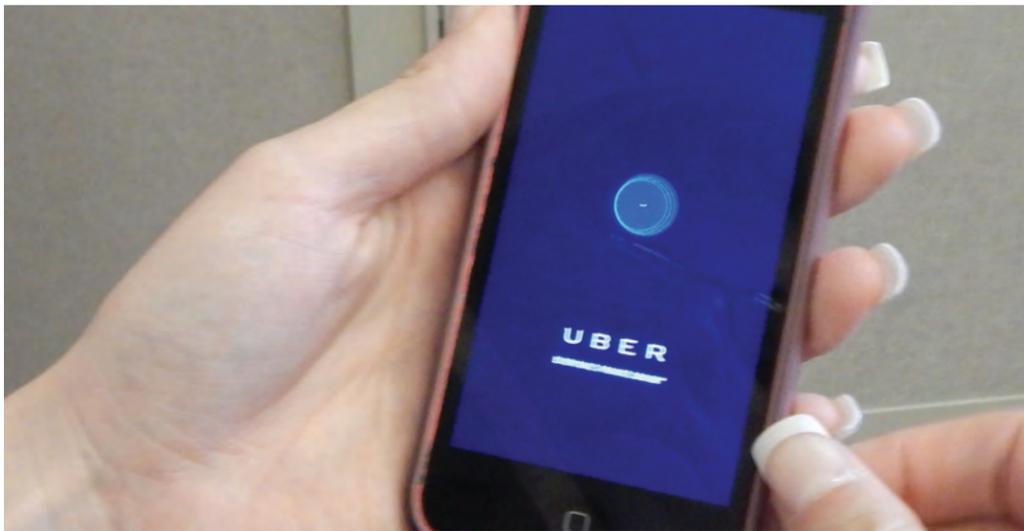
involved; from bake sales to fundraising for domestic violence awareness.

The club is new and ready to make an impression here at Bergen Community College and already began tabling on April 20, where they tried to recruit new members, educate people, and find a secretary. They have rehearsed responses full of facts and statistics to answer any questions and also for any harsh feedback if anyone lashes at them. "We want a friendly face, we want more members," Gonzalez stated at their first meeting.

"We're asking people if they believe in gender equality...every day we are tabling, we ask a different question and we are going to take people's responses and use them at one of our future meetings this semester," Treasurer Jessi Melendez informs about her tabling in the student center. F W.O.R.D. members were also giving out bracelets for participants who underwent the one question survey.

The club is an open space where both men and women are welcome, and male students are especially encouraged to join. The club is trying to fight off the stereotype and myth that only females are feminists. "If you believe in equality between the genders, then yes, you are a feminist," Gonzalez said proudly.

The club is not just an academic gathering for more homework and reading, it is an association active in the community. The members are an interesting handful of people of all sexualities, religions and genders, and treat each other, including strangers, like friends. The atmosphere is light and jokes are constantly being made. Ideas, thoughts and laughs bounce right off one another into a flow of cleverness. "I think my first meeting went fine... it was super fun. Everyone had the same interests, the same beliefs, the same rights that an activist believes. I think as long as we all have the premise I think it was a really good meeting," President Allison Jamauca told the Torch.



Set your pickup location, and see how many drivers are in your area. Noura Dakka//The Torch

Uber: Everyone's Private Driver

KRYSTIN BRUNO
STAFF WRITER

Technology is doing it all for us today; most importantly, it has brought us convenience. Uber calls themselves "Everyone's Private Driver." With one click you can download Uber's free app and connect with hundreds of drivers in your area. Their website allows users to see what the app offers. You can learn about their One Tap Ride, Reliable Pickups, Clear Pricing and carpool option that allows the rider to "Split Your Fare." The service provides "Cashless and Convenient" fares that they call "better, faster, and cheaper than a taxi."

Joseph Cohen, 18, has used the Uber service in New Jersey, New York and California. Uber has been Joseph's primary source of transportation since his move to New Jersey six months ago. "Convenient and reliable," is what he calls the service as he travels from Tenafly to Bergen Community College and also often rides to New York City. Monday through Friday, Joseph takes Uber to BCC and spends an average of \$14-20 each way. "A company taxi will charge about one-third more," he says. Joseph is considered a VIP member for Uber. Since he has taken over 80 Uber rides, he can ride with drivers who have an average rating of 4.8 and up. Joseph calls New Jersey Transit "time consuming and, without a bus pass, more expensive." Joseph sees a bright future for Uber. "In three years I see Uber being just as prevalent as Apple products," he says.

As a rider you can connect with your driver as soon as you send a request. The drivers arrive with their personal vehicles and you instantly receive their phone number, license plate, and name. Riders can even pick their own type of vehicle if he or she is riding with numerous passengers. UberX is available for those who wish to ride in a sedan, UberXL cars are essentially SUVs for larger parties, and LUX allows you to ride in a vehicle of "Ultimate Luxury."

Uber is seeking drivers worldwide as consumers are in demand for their service. "Her Turn To Earn" is part of Uber's network that is "creating 1,000,000 jobs for women by 2020." The website provides a link for those who seek to drive for Uber. "[Being] your own boss and [getting] paid in fares for driving on your own schedule," are two perks of becoming a driver.

Use Uber as a backup plan when you're running on a busy schedule and NJ transit seems to fail you once again, use it during a night out when there is no designated driver available, or use it everyday like Joseph.



A graphic, developed by the Veteran's Center, showing solidarity. Courtesy of Bergen.edu

A Safe Place For Veterans

NOURA DAKKA
PHOTO EDITOR

Few are aware that Bergen Community College serves as a home-away-from-home for those uniformed men and women who have spent too much time away from home. The Veteran's Center at BCC provides resources and specialized services for BCC's Veteran students. New or former students will be helped with registration, military transcripts, class counseling, financial aid and VA benefits. Veteran students get the opportunity to work with personal academic counselor, Professor John Giaimo, with whom they can work on their program evaluation and class schedules. Violet Surdyka - Interim Coordinator of Veteran and Military Affairs, is there to assist Veteran Students with academic issues. She keeps track of each semester for every student and makes sure that everything is running smoothly for them. Her office is located in Room L-113 in the Pitkin Education Center, and her office hours are from 8:30am to 4:30pm, Monday through Friday. Veterans are welcome to walk in at anytime.

Also, every Tuesday at 3:30 pm veterans meet in room the new room to be announced, only to start in the Fall of 2014, the Veteran's club is a place where Veteran students of BCC meet to vent, communicate, and unwind with each other. Violet Surdyka calls it, "a safe space for veterans to talk to each other in their common language..." Veterans get the time to share personal stories, educational interests, class experiences, future plans, or even to, "just blow steam off." "[The] Veterans Club brings veterans together," explained Surdyka. "The Club gives them the ability to meet other students... it makes them feel like they're part of this college." The club allows veterans to meet other students who have taken the same road as them. The Veterans Club also arranges fund raisers like Toys for Tots and sometimes has special guest speakers come and visit. The club even has its own study room in the college's library. "We push them to succeed...have a good well-rounded college experience," Surdyka expressed.

Torch Ignites 2015 NJPFs

continued from pg. 1

Henry Fowler//The Torch

Ricardo Montero has won six NJPF awards in total since he first entered the contest in 2013. What made this year much more remarkable was that it was his first time winning a first place award in editorial writing, first place in layout and design, and third place in features writing. Torch winning the best in general excellence for 2014-2015 was during half of his reign as Editor in Chief. This was Montero's third and last time at the NJPF Awards where he was able to make BCC proud.

"This year was incredible, full of life, passion and family. Prior years, fewer people attended the ceremony and it wasn't nearly as emotional or exciting. This year however, I was surrounded by those who I love and loved me, and made everything so fun and awesome. So much so that we even got to make money rain on our awards. That's having fun, man. Gotta have fun," Montero stated.

Lastly, current Co-editor Jessica Rodriguez won a first place award in photography for her pictures of the Garner protests that took place in New York City. This was Rodriguez's second time attending, but the first time she was entered in the contest and won an award. "This year, the group that went was very tightly knit and you could feel the love and support emitting from them as you went up to get your award, it was almost overwhelming to feel so loved. Winning so many awards definitely had our spirits up so our energy was incredible. It was overall just incredibly positive and exhilarating to be there as a part of The Torch family," Rodriguez stated of the experience.

Rodriguez added, "Winning anything in general is amazing, but to win a first place in something that you love and dedicate yourself and have worked so hard on, while being surrounded by people you can call family, there's no feeling like it. It's almost indescribable."

Being that this was the first time that she was entered and ending up winning first place definitely makes it even more amazing and memorable. The award to her isn't necessarily that it's validating. It's more of a reminder that she is on the right path and that she is doing a good job.

"You pour your heart and soul into this and for these officials to come along and pick your work over all of the other two-year schools, means so much, it's a great feeling," Rodriguez expressed.

Rodriguez said, "Receiving awards for my hard work and dedication is amazing, but that shouldn't be the goal, it shouldn't be the only thing pushing you to write or take pictures...it's about capturing a moment within a picture that tells a story all on its own, it's about getting someone's story out there for everyone to see, it's about writing what other people are afraid to write about, it's about telling the people the things they need to hear, whether they want to listen or not..."



SGA President's Letter to Students

Outgoing Student Government Association President, Laura Hoyos.
Iness Rabah//The Torch



"You were chosen to lead us and guide us towards success. Please keep student success as your main priority within each decision and change that you make..."

Dear Students,

As I prepare to graduate and complete my term as President of the Student Government Association, I cannot help but feel extremely overwhelmed with emotions. During this year, our team accomplished many things including the move of the Food Pantry to a more suitable location, volunteering at different community events, collecting perishable goods for our students in need and raising money for our SGA scholarship fund, among many other accomplishments which will be mentioned during this May's Board of Trustees Meeting.

I would like to thank a few individuals for becoming key factors in my success at Bergen Community College. SGA Advisors Juhi Bhatt and Greg Fenkart set an impeccable example of true professionalism and dedication. I will always admire their ability to advise, lead and represent the best version of our college. Without their presence in my journey and the journey of my team, this experience would not have been as impactful as it was. I will forever be grateful for your kindness, patience and guidance.

I also wish to thank Vice President Natasha Pineiros for raising the bar and the expectations. I have never met such a focused, dedicated and, quite simply, extraordinary woman. Your integrity and commitment to the team pushed us past the limits that we had set for ourselves. Thank you for your hard work, detailed input and irreplaceable friendship. As you prepare to graduate, I look forward to this new chapter in your journey and to learn of your continued success.

I want to thank the students for becoming an inspiration behind every idea, proposal and event that we integrated this year. I want to remind you that this college is full of individuals who are invested in your academic and personal success. Therefore, I encourage you to take advantage of all the opportunities that are offered to you and to communicate your needs. I am confident that the future SGA executive board and senate will continue to represent your needs and be your voice in every change and decision that will impact you.

Lastly, I want to kindly request that our administration takes a closer look at the essence of our college: the students. You were chosen to lead us and guide us towards success. Please keep student success as your main priority within each decision and change that you make moving forward. Above all, I wish to remind you that respect and communication are key factors in fostering a healthy relationship between students, faculty and staff. We expect you to be exemplary leaders that we can look up to as we grow within our own leadership roles.

BCC, thank you for letting me to live out my passion and allowing it to become contagious along the way.

Sincerely,
Laura Hoyos



From all of us, who have looked at the stars a little differently thanks to Dr. Opstbaum's influence, we are and will remain eternally grateful. Graphic by Zach McDevitt/The Torch

Dr. Opstbaum: The End of an Era

ZACH MCDEVITT
LAYOUT EDITOR

With the advents of change and growth within any society as time progresses, one is necessarily burdened with having to bid farewell to the familiar and reliable, in favor of what must come next; such is the present source of Bergen's heavy heart. Dr. Roger Opstbaum, legendary professor of the physical sciences here for 31 years, and a veritable renaissance man of the scientific community at Bergen Community College all the while, has decided to call this semester his last.

It is nearly impossible to be a Bergen student without stumbling upon some form of Opstbaum's widespread influence. From literally writing the books on physics and astronomy classes - his lecture notes are often required purchases for students of the sciences - to quietly developing the Buhler Trust Observatory from faulty machine to its current splendor, one is hard pressed to imagine the campus without Opstbaum. But, in the risky way fate plays its hand, his entire career at Bergen nearly never happened.

"I was trained in research, not education," Dr. Opstbaum admitted to me on a balmy, windy afternoon, from his office in the Technology building, "but research requires money to make a living on." Beginning at Westchester Community College as a part time lecturer, Opstbaum found that his balancing act of teaching and researching was not fruitful, and the finances for his research had become unsustainable. Going through a divorce at the time and in need of a living, Opstbaum was faced with an ultimatum.

"I went into teaching full time because there no other way I could get a [researching] job, unless it was going to be in California," Opstbaum said, "and I would have left my children back here if I did that. I was not going to do that." Seeking any kind of stable work in the local area, Dr. Opstbaum eventually stumbled upon Bergen Community College, and applied for a teaching position - something for which he was initially rejected. Opstbaum explained, "Four days before the semester, the candidate they picked decided to quit. Being the only other candidate who hadn't yet gotten a position, [Bergen] was forced to take me," adding that "it was really ironic. Sometimes, things work out that way."

Good fortune or not, Opstbaum's earliest years at Bergen were spent ambitiously, aiding

and spearheading the expansion of the physical science department; individualizing the astronomy, climatology, geology, and meteorology courses and expanding the amount of sections offered for each, Opstbaum's hard work transformed the department into what it is today. "The department has grown tremendously and it seems like it was the right decision," Opstbaum reminisced, "but the success of those things can only be determined in the eyes of the students."

Dr. Opstbaum's relationship with his students over the span of his career has been one of tireless dedication and genuine camaraderie. Professor Marie McCrary, first a student and later colleague of Opstbaum, recalls his guiding hand in her education. "Dr. Opstbaum took his students incredibly seriously, and he immediately treated me with respect, as if to say 'you are fully capable of becoming an astronomer one day, and here is how you are going to do it,'" McCrary explained, "He was one of the first teachers I ever had that did that for me." Dr. Opstbaum has been known to log unimaginable hours in his office, working with students in whatever manner they need; in scheduling an interview with him, in fact, Dr. Opstbaum informed me that, should any student need him, we would have to cut the interview short. McCrary spoke of this, explaining that "[Opstbaum] will sit for hours in his office helping someone out, and never says he has to leave. If there was infinite time, he'd make infinite time for his students. I don't see that very often."

A humble man by design, Opstbaum is less willing to laud himself in this regard. Discussing his most proud moments at Bergen, he half joked, "Probably that I haven't gotten in the way of students succeeding. Some of my students have gone into the areas they've wanted to go into, and I managed not to mess them up in doing so." In discussing his sense of self-pride, he admitted, "I'm a lunch pail kind of person," explaining that as his career is invested in the successes of others, he doesn't have the authority to comment on achievement.

In contrast to this humility and passive sense of being, Opstbaum's colleagues were enthused to comment on his character, one of compassion, ambition and dedication as a friend, as well as an educator.

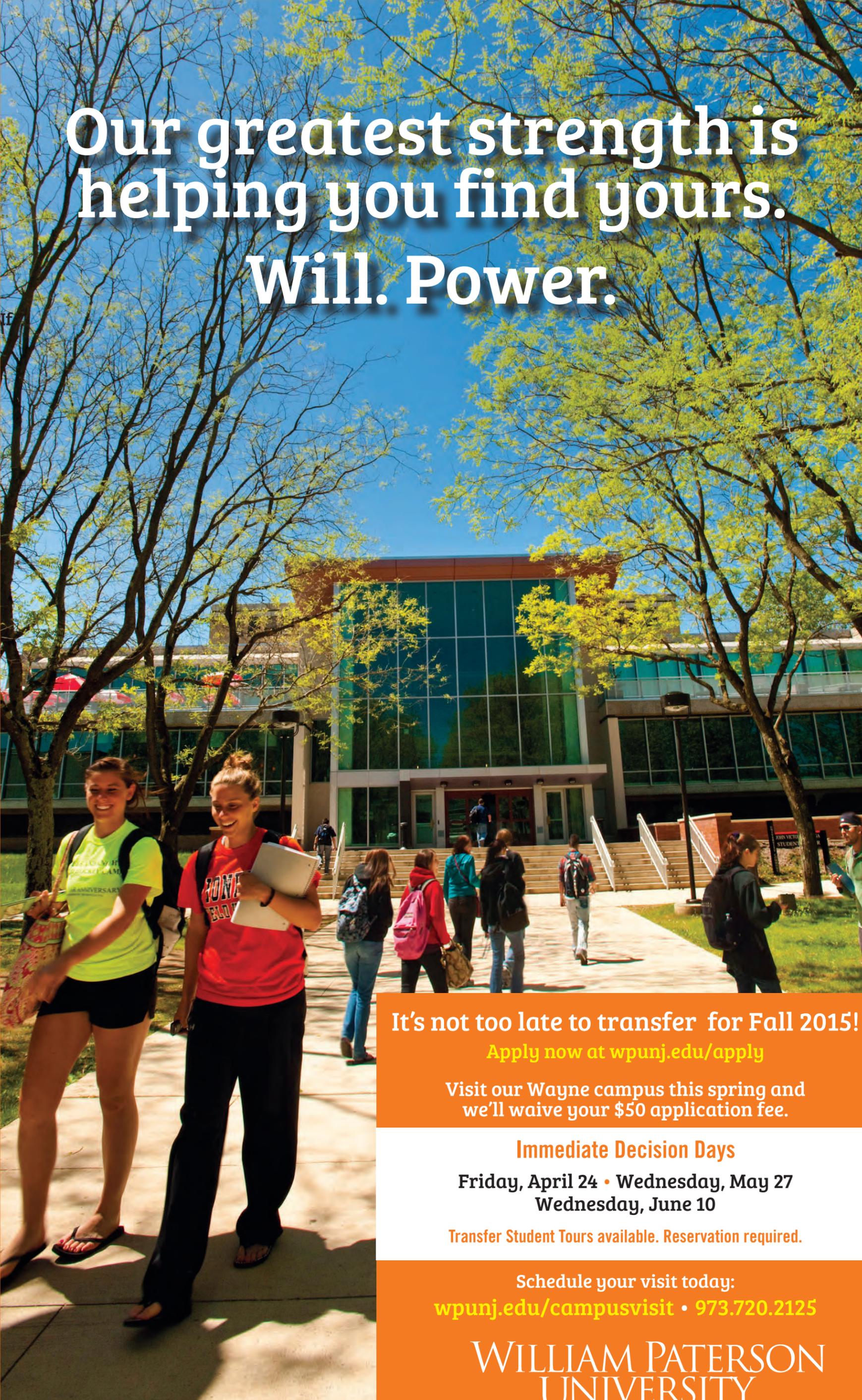
"At first impression, I thought he was very

brilliant, reserved, and sometimes a little grumpy," McCrary joked, "and when I began working with him, that all held true, except for the grumpiness." Professor Joseph Sivo, who first knew Dr. Opstbaum as a client, receiving a shipment from Sivo's manufacturing company, remembers Dr. Opstbaum as the sole reason he transitioned from entrepreneur to educator, once again by the forces of serendipity along with Opstbaum's insistence. Having made the shipment to the newly built Buhler Trust Observatory, Dr. Opstbaum persuaded Sivo to join the Astronomy Club and, eventually, teach laboratory sections of Astronomy courses. "He twisted my arm and convinced me to [teach] four sections [of Astronomy]," Sivo remembered, with a hint of both sarcasm and gratefulness in his voice, "Dr. Opstbaum got me in the classroom teaching, which I never intended to do- the last thing I ever wanted to do was go back into a classroom." Calling Opstbaum "The best mentor you could ask for," Sivo continued, "If I didn't sit in on his classes to get a sense of his style, I would have been a complete disaster as a professor."

From the parking lot of the Technology building, one need not look far to see one of the most storied of Dr. Opstbaum's accomplishments, stark and silvery against the low Paramus sky- the Buhler Trust Observatory. Ten years a staple of the ambition of the physical science department, and a reliable means for local hobbyists to stargaze with relative ease, the observatory's development was not only fraught with complications, but nearly wasn't an observatory, at all.

"The Hayden planetarium was undergoing a makeover... their projector was going to be replaced by a more modern one," Opstbaum explained to me, "Very late in the game, I became aware of this and I asked whether or not we could purchase their old projector and actually have a planetarium, not an observatory." The pieces never fit into place, however, and Opstbaum realized that a planetarium would not have been the proper venue. Turning his intentions to founding an observatory, Dr. Opstbaum reached out to the Buhler Foundation, which already maintained a healthy philanthropic relationship with Bergen, but they were initially hesitant to support the endeavor.

(continued on pg. 11)



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The Torch

THE TORCH, a member of the Associated Collegiate Press and the College Media Association, is the official student newspaper of Bergen Community College. The purpose of THE TORCH is to report on the events at BCC and the local community, and to offer the BCC community a forum for expression. The opinions expressed in THE TORCH are not necessarily those of THE TORCH. All the materials submitted to THE TORCH become property of THE TORCH.

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As an open public forum, The Torch welcomes guest opinion pieces and letters to the editor from any member of the Bergen Community College community. Materials should be submitted to eictorch@gmail.com or delivered to The Torch office, SC-111. Such submissions must include the writer's name, contact information and affiliation with the college. Students should include their major; faculty and staff should include campus title or position. Opinion pieces are limited to 600 words and letters to the editor to 200 words. The Torch reserves the right to edit and to refuse publication of any submission.

The Torch offices are located in Room SC-111D, 400 Paramus Road Paramus, NJ 07652-1595 201.493.5006/5007 eictorch@gmail.com

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Some of the 2014 Torch staff. Many have come and gone, but each one of their experiences carries on in their wake. Henry Fowler/The Torch

What It Means To Be In The Torch

Blair “Uncle Blair” DeLong, Editor-In-Chief - The Torch has been a family to me during my tenure here at Bergen Community College. I've had the pleasure of working with some of the finest future journalists this school has ever seen, as well as studying under an incredible advisor and professor in one, Lew Wheaton. My time spent at The Torch has been one filled with up's and down's but every ounce of energy I've had, I've put into this award winning newspaper. Unfortunately as I graduate, there are some fights left unfinished and it breaks my heart, but I have a feeling that someone will step into my shoes and be the voice of the disenfranchised and dig for the the truth, no matter the cost. My final message to The Torch, In Hoc Signo Vinces.

Adrian Yllatopia, News Editor - The second I walked into Bergen, I had no idea where to go other than my classes. Many days were spent in the library or student center. Being pulled aside by a Torch editor during a Club Day event, I was enamored by the camaraderie within the staff. I made it a personal goal to align myself with these people, and contribute great stories. Since then, I've made great friends, have written stories I can be proud of, and have seen myself become as an editor at the Torch newspaper. It's easy for me to say that my time here at the Torch newspaper has become the most fulfilling experience for me in my short life thus far. In every way, shape, and form, this has been more than just a newspaper for me. As we continue to provide more information to the college at a high standard, we strive to make our next issue better than the last. Thank you for reading.

Clifford Boan, Copy Editor - My first two months at Bergen were weird. I would sit around the student center waiting, sometimes for hours, to go to my next class and finish my day. I met some people that I would tend to hang around with, but no real “friends.” Then, one day, I wandered into the Torch office. They took me in as one of their own immediately, and I felt there was some chance of me doing something productive with my spare time at school. I began writing, and I really enjoyed it. I became good friends with many of the writers and editors. A couple of semesters in, I became the copy editor, and really took on a lot more work and responsibility. Being an editor and a part of this team has given me great memories and a more solid work ethic that I can take with me for the rest of my life. I'm very pleased that I was able to be a part of this award-winning paper.

Gabe “Captain Black” Wanissian, Sports Editor - My first article with the Torch dates back to January of 2013, and it still hangs on my wall. It was a run of the mill story, but its quality matters little - every godforsaken time I wake up in the morning and go “ugh” as I get dressed, That 2 and a half year old article stands in the corner of my eye reminding me of the importance The Torch holds in my life. Hey, the NJPF awards and recognition is nice, but what makes it all worth it is the personal bonds, the measurable changes we've brought forth on campus, and character growth that we've all experienced through putting together this paper every month. But man let me tell you, it feels pretty sweet to put that NJPF award right next to my first article; it's vindication in every sense of the word.

Noura Dakka, Photo Editor - Oh gosh, where do I start. It's only been two semesters and I can't believe how far I've gone. I graduated high school knowing I wanted to be a journalist, but when I started college I questioned that decision for a second. However, working for The Torch made it clear that this is exactly what I love. In just my first college year, I got the chance to meet journalists like Joe Torres from ABC7 news and Vikram Gandhi, on-air correspondent and producer for VICE. By my second semester, I became photo editor, and now next semester I will be the News editor. Amazingly, I won third place for one of my op-eds in the New Jersey Collegiate Press Association. I learned and interviewed people, investigated in some school confidential affairs, and had the opportunity to work with incredible people, who are like family to me now. All this and it's barely been a year. I am more than grateful I work for The Torch; it was like my first step to success. And I wouldn't trade Professor Lew Wheaton for any other advisor in the world.

Joe Cirilo, Features Editor - It's hard to overstate the great pleasure it was working with incredible people like Blair DeLong, Pepe Romero, Ricky Montero and others who have come and gone. What I'll miss most is the faces I've become accustomed to, but I'm comforted to know that we're all on course towards a good life, and I think every bit of that has to do with what we gained from The Torch both as a place that shaped us professionally, and the sense of family it gave us.

Yaidelisse “Jay Jay” Roman, Ad Manager - Working for The Torch is an honor, working without the Torch is an absolute horror. Working under the EIC is a pleasure, an experience that I will truly treasure. But I won't suck up to the Torch by lying and saying that it's perfect in every way. The Torch has given me hardships and good times, but it comes as a package. That's what made my Torch experience an unforgettable one!

Zach McDevitt, Layout Editor - Having made the jump to layout editor from not-even-staff writer, the first thing The Torch gave me was fatigue and emotional instability. After I slept that off, The Torch gave me camaraderie and vitality in others- my fellow writers and editors, whom I am blessed to call friends. When the people came and went, The Torch left me with something less tangible, but all the more robust. I found a sense of purpose- a devotion not only to the Bergen population, but to myself- to seek out, herald, and defend the truth, wherever it may be, in whatever strange form, with whatever faculties this mortal coil allows. This paper has given me confidence and conviction in living. Or, maybe not, you know?

Amber Tariq, Online Editor - My experience being an online editor for the Torch is one I'll never forget. There's many things I've learned, like how to be a good writer and write things I'm interested in and have people actually like what I've written. Being a part of an award winning newspaper and winning an award for 3rd place for overall website makes me feel proud of my work. This experience will help push me forward into hopefully becoming a writer for a popular newspaper or website. I'll always be grateful to be a part of the Torch and will hope to continue to learn more until I graduate.

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First Place Awards
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CENTERFOLD: Life of a Marine Tanker
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OPINIONS

The Torch



"I believe that a lady shouldn't show off what she has, but instead conceal her beauty."
Tania Boghossian//The Torch

I "Wear" Respect

NOURA DAKKA
PHOTO EDITOR

People stare at me a lot like they've never seen a scarf before. It's extremely awkward going out to places like concerts, cafes, and even the mall. There are a lot of hijabi girls out there, but I don't know why people still find it unusual to see a girl wearing a hijab. I mean it's just a scarf, except I'm wearing it on my head. "Don't you get hot wearing so many layers?"; "Do you like wearing that scarf?" are questions I get asked almost everyday. I also get compliments on the color and designs of my hijabs, but people think I just wear it because it is a part of my religion. Nonetheless it is more than that.

It is a part of the Islamic religion, a requirement actually. However, you are not forced to wear it, that is a decision a woman is left to make. Islam gives us the freedom to practice the religion in any way we find proper with the notion that God is the judge. You will find a lot of Muslim girls who don't wear the hijab in America, and even in the Islamic countries. When I was a little girl growing up in New Jersey, I never wanted to wear the headscarf. My mom could only explain the importance of it to me. Even though she really wanted me to wear it she would not force me to. One day, literally out of the blue (I was still only eight years old), I decided to wear it, not really understanding the meaning of the hijab. My mom would explain the significance of the

hijab to me but I didn't care, all I wanted was to wear the colorful scarf on my head. As we grow older, we learn so much from our past and mistakes. The hijab has taught me things that books could never.

The hijab is not only wearing a scarf on your head, it also includes covering your body. It is believed in Islam that a woman is not an "ornament", she is a precious gem that must be guarded. "Just like a diamond protected in a forceful glass case," my mom would always say. It used to bother me that I wasn't able to go out and show off my hair or wear a tank top in the summer. I would watch all the other girls strut their beauty while I'm there sweating my butt off in the blazing sun. However, is that really beauty? I ask myself that question everyday. I'm not disrespecting any woman nor am I judging. Everyone has their own interpretation of beauty.

I wear my hijab for respect. I believe that a lady shouldn't show off what she has, but instead conceal her beauty. It is not for just anybody to see. Men can't touch me or "love" me whenever they want. My hijab is like an unbreakable wall to them. There is nothing physical to see, only my personality and the color of my soul. That is what I should be judged on, not my body or hair. The hijab also gives me strength. I get discriminated sometimes. People think because I'm a Muslim, it means

I'm like those violent people on T.V. I will not take it off just because that's what they think, on the contrary, I will cherish my hijab even more. Because I wear a hijab, I am polite to others, even the ones who disrespect me. I act like a well-mannered woman (though my friends will not agree so much on that). The hijab has taught me patience. It irritates me at times, but I will never walk out of the house without it. It is a piece of me. I want to show people that I wear my hijab because I want to, not because I have to. There is no such thing as "have to" in life. Either you are convinced that what you're doing is right, or you're not. Don't let life or religion force you into doing something you don't believe in.

I would recommend the hijab to all ladies. We must know that we are not a piece of meat, but the image of respect. Show your beauty with your actions. Even though I violate the hijab's principle sometimes, I still adhere to my religion and hijab and learn from my mistakes.

In case you're still wondering, yes I do get hot wearing all these layers, but I have gotten used to it. I love matching my scarf with my outfit everyday, though. It is kind of like my hair. My hijab is my power and I will use it as my sword everyday.

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Meetings every Tues., 12:30 p.m., SC-111C-D



Image courtesy of MCTcampus.com

Love Has No Religion

HELEN MAFINEJAD
STAFF WRITER

Around the world there are numerous religions such as Catholic/Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, etc. that people practice and strongly believe in and often seek out a partner who practices the same religion as them because it is important to them.

Most people are straightforward with their religion from the start when starting a relationship because, from a young age, they were taught not to date or marry out of the religion because it's seen as a sin. Everyone has their own beliefs and they are entitled to it, but it shouldn't be a deal-breaker not to pursue the relationship or break one off because you don't agree with what they practice.

If you feel strongly about your religion, you should sit down with your partner and have a serious talk about the issue at hand to see if they would take converting into consideration. If they express to you that there is no possibility of them converting, then you can make a decision of staying with them or leaving. You shouldn't pressure them or give them an ultimatum, you need to give it time and let it sink in because just as much as it is a big decision for you, it's a big decision for them as well.

If your partner loves and cares for you with all they have and wants to be with you, they will put their beliefs to the side and convert for you. If he or she loves you unconditionally, you shouldn't let that person who could potentially be the love of your life walk away. At times you have to put your pride and ego to the side, and think to yourself is this really worth losing what you have.

You might not even care what religion your partner practices or believes in, but if each others' families are involved, they might pressure you to break off the relationship because they don't agree with it, and will disown you if you don't.

Many relationships have two partners that follow different religions and they make their relationship work no matter how hard it may be at times. Finding love is hard, so when you meet that person that loves you unconditionally, flaws and all, don't let them go. You don't fall in love with someone for what religion they believe in, you fall in love because of how they make you feel on the inside and outside.

"Love doesn't care what language you speak, what color you are, what religion you believe in, what car you drive, or the amount of money in your bank account, because love has no boundaries" - Dabb

You don't fall in love with someone for what religion they believe in, you fall in love because of how they make you feel on the inside and outside.

Uncle Blair: A Parting Thought

BLAIR DELONG
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Sometimes, our imaginations get the best of us. Other times, they're on point.
Illustration courtesy of MCTcampus.com

Here we are, on the raggedy edge. It seems like every channel I turn to, there is some talking head rambling on about racial inequality and discrimination. Everyone from store clerks in Indiana to police officers in New York City are being accused of being racist, or just plain ignorant. These problems aren't just on a national scale, but locally, here at Bergen Community College. A student shouldn't have to worry about being racially discriminated by the Office of Public Safety, and neither should a Public Safety officer have to worry about being discriminated against by fellow officers.

This isn't the case, though. Since April 2014, a Public Safety Officer, who asked to remain anonymous, said he had to deal with two fellow officers using racial comments, which have "continued to this day." While the unnamed officer has tried to keep the matters in-house and be handled by the administration, the officer said, "the administration isn't doing anything."

Being Uncle Blair, I decided to take it a bit further and see if anything was being done, so I checked with the administration, Public Safety and Human Resources; of course, I was met with brick walls. Vice President of Facilities, Planning, Operations and Public Safety, William Corcoran said via telephone, "I can not comment on any ongoing investigations," and I was directed to contact Jim Miller, Executive Director of Human Resources. When I contacted Miller's office, he said, "We can't discuss any ongoing investigations." So I contacted President Walter's office, but once again was referred to someone else - BCC's legal counsel. So not only is the officer's own department keeping quiet, but all the other arms of the administration are remaining just as tight lipped.

I spoke to another Public Safety Officer, who also wished for their name to be withheld, that said, "Nothing is being done in [Public Safety]." How can this even be allowed? How can any office allow members to be against one another while they depend on one another to watch each other's back? A third officer, who on the terms of anonymity agreed to speak with me, said, "Both of the PSO's involved in the investigation know they are being investigated, but nothing has been done yet."

This situation raises a serious question: What would keep one of these Public Safety Officers from racially discriminating against a black or Latino student? This could be quite the blemish on BCC. While BCC has been no stranger to controversy, a situation such as this could be the tipping point, and make the Francis Schmidt debacle look like a walk in the park. Considering how hot of a subject racial discrimination is right now in the media, BCC would not only be looking at a possible lawsuit, but a flood of negative exposure that could quite possibly curtail registration and lack of interest to study at a "racist" college. How would it look if the men and women that are charged with the SAFETY of students were seen as racist and bigoted thugs?

This could be the administration's chance to right the wrongs of the past. Handle this the correct way and you won't have to worry about the horrific fallout if it goes to court, or in Professor Schmidt's case, garner national attention. BCC can finally be seen as a safe and friendly institution and be a beacon for the rest of the country as to how to deal with racial discrimination in the workplace. Frag out.



One Body, One Gender, Two Identities

AMBER 'AJ' JASMINE

ONLINE EDITOR

"Are you a guy or a girl?"

That's a question I've been hearing for the last couple years. It comes as no surprise to me, considering I do look like a guy, but I have no intention of being one.

On New Year's Day in 2011, when I was a junior in high school, I decided to cut my hair off. I was only doing it because I've wanted short hair so I could style it, and hated to keep my long hair in a ponytail. It eventually took awhile for everyone to get used to it, but most of my friends said they preferred me with short hair instead of long. People still knew me as Amber, the girl who loves to play videogames and the drums. No one said anything. I didn't think about being referred to as a guy until I came to Bergen.

My style was still the same when I graduated high school. Jeans with a collared shirt, or sometimes a novelty t-shirt with my Legend of Zelda snapback. All these clothes to me are comfortable. I'm not a girly girl, or someone who dresses to impress someone - that's not my style. To some people, I dress like I want to be a boy. After asking 30 of my friends what gender they honestly thought I was when they first met me, 23 said girl, 5 said guy and 2 said they didn't want to assume the wrong gender. A lot of people on Xbox Live keep saying 'he' instead of 'she', but I don't get mad at them, I just correct them like I normally would.

There have been numerous encounters with people who automatically assumed I was a guy. I've gone to the bathroom sometimes only to hear someone say, "This is the girls bathroom." I've crossed the road sometimes only to hear the crossing guard say, "Have a good day sir." Of course I feel offended each time I hear something like that, but I've gotten used to it.

There have been times I've actually tried to go as a boy, just to see the outcome. I would use the alias 'AJ'



Don't judge a book by its cover; judge it by the content within. Or, don't judge it at all. Iness Rabah/The Torch

as my name, and some people actually fell for it. They were shocked to find out who I really was.

I don't think people should judge others by the way they dress, especially

when one gender is dressing as the other. If they wanna dress girly, let them. If they want to dress boyish, let them. People shouldn't have a set style. Females can dress like males, but not want to actually

turn into a male. I've gone from a girly girl as a kid, to a tom-boy like I am now. It's just the way I am. I still intend to dress the way I normally do, because that's who I am and I'm going to stay this way.

continued from pg. 6

Opstbaum: End of an Era

"[The Buhler Foundation] was reluctant and it was pretty obvious why- they were concerned about light pollution." It was through an innovation in electronic photography - known as dark frame subtraction, which utilizes dual photographs of the same object to separate image noise from the intended image, allowing for an electronic subtraction of the noise- which convinced the Buhler Foundation to follow through with the project.

Much was at stake during the observatory's inaugural public viewing, scheduled for August 27, 2003. That night, luckily, the cosmos was - quite literally - aligned in good fortune. "That day was the closest approach of Mars to the Earth in over 73,000 years," Opstbaum explained, "and that was our advertising point; we splashed the message all across Bergen County." On the night of the 27th, the Buhler Trust Observatory opened to a massive public turnout of more than 600 people. "We processed about 500 of the 600 people, and by that time it was 3:00AM," Opstbaum told me, as the automatic lights in his office coincidentally went out, "so we had the other hundred people come down the next night".

Professor Sivo recalls nights spent at the observatory with Opstbaum and company with fondness and nostalgia. "[Dr. Opstbaum] volunteered in early years to help run the observatory, and we had a great social gathering for years. Every Saturday night, we'd grab dinner, open to the public, and just hang out and chat."

Despite his laundry list of scholastic and supervisory feats at Bergen Community College, Dr. Opstbaum is a researcher by trade, and continues to work in this regard in a pressing and important field- climate change. Focusing, specifically, on the lasting effects of fossil fuel consumption, Opstbaum's works seeks to answer not only the question of what will become of the earth if we continue current patterns, but also, when all is said and done, whether there will be a habitable earth at all with which to concern ourselves. In absolute layman's terms, Opstbaum explained his research to me in ways the unscientific mind might be able to comprehend: "We certainly recognize the standard problems associated with higher temperatures on

Earth, being a change in world agricultural strategies and rising sea levels." He prefaced, "but we've also been concerned with another problem - and that's whether we could, through burning fossil fuels, add enough carbon dioxide to the atmosphere to cause it to undergo Venus' natural runaway greenhouse effect." Working with computer models, Opstbaum, along with his research partner, Jim Hansen, ran simulations of various hypothetical futures, playing with the variables of fossil fuel availability, ocean depth, and methods of fossil fuel extraction. "You used to be able to access oil from oil wells, alone, but now you can get oil from horizontal drilling, as well as fracking from shale rock and tar sands, and that's doubled our fossil fuel inventory", Opstbaum explained. Through every test and trial they ran, Opstbaum and Hansen concluded, for the present moment based on current predictions, that our planet will not initiate a runaway greenhouse effect, but rather reach thermal equilibrium, which means a stable temperature. However, this is not an exclusively happy prognosis. According to the concluded numbers, this thermal equilibrium will have adverse effects. "[Upon burning 1/4 of our fossil fuel reserves], mean global temperature will jump from 59 to 77 degrees Fahrenheit," said Opstbaum, "and all of earth's ice will be gone- no Antarctic ice, and no Greenland ice." If we, as a race, are to burn all of our fossil fuel reserves, Opstbaum's research establishes the mean global temperature as 101 degrees Fahrenheit. "I hope we don't burn all these fossil fuels. In this business, you hope you're wrong", Opstbaum said in a graver tone, "But as long as we're still driving to the gas station to get energy for our cars, anything is on the table for discussion."

Waxing political, Opstbaum expanded the scope of his research's message to that of a metaphor, as well as a direct effect, of a widening socioeconomic gap. "What this really is is the 99% versus the 1% playing out in the arena of climate. The 1% gets in the way of there being a better world, in large part because the 99%, in large part, is unaware of what's going on." Opstbaum continued, now waxing poetic, "If you can't identify the enemy, you can't fight the enemy. And [the 99%] tends not

to identify an enemy. I hate to use those kinds of terms, though, especially in an interview."

Having spent a full and bountiful career, brilliantly not getting in the way of students succeeding in the best possible ways, Dr. Opstbaum, nevertheless, seeks a more personal calling. For one thing, Opstbaum hopes to continue his climatological research. "We want to implement a full ocean into the computer model," Opstbaum said, citing the fact that with a full ocean, the effects of current flow on the progression of the atmosphere can be fully understood. "This certainly has not been looked into... and we want to see how different the world will be as a result of that." Beyond his research, however, Opstbaum's family will take precedence, as it always has. Dr. Opstbaum will be moving to Pennsylvania, closer to his son, where he hopes to spend more time with his children and grandchildren. "We found out through the oldest [of my grandchildren], who has Asperger's Syndrome, that my entire family, including myself, has Asperger's. My granddaughter, as well, is autistic, so we want to help." Opstbaum hopes to aid her development, taking the expertise from his teaching career, itself a product of circumstance. "I'd consider it privileged to use 40 years of teaching to work with my granddaughter and see if there are ways I could bring the best in her out, because there's a lot of best in her." As he has for his students and colleagues for so many years, Opstbaum looks forward to being there for his granddaughter. "I would consider it a challenge and an honor to work with her, and my secret hope is to make her a climatologist," Opstbaum admitted, half-humorously.

The climate of Bergen Community College will most certainly be different without Dr. Opstbaum around, and his emptiness will be felt. "He took a risk with me, and it turned out great. I am eternally grateful," Professor Sivo admitted.

Through it all, in his humble way, Opstbaum looks to the future of Bergen with great positivity. "I was just an old person looking over; the physical science department will be in good hands. I don't have any worries," He concluded, but not before adding, "I'm very much going to miss this place. There's no two ways about it."

GABE WANISSIAN
SPORTS EDITOR

A Marine Tanker's Life:

Unrequited Fury

Bergen Community College student and Marine Tank Gunner Cpl. Kevin Quigley and his crewmen had received word that, in 24 hours, they would be embarking on their first patrol into the vast terrain of Helmand Province, Afghanistan. By sunrise, the anxious Quigley's anticipation reached a fever pitch. Metallica and Slayer became the soundtrack needed to channel his nerves as a call to arms - the doubts still lingered.

"I didn't know what to expect," stated Quigley. "All I thought at the time was, 'holy s---, I'm in a war zone.'"

Any expectations for a cinematic, Brad Pitt-esque "Fury" turn of events were quickly put to rest however.

"It ended up basically being a car ride," Quigley said almost embarrassingly. "I got all amped up for nothing," he laughed.

It wouldn't be until his crew was a part of their first mission months later - Operation Lions Den 4 - that Quigley would truly see the unforgiving nature of the battlefield.

The humorous patrol ride was one story of many that Quigley would end up sharing often at Bergen Community College's Veterans club, the place that would end up being Quigley's sanctuary. "We started sharing our stories, and joking around and s---. It felt like I was back," smiled Quigley; the brotherhood he formed with fellow veteran students would mirror a shared bond made with three other crewmen back in his experience in Afghanistan over two years ago.

Love for the Tank, and the Crew

His tank had been assigned four members - Lance Cpl. Klarman as Loader, Lance Cpl. Martinez as Driver, Cpl. Quigley as Gunner and Sgt. Hernandez as Tank Commander. Starting off as a driver, and eventually becoming the tank gunner, Quigley considered his crew men's level of chemistry to be key to their safety and success. "You had a level of familiarity with the guys, you knew their strengths and weaknesses."

A tanker would swear to you however that the 72-ton M1A1 tank in of itself is a living, breathing, fifth member - Quigley's crew affectionately and appropriately named it "Handicapable." Quigley describes the origins of the alias being that, "We were like giants. We were a bunch of idiots, but we got the job done."

He added, "'Handicapable' was a testy b---, but we loved our tank." and like an older brother hearing about his younger sibling being picked on by the school bully. 'Handi' was in safe hands.

Fight Against the Taliban

He and his crewmen understood that the Taliban threat was not one to be taken lightly. The Pashtun based terrorist group emerged out of the region in the early 90s, but the presence of conflict that dates back to the Soviet-Afghan war in 1979 provided a hotbed for extremists to overthrow the relatively incompetent Afghan national government. "[The Taliban] is not stupid, that's for sure," said Quigley.

What they lacked in resources, they made up for in land familiarity and tactical strategy - and the Marine Corps Special Forces received intel that they had a stronghold within the province.

It was time for Operation Lionsden 4, the first, and what Quigley called "The hairiest mission" during his deployment. While sharing that there was initial excitement, Quigley added, "I was f---ing scared." The plan was to provide RECON outer security so that they could clear out Taliban fighters whilst preventing them access to resources needed to create Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs)

The platoon that "Handicapable" was a part of - Bravo section - then pummeled through the ruins from leftover ancient Babylonian architecture to mine sweep the location and camp out there for the next 10 days. It was then that Quigley's life would change forever.

Losing a Brother

Days into the affair, things went according to plan: provide security for RECON, scan the nearby areas for Taliban Insurgents, refuel the tank, and repeat. That was, until Tank Commander Sgt. Hernandez received the dreadful news regarding Alpha platoon taking fire.

"[Hernandez] came running and he's yelling, 'Get the f--- back in the tank, we gotta go!'" Reminiscend Quigley. "I didn't know what happened."

Quigley and the men on "Handicapable" were sure of one thing: "That should be us, that should be us shooting."

By the time they arrived on the scene, the damage had been done - Taliban soldiers were able to sneak in mortar

rounds, tragically killing one, Marine Dan Linnaberry, wounding three others in the platoon.

It hadn't set in yet for Quigley and the other men, "I didn't know who got hurt or what happened, I just knew we had to provide security for the emergency chopper."

Just like that, one of Quigley's brothers in arms had perished, and instead of having time to mourn, he and his crew had to continue forward with the heavy burden of loss on their hearts and minds. "You get those 10 minutes to get it out and cry, and you're back to do your job," Quigley remembered. "After that s--- happened, I felt like I should have been able to do something."

Kevin Quigley's Battle in Afghanistan and the Battle Back Home



Clockwise from top left: The M4 Carbine is the go-to gun used by Marine combatants. Courtesy of Kevin Quigley. Quigley would wear a Tactical scarf to deal with the sand-filled gusts of wind. Courtesy of Kevin Quigley. Quigley also bears a tattoo- A handicapped sign, with the wheels replaced with a tank's continuous track. Iness Rabah/The Torch The logo, which was drawn onto the tank by Hernandez, serves as a reminder to Quigley. Courtesy of Kevin Quigley. Military-grade tanks are machines of incredible and frightening firepower. Courtesy of Kevin Quigley. Afghan kids look on as "Handicapable" traverses through the Helmand Province. Courtesy of Kevin Quigley. Lance Cpl. Jomar Perez give his condolences for his fallen comrade, Daniel Linnaberry. Courtesy of Kevin Quigley.



War's Devastation

"f--- this, I just want to kill someone," said Quigley. The emotional turmoil, coupled with the will to avenge his fellow mate, gave a sense of helplessness.

It was the 'Fight-or-Flight' mentality that Quigley had his morals and logistics clash amongst one another when days after he had been scanning the vicinity when he had found a man in a small farm moving around large quantities of yellow jugs around; previous intel had said that it was likely a sign that IEDs were being made.

"I just remember thinking 'this guy is totally making IEDs, and I remember telling [Commander Hernandez] 'he's got way too many jugs for that farm,'" said Quigley. He then asked the question: "Can I shoot him?" The calm and collected Hernandez advised probable cause was not enough as that was against Marine Corps Rules of Engagement. "Thank God he had a much cooler head than I did."

It was the next suspected threat however, that Quigley would sit behind the M240 Coaxial Machine gun to fire and kill for his first time. There had been word that there were Taliban spotters in the area communicating with cellphones, and Quigley spotted a half dozen men huddled in a group by a building - one carried a cell phone.

Quigley remembers, "I tell my tank commander and he says, 'keep watching him, are you sure its a cellphone?' and I say 'Yeah I'm positive it's a f---ing cellphone,' so he tells me to watch them another second or two."

He then saw clouds of smoke arise from the ground near them - RECON had fired from nearby armored trucks and the men in the circle dispersed in all directions. The one with the cellphone, dressed in all black robes, had an accomplice drive him off.

"Once the guy picked him up, I asked my commander, 'Can I kill them?' and he's like, 'yeah do it,'" said Quigley. The shots from Quigley's M240 sent the motorcycle into an spiraling crash and the two targets had been killed.

"Once I hit those guys on the motorcycle, the adrenaline was going through my body and my heart was in my throat," remembers Quigley. "All I was doing was 'seeing', it was kind of like an outer-body experience."

For Quigley, it had been redemption for the death of Lindenberry days prior. "Finally, it felt so f---ing good knowing that mean those guys may not have been directly responsible to what happened to what happened to those guys in my platoon, but I didn't care, because I finally got to get back at them."

In times of war and bloodshed, aspects of humanity begin to dwindle. Yet, it was during these tumultuous times that human bonding would help keep the spirits alive.

Sobering Moments of Peace

Communicating and socializing with the locals provided times of solace and human connection for Quigley and his crewmen, and the English-Pashto language barrier mattered little. "We would communicate with body language," said Quigley, "A lot of pointing and smiling." Ironically, it was times like these that Quigley felt most at home. "Honestly, they really aren't much different than us."

His interactions with the eager and bright eyed children from the Afghan villages were times that were especially refreshing.

"The little kids were the best," said Quigley with a smile. "We would always give them things so there was incentive for them, and they would come up to our tank and we would take pictures with them." It wouldn't be uncommon to see the young ones horseplay and carelessly shove each other around; the images provided Quigley a sense of nostalgia for simpler times growing up in Emerson.

The one interaction that Quigley cherishes most involved an exchange of goods with an Afghan boy that left a lasting impression. "I had a Timex, like an Ironman or something," struggling to remember the specifics; Quigley ended up trading it for the boys worn out watch.

"He was so f---ing happy," laughed Quigley, "He was showing all of his friends. It was the s--- like that, that made it all worth it you know?"

The positive interactions with the locals was the common thread throughout his deployment that he realized wasn't getting enough recognition back in the states

"I feel like there's a big misconception in America that every Iraqi or Afghani hates Americans," said Quigley. "I want to say that 90 to 95 percent of the people don't give a s---, they just want to survive."

By the end of his deployment on January 25, 2013, Quigley's daily conditions of survival and having first hand experience of feeling death being around the corner gave him more in common with the struggling Afghan than the people back home with the comfortable American lifestyle. The traumatic experiences changed Quigley, and his return was going to bring forth a new battle within himself.

Readjustment and Alienation

Quigley described his adjustment period to everyday life, "Coming back home is like, you're on a subway platform and there's a subway driving by you at 90 miles per hour, but if you just jumped on, you're going to get f---ed up."

The revved up engine that he had become led to his heavy use of drinking as a solution to quell his inner struggles, Quigley recalls a specific moment when his friends and family threw him together a welcome back party that turned into a drinking episode. It would lead to drunken Quigley lashing out at his concerned sister.

"I didn't see my sister, I saw an obstacle, and dealing with the obstacles, with the way I dealt with them in Afghanistan." By the time he had cooled down, his fearful sister had tearfully ran out of the bathroom.

"I just sat on the toilet and I was f---ing crying, that's when I knew that wasn't the same person anymore from before Afghanistan," remembered Quigley. His first semester at Bergen Community College didn't fare any better.

"I didn't have a single f---ing friend in Bergen," he remembered. "I kind of resented people who didn't serve or have the same experience as I did." Thankfully for Quigley, time, along with relinquishing his fears to discuss his feelings became a huge part of his acclimation to normal everyday life - an idea that he feels needs further embracing in the military community.

Turning it Around, Unanswered Questions

"My buddy, an Iraq vet, came to the bathroom and told me, 'You're not alone,'" Quigley reminisced in regards to the night of his fallout. "That really helped because I still think about that, no matter how I feel, there's always somebody to talk to."

"When you're in the military, you're supposed to be a bad motherf---er - go to combat and kill people - and you're supposed to be a hard person and not let anybody know that you're hurting," said Quigley.

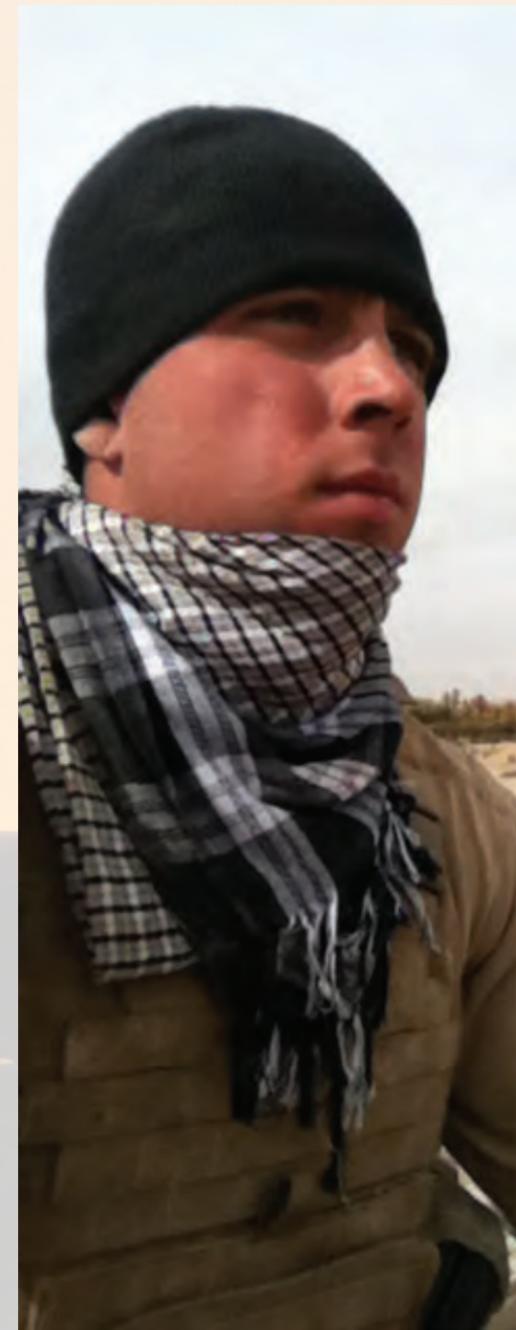
When he joined the BCC Veterans Club in the fall semester of last year, he managed to get rid of that expectation and merely be himself amongst peers, as well as crediting conversations with Interim coordinator of Military Affairs Violet Surdyka and his family for helping him get out of his dark place.

Perhaps it is this pressure of adhering to society's perception that has led to suicide becoming the leading cause of death for combat vets in 2014. Quigley's recollection of an interaction with his friend's wife that perhaps happens all too often to military veterans.

"She asked me if I was a Marine, I said, 'Yeah,' and she said, 'Oh, so you're f---ed up then,'" Quigley remembered. "Does every combat vet have their issues? Yeah, but looking at us like machines and s--- is going to make it worse when you say stuff like that, it reinforces that feeling of alienation," he added.

After the woman's comment, Quigley couldn't help but echo the words that many Veterans have felt upon returning home: "God damn, is that what everybody f---ing thinks?"

A shift in culture may be necessary for a change in society's perception. Quigley remains hopeful, as he's seen it occur already; his exchange with the young Afghan boy saw two people from two different worlds share a sobering moment of understanding in the midst of all the chaos and warfare. Quigley added, "Will it change? Maybe. I'd like to see that kind of thinking change."



"When you're in the military, you're supposed to be a bad motherf---er, go to combat and kill people, and you're supposed to be a hard person and not let anybody know that you're hurting."



Reflective In Perspective: Musings Of An “Ex” Musician

JOSEPH CIRILO
FEATURES EDITOR

The wiring is all shot, but the strings- and the players- still make noise. So, they will.
Joseph Cirilo/The Torch

If I wasn't in love with music, body and soul, I probably wouldn't have put myself through everything I've endured for 10 years and continued writing about it today. The daily queue of articles that I hash out are nothing compared to the experience of live performance; the dripping ecstasy and adrenaline that pumps through our veins with every show, every roaring crowd and every anxiety-ridden moment your hand slides about a maplewood neck of a bass guitar.

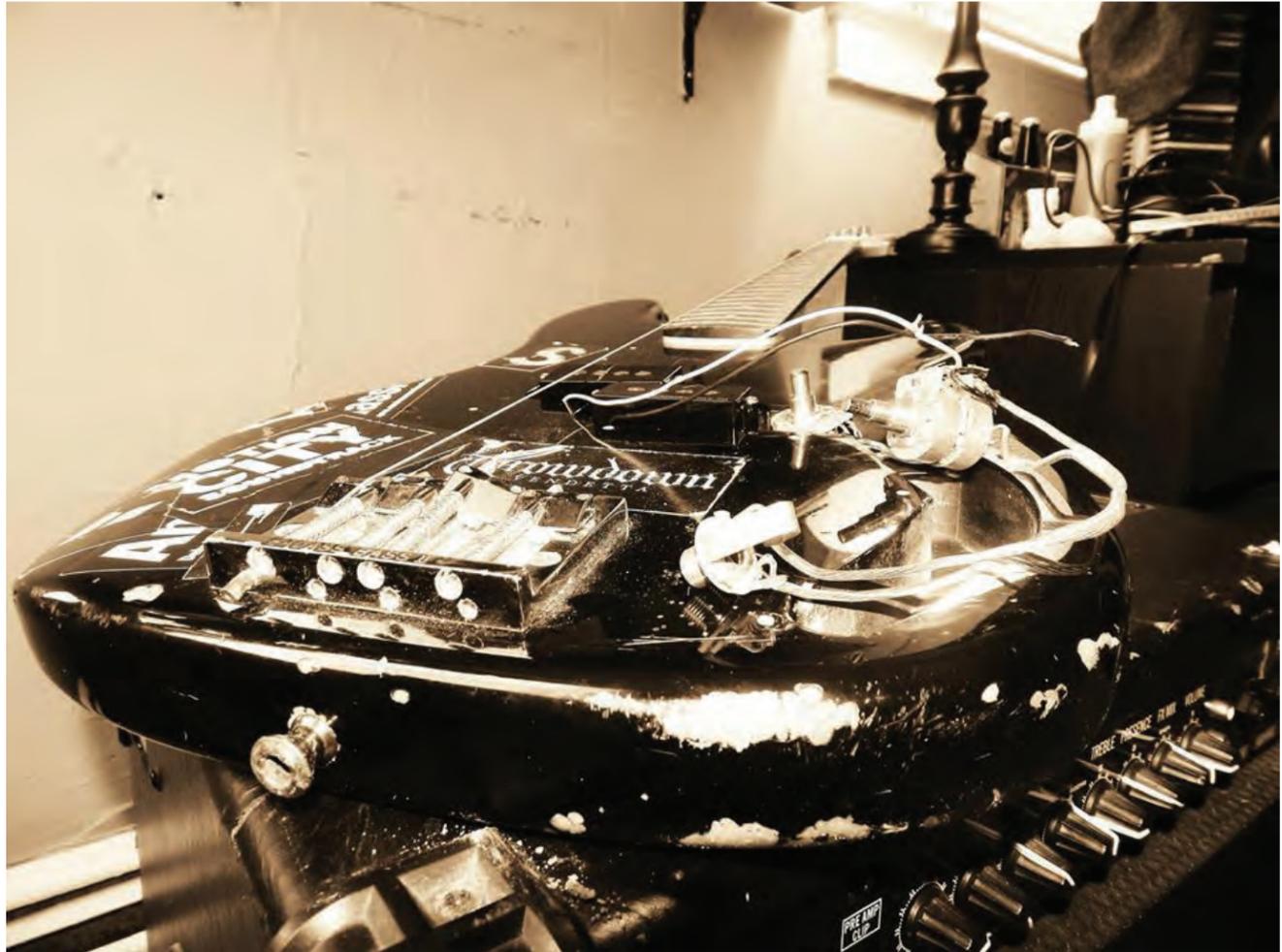
There's something truly incredible about looking back at the last 10 years of my life that no one really cares to share in. In those days, I thought I was going to be a famous “punk rocker,” and the reality is, I ended up caring more about supporting those bands through the media than following them on long and dirty roads.

Recently, I had the privilege of meeting one of my fellow ex-rebels, still wearing old tee-shirts adorned with the trademark “A” airbrushed across his chest.

“You ever think about the old days?” He asked me after an hour over coffee.

The easy answer is, “Yes, of course I do.” You never forget something like that. Every venue, every new town, every new girl - there's an intrinsic magic to it, bad as it all is.

Raging in the background of our lives was a war, one that many of my friends and colleagues are veterans of today. While we were throwing back bottles underaged, chasing tail and getting scammed into buying bad albums in the process, they were doing the service we feared we'd get roped into someday. The stubborn, useless youth we were would someday have to face facts that nobody believed in us, and that the music we played was probably going to fizzle out and fade into obscurity like most people who traffic the underground.



At our worst, we were modern day artists, filled with self-loathing and doubt. We emptied our wallets to get out of town and out of state chasing a dream that was doomed to never happen. While some get lucky, and even more get connected to all the right people -- grease all the right palms -- somehow, we knew we'd never be one of them.

Those old outfits had the best of times and the worst of times. We'd cram into tiny sedans and the back of “roach coaches” rolling 20 miles to the next city to play for 30 minutes and leave. There were cigarettes, drugs and all the drama that came with it.

We lost friends to suicide and to disease, we had our hearts broken and mended, played every show like a funeral celebration for those who couldn't join us anymore. We were borne ceaselessly by grief and agony, but also through angst and uncertainty.

Through all of it, Newports, smoky bars, VFWs, the witnessing of money changing hands for spots in Battle of the Bands and the revelation that The Break Contest was (and probably still is) fixed to some degree, we had each other.

At our best, we were purveyors of “Jersey noise,” trying to make a living. Working class thugs who thought ourselves above the system, talking about the merits of communism and political division like it mattered all that much to us.

At our worst, we were modern day artists, filled with self-loathing and doubt. We emptied our wallets to get out of town and out of state chasing a dream that was doomed to never happen. While some get lucky, and even more get connected to all the right people -- grease all the right palms -- somehow, we knew we'd never be one of them.

The kids were alright.

Loose ends and all that we left open, it was worth it all the same. We moved on, got jobs, went to school and started dreaming of another life to live after everything was done and buried. All those things we did never really disappeared on us, and through memory we get to live it every day. But for an ex-musician, it's hard to swallow the thought that only in the Marines are you “once and always”; out here, people only care that you're different now, not who or what you used to be.

“No,” I told him, “not much.”





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Bergen
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Life on... Venus?
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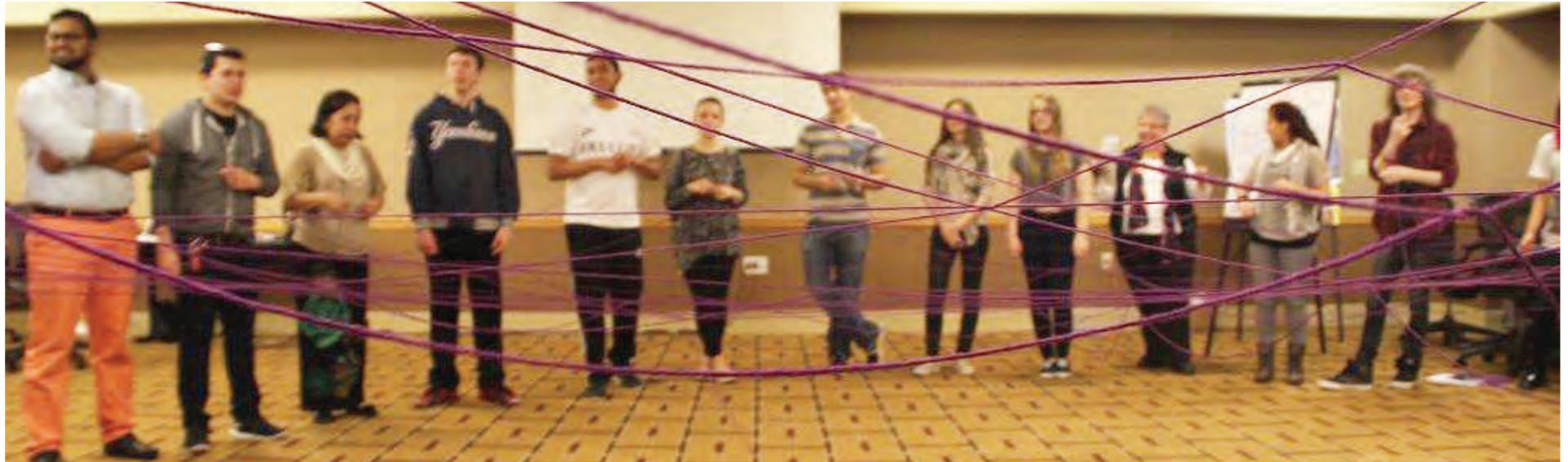
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FEATURES

The Torch

Diversity Weekend 2015



LUCIA RUBI GODOY
STAFF WRITER

"Diversity is not about being equal, but about celebrating our differences."
Gloria Cevallos//The Torch

Diversity Weekend is a convention that Bergen Community College has organized every spring semester for ten years. The event -- organized by Greg Fenkart, Coordinator of Student Life, Juhi Bhatt, Coordinator of Judicial Affairs and Student Information, and Joli Nelson from the Office of Student Life -- began on Friday, April 10th at 1:30 with the check in of the 38 students who had previously signed up for the event and attended the corresponding workshop previous to the convention. The bus left the school at 3:30 and arrived to the Wyndham Hotel in Florham Park, NJ about an hour later. Once in the hotel, the students were assigned a random roommate and were given time to get to know them and organize their belongings in the rooms. Shortly after dinner, the students began the mandatory sessions by discussing the term diversity and the theme that was chosen for this specific weekend: "Let's Change the Conversation."

The theme was chosen to improve the way in which students carry themselves when having a conversation that addresses the differences between people. Sometimes we do or say things in a way that we think demonstrates that we accept people and consider everyone equal, but the truth is we are not all the same, and that is not a bad thing.

"The theme of this one is very interesting, considering that with all the technology that we have today people are becoming incapable of starting a conversation with a random person and hear what they have to say," said Professor Win Win Kyi, the Advisor of the Alpha Epsilon Phi Chapter of the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society.

Terms like "melting pot" and "handicapped" are some of the words that one hears or use on a daily basis without thinking about their real meaning or implications.

"It's alright to become uncomfortable during a conversation. People are going to have opinions that make you uncomfortable and that is okay," said Juhi Bhatt when preparing the students for a weekend full of diverse conversations.

After some small activities that allowed the students to get to know the rest better, they were divided in four small groups selected at random, to get them out of their comfort zone, with which they would have break-outs at certain times to discuss the sessions more deeply and go over points that students wanted to clarify. Like the random selection of roommates, this groups forced the students to interact with people they don't exactly know and maybe wouldn't approach voluntarily just to

start a conversation. The idea was to get to know other people, not for the students to just spend extra time with the people they are already friends with.

At 9:00 p.m., the students were shown the movie "Bully," a heart-breaking film in which five parallel cases of youths who endure the most explicit bullying and discrimination are studied. This film was a good way to show the students the impact ignorance and lack of acceptance can have on some people. The cases were generally as outrageous for the students as for the coordinators and speakers.

After breakfast, the next morning, the movie discussion was followed by a master session given by professor Kyi, "Change the Conversation, Change Your Life." In this session, professor Kyi shared some personal experiences that encouraged students to accept themselves first and work on becoming better people, in order to be accepted by others. "It is part of your generation to fix the world that we have left you," claimed the professor.

The students later rotated through two mini sessions. "Diversity and Social Justice" discussed how

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CASH FOR YOUR CLOSET

MICHELLE PEREZ
STAFF WRITER

Thrifting and reselling are in vogue in the time of college-age consumerism.
Courtesy of MCTcampus.com

Think for a moment - how many of those bargain tops that you bought last spring are now collecting dust in your closet? Do you have that one pair of shoes that are so old, but you keep them sitting on your shoe rack? We all spend money on meaningless "stuff" and forget about it later. Like many of my friends, I have so many clothes in my bedroom, and I have absolutely no more room. Thanks to technology and curiosity, there is now a way of removing the 'clutter clothes,' updating your drab drawers, and maybe filling your pockets with some cash, too.

Selling your items may seem obvious, but it's becoming something that many young men and women turn to as a way of finding bargain deals on expensive items, while also earning some money. Sites like Poshmark, Threadflip and Vinted have made it possible to sell your items online and pay only a small fee on your sale for use of their service. Its not just beneficial for you, but for the companies who choose practices like these.

Poshmark CEO, Manish Chandra, made the investment for his fashion tech business and, according to BizJournals,



has made approximately \$17 million as of last February. In an interview about the history of the company he said, "Women are putting roughly a trillion dollars of clothes into their closets every

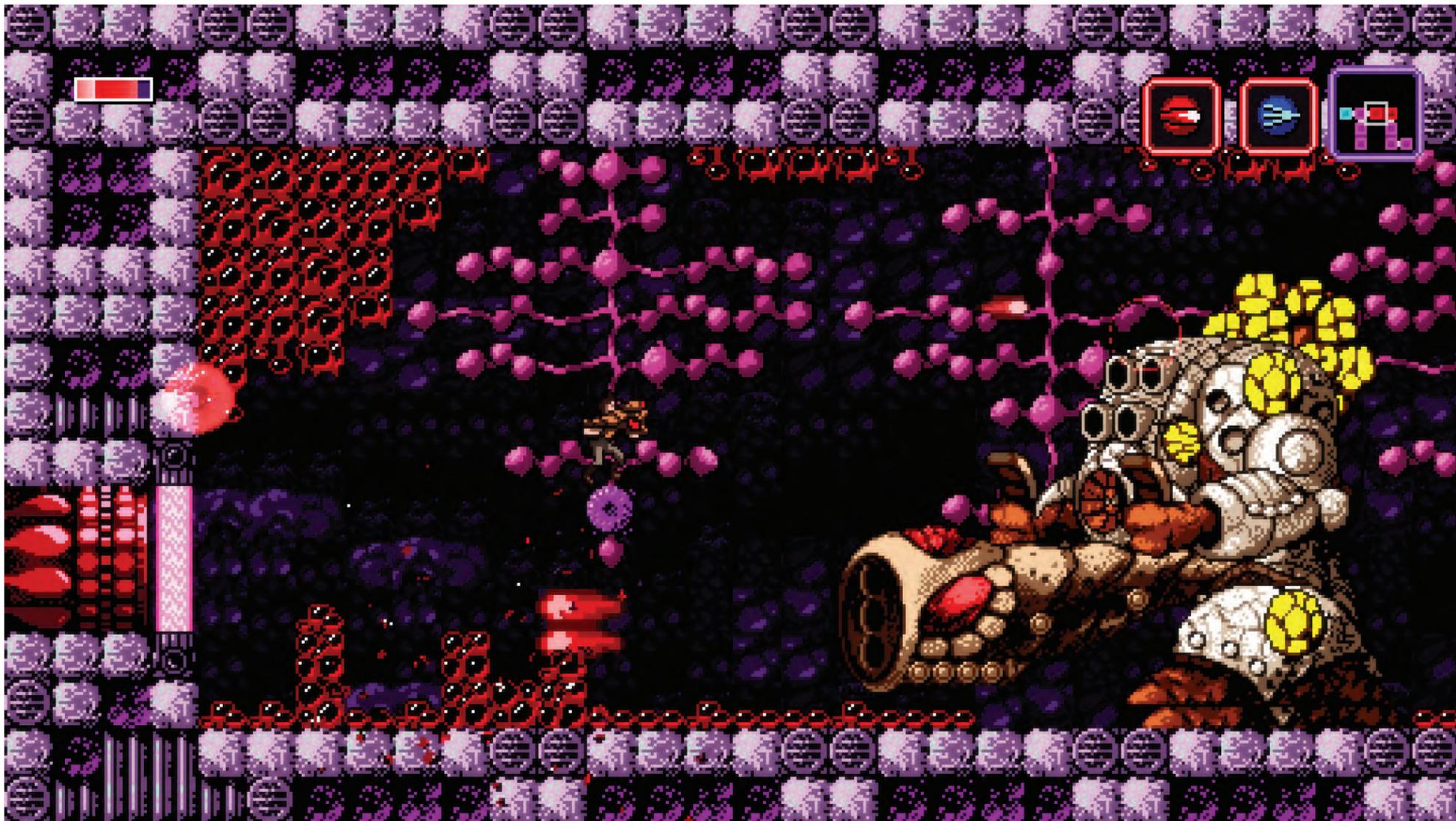
three years. But it doesn't all get worn — a third of it gets worn regularly, a third of it gets worn once or twice, and a third of it is worn not at all."

These companies may remind

you of eBay in the peer-to-peer aspect, but instead of bid or time constraints, the seller and buyer are able to negotiate a price, discuss measurements and foster a trusting relationship.

I thought about this in my own life and began researching ways of acquiring money or forms of payment through disposing of that "one third" that I don't use. In the process, I discovered many companies set up donation initiatives with incentives. In February of 2013, H&M began offering discount vouchers in exchange of a bag of clothes. The clothes are recycled in a program where they hope to reduce the waste in the world in an effort to show commitment to sustainability. According to the H&M website, "Of the thousands of tonnes of textiles thrown away every year, 95 percent could be re-worn or recycled." For every bag dropped off at an H&M location, you receive a 10 percent discount voucher. Other clothing donations are tax deductible.

One thing's for sure, whether you're selling, donating or just giving away your clothes, you'll feel better and look better.



*Axiom Verge is nothing but pure joy to explore inside and out.
Photo courtesy of Thomas Happ Games*

AXIOM VERGE: OLD WORLD, NEW TRICKS

BRANDON RENO
STAFF WRITER

If looking at the image above inspires a sense of nostalgia about playing Super Metroid on the Super Nintendo Entertainment System, then Axiom Verge is likely to be a game you'll enjoy quite a lot.

For those unfamiliar with Metroid or any of its spin-offs (Chair Entertainment's "Shadow Complex" comes to mind), Axiom Verge plays out in an alien dimension after a lab experiment goes terribly wrong. You'll find yourself exploring and platforming around an environment that somehow feels alive, while fighting off grotesque monstrosities. Along the way, you'll unlock power-ups and abilities that allow you to bypass obstacles that impede your progress. In typical Metroid fashion, the obstacles and the ability that lets you bypass them are presented non-linearly, meaning you'll likely be backtracking through rooms after you locate whatever it is you need.

The abilities in the game appear to set one's expectations in such a way where a fan of Metroid may inevitably have their expectations dashed. A rock wall may force a player to think they're about to unlock bombs when the actual item required is a large drill. The sensation of having your expectations subverted actually

becomes something of a joy to experience. I found myself eagerly awaiting how the game would present solutions to problems I otherwise thought would be solved differently.

The other critical component to Axiom Verge is its combat system. Over the course of your exploration, you'll encounter a surprisingly large amount of variety in the weapons. Some of these weapons, like the aforementioned abilities above, check your progress at key points, but others are merely trophies to show off your triumph in the optional areas. Selecting and changing your arsenal is simple with the flick of the right stick, though I found myself sticking to one or two weapons in particular, only switching to some others when the situation dictated it. The lightning shotgun in particular, deadly at close range, practically became my go to problem solver for any foe.

Against regular enemies, combat felt like a fast-paced delight. I took it upon myself to clear each room as quickly and gracefully as I could, and with the inclusion of a speedrun mode, which strips the story elements out and adds a timer to the corner of the screen, I felt like the game encouraged this behavior. Boss battles were a different story. While challenging, some felt too much

like trial and error. I eventually threw myself at bosses blindly and repeatedly to figure out their gimmick, then beat them with relative ease. Though the game has a comfortable difficulty curve, the boss design themselves could've been more refined.

The narrative in Axiom Verge is minimal at best. You'll come across these little scraps of backstory while delving through the environment, and some are presented in an alien language that you'll have to translate in order to get anything out of it. The small pieces of story were mostly inconsequential, not doing much to add anything to my enjoyment, but weren't terrible either.

Axiom Verge pays attention to what its predecessors did, but isn't overly reverential to them. It takes your expectations and subverts them in a way that's both entertaining and refreshing. To somebody who has little to no experience with this kind of game, I can't say that I'd recommend it so quickly. There are other games available that have executed this style better. For those that do have that experience, or want to enjoy a solid 2-D action-adventure game that does plenty of refreshing and innovative concepts, Axiom Verge is a game you must play.

Diversity Weekend 2015

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the misinterpretation of diversity causes social inequality; it was a workshop led by Gloria Cevallos. This session ended with a post-workshop dancing moment to boost the spirit. The other session, "Unpacking Gender Stereotypes" discussed the difference in gender roles and expectations; it was a workshop led by Christine Eubank. Later on, Jennifer Flynn and Hillary Fanelli led the session called "Walk in My Shoes." In this session, they discussed the proper way to address, help and refer to students with compromised abilities.

"Just because a person can't walk or see, it doesn't mean that they can't do exactly the same things that you do. It just means that they have to use different means or take a little bit longer to do so," stated Jennifer Flynn.

During this workshop, students volunteered to walk around with glasses that blocked their sight completely and to attempt to have a conversation with their ears covered with a device that blocked sounds almost completely. After dinner, current events related to issues of diversity, as the recent chain of police violence cases, and the misuse of derogatory racial terms as simple slang.

"I feel that the weekend was a success in that it got students talking about a variety of hot-button issues and viewing things from angles that they might not have ever considered before," said coordinator Fenkart.

During the morning of Sunday, the students had

the last small group break-out, where they had a chance to express their final thoughts and ideas on previous discussions and comment their overall feelings about the weekend. Afterwards, a last group conversation took place, where also the speakers and organizers had an opportunity to comment on the weekend. The students demonstrated themselves very thankful for being allowed to participate, and the comments made by the organizers were very positive.

"I think that anytime you have the opportunity to participate in programs such as Diversity Weekend, in any capacity, one has the opportunity to enrich our own lives, while touching, or at least begin the process of changing someone else's life, should we embrace the phenomenon. So if the goal was to change the conversation, I can confidently say that we achieved that weekend. Now the long term goal, which I pressure is to return to BCC and be instrumental/ambassadors/conduits that would change the conversation, and make and be that difference that we need on campus, that is the task at hand. The way each one of us understands, assimilates and approaches diversity depends on our identity, our culture, and the knowledge we have as well as other factors such as environments, gender, age, etc., I believe that diversity can be a powerful resource in an organization such as Bergen Community College where a number of countries, so many cultures and backgrounds are represented," expressed Gloria

Cevallos.

When asked, several students stated that most of the bonding occurred during the free time, the late nights and during the small group break-outs. They said that the casual conversations with the randomly assigned roommates and groups allowed them to know who the other students really were.

Most of the students have also confirmed that they have exchanged numbers or keep contact with some of the new friends they made during the convention.

Since this is an event organized by the school, students are expected to follow the same code of conduct that they are expected to follow at school. The students who fail to follow these simple rules have to be sent home and face consequences back at school. "The only problem that we had with this group, was that they were constantly late," stated Juhi Bhatt.

"The conduct was perfect, and the thirty-eight students that attended came back with us, but we never had students arrive to the sessions so late and so often as this weekend." When asked if she believed that there had been an impact made on the students after this weekend, Juhi Bhatt declared that "the impact was definitely made, but now it was within each student to apply what was learned in everyday life."

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Bergen Holds STEM Summit



LUIS LOPEZ WEI
STAFF WRITER

Bergen Community College, partnering with United Water, held a STEM C2 Research Summit Conference; the aim of which was to “empower teachers, inspire students and advance the studies of the four STEM fields,” according to BCC dean of mathematics, science and technology, P.J. Ricatto. The conference began with breakfast and introductions from STEM Grant Program Director and coordinator of the conference, Luis De Abreu, followed by the Dean Ricatto.

The keynote speaker for the conference, Michael Argenziano, M.D., spoke after introductions and whose talk was titled: “Robotically-Assisted Cardiac Surgery: Transferring the Pain from Patient to Surgeon.” Dr. Argenziano performed the first robotic open-heart operation in US history in 2001 and became the first American surgeon to perform a totally robotic coronary bypass in 2002.

When asked about the conference, Nicolette Filippone, a STEM club member who volunteered at the Summit said, “The conference was great. I met a lot of people and learned a lot of interesting things at the workshops. I even met some great doctors with a lot of experience who provided me

with useful resources and information.”

Following the keynote, conference attendees were encouraged to check out a room filled with posters, all containing information on various projects STEM club members and students have worked on here at BCC and from other schools in the area. STEM members even performed demonstrations of their Velomobile and Vertical Electric Generator Efficiency Test Apparatus (VEGETA) projects.

The rest of the day consisted of four workshop sessions, all with a range of topics to choose from for each. Workshop topics ranged from gasoline to electric conversions, technical writing, pathways to sustainability and advanced aircraft avionics - the only topic that was reservation only and ran during every workshop session.

Nineteen institutions participated in the Summit, including BCC, three high schools, three other community colleges, some four year schools and some organizations that do work in the STEM field. Nine schools with STEM programs also had representatives there to inform students of the different opportunities at their schools.



*Clockwise, from top:
Presenters and attendees gather outside TEC-128, anticipating the summit conference.
Ruben Henao, former team leader of the electric car project, in a moment of pensiveness.
The summit was made possible by Suez Environment, as well as United Water.
The famous Velomobile, which has been featured in previous STEM demonstrations around campus.
An electric retro-motor, both stylish, functional, and reflective of considerable engineering and research talent.
Luis Lopez Wei//The Torch*



Theoretical portrayal of the concept of a "cloud city", founded high in the Venusian atmosphere.
Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons and NASA.

A FUTURE IN THE CLOUDS, NOT MARS



JOSEPH CIRILO
FEATURES EDITOR

By now, the internet has beaten dead the prospect of humanity landing on Mars by the end of this century. Moreover, recent developments that may have exposed the non-profit group, Mars One, have even further added fuel to the fire that we're neither equipped nor prepared for a long term mission on the Red Planet.

There are, however, other -- perhaps more tangible -- prospects for the colonization of humanity on another planet in our solar system; Venus.

Mars presents a number of problems immediately when you consider it a prime target for habitation. The atmospheric pressure there is only a fraction of what it is on Earth, averaging 7.5 millibars versus just over 1,000 on Earth.

Universe Today provides a number of facts that show both the comparative differences and similarities between what we experience here and what's present out there.

The Red Planet has an average surface temperature of -63°C compared to 14°C here. Additionally, the length of one day on Mars is about the same as here on Earth, with the addition of an extra 37 minutes, but since it's also much further from the sun, its year is 687 days.

Mars does have roughly the same amount of land surface area, sustained polar caps and a similar axial tilt. However, even if we managed to terraform the planet, we wouldn't be able to do anything about its gravity.

Using Newton's theory of gravity, scientists have been able to approximate what kind of surface gravity we'd be landing into. The formula $g = m/r^2$, where g is the surface gravity of Mars (expressed as a multiple of Earth's, 9.8 m/s^2), m represents the mass -- expressed as a multiple of Earth's ($5.976 \cdot 10^{24}\text{ kg}$) -- and r is the radius, expressed again as a multiple of Earth's mean radius ($6,371\text{ km}$), they were able to estimate Mars gravity as being 0.38, or about 62 percent lower than what we experience here.

This calculation matters a great deal, because astronauts orbiting the Earth lose bone mass at 10 times the rate of someone with advanced osteoporosis. Even if we were able to do something about the lack of surface water, the thin atmosphere and lack of oxygen, experiencing about 0.4Gs every day would have a profound effect on the body.

But what about Venus? What makes our other planetary neighbor a better suited choice for colonization and sustained habitation of human life?

The NASA Langley Research Center has been hard at work trying to get a better idea at our nearest neighbor. Their investment into this research has yielded the High Altitude Venus Operational Concept, or HAVOC; a lighter-than-air rocket ship that would send two astronauts on a 30-day mission to explore Venus's atmosphere.

Why only the atmosphere? Venus' surface temperature is around 450°C , well above the melting point of lead. Not that you'd ever be able to reach it, as every probe we've ever sent down there has imploded under the immense pressure.

The barometric pressure on Venus' surface is over 90 Earth atmospheres -- that's the equivalent of diving 1km, which is well beyond the crush depth of most military submarines. In other words, there's a good chance no astronaut will ever set foot on Venus' surface.

Additional challenges lie in the upper atmosphere itself. The atmosphere of Venus is laced with a smog-like sulfuric acid cloud, which could potentially damage the necessary equipment to sustain the month-long mission. NASA Langley scientists are currently working out the kinks in the technical design, including performing the aerocapture maneuvers at Venus and Earth, inserting and inflating the airship at Venus and protecting the solar panels and structure from the sulfuric acid in the atmosphere.

There are upsides, however. About 50 km above the surface, the environment is relatively benign. The temperature drops to about 70°C (158°F) and the barometric pressure lowers to almost exactly one Earth atmosphere.

Venus is also significantly closer to Earth than Mars is; 41.4 million kilometers to Venus versus 78.3 million kilometers to Mars from Earth. Shorter distance means a shorter round trip -- about 30-50 percent shorter in fact.

Still, a 30-day mission and a lifetime are wildly different concepts to consider. While a one-way trip to Mars would almost definitely be a one-way trip without question, we can't say for sure that even in 100 years we'll have the capability to change the gravity on the planet. Lifetimes of colonists might be incredibly short, and the scientific gains may be relatively small for many human lives lost.

In this way, any colony that was established in Venus' upper atmosphere would be largely dependent upon Earth for life-sustaining resources and building materials, which is probably why NASA has their sights set on short round-trip missions of two astronauts rather than thinking long-term about establishing living space there.

Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

PRIDE AT BERGEN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

JOSEPH CIRILO
FEATURES EDITOR

With recent news of homeless youth and discrimination abound, it's of great comfort to know that under the wing of Bergen Community College, students of the LGBT community - and their allies - can find safety in shared camaraderie.

The PRIDE Club here at BCC has been operating for a number of years, providing the security of a small, tight knit group of people who either are themselves struggling with identity, open about their sexuality, or are just looking for a place where they can be helpful to those who are.

"We are a club that is accepting of everyone," says Nafi Korkmaz, President of PRIDE. "People Recognizing Individual Diversity and Equality," she went on to elaborate was the acronym for the club's name.

"It's for everyone who's for equality, for gay marriage - people who are transitioning between genders as well."

Ms. Korkmaz went on to elaborate that not everyone who attends the club's meetings exactly fit conform to how we imagine the LGBTQA community. Despite going in with assumptions that it was every inch a place where the openly LGBT students of Bergen could find solace in their shared numbers, PRIDE extends itself much further.

Korkmaz told The Torch that there were even some instances in which people in the club were not open about their sexuality, but found it comforting to know there were people there who could speak in confidence and help them.

"People come a lot when they have trouble coming out, I've seen a lot of that. As long as you're good for the movement, you can be part of it. People see the rainbow and they assume it's the gay club." That wasn't the case according to her. "There are people who aren't open about it here."

When speaking of the challenges that PRIDE faces here at BCC, Korkmaz spoke of only stories that she'd heard while in attendance at the club, but couldn't independently confirm that the events were actually taking place. One of the most

disturbing of those was of a young, openly gay, woman getting shooed from the bathroom.

"Can you imagine not being able to go to the bathroom?" she proposed. "I've never openly seen the big dramatic things that you hear on the TV. I guess those happen too, but I've never seen it."

Our conversation turned to the students themselves who have become involved in PRIDE. While it's main focus has always been on promoting acceptance and harmony on campus, Korkmaz pointed out that there are a lot of students who enter PRIDE because they're unsure of themselves. In the confusing times searching for one's identity, some students have found the wisdom and guidance of the older officers of PRIDE to be helpful in both this transitional phase as well as thinking about the future.

"I don't want people to label themselves," Korkmaz continued. "If you come to PRIDE, you're probably coming because you already know though. They're looking for people who are like them and that acceptance is important."

While it is indeed an important aspect of PRIDE, and a sizeable portion of its members are openly LGBT, Nafi reiterated that the club's role is not predominantly as such, and has moved to tackle issues of equality everywhere they exist, conceding that the LGBT community has taken a large amount of its focus over the years as these issues waned even in Bergen County.

PRIDE has also involved themselves heavily in the politics of gay marriage, going so far as to have off-hand knowledge of which states are still in contestation of state-recognized marriages and which have voted yes to equality.

Here at BCC, there are a wealth of resources that make it possible for the average student to find what they're looking for - be that academic or spiritual guidance. So if you're looking for a place to find people more like yourself, or just ways to lend a hand while the good fight rages on, look into PRIDE Club.

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BASEBALL IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC



A young boy swings a baseball bat on the streets of San Pedro de Macoris in the Dominican Republic.
TERRENCE ANTONIO JAMES/CHICAGO TRIBUNE/TNS

Where baseball is life

Fueled by millions from MLB teams, sport thrives in impoverished country rich in talent

By Jared S. Hopkins, *Chicago Tribune*

SAN PEDRO de MACORIS, Dominican Republic — Winding through the dusty and chaotic streets crammed with honking cars and buzzing scooters, you'd never know this coastal city is a baseball mecca.

But past the rows of one-room concrete buildings with peeling paint, and beyond the roads littered with garbage and stray dogs, a sprawling park emerged. Kids there scrambled around the ragged fields, their shouts in Spanish piercing the afternoon heat. Bats cracked and balls thudded into leather gloves.

Among the dozens of young ballplayers was Richard Paulino, 16, who stood along the first-base line, a few feet from what used to be a full backstop but had been whittled into a short stub of a fence. Muscular and a bit taller than his teammates, Paulino just finished shagging fly balls in the outfield.

"I want to play in the major leagues, of course," he said, his face curving into a smile to show braces. "I am passionate about the game. I am focused."

Can Paulino reach his goal? He's certainly in the right country to get there.

The Dominican Republic delivers more talent to the major leagues than any other country besides the United States. Kids here are four times more likely than their American counterparts to reach the major leagues. Dominicans make up between 25 and 40 percent of minor leaguers.

"It's the second-most-prolific country of baseball talent in the world," said Kim Ng, Major League Baseball's senior vice president in charge of international operations. "The Dominican's tremendously important and that's why we just opened a brand-new office down there."

The sport thrives here because of the talent — kids regularly drop out of school to play — and the environment that hastens its development. Money pumps in from the United States, thanks to major league teams and private investors who open academies. And success is still tied to

the reluctant, rocky relationship between MLB and a network of independent Dominican scouts who train players, known locally as buscones.

"They depend on each other for survival and they depend on each other to flourish," said Alan Klein, a sociology professor at Northeastern University who has written books on Dominican baseball. "So, who's controlling the game? There's no clear answer. It's a new system."

Baseball also remains a leading opportunity for kids to escape a country where more than a third live below the poverty line. Likewise, its economy stretches to jobs far beyond the ballfields: landscapers who care for fields; cooks and housekeepers; even real estate agents teams hire to find prospects housing.

Don't expect the growth to stop soon with the money at stake. MLB's 20 players on the country's last World Baseball Classic team were paid a combined \$105 million in MLB salaries. All major league clubs operate year-

The 20 MLB players on the Dominican Republic's last World Baseball Classic team were paid a combined \$105 million in MLB salaries.

round pristine academies to mold prospects. Legions of scouts are deployed to find them.

The growth of Dominican baseball reflects the diverse demographics of foreigners playing in the United States. The Latino player population in the big leagues has steadily increased to reach about 27 percent, according to the most recent statistics from the Society for American Baseball Research.

By 2013, there were 510 Dominican player signings, an increase from 432 a decade before, according to MLB. The combined bonuses for player signings jumped from \$13.7 million to \$61.5 million during that same time period.

But numbers alone don't paint the complete picture of baseball's dominance in the Dominican.

Many here insist there are more opportunities to make it as a ballplayer. They cite player showcases and the plethora of academies who host them; MLB officials using the Internet to monitor player progress; and pro leagues that replaced the amateurs.

"It's a lot easier than when I used to play," said ex-Chicago Cub Moises Alou, now the general manager of a Dominican Winter League team. "Everybody now plays baseball. There's a lot of programs and tryouts and there's a lot of teams competing to sign players. Everyone wants to be the next Pedro Martinez and the next Sammy Sosa."

The presence of MLB facilities is a crescendo from more than 30 years ago. The newest of these glittery churches rival their stadiums in the United States and boast classrooms, weight rooms and the thickest grass in the Dominican.

"The housing itself is bigger, more modern," said Class A St. Lucie Mets managers Luis Rojas, a Dominican native who visits regularly. "It helps even more with the player, as far as they learn baseball they also develop as human beings. Our education is not as high. Some guys don't finish high school."

Despite the growth, MLB continues to recover from years of scandal in the Dominican. Age and identity fraud, performance-enhancing drugs and bonus-skimming were regular headlines. In recent years, three White Sox employees went to federal prison in relation to kickbacks from players' bonuses and contracts.

To clean up the sport, MLB launched a task force about a decade back. Some recommendations were enacted, but the much-publicized idea for an international draft was shot down after Jacobo led a protest that included a petition from hundreds of pro players.

In recent years, Ng said, MLB has continued to reorganize its Dominican office, begun hosting showcases for players, and started registering prospects.

"It has gotten more organized, but I think again, given the inherent issues there, it's not solved by any stretch," Ng said.



Brian McCann needs to take the torch Derek Jeter left behind as the Yankees leader. Courtesy of MCTcampus.com

Is McCann the Key to the Yankees 2015 Season?

ADAM GRASSANI
STAFF WRITER

The 2015 MLB season is underway and the New York Yankees are looking to make the playoffs after missing the playoffs for the past two seasons. Going into the season, the Yankees have many players that need to produce; veterans Mark Teixeira and Carlos Beltran are both looking to have bounce back seasons, while players such as Brett Gardner are looking to duplicate the performance they had last seasons. Shortstop Didi Gregorius, needless to say, has some major shoes to fill, as he will try to replace future Hall of Famer Derek Jeter, who retired last season. Alex Rodriguez is hoping to redeem his image, returning after serving a one-year suspension last season.

But by far, the key to the Yankees getting back to the postseason is in the hands of their catcher, Brian McCann. McCann, who was signed to a five year \$85 million contract before last season, had a down year last season - finishing with a .232 batting average, 23 home runs, 75 RBIs, and major difficulties getting past the defensive shift. McCann was known for being one of the best catchers in the game last season, but certainly didn't play like it; perhaps due to the infield shifts tailored to his pull hitting.

"Now that the shifting's involved, it's time for me to take a step back and figure it out. Now I've got to beat the shift," McCann said before the season, according to the New York Post. "I've hit a certain way for nine years. The shift obviously is more advanced, so hits that I've always had in the past are now outs. I [used to] hit .290, .280, now

[I'm] hitting .240, .230. It's time for me to make that adjustment, and I went into this offseason, and that's where I'm at."

However, McCann needs to do more than just have a bounce back year; McCann needs to become the new full-time leader for this team. When Jeter retired, the Yankees lost the leader, heart and soul of the Yankees for nearly 20 years. Now that he is gone, the Yankees need someone to spark a fire for the team. McCann is known for being a leader and has showed it before.

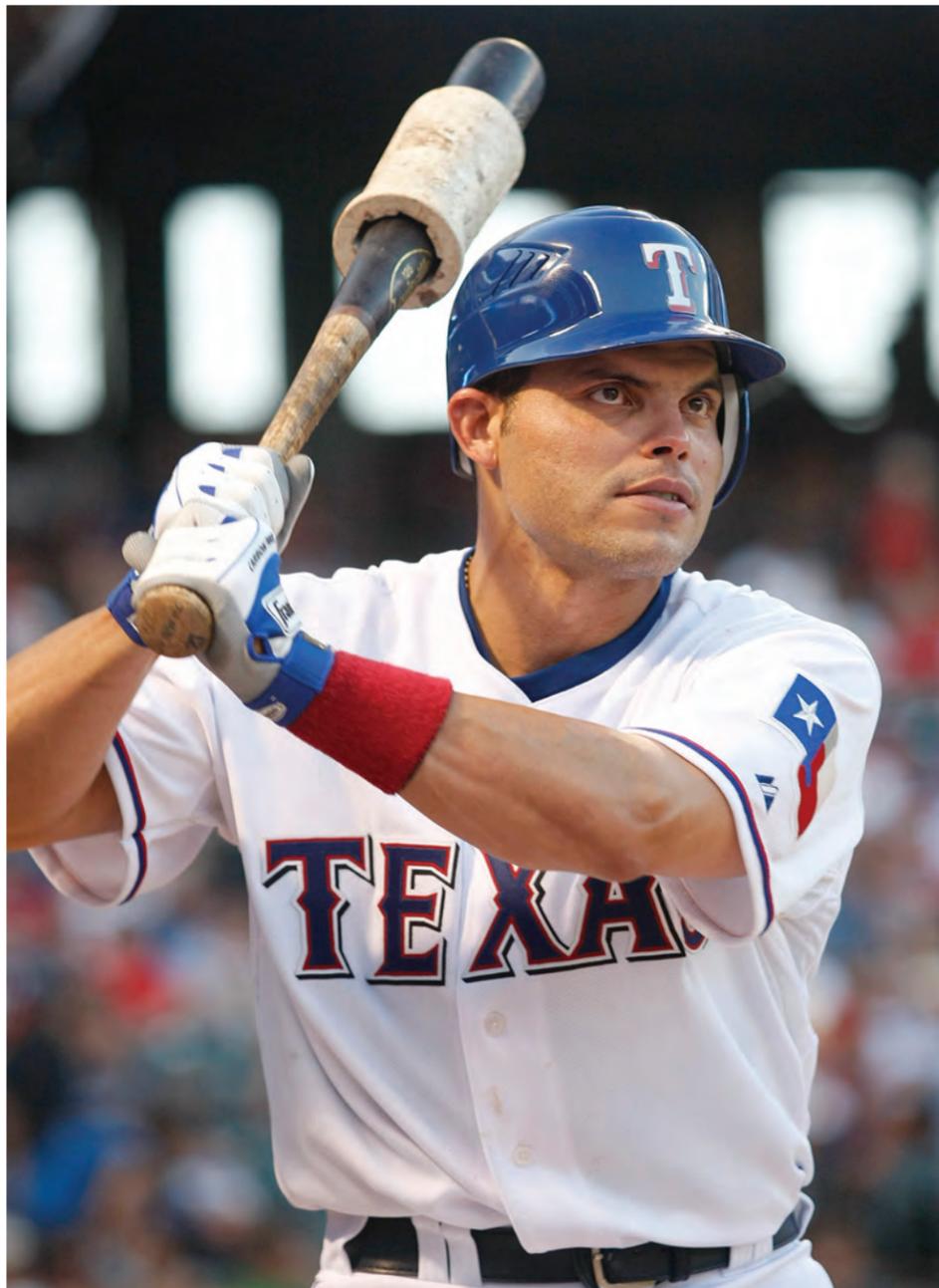
During the end of the 2013 season, when McCann was on the Atlanta Braves, Brewers Outfielder Carlos Gomez was trash talking multiple of McCann's teammates after hitting a home run. McCann stood up for his entire team when Gomez reached home plate, which sparked a benches clearing brawl.

"Leadership, to me, it's guys having certain qualities," McCann said. "It's guys that show up every night that will do anything and everything for the guy next to him. I feel like we have a lot of guys that do that. If something needs to be said, it's going to get said."

While no one should be asking McCann to start brawls with the other team, he needs to show that kind of leadership both on the field and off the field as the mature veteran he is.

Weighted Bats: Science Says Lighten Up

Ivan Rodriguez is clearly unaware of the science. Courtesy of MCTcampus.com.



The image of a major league hitter swinging a weighted bat in the batters box not only gives the the false feeling of a lighter bat, it's part of the psychological chess match that occurs between the hitter and pitcher.

GABE WANISSIAN
SPORTS EDITOR

We've seen this image all too often; the batter in the on deck circle holding three bats with weighted donuts as he takes his mammoth hacks in hopes to increase his bat speed - science is saying that players may need to "lose weight."

According to a study conducted by the University of Hawaii, using weighted doughnuts prior to an at bat actually recruits larger, slower muscle fibers designated for heavy lifting; contradicting the desirable quick twitch muscle fibers needed for quick bat speed.

Tests have found that decreases in bat speed were across the board, ranging anywhere from a 10-13 percent drop in swing velocity - when a 2.9 inch ball is coming at you faster than a raging lunatic on Route 17, that can be the difference between a strikeout and a game winning homerun into the bleachers.

So then one must ask, why the heck are professional hitters still using this thing? The answer simple; superstition, stubbornness and a tendency to fall for mental placebo.

"The batter should mimic in his warm-up what he will do in the game—the same weight, the same motion," says University of Hawaii Physical Education Professor Coop Derenne.

We can all thank Yankee catcher Elston Howard for duping hitters into using the doughnut for a false sense of confidence by inventing the doughnut and using it throughout his career. The concept then caught the eye of New York entrepreneurs Frank Hamilton and Vince Salvucci, who both collaborated with the All-star catcher to trademark it, and the rest was history.

Hitters tend to take a more cerebral approach however; the image of a major league hitter swinging a weighted bat in the batters box not only gives the the false feeling of a lighter bat, it's part of the psychological chess match that occurs between the hitter and pitcher.

"Hey, each guy does what's right for him," says Nick Swisher, a New York Yankees outfielder. "How you feel matters most," he added. He's not wrong; in a game where players refuse to change their underwear during a hot streak, the mental aspects of using a weighted bat may outweigh the scientifically proven negative effects.

But wait, fear not doughnut users! A California State University, Fullerton study shows that long term use of a weighted bat during batting practice or on off days may improve upper body explosiveness - which in turn will result in Monstrous Long balls. That'll surely impress that girl over there in the stands.

YOU DA REAL MVP: KEY PLAYERS FOR SPRING 2015

Junior Nasi

While the Bulldogs stellar starting pitching has been getting the majority of the shine, Offensive bats such as the 6'5 Shortstop Nasi was one of key factors that have catapulted bergen into a legitimate threat. On April 23, Nasi was given the NJCAA and GSAC conference Player of the Week for averaging .677, 32 total bases 12 RBIS, and had five stolen bases. Nasi also managed to put on a dominant performance by hitting for the cycle against Middlesex CC.



Linzi Reginald

In a season filled with player ending injuries and postponed games, The Softball team needed a dependable front of the rotation Ace to hold down the fort, and Reginald did just that, leading the team to a 10-6 record. If ever the bullpen needed rest, Reginald stepped in- compiling seven total complete games, and 65 strikeouts over 47 total innings on the season.

Her masterful performance earned her 2nd team on the Garden state Athletic Conference. Only, a freshman, Reginald has the potential to reach further heights next season.



Spieth's win puts him at #2 Golfer Worldwide Behind McIlroy. Courtesy of MCTampus.com

BRINGING HOME THE GREEN FOR A CAUSE

ALYSSA BLUNDO
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

21 year-old Jordan Spieth of Dallas, Texas is the second youngest professional golfer to win the Masters in Augusta, GA on Sunday, April 12 at the Augusta National Golf Club. Spieth won it all with a bang, by going in for a bogey in the last and final hole to accomplish his dream of winning the coveted green jacket as his first Majors win.

It was a gloomy and cloudy day that Spieth hit 20-under par to finish at 18-under 270 and four hits that beat three-time Masters Champion Phil Mickelson and 2013 US Open winner, Justin Rose. Though, the 18-under 270 marks was tied with Tiger Woods and matched his overall score record - becoming the first to bring a 19-under par to the Masters Leaders' Score Board and achieve a record setting number of birdies that surpassed Mickelson's mark of 25. Spieth also hit 28 Birdies, 35 Pars, 8 Bogeys and 1 Double Bogey in this major event.

He then received the coveted green jacket from Bubba Watson, the man who beat Spieth last year at the same event. Jim Nantz and Augusta National Chairman Billy Payne joined in as well.

While Spieth is known for his talent, he gains even more inspiration from his younger sister, 14-year-old Ellie Spieth. Ellie has a neurological disorder that lands her on the Autism Spectrum.

"Ellie certainly is the best thing that's happened in our family," Spieth said. "It helps put things in perspective that I'm lucky to play on tour and to compete with these guys, it's been a dream come true. I definitely attribute a lot of that to her."

Spieth's sister helped to build a connection with Spieth and golf legend Ernie Els. His son Ben is autistic and Els who started the Els for Autism Foundation in 2009 encouraged the Texan native to do the same. Spieth created the Jordan Spieth Charitable Trust into something that can help raise awareness for Autism in a similar way. "We've shared some really funny kind of stories because autistic kids are so special, and the way they handle life is quite special," said Els at Congressional Country Club. Spieth is a role model for special needs youth and has maintained his role on and off the green.

The Murder of Odin Lloyd: Aaron Hernandez's Trial

Former New England Patriot Aaron Hernandez faces life imprisonment for first-degree murder. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.



GELBER CASTILLO
STAFF WRITER

Former New England Patriots tight end Aaron Hernandez was found guilty of first-degree murder and four other charges and sentenced to life imprisonment without parole for the fatal shooting of Odin Lloyd. Once a top-ranking athlete in the entirety of the NFL with a contract worth \$40 million is now serving a life behind bars.

Odin Lloyd's murder occurred in the early hours of June 17, 2013. Hernandez texted the victim the day before at 9:05 p.m. saying he wanted to get together with Lloyd. Two associates arrived at Hernandez's house, and Hernandez is seen on his surveillance system with a gun in his hand telling them he "is upset he can't trust anyone anymore."

The three left the house at 1:12 a.m. in a silver Nissan Altima Hernandez rented. At 2:10 a.m., they were captured on camera buying gas and caught Hernandez buying a Bubblicious Blue Cotton Candy gum, a piece of evidence that helped the jury indict Hernandez.

They picked up the victim from his house at 2:32 a.m. The victim texted his sister asking "did you see who I am with," at 3:07 a.m. He texted her again, "Hello?" when she finally replied, "who?" the victim responded with, "NFL," and one minute later with, "Just so you know".

Surveillance cameras then captured the Altima driving down the road leading to the murder site at 3:23 a.m. Between 3:23 a.m. and 3:27 a.m., several workers nearby heard multiple gunshots.

Cameras picked up the Altima again at 3:29 a.m., this time on route to Hernandez's house. The police confirmed the drive from Hernandez's house to the murder site is a 2-minute drive. Hernandez was seen with his two associates, one of whom held a gun, in his driveway at 3:30 a.m.

The victim was found half a mile from Hernandez's home with several gunshot wounds in the his chest, two of which went clean through, with .45 caliber casings nearby. When the police dug the place under the body and found the two .45 caliber bullets that went through. This indicating Lloyd was already on the ground when he was shot.

At 5:30 p.m. later that day, Hernandez and his associated return the Altima to the rental agency. Hernandez offered the attendant Bubblicious gum. That same attendant later found a piece of Bubblicious gum and a shell casing. The shell casing matched the casings found at the crime scene.

Tire impressions were found next to the victim's body, and when compared with the treading on the Altima, it was a perfect match. Dirt on the car also matched the dirt from the crime scene.

Police immediately suspected Hernandez as the perpetrator when they found a key that belonged to the same car Hernandez rented in the victim's pocket. The trial subsequently had his arrest deliberated for almost two years, but on April 15, the jury found the evidence too incriminating.

"The jury found that he was just a man who committed a brutal murder," said District Attorney Thomas Quinn after the jury's verdict, "The fact that he was a professional athlete meant nothing in the end."

The motives for the murder have never been clear. Hernandez now faces another trial for a 2012 double murder- a drive-by shooting in Boston's South End.



SPORTS



A triumphant and chaotic slide into third base for the Bulldogs. Courtesy of IHigh.com.

LADY BULLDOGS MAKE THE PLAYOFFS!

MELISSA PEREZ
STAFF WRITER

The lady bulldogs have endured a lot this season, and every obstacle they jumped got them closer to the playoffs. As a team, they faced incident after incident (such as cancelled games and unforeseen player resignations), but they toughed it out. Unfortunately, the drive wasn't enough, resulting in elimination in the first round of the tournament [2-6 loss].

"I think we were doing pretty good. I mean, we have our ups and downs, but overall we usually pulled together and play as a team," Utility player Michelina Chermak stated regarding their 10-6 record.

"The season is going great, we are a little bit low on numbers. We lost some players to injuries and personal issues, but we are doing with the girls that are here, they're working really hard," Coach Mallorie Gilbride stated.

"Weather has been a really tough thing for us this year, so our games have been really spread out. We are actually going to have ten really compact games this week to get this season finished," Gilbride added ; With a total of two postponed, four cancelled and three rained out games, the team is feeling the pressure.

Athletic director Jorge Hernandez called a meeting on April 16, asking the team if they would prefer to withdraw for the season due to such difficulties and so many obstacles . The team rejected the idea and now are more fired up than ever this season. Upcoming doubleheader matchups may seem daunting to some, but the lady bulldogs are up for the challenge.

"I definitely think it will be a lot [of games], but we've been working hard and I think they're up to par with it and that they're fine. Also, [softball] is not the same as baseball. Pitchers in softball go back to back to back and that's fine so I think we'll be fine." Coach Gilbride stated confidently, her faith in her girls obvious.

While the team has had their fair share of success, several games this season have proven challenging, losing doubleheaders (13-0 and 13-3 vs Brookdale and 6-14 and 5-17 Rowan college).

Opposing against Montgomery Co. Community College, the ladies bounced back with a 14-5 and 11-0 win in a doubleheader. The victory tour continued to Sussex Community College, where they won another doubleheader with a close call in the first game (3-1) but captured the win in the second with a score of 16-9. Even with all the chaos of the season, the girls had time for a Breast cancer awareness game, raising money for the cause. Not only did they fight breast cancer, but pulled out two more wins (9-1 and 11-3) against Northampton Community College. The winning streak eventually came to an end, like all good things, in a match versus Ocean County College, losing 18-2.

Playoffs were not the only high notes for the problematic season. Pitcher Linzi Reginald has achieved 2nd team All-GSAC pitcher (Golden State Athletic conference). Reginald, number 14, has pitched 47 innings, seven CG and 36K, making the BCC sports department, her team and BCC proud.

Reginald and the team may have not gotten the first place trophy, but they have gotten stronger, tougher and have become like family. For every ounce of pressure or defeat, they were there for one another, pushing one another to the playoffs. Nothing gets our bulldogs down and this whirlwind of a season certainly proves it.

KARA WOEGENS: MULTI SPORT ATHLETE

Iness Rabah/The Torch



INESS RABAH
STAFF WRITER

Kara Woegens is a dedicated multi-sport athlete who is the current catcher for the BCC softball team, and is immensely enthusiastic about sports. In addition, she played basketball last fall, but isn't planning on stopping there, as her love of competition will drive her to play soccer this upcoming fall semester as well.

Woegens' passion for sports runs in her family, as her father had an adoration that rubbed off on her at a very young age. He encouraged her and her sisters to always be active. Once she began to, she realized how much she loved it. Woegens grew up playing sports in her community rec center, middle school and high school.

"I love [sports], it's one of my passions. I felt that I was great at it in high school, so I thought maybe I should play it in college. After high school, I didn't just want it to be over, I wanted it to continue because I love [sports] that much," said Woegens.

On the topic of balancing schoolwork with her athletics, Woegens said, "Sports is a really good motivator for my education. If I failed then I couldn't play, so it always pushed me to get good grades so I could play." When asked if it was ever overwhelming and difficult to balance the two, she responded, "At times it is, because right now this next week for softball I have a game basically every single day, and I have classes to take and papers to write," she said. "but at the end of the day, I get all my work done on time," she added confidently.

Addressing her preference between basketball and softball, Woegens said, "That's a tricky one because for basketball there are different aspects of the game and then when you play softball, you get a whole different attitude. You get a different group of girls for each sport. Personally I don't prefer a sport, it's about what team improves that sport for you...It depends on the team to a degree but it's about how you work at it together."

"Getting in shape - that's a hassle." According to Woegens, getting in shape for softball is a lot of conditioning, saying, "There's running, there's squats, there's all these other things that you have to put in perspective." She then added that getting in shape for basketball was much more difficult.

Woegens is very nervous, yet very excited about playing soccer this upcoming fall, as she has never played the sport before. Luckily, she already has the advantage of being in shape from other sports. One thing's for sure, several of her softball teammates will be there with her on the carry over to the new sport, which gives her the extra comfort and enthusiasm to carry her "Bulldog Bravado" into next semester.

BULLDOG BASEBALL STATUS REPORT

GELBER CASTILLO
STAFF WRITER

Bergen Baseball has ended their season strong, with a 22-12 record. Gaining the #3 seed in the Region XIX Tournament. It has been their resilient ability to win games such as the April 25th doubleheader game vs. Camden CC, The first game ended in a 10-3 loss, but the team redeemed themselves winning the second game 5-0.

"We have never had an offense this consistent before," said athletic director Jorge Hernandez.

Indeed, the Bulldogs have not been easy prey. Blake Smith (#33), RHP, was named Garden State Athletic Conference player of the week (3/23-3/29). Junior Nasi

(#17), SS, is Bergen's most recent NJCAA player of the week (4/20-4/26) with a .677 batting average as well as hitting for the cycle in the game against Middlesex CC under his belt. Matt Van Riper (#39), RHP, continues opening as the strong-hitting jaw of the Bulldogs.

There have been several games where the boys swept the competition away. The April 21st doubleheader against Luzern CC ended with a double victory of 16-7 and 17-2. Middlesex CC was sent home on April 16th with a 18-3 loss to the Bulldogs. Bergen's rivals, Brookdale CC, were also defeated 4-3.

In May, the Bulldogs' head coach, Steven Mimms, was honored as the recipient of the Region XIX Coach of the Year Award.

Bergen has sent out application to become a nationally ranked team. While the pitchers are well trained and versatile, the entire offense has made Bergen a top team in their division; as of writing, they maintain sole possession of 3rd place in the DIII standings. While their season seems to be going well, they'll be put to the test in the upcoming playoffs.