

THE NITTANY PRIDE

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Students Lend a Helping Hand in Puerto Rico

To Infinity and be THON'd

Help a Child One Bag at a Time

MEET THE STAFF



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Students Lend a Helping Hand in Puerto Rico.....	1
To Infinity and be THON'd.....	3
Help a Child One Bag at a Time.....	6
Penn State New Kensington Welcomes Jazz Exhibit.....	8
Job Fair Student Perspective.....	10
Students Enjoy Wings and Sings.....	12
Gamers Divided by Gate.....	13
Green Floods Downtown Pittsburgh for St. Patty's Day Parade.....	15
Steel City Slam League Keeps Poetry Alive.....	16
Tough as Steel, Heart of Gold: Introducing Local UFC Fighter.....	18

Cover photo features students in Puerto Rico for spring break photographed by PSNK Student Life.



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CAMPUS LIFE

Students Lend a Helping Hand in Puerto Rico

By Eric Bennardo



Students working in Puerto Rico mixing dirt and planting mangroves on the alternative Spring Break. (Photo Courtesy of PSNK Student Life)

UPPER BURRELL, Pa—Several Penn State New Kensington students spent their spring break performing community service and outreach in Puerto Rico during spring break 2015.

As part of the campus's service learning efforts, students were granted the opportunity to attend an alternative spring break trip. This trip, where the students spent a week in different cities and towns throughout Puerto Rico, was just one of many initiatives by the campus to

allow students to donate their time to benefit communities. While in Puerto Rico, students performed various acts of service, such as assisting in building homes, planting trees, and giving English language lessons to native children.

Kelcey Harris, a sophomore studying Agriculture and Extended Education, had several reasons why she went on the trip. "I chose to go to Puerto Rico to gain experience for my major," said Harris. "My major involves a lot of travelling."

Harris also had many notable experiences during the trip, the most relevant to her major being the preservation of mangroves, a type of tree that grows in the region. "During the first full day of the trip, we were given a presentation on the mangroves, and learned that they are an endangered species of tree," Harris explained. Harris also said that working with the mangroves allowed her to see just how devastating a lot of the demolition taking place in Puerto Rico is to the environment. "I felt obligated to replenish the quantity of the different kinds of mangroves," she said.

Christian Kaminec, a junior studying Information Science and Technology, also had some very positive experiences on the trip. "I wanted to work in an environment where I could do something different and where a change could be seen," said Kaminec. "I wanted to do something good for the world, which is

CAMPUS LIFE

satisfying, and I also like to travel and be submerged in other cultures,” he added.

Kaminec also talked about his experience working in the Vietnam Community, an area in Puerto Rico where many Vietnam War veterans settled after the war’s end. “The area was so poor, so oppressed by the municipal government,” said Kaminec.

“However, despite their unfortunate circumstances, the inhabitants of the region still showed us incredible hospitality and gratitude for us helping them so much,” he added. Kaminec said that a majority of the work he had to do in the community was gardening, which due to the incredibly thick shrubbery required the use of a machete. Kaminec also mentioned that he enjoyed speaking to the natives about their culture and personal experiences.

“Seeing some of the natives we were working with talk about their own experiences, showing us where they grew up and liked to dine was a very powerful and enriching experience,” he said.

Sandra Muhhuku, a sophomore studying Petroleum Engineering, had her own reasons for going on the trip. During last year’s spring break, Muhhuku traveled to Washington D.C. to help feed the homeless as part of that year’s service learning trip. “I had an amazing time in DC last year, and I thought going to Puerto Rico would be an even better experience and I’ve always wanted to go to the Caribbean,” said Muhhuku.

Muhhuku thought that working with the communities in Puerto Rico was the most memorable experience of the trip. “Seeing how passionate they were about their communities and the environment was great,” she said. Muhhuku also said that getting to experience the Puerto Rican culture, food, and music was an experience she will never forget. “Going Salsa dancing was definitely a highlight for me,” she added.

Penn State New Kensington is dedicated to the improvement of both local communities and communities throughout the United States and around the world, and they plan to continue similar projects in the years to come.



PSNK students helping the community in Puerto Rico. (Photo Courtesy of PSNK Student Life)

CAMPUS LIFE

To Infinity and be THON'd

By Paige Owens

STATE COLLEGE, Pa. -- The Bryce Jordan Center (BJC) at Penn State University Park erupted with thousands of cheers and vibrant T-shirts from students, volunteers, and families during THON Weekend 2015, which took place starting at 6 p.m. Feb. 20 through until 4 p.m. on Feb. 22.

Each year since 1977, Penn State students from the surrounding branch campuses and University Park gather together in State College for a 46 hour dance marathon to raise money for children with pediatric cancer. Penn State has raised over \$127 million dollars for the Four Diamonds fund at Penn State Hershey Children's Hospital since the creation of THON. THON Weekend 2015 generated a staggering total of \$13,026,653.23, according to the official THON organization

Over 700 Penn State students are recognized as THON dancers from various organizations, fraternities, and campuses. This year, Brooke Churma, a senior Corporate Communications major, and Alex Pedder, a sophomore Mechanical Engineering major, represented Penn State New Kensington (PSNK) as THON dancers.

Pedder explained that he experienced his first THON Weekend in 2014. "After seeing my first THON and seeing the experiences people were having on the dance floor, I knew I wanted to be a dancer this year," said Pedder.

Churma and Pedder had been preparing for

months in order to be selected as the two dancers to represent PSNK. Their preparation consisted of a healthy diet, which excluded alcohol, caffeine, and sugar. A healthy diet was required in order to prepare the dancers for a 46 hour weekend without sleep or sitting down.

"Alex joked multiple times Thursday night that it was like we were being prepped to go into The Hunger Games the next day," Churma enthusiastically stated. "It was honestly like luxury everything and then it's like, 'okay go to war now!' But it has been so fun the entire time."

Each dancer was not alone in their journey through THON Weekend. The dancers' families, friends, campus members, and perhaps most importantly, their personal Dancer Relations Committee Member (DRCM), were all present to support and cheer on the dancers.

The volunteers for THON Weekend were all divided and distinguished by different colored T-shirts. DRCM volunteers wore yellow, while those in charge of Rules and Regulations wore red, Public Relations wore purple, and Hospitality food distributors wore pink.

CAMPUS LIFE



PSNK dancers Alex Pedder and Brooke Churma enjoy time with Theresa Bonk and Churma's DRCM, Derek Stufflet. (Photo by Darren Myers)

"My favorite part of THON would probably be just interacting with our DRCM's," said Churma.

"They're personally there for us at all times and they're perfect matches, I think, for the both of us. I couldn't have asked for anyone better. Your DRCM is like your own little, personal cheerleader and they're in charge of making sure you stay motivated at all times."

Harte Olechowski, a sophomore studying Biology

and a DRCM this year, discussed her experience and the pride she had in helping to inspire her dancer.

"We're there to support our dancers physically, but also mentally and emotionally," Olechowski said. "We make sure they're eating and drinking water all the time. We also have to make sure they're stretching. That's one of the biggest things. We help to inspire them and when they hit their low points, we help bring them back up by having them play with one of the kids or by reminding them why they're here."

Caroline Ryan, a sophomore studying Biomedical Engineering at University Park, explained her position in Rules and Regulations (R&R) during an interview throughout THON weekend. "With R&R, it's more about making sure everyone follows the rules," Ryan said. "We're in the stands, throughout the mezzanine, and some of us are out on the floor right now making sure no one has taken the dancers' water or anything like that. We try to keep the peace and, in general, there aren't many issues because we're all here for the same cause."

THON Weekend was packed with events for families, kids, dancers, and the Penn State students and faculty to enjoy. One of the signature events that occurred periodically throughout the weekend was the Line Dance by the dancer relation officers. The Line Dance was a nearly five minute choreographed dance that kept the dancers and families motivated, active, and stretched. Pedder explained that stretching was an essential part of the weekend in order to get through the 46 hour marathon.

CAMPUS LIFE

Another event that drew in a nearly maximum capacity audience was the University Park athletic teams Pep Rally on Saturday evening. Each team put on a performance that they choreographed. The football team, men's soccer team, men's hockey team, and the men's gymnastics team were among the finalists for this dance competition. The winner was judged based on the loudest crowd reaction when the finalists were listed. The men's hockey team took the win with a crowd pleasing performance of a mash-up of "Come on Eileene" and "It's Raining Men," utilizing umbrellas, water guns, and various hockey equipment.

Among a variety of musical performances, fashion shows for the kids, and the 2015 Line Dance, audience members kept the dancers and kids motivated with colorful, creative THON inspired T-shirts and Greek organization letters. Penn State New Kensington was voted one of the best THON T-shirts this year by Onward State, an independent Penn State blog. The shirts read, "To infinity and be THON'd" with Buzz Lightyear from Toy Story under the phrase. The crafty letters and T-shirts helped keep up the spirits of the families, kids, and dancers at THON.

Throughout the weekend, students, families, faculty, and volunteers teamed together for the same reason: For The Kids (FTK).

After families of children with cancer took to the stage to share their stories and thank Penn State for the efforts that they have given for the last 43 years, a "Celebration of Life" video was played throughout the BJC. This heartbreaking

moment brought every individual together, arm in arm, hand in hand to commemorate and remember those children lost to pediatric cancer.

After nearly 46 hours on their feet, THON dancers enjoyed one more Line Dance and then were finally able to sit down. The Nittany Lion mascot, a participating dancer for the entire weekend, collapsed on stage in front of the crowd.

To conclude another successful THON Weekend, the total amount for donations was announced. The top five Commonwealth Campuses, independent dancer couples, general organizations, Greek organizations, and special interest organizations amounts raised were announced before revealing the grand total of donations raised for THON that year. Penn State New Kensington's THON organization raised \$28,000.00 on their own in the last year of fundraising.

THON Weekend exists to provide the kids with pediatric cancer a chance to forget their illness, and enjoy their lives to the fullest. It gives students the opportunity to participate in an event that may never be understood to fully unless you are able to experience THON Weekend for yourself. THON will continue to fundraise and collect donations in order to one day find a cure.

"One day we will dance in celebration. Until then, we dance for a cure." - THON 2015

CAMPUS LIFE

Helping a Child One Bag at a Time

By Darren Myers



Photo by Free Illustration

NEW KENSINGTON, Pa. – Penn State New Kensington (PSNK) clubs are mandated to fulfill a community service requirement each semester. A popular project that clubs are working on this semester is “Children Moving Easier.”

“Children Moving Easier” is an organization that helps foster kids move to and from different foster homes. The organization accepts gently used bags and luggage of any kind including draw-string gym bags and carry-on luggage. The bags are used to help the less fortunate kids carry their belongings wherever they go. The bags and luggage are due to each club's adviser no later than April 15.

“Any type of bag is better than the garbage bag they’re currently using,” said freshman Kristy Parola, an active ROTC member, Athletic Training major, and founder of this bag project.

Typically, kids in foster homes do not have any type of bag to carry around the little clothing or toys they do have and are, therefore, forced to resort to carrying around a garbage bag.

Every \$25 a club donates to “Children Moving Easier” is worth one hour of community service. Each club needs a minimum of \$200 collected if they are considering participation in this project. Any club that would like to participate in this project will need to collect 20 bags and submit them to Parola for collection and final count for “Children Moving Easier.”

This project hits close to home for Parola since her younger sister was adopted from a foster home at the age of four, so she understands and has seen first-hand how each donation helps. “I feel for these kids,” says Parola, “there’s a lot of charities for cancer, which is great, but you don’t see a lot of things for kids of adoption.”

The bag project is a brand new idea. Parola had the idea in high school, but she found difficulty executing it. “You just have more freedom (in college) because there aren't as many rules and regulations,” she said.

The PSNK Baseball Club has taken the bag project idea and ran with it, collecting over 50 bags as a group. When asked, during a phone interview, about collecting bags for their community service project, Treasurer of the Baseball Club and Electro-Mechanical Engineering and Technology major sophomore Dan Quast said, “The fact we were able to collect 50 (bags) with a

CAMPUS LIFE

fairly small team was incredible and that we would help just that many more kids was great news.”

Penn State New Kensington is not the only place gathering bags to donate. The Air Force Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC) is also participating in this bag project. Parola is a part of the Air Force ROTC detachment 730 in Pittsburgh where she is involved in the community service flight. The idea for the bag project was originally brought up there and was then later brought to the attention of the Lion Ambassadors at Penn State.

Parola, also a Footwear Associate at Dick's Sporting Goods at the Galleria at the Pittsburgh Mills, brought the idea of the bag project to her co-workers' attention. By generous donation, the staff and company have donated 52 bags to the project.

Currently, the bag total sits at 150 and that number continues to rise. As the days go on, more and more bags are being delivered by clubs and students alike.

The deadline, previously planned for March 19, has been extended until Wednesday April 15, so there is still time to donate. The total number of bags donated will be announced on Monday, April 20. Parola will hang posters around campus informing everyone of how many bags were donated.

In previous years, clubs have completed a range of community service projects such as Penny Wars - where clubs set up tin cans in order to raise mon-

ey. The cans are labeled with a particular organization or cause. At the end of the project, the money collected is then donated to the organization.

Last semester, other clubs also created baskets for the annual Basket Bingo event that took place in Café 780 and goes towards raising money for the campus' THON organization. One club even donated a basket to the international students on campus.

These projects, however, are not the only community service projects that clubs can participate in. Clubs may choose a community service project of their own as long as it is pre-approved by Student Life Coordinator Lauren Blum

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CAMPUS LIFE

Penn State New Kensington Welcomes Jazz Exhibit

By Sarah Steighner

NEW KENSINGTON, Pa. – An intimate crowd of approximately 20 people gathered to view the photography jazz exhibit of Kenan Foley, Nelson Harrison, and Ronald Jones during a reception held at Penn State New Kensington on Feb. 7.



Local jazz musicians entertain guests during the jazz photography exhibit and reception at Penn State New Kensington on Feb. 7. (Photo by Sarah Steighner)

The evening was set in a tasteful environment that jazz often evokes. Jazz music floated through the air, as people walked through the Art Gallery admiring the photography, while picking at cheese trays and sipping glasses of Merlot. The night's theme was, "Photo Jazz: Come and See the Music." The reception, a chance to view the artwork, and hear jazz music was open to the public free of charge. The exhibit itself was open to the public for viewing until Feb. 27 at the Penn State New Kensington (PSNK) Art Gallery.

The wall dedicated to Harrison's work, highlighted the Crawford Grill. The Crawford Grill, located in the Hill District of Pittsburgh, opened in 1943 and closed in 2003. Harrison described the Crawford Grill in its heyday as a sacred place similar to church. "There used to be 30 clubs just in the Hill District, but the Crawford Grill was a jazz shrine," said Harrison.

Harrison's photographs of various musicians performing throughout the years, showed different angles of the Crawford Grill. Photographs of tap dancers, musicians holding instruments larger than themselves, and people grinning ear to ear at the bar were immortalized in Harrison's jazz exhibit.

"When the Crawford Grill was open, you couldn't walk down the street without hearing music. Jazz was the soundtrack of the community," said Harrison. "I've been in the Crawford Grill since it closed and you can still feel the vibes in that place."

CAMPUS LIFE

The next wall of artwork featured photographs by Kenan Foley. Foley is a former adjunct instructor at PSNK. He explained that he has taught many aspects of music and jazz including jazz in films, women in jazz, the influence of jazz, and understanding jazz. "People all respond to jazz differently and students respond to parallel stories," said Foley.

Some of his photographs included the Crawford Grill, as well as some of Nelson Harrison playing trumpet on the street. "These pictures of Harrison are evocative of corner bars in African American communities, like Homewood," said Foley. "I feel like these pictures bring to mind all the little no name bars and clubs that played jazz. It is where everyone had the opportunity for jazz to develop."

As Foley introduced each photograph on his wall, he demonstrated the precise alignment of some and the "accidental composition" in others.

Foley credited his favorite musical mentor, Mike Taylor of Bridgewater. Taylor played at the Crawford Grill in the mid 90's. The exhibit even featured a long lost photograph of Taylor taken by Foley. "This exhibition was an excuse for me to find the picture of Mike Taylor," said Foley. "I eventually found it in mixed in with my family photos and was able to dig it out for this exhibit."

Foley recommended the James Street Gastropub and Speakeasy located on the Northside of Pittsburgh for those interested in what is left of the local jazz scene. The James Street Gastropub is a family owned bar and restaurant that has regular jazz nights from local artists. It is located on 422 Foreland Street in Pittsburgh.

The final wall of photographs was taken by Ronald Jones. Jones' artwork featured multiple dark backgrounds that highlighted the musicians. Jones is a self-taught photographer who has recently retired after 33 years as an electrician.

Art Gallery Director, Tina Sluss, admired the photographs as she mingled around the gallery with the other guests. "You can just see the history jumping out of these photographs," said Sluss.

Harrison has founded the Pittsburgh Jazz Network. He explained that this online network reaches every continent. "Its purpose is to tell jazz stories and welcome comments to keep jazz thriving," he said.

Those interested in upcoming jazz related events or simply looking to connect with other jazz enthusiasts are welcome to visit the site of the Pittsburgh Jazz Network at jazzburgher.ning.com

CAMPUS LIFE

Job Fair Student Perspective

By Eric Bennardo

MONROEVILLE, Pa. – Spring break 2015 proved unforgettable for me, as I attended the Western Pennsylvania Collegiate Job and Internship Fair (WESTPAC) in search of my first professional job. It was both a stressful, but exciting experience.

It was recommended that I attend this event by Jim Shields, the Penn State New Kensington Career Services Director, as well as several of my fellow upperclassmen. Additionally, there were several other factors that led to me attending the fair. First of all, it was free, therefore money was not an issue. Secondly, it took place at the Monroeville Convention Center, which is less than thirty minutes from my house, so the location was convenient. The final reason as to why I attended was because it took place on the Wednesday during spring break, so I, nor any other Penn State students in attendance had to worry about missing any classes or meetings.



Jamie Simms giving the welcome speech on how to rock a job fair (Photo by Ryan McLaughlin).

In preparation for the fair, I went to the WESTPAC website and printed out the list of 156 employers attending the job fair. I then made my own list of companies that I felt would be a good fit for me. Next, I finalized my resume and made the appropriate number of copies. While I knew that this would be a worthwhile experience, I had no idea just how rewarding it would actually be.

Once I arrived at the fair and went through registration, I immediately began seeking out the companies I was interested in. This was a very tedious task because of the large amount of company booths that were set up, as well as several hundred job seekers in attendance.

I ended up looking at some companies that I did not initially intend to, including a financial advising firm, Wal-Mart, and Rite Aid. While the conversations I had with the recruiters from these companies were not particularly fruitful, it was still nice to get some more practice approaching a potential employer.

CAMPUS LIFE

Another unexpected thing happened to me while at the fair. As I was walking down one of the aisles, I saw one of my friends who graduated from the Penn State New Kensington campus in 2014 who was recruiting for her company, PLS Logistics. This company was not on my list, but after talking to her for a couple of minutes, I considered applying for a sales position there.

Once I was finished with PLS, I then made it a priority to seek out the employers I had initially come to see. I managed to talk to several of these companies, such as Comcast, Comcast Spotlight and Prudential. I also spoke to recruiters from the PA Department of Environmental Protection, PA Department of Public Welfare, City of Pittsburgh, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), along with several other state organizations.

While most of the state recruiters did not have a whole lot to offer me, it was good to get my resume out to the variety of companies from various industries. The other companies, however, showed much more interest in me as a soon-to-be communications post-graduate, which was very exciting and motivating for me. The final recruiter that I wanted to visit was UPMC, but when I found the booth there was a long line of anxiously awaiting job applicants. As I was pressed for time, I was unable to wait.

In conclusion, I think it is important for college students to attend career fairs. The first reason it is so important may be the most obvious, which is to find a job. The second, perhaps less obvious reason, is to network with employers and other job seekers.

While finding a job is the primary goal of these events, networking and making connections is just as important. This is because when you make a connection with someone, you then have access to some of their network of connection, which starts a whole new plethora of opportunities for you as you look for the job that will set your career in motion. Therefore, I hope that the next time Jim Shields or a classmate tells you that you should attend a job fair, you will at least consider it. You only have to meet that one right person to get the job of your dreams.

CAMPUS LIFE

Students Enjoy Wings and Sings

By Paige Owens

NEW KENSINGTON, Pa. — Penn State New Kensington's Student Life held the second Wings and Sings event of the academic year on Wednesday March 18 at 8 p.m. in Café 780.

Penn State students came to this after hours event for free wings, karaoke, and plenty of fun. Within the first half an hour of the event, all the wings that had been prepared were devoured by students, however, the crowd was still growing and anticipating free food.

In order to solve this issue, Student Life ordered pizza from off campus to feed the students showing up after the start of the event.

Overall, the event was a huge success. Faculty and students were able to enjoy the food and have some time to dance, sing, and have fun with one another.



Photos courtesy of PSNK Student Life.

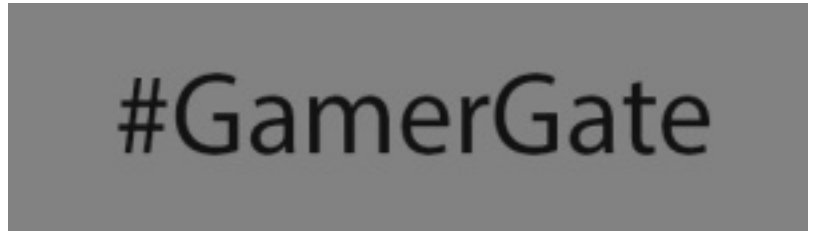
ENTERTAINMENT

Gamers Divided by Gate

By Ryan McLaughlin

NEW KENSINGTON, Pa.—Since August 2014, a controversy has broken out that has concerned video gamers and feminists alike. This cause has taken on the title of #GamerGate, and it has the misfortune of dividing and demonizing video gamers every year.

An article in Forbes magazine, from Sept. 4, 2014 helped pinpoint the beginning of this controversy. According to Erik Kain, the controversy started with critic, Anita Sarkeesian, and developer, Zoe Quinn. Both women received harsh harassment and multiple threats of injury and against their lives, which caused them to relocate.



Hashtag divides the gaming world (Graphic by Ryan McLaughlin).

Sarkeesian received these threats because of her show, "Feminist Frequency," which points out misogynist tendencies that she has found within games and gaming. Critics of the show point out holes in her arguments, whereas other haters of the show have threatened her life.

The press took this scandal, and seemingly, blew it out of proportion. In fact, many gaming sites such as Kotaku; Rock, Paper, Shotgun, and Polygon all began writing stories that the gamer was dead. This news sent shock waves throughout the gaming community. The majority of gamers had nothing to do with these attacks and most likely did not know about Quinn before these attacks. These types of stories then started animosity between gamers and the press and caused tension between gamers and feminists.

An article from Gamasutra by Leigh Alexander showed how the image of what a gamer was is now outdated. "By the turn of the millennium those were games' only main cultural signposts: Have money. Have women. Get a gun and then a bigger gun," said Alexander. "Be an outcast. Celebrate that. Defeat anyone who threatens you. You don't need cultural references. You don't need anything but gaming."

This mentality was outdated even when Alexander was referring to early gaming. We did not just have masculine power fantasies, but those games were highly successful and played by more than just men. Alexander then drops this antagonist tidbit. "'Gamer' isn't just a dated demographic label that most people increasingly prefer not to use," Alexander said. "Gamers are over. That's why they're so mad."

ENTERTAINMENT

On the contrary, gamers continue to exist, and a gamer is not an exclusive title that only men can wear. There are many female gamers out there, as well as female developers and journalists.

Alexander was also referencing another article on Gamasutra, which was written by Brandon Sheffield. Sheffield discussed retiring the word “gamer” in order to make video games more socially acceptable. “If you want to call yourself a gamer, fine,” Sheffield said. “I can't tell you what to do. But if you want to start changing the public perception of the game playing public, so that the definition includes everyone who plays games, I say it's time to retire the word ‘gamer.’”

The next cause of escalation came from a source that was not a gamer. Adam Baldwin became famous in so-called nerd culture from the cancelled show Firefly. He wrote a tweet about the whole affair and added “#GamerGate.” The movement now had a name, and sparks began flying.

As a result, gamers and those watching were forced to take sides. And for what? As far as I can see, no one wins here. If the movement was based on bringing attention to the gamer world, then it succeeded. However, #GamerGate claims that it's based around ethics in gaming journalism, but it's not. Anti-GamerGate people claim that it's feminists trying to ruin gaming, but it's not.

What #GamerGate shows is how vocal minorities can speak for the masses on both sides. No one has to take a side. In fact, the whole controversy should just be ignored so we can get back to playing the games we love, instead of arguing about what games and gaming should be.



ENTERTAINMENT

Green Floods Downtown Pittsburgh for St. Patty's Day Parade

By Paige Owens

PITTSBURGH, Pa.—St. Patrick's Day was celebrated early this year, as the annual St. Patty's Day Parade commenced on Saturday March 14 in Downtown Pittsburgh. Although the skies were grey, and the temperature peaked in the upper 40s, paradegoers stayed dry and warm under tents, umbrellas, and sipping on coffee.



Photo courtesy of pixabay.com

The Boulevard of the Allies was flooded with a sea of green T-shirts, shamrock shaped glasses, and dancing leprechauns as the parade began at 10 a.m. Saturday morning. Spectators gathered on the sidewalks, in parking garages, in bars, and in coffee shops along the streets to get a view of the festivities.

Pittsburgh's St. Patty's Day Parade is a tradition that has been celebrated since March 1869, according to Pittsburgh Irish online. Each year, the parade can be heard throughout the streets as bagpipes are played, horses trot down the pavement, and those dressed as leprechauns and in green costumes greet the children that have gathered to enjoy the tradition.

According to the official press release which included a list of events for Saturday morning and afternoon, the annual parade is the second largest in the country, which features over 23,000 participants and 200 marching units.

Point Park University senior, Vince Naglic, sported a green T-shirt and baseball cap as he celebrated with his friends along the Boulevard in front of the Point Park apartment building.

"It's been great attending Point Park for my past four years of college because it's nearly impossible to miss the parade," Naglic said. "I'm sad that I'll be graduating in May, but I'm sure I'll be back down to celebrate with my buddies next year!"

After the parade concluded at 1 p.m. the festivities continued in the Strip District, Southside, and in Market Square. Market Square hosted a party with live music, food, and of course, drinking for those of age. Despite the rain, the parade and celebration was a great success, as it is year after year.

ENTERTAINMENT

Steel City Slam League Keeps Poetry Alive

By Sarah Steigner

EAST LIBERTY, Pa. —The Pittsburgh Poetry Collective is at the forefront of the Pittsburgh poetry scene, offering opportunities for self-expression and the arts to thrive in the community.

The Pittsburgh Poetry Collective provides numerous programs including WordPlay workshops, the WordUp program that connects poets and the community, the YoungSteel youth slam league, and the Steel City Slam adult league.

The Steel City Slam league holds weekly events at the Capri Pizzeria and Bar located at 6001 Penn Avenue in East Liberty. Judges are selected randomly from the crowd, who rate each poem immediately following the performance. Based on the rankings at the end of each year, a team is then sent to the National Poetry Slam.

Each poetry night provides the chance for up to nine poets to sign up and perform. Additionally, up to six open-mic spots are available. With sign-ups starting at 7:45 p.m., the show begins around 8:30 p.m. and is finished by 11 p.m.

One of the recent poetry slam nights took place on Feb. 23. A small stage fashioning Pittsburgh Poetry Collective banners on each side was set up in the corner of the Capri Pizzeria and Bar. Poets signed up for their chance to perform as the audience mingled around talking and meandering over to the bar for a drink.



Danielle Ramsay (center) wins the Steel City Slam Poetry night at the Capri Pizzeria & Bar on March 10, 2015. (Photo by Lori Beth Jones)

Around 8:40 p.m., a guitarist took the stage to play his emotional, but original renditions of Sam Smith and Christina Perri song covers. Lori Beth Jones, the M.C. of the evening, then took the stage in an enthusiastically loud and charismatic manner. She addressed the poets, audience, and judges with her witty laced banter while describing the rules of the evening.

As the poetry portion of the evening started, some poets read from tattered notebooks, while others recited from heart, and the majority read from their phones reflecting the modernized poetry era.

As the eight poets stepped forward, they each had their own unique style. One captivating style held true for many as they gradually got louder and faster with energy and emotion,

ENTERTAINMENT

never missing a beat except when pausing for emphasis. Poet Jesse Welch used entrancing hand motions that only furthered the audience's attention as he stepped down from the podium and into the audience to complete his performance.

Themes of each poetry included everything from racism, working in the fast food industry, relationships, depression, heritage, and techni-colored worlds.

A short intermission took place after the first round, where announcements of upcoming poetry events in Pittsburgh were listed. A sweet and endearingly relatable poem that started out, "I liked you more than I thought I would" was read before the next round began.

All eight poets made it to the second round to perform another set of poems. Poet Danielle Ramsay performed the first poem of round two with her piece, "Diagnostic Criteria." This edgy poem about depression, and struggle ended with a hopeful "Fragile but still flying" line.

Ramsay explained the variety of things she writes about. "I'm interested in raising awareness about mental illness and women's rights," Ramsay said as she talked about her positive experience with the Steel City Slam. "The Steel City Slam has already been a very important experience for me as a poet, by expanding my horizons, pushing me to be better, and especially by giving me the opportunity to represent the slam at a national event," she added.

While points were tallied after the second round,

a guitarist took the stage again this time performing Mumford and Son's "White Blank Page" in a rugged, but calm demeanor.

Three poets made it to the third round. Among them were Daniele Ramsay, Malcolm Friend, and Jesse Welch.

Ramsay performed a piece about being half Mexican. She described it as "the strange struggle with racism and feeling a part of the marginalized, but also never experiencing the real struggle of being a person of color."

Friend's final poem was titled "Roberto Clemente's Letter Home." His serious, but captivating poem infused with Spanish, won him second place.

Welch strongly began his final poem about a girl who smelled colors. His cleverly crafted wordsmanship left a smile on the audience's faces and won him first place for the evening.

The next Steel City Slam night is March 24 at 9 p.m. at the Capri Pizzeria & Bar. The Steel City Slam Grand Finals will be April 17 at the Union Project on 801 N. Negley Ave in Pittsburgh. The top 13 Pittsburgh slam poets will battle each other to win a spot on the Steel City Slam Team that will be representing the city at the National Poetry Slam in Oakland, Calif. For more details about the Pittsburgh Poetry Collective organization visit www.pghpoetry.org

SPORTS

Tough as Steel, Heart of Gold: Introducing Local UFC Fighter

By Nico Regoli

LOWER BURRELL, Pa. -Industrial employee from Ambridge and 27 year old mixed martial arts (MMA) fighter, Chris Dempsey gets a second chance to become a star as he returns to the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) Octagon this April.

When a fighter pulls out of a UFC match there is always someone waiting by the phone, ready to step up, and take advantage of an opportunity to compete on the big stage.

Last year, Dempsey was lucky enough to get that call. Currently an employee at D&S Industrial Fasteners, Dempsey comes from a hardworking background. The son of a policeman, Dempsey made a name for himself at Ambridge High School. There, he was a 3-year starter and senior year captain of the football team, and a 4-year starter and captain of the wrestling team his junior and senior years.

His success continued into college, at the University of Pittsburgh Johnstown. There, the list of accolades within his wrestling pedigree grew, as he became a 4-year starter, a 4-year National qualifier, and a 2-year All American. During his sophomore year, Dempsey was granted the unique opportunity of helping former NFL player and Pitt-Johnstown wrestling legend, Carlton Haselrig, prepare for an MMA fight.

Dempsey described Haselrig with admiration as,



Chris Dempsey demonstrates a headlock on Nico Regoli

“probably the best college heavyweight of all

time.” The two would become friends, and through that experience, Dempsey realized his own desire to be involved in MMA, which he would pursue post-graduation.

Dempsey was offered a chance to make his UFC debut on July 19, 2014 fighting against Swedish wrestler, Ilir Latifi, on July 19, 2014 in Dublin, Ireland after beginning his career in Heavyweight (265 pounds) and going professional at Light Heavyweight. He accepted the offer, and became the very first member of The Mat Factory Wrestling Club, stationed in Lower Burrell, to be hired by a major promotion.

“It was a crazy day,” Dempsey said. “I was at work that day, and I got a text message about an open spot for a fight in Dublin, Ireland. I didn’t really think I was going to get it, but I called Oren (Hodak), my manager in Dallas, and he was like, ‘Alright, we’ll try for it.’”

SPORTS

Once he was told the fight was official that day he left work, and headed to the gym three hours early, signed the paperwork, and later that night during jiu-jitsu class, told everyone on the mats the good news.

Unfortunately, the fight was over in two minutes and seven seconds, as Latifi kicked Dempsey's leg, and then knocked him out with a nasty punch.

"Going in, I was like, 'Man, I have a hard head. Nobody can knock me out,'" Dempsey explained, "Getting knocked out, I mean, anybody gets hit the right way, you can get knocked out, and that kind of proved it to myself. So, I think, if anything it will help me for the future, to be smarter and stay in better positions, and not think that I'm invincible."

However, Dempsey is being given another chance to impress, and after months of working nine-to-five, waiting for another phone call, Dempsey is finally scheduled to return to the Octagon, back at his natural home of Middleweight (185 pounds), in Newark, New Jersey's Prudential Center, on April 18.

Dempsey is happy to have the additional preparation time, mentioning, "I have more to, to think about the fight, to visualize the fight, and everything in my head. I feel like I'm going to be in better shape, because I have a full training camp, and I get to go back to my original weight class."

Headlining this event will be Former UFC Light Heavyweight Champion, Lyoto "THE DRAGON" Machida, in a Middleweight contest against For-

mer Strikeforce Middleweight Champion, Luke Rockhold. The winner of this fight could be the next potential challenger for the UFC Middleweight Championship.

The event will be broadcasted on two platforms, starting with four preliminary fights streaming live from the subscription-based UFC Fight Pass online network (starting at 4:15 PM ET), and then the remaining eight fights will be showcased on Fox (starting at 6:00 PM ET). Dempsey will be featured in the opening fight on Fight Pass.

Standing across the cage from Dempsey will be Eddie "TRUCK" Gordon. Gordon is the Season 19 Middleweight Winner of the UFC's longtime reality series, The Ultimate Fighter. In an interview conducted through email, MMA Fighter and Penn State New Kensington's wrestling coach, Francis Healy feels that while Gordon is a big, talented prospect, he is also "tenacious, but sloppy in his technique."

"Gordon is a great up-and-coming UFC talent, and a perfect test for Dempsey," Greeley said, in an online interview. "He needs to weather the storm, but Chris will win the war if it comes down to who has the bigger heart, and that's what we're banking on. Chris will never lose a fight based on heart. We want a war!"

SPORTS



Chris Dempsey utilizes MMA fighting techniques on a student.
(Photo by Eddie Vincent)

“There’s only really two ways you can come back, and it’s worrying about you getting knocked out in the past, or learning from it and building from it,” said Dempsey.

Regardless of what Gordon does though, people will still know who he is after this fight, win or lose. His time on *The Ultimate Fighter* has made him someone MMA fans recognize. Dempsey on the other hand, has yet to establish himself as someone the UFC’s Middleweight Division should watch out for.

In this sport, one performance can change everything for anyone, and cards with multiple names attract multiple eyeballs. So, it makes sense for Dempsey to believe that a win over Gordon, on a card as stacked as this one on April 18 should surely help establish his presence within the UFC. No doubt, repeating this process one fight at a time, will eventually help the spotlight find him.

Having faith in your coaches and your team is certainly not a bad strategy either, especially when their teaching lead to success. Under the Team Mat Factory banner, Dempsey has won 10 of his 12 professional fights (according to Sherdog.com), and he attributes all of that success to the care his coaches have for the progression of their students.

Dempsey praises his coaches, stating, “Eddie and Issac are just here, and they want to see us succeed, and they’re good-hearted people. You can’t really ask for better people to be around.”

Ideally, Dempsey wants to push himself to the absolute limit, leave no stone unturned, and eliminate all room for excuses.

“I fight because I don’t want to be that guy, in the bar, at 45 saying, ‘Oh, this is what I could’ve done.’”



Photos courtesy of PSNK Student Life and Onward State.