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PSNK Professor Backpacks Her Way Through Spain

The Truly Magnificent Seven

Jon McCabe: Making Your Vote Matter (Part 1)

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“My Vote Matters” Welcomes a New President

by Kierstin Flickinger
Managing Editor

NEW KENSINGTON, Pa. – Senior Criminal Justice major Adam Johnson took on the all-important role of “My Vote Matters” president for his final year in order to both register students to vote and educate students on politics.

“My Vote Matters” is a non-partisan club on the New Kensington campus that is attempting to register the majority of students on campus to vote in elections. The club also wants to educate students on candidates in both local and state elections. Non-partisan means that the club does not advocate for any particular party, or attempt to only register students in one party.

“I just recently got an interest into politics,” Johnson said. “I think that the youth are finally starting to be concerned about where the country is headed. Plus, I was told that there was no president [of the club] and that kind of concerned me.”



“My Vote Matters” president Adam Johnson (Photo courtesy of Kierstin Flickinger)

Johnson is only one piece of the larger force to revamp the “My Vote Matters” club.

“Adam acquired this position recently,” Ashley Worlds, a senior Bio Behavioral Health major, and treasurer for ‘My Vote Matters’, said. “A lot of people recommended that he become president, and I think that Dr. Wood saw this, and realized that he would be a great president for the new ‘My Vote Matters.’”

New is a relative word, because “My Vote Matters” was a recognized club on campus last year, but this is the first year the club will exist without any of the original founders. Only two club members, Nico Regoli and Kierstin Flickinger, had been members of this club before then.

“Adam’s passion for voting and his commitment to get people registered makes him a great choice for president of the club,” club advisor Dr. Jennifer Wood said.

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“If Adam hadn’t stepped up, we wouldn’t have a ‘My Vote Matters’ club this year. He has wonderful ideas and steps right up to get things done,” Wood added.

“I was a Student Orientation Leader this year,” Johnson said. “So, I got a chance to talk to a lot of the freshmen and they didn’t seem like they had much concern for any daily events, and I think we’ve got to do something about that.”

Freshman Ian Fagan, however, seemed to be very interested in the topic of politics. As one of the newest members of the club, Fagan is relatively unaware of what actually happens in the club. As he sat in on his first “My Vote Matters” club meeting, Fagan asked questions about past events and registering students to vote.

“I know a lot of people that need to vote,” Fagan said. “How do I get people off campus to register to vote? Like, it’s really important.”

“I basically set up a table every Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday,” Johnson said. “And I encourage people, with my loud, annoying voice, to vote and see if they’re registered.”

Johnson said that he was surprised at how many students on campus are already registered to vote.

“All of the other years [that “My Vote Matters” has been on campus], we had way more people who were willing to register with us,” he said. “And now, it’s like, students all saying that they already registered in high school. I think it has to do with the Trump election. My goal is to register every single student on this campus who can be.”

Johnson also placed emphasis on the importance of educating students on local government.

“I think that people see a distance between them and the government,” he said. “People have stopped seeing the government as people who work for them. It’s why I want to host more events like we’ve done in past years, especially since Jon McCabe is running. I want to reach out to him to help us set up a panel again.”

“My Vote Matters” registers students on campus on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays during common hour outside of Café 780.

“The last day to register to vote in the November election is Oct 6,” Johnson reminded. “So, please try to get to the registration table and make your voice heard in the election.”

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PSNK Spanish Professor Backpacks Her Way Through Spain

by Ryan Fiore
Editor-In-Chief



Professor Melba Amador (second from the left) with *camino* family (Photo Courtesy of Melba Amador)

NEW KENSINGTON, Pa. - While most people go on vacation or attend concerts and sporting events during their summer break from school, one of Penn State New Kensington's very own professors got the chance to do what many people can only dream of doing in their lifetime: backpacking through another country.

Penn State New Kensington Spanish professor, Melba Amador had the opportunity to walk a path through Spain in two weeks, and also had the luxury of spending five additional weeks in Spain as a tourist.

"I'd been hearing about it for a while because it's related to Spain, my field of studies," Amador said. "It's called 'the way of St. James' because it is thought that the apostle St. James is buried in this town called Santiago de Compostela. St. James in Spanish is Santiago. Compostela is actually what you get once you've walked the *camino*. It's kind of like a certificate that says you've done it. The actual *camino* I ended up doing was about ten days."

The *camino* Amador chose was the French way, or *Camino Frances*. The French way begins in St. Jean Pied de Port, taking about 30-40 days to complete.

Though Amador did not intend on walking the whole way, a missed flight forced her to make some adjustments to her route. She ended up starting more than halfway through the *camino* in Astorga and walking all the way to Santiago.

"It was awesome, but in so many ways," she expressed. "It's interesting because when you're doing it, all I could think about every day I was walking was, 'Why the heck did I get into this? Why did I have to do this?' What some of the people doing the entire 800 kilometers were telling me was during the first week, it's all about the physical pain. Then, once you start walking more and more, you start going into parts of yourself you didn't know about. You start pondering about your existence, so then it transcends the physical."

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Along the *camino*, Amador, who had never been to Spain before, encountered many experiences different than here in the states.

“It was very different,” Amador noted. “It’s not an experience and it’s not a feeling that you have every day. It had its challenges, but at the end of the day, you felt proud of yourself; so satisfied with what you did, even if it wasn’t a great day.”

“I had been sort of preparing for about a year and I say ‘sort of’ because I really didn’t prepare physically which is what I should’ve done,” she described. “I should’ve worked on endurance on walking with a backpack, but I hadn’t. In reality, I even got sick about two weeks before I left. Classes ended, so I thought, ‘Perfect! I’ll just spend every day training, walking up and down the hills in Verona for practice.’ Well, I got sick so I couldn’t do that, so physically I did not prepare at all. If I were to do it again, I’d definitely work on endurance and work on training and get physically ready.”

She added, “It’s funny because when I finished, I was like, ‘That’s it. I’m not doing this again. This is it, but then once it was over, it was like, ‘which one do I want to do now? Do I want to do the French way again or do I want to do the Portuguese way?’”

Amador may not have been physically prepared when it comes to endurance, but she was physically prepared when it came to necessities.

“I think I had less than 15 pounds in the backpack,” Amador said. “People recommend that it be 10% of your body weight, but in reality, it should be what you’ve trained with and what you know you can carry.”

Because space was limited and what you brought is what you carried, Amador’s backpack contained accessories vital to what she would need for the nearly two week long trail. Items included a change of clothes, a poncho, sandals, water, medicine, and sometimes a snack.

“There are some services that for five euros, they’ll take your pack ahead to the next *albergue*, and I did use it a couple times, but five euros every time adds up,” she added.

According to Amador, “Some shelters are provided by the government and some are private and they’re called *albergues*. Some of the places are just five or ten euros to spend the night, but that meant that you were probably in a big, huge room with like 50 bunk beds and a few bathrooms and that was it.”

Amador also mentioned the ways life is different in Spain compared to the United States.

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“It’s very different. They still have the *siesta*. It’s from 2-4 everyday and some places close like banks and pharmacies because that’s their lunchtime. So people will have lunch, pick up their kids at school, or whatever it is they need to do during that time. What that means is that they’re not done with their jobs at five. They’re done at six or seven, depending on their schedule.”

Because of the *siesta*, dinner time is later than it is in the states.

“Meal times are later so it's very common to go to a restaurant at ten or eleven o'clock. That's when people are eating their dinner. They have *tapas* or *pinchos*, depending on the region, during what would be our happy hour, so if you have a beer or wine, they'll bring you a little plate with an appetizer. For every glass that you ask, they'll bring you another little plate of whatever appetizer.”

“It's also very common to pass by a plaza or town square and see people dancing or sitting on a bench just talking and I'm not just talking about young people,” Amador added. “I'm talking about people in their 60s, 70s, and 80s. It's just part of the culture.”

Among the new experiences Amador encountered was different kinds of food.

“Ham in Spain is really good. I had an appetizer plate of *jamón ibérico con melón* (ham with melon). It was such a great combination. It was so good. It was very light, but so good.”

Amador described her favorite breakfast meal, *pan con tomate*; bread with tomato.

“It’s not even sandwich bread. It was rustic type bread and they cut it thin, they toast it, and then they smear tomato on it. Then, you drizzle some olive oil on top and if you wanted to, you could put a little bit of salt on top. It’s so simple, but oh so good! I have to say that was my favorite breakfast with, of course, fresh orange juice.”

“One very common meal is called *ensalada mixta*; a mixed salad. A mixed salad is not what you would think here in the states. Yes, it has lettuce, it has shredded carrots, olives and different little things, but then it has tuna on top and at first when I heard about it, I thought, ‘Oh my God. Who would put tuna in a salad?’ and after I tried it, I was like, ‘Oh my gosh, these people are geniuses!’”

Amador jokingly added that the toast was not the kind that shares her name - Melba toast.

Though homesickness is very common among travelers, Amador had an interesting

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experience leaving Spain and returning home.

“After living out of a backpack for about six weeks, all of the sudden, you come back and I remember coming back to my house here, standing in the middle of the living room, just looking around and thinking that ‘1. This place is so big’ and ‘2. I have so much junk. Why do I have all this?’,” she recollected. “I was very happy and very organized and doing fine with just a couple of outfits that I had in my backpack. It was such a shock coming back.”

Amador’s return home presented her with the opportunity to share the story of her journey with many students, staff, and faculty at Penn State New Kensington.

During her Sept. 24 presentation, “300 Kilometers to Santiago de Compostela: Backpacking Through Spain on a Journey of Self Discovery,” Amador spoke of the saying, “*ultreia, et suseia*”, a term used to greet other pilgrims along the *camino*.

“It used to be a shout out that pilgrims gave each other,” she mentioned during her presentation. “It kind of means ‘go farther, go upper.’ If a pilgrim walks by and says, ‘*ultreia*’, you’re supposed to say, ‘*et suseia*’. Nowadays, the more common one is ‘*buen camino*’, which means ‘good way.’ Instead of saying ‘good morning’, you would say, ‘*buen camino*’.

Though Amador began her travels alone, she made plenty of friends along the way.

“We have a little group on *WhatsApp* and every once in a while, we communicate,” Amador stated. “It’s kind of tricky because there’s still a six hour difference. Some of us are just waking up when they’re already almost done with their day, so the conversations are really interesting.”

Amador’s advice for anyone wanting to walk the *camino* is essential.

“You need to prepare yourself because not everyone’s *camino* is the same,” she forewarned. “Some people will find *camino* family - friends you meet on the *camino* - right away, but some other people will just be lonely the entire time.”

Amador lastly mentioned, “**People say that the *camino* gives you what you need, not what you want.**”

COMMUNITY

The Corner's Sustainability Project Proves Successful

By Ryan Pawloski
Staff Writer and Reporter

NEW KENSINGTON, Pa. - The sustainability project held in downtown New Kensington at the Corner focused on sustainable energy and bringing attention to different energy sources to the area.

The day consisted of many speakers and presentations on a wide variety of topics throughout the day. The workshop was held in at different locations in downtown New Kensington. Locations included The Corner, Knead Café, Westmoreland County Community College, and Modfinish.

The day began with breakfast and time for walking around and looking at the exhibits on display. The next event moved onto introductions and a presentation by WPPSEF. The day then lead to a panel on sustainability's importance to the rust belt.

Events continued through the day with a wide variety of topics that focused on city planning and thinking of plans for the city of New Kensington. Some events that included food also occurred with free coffee and a lunch with keynote speaker, Grant Ervin.

Ruth Herstek, the assistant coordinator for academic success at Penn State New Kensington, helped arrange the entire workshop. She was very excited about the keynote speaker.

"We are extremely excited to have Grant Ervin, Chief Resilience Officer for the city of Pittsburgh, as our key note speaker," she explained.

Ervin spoke about many different things affecting the city of Pittsburgh and the surrounding area. He focused on energy and all of the changes that could be made to help benefit the area. He also spoke on the global scale and how much a difference switching to sustainable energy can affect the planet.



Keynote speaker Grant Ervin speaks to the crowd about the sustainability project at Knead Café (Photo courtesy of Ryan Pawloski).

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Many different businesses were present at the workshop. People from local businesses and also from the local community gathered at the event. Many people walked away impressed with what they saw during the event.

A man attending the event was excited to be there to see how this project is going.

“This event highlights all of the good things that this revitalization project is trying to accomplish,” he said.

The event showed potential investors like this man how the project has evolved over time. This workshop also showed how successful this project has become.

The day was helped by the many different volunteers who gave their assistance throughout the day. The volunteers were led by Jake Boney. Boney is currently doing an internship that relates to the sustainability project.

Even though he was focused to help accomplish this project, he wants to take some things away from this experience.

“My goal is to gain experience that will help me excel in applying sustainable habits to my professional and personal future,” he said.

The volunteers had different tasks throughout the event; things like throwing away the trash and cleaning up while events were going on. Joshua Miller who is a student at Penn State New Kensington stated, “I helped by showing groups of people the way from the Knead Café to Westmoreland Community College.”

The volunteers helped anyone that needed directions throughout the day. The volunteers also helped move chairs and tables around to accommodate those that were attending the workshop.

The event brought many people together from the local area. Many people were talking and engaged throughout the workshop. The event created an exciting atmosphere for the future of the City of New Kensington.

Newly renovated buildings like the Knead Café and Modfinish show that this project that Penn State has been so involved in has promise. These new buildings made the area more vibrant and updated.

The workshop showed potential investors what has happened but more importantly what could happen soon.

POLITICS

Jon McCabe: Making Your Vote Matter (Part 1)

by Nico Regoli
Staff Writer and Reporter

NEW KENSINGTON, Pa. - On May 15, 2018, 10 days after graduating from Penn State New Kensington, Jon McCabe won his Democratic Primary race for a 54th District seat in the PA House of Representatives. On Sept. 19, he returned to his alma mater to aid the club he helped found - PSNK's "My Vote Matters" - in preparation for the new semester and upcoming election season.



PSNK graduate turned PA House candidate, Jon McCabe, discussing his campaign. (Photo courtesy of Nico Regoli).

"It feels great to be back actually because Penn State New Kensington was an area where I had an environment that pushed me to be the best person I could be," said McCabe. "It allowed me to see opportunity that I never saw growing up. So this campus definitely is near and dear to my heart, and I love Penn State New Kensington," he added.

From Day 1 of classes to Graduation Day, Jon McCabe was best known at PSNK for his tremendous passion of wanting to make a difference in his community, and inspiring that passion in others, specifically through the electoral process. That desire to share his passion gave life to the student-run organization of "My Vote Matters," which has helped register hundreds of PSNK students since its creation.

"I co-founded the organization (My Vote Matters) with another student, Millie Brassler, who is from Peru, and when we founded the organization, this woman wasn't even eligible to vote, but she knew the importance of voting," McCabe continued. "She understood that this is something that impacts our society, and this is how we can get a government that actually works for us, if people start voting."

According to McCabe, the populations of millennial voters and baby boomer voters stand equal at 69 million each. Those commonalities end in political engagement, of which older generations tend to outdo younger generations. "My Vote Matters" was created to get those younger generations politically active, and to realize what Brassler already knew, and what McCabe soon learned as well... that their vote holds power.

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“I was just a sophomore on a college campus, and I didn’t really know what power I had,” McCabe explained. “And, what we saw was, ‘Hey, we have the power to register people to vote.’ And, it (My Vote Matters) just started with an idea, and it progressed into a movement. It progressed into something larger than we ever expected it to progress into.”

McCabe credits “My Vote Matters” as the first step on his journey to helping reform our democracy, and the first step of his journey into career public service. McCabe saw the impact he was making, the frustration towards the government in his community, and was motivated to help more. Through his passion, combined with inspiration from PSNK’s Dr. John Hammond, and his experiences in “My Vote Matters”, McCabe made the decision, while still pursuing a Bachelor’s Degree in Psychology, to run for state office.

“I don’t know if I recommend running while being a college student,” McCabe warned. “I was just so passionate about seeing a change in our government, that I decided to run earlier than I ever expected to, and that’s because I had an opportunity.”

McCabe is campaigning in the 54th District for a seat in the PA House of Representatives, specifically the seat that former Rep. Eli Evankovich vacated in July. Originally in a three-way primary race, Lower Burrell Mayor Richard Callender would eventually drop out, narrowing the field down to McCabe and West Deer’s Robert Bertha.

“I knew if I was going to enter this primary I would definitely have to put up a fight, and that’s exactly what I did,” said McCabe.

McCabe used a simple, but impactful strategy of spreading his message by knocking on door after door from the beginning of his campaign to election day. Whether he had their vote or not, McCabe wanted the public awake and at the polls on May 15, showcasing the true power of democracy. The results would later show that McCabe’s strategy had paid off, as he was able to overcome Bertha’s 3-to-1 fundraising lead and beat him by a gigantic points margin.

“So he (Bertha) had money, he had yard signs, he had mailers, he had everything more than me, but what I kept on doing was knocking on doors,” McCabe explained. “I didn’t realize how impactful knocking doors was until I saw the election results that night, because those election results showed that I not only beat Bertha, I beat Bertha by 30 percentage points,”

Notably, the areas in which McCabe had significant wins were the areas where he had been knocking on doors. His strategy worked, and he won, topping any personal excitement he had when he received his Bachelor’s Degree in Psychology just 10 days prior, a day in which he also went door knocking.

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“It’s like, I had one accomplishment, and that gave me a rush, but the greater goal for me is to see good government, and a government that’s responsive to people,” said McCabe. “So, as amazing as it felt to have that psychology degree, I still felt there was something more that I wanted to do with my life, and that was advocating for things that I believe in.”

However, campaigning while a student was far from a stressless task, and it’s clear why McCabe does not recommend that others run for office while still in school.

“I just kept pushing forward, and I knew that I worked really really hard, throughout finals week, after I got my diploma, and everything like that,” McCabe said. “I knew that I was working seriously hard, and it was very nerve-wracking,. It was like, I was nervous just to see if this is all going to pay off.”

Thankfully for McCabe, all of that work did pay off, and he believes it’s because the people can resonate with his story.

He explained, “When I tell them at the doors, and when I go to events, and even when I’m on social media I just always try to relate it back to I’m fighting for the working class, I’m fighting for the people that feel forgotten” said McCabe. “And that’s what’s helping us gain momentum as we progress forward through this election.”

Being a young candidate with fresh ideas is also helpful, hence why McCabe supports the overall idea of more young people running for office (again, just not while still in school).

“They say the millennial generation... they say a lot of nasty things about them, but at the end of the day, they’re the hero generation. They’re the generation that’s going to change what’s going on, and they’re the generation that’s going to fight for a middle class, and working people, and all the other things that they’re passionate about,” proclaimed McCabe.

Those issues McCabe is passionate about focus on economic, social, and environmental justice. More specifically, he wants to repair infrastructure, rebuild the middle class, bring businesses and good-paying jobs back to the communities, combat climate change, fight for accessible and affordable healthcare and education, promote apprenticeships and vocational opportunities, put resources in place for treating mental health issues, and more.

“The most important issue to me is he supports Planned Parenthood, and to me that’s really important, because many people don’t support it, and he is like one of the people who do support it,” said Corie Kiebler, a PSNK political science major, and campaign manager for McCabe.

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McCabe has actually received the endorsement of Planned Parenthood, as well as groups like United Mine Workers, United Auto Workers, the Pittsburgh Boating Regions Trade Council, Humane PA, and Equality PA. Absent from that list of endorsements are any big pharmaceutical companies, which makes sense considering one of McCabe's biggest campaign issues is fighting the growing opioid epidemic.

"He's (Jon) told a story about how he worked at Sheetz back in like, I believe in college, and people would frequently overdose in their bathroom at Sheetz," explained Matthew Markulin, Robert Morris University student from Murrysville and field worker for the McCabe campaign. "And they installed a blue light as a solution, but he always says a blue light will not fix the opioid epidemic. There are various means that could be done at the state level to fix the opioid epidemic."

Markulin listed legalization of marijuana, and increasing regulation of opioid prescriptions as potential solutions the epidemic that McCabe has made it his mission to fight. And with the general election in sight, McCabe is now able to spread his message, ideas, and passion to a much wider and broader audience than he had in Pennsylvania's closed primary. An audience that regardless of party or age, Democrats, Republicans, Independents, millennials, and baby boomers alike are all fed up with the current system in place.

"It's not just the younger people that are saying this, it's the older generation too," said McCabe. "They are sick and tired of the status quo right now. They want to see those fresh voices onto our system."

If McCabe wants to become the fresh face that the 54th District craves, he must defeat 74-year-old career politician from Murrysville, Republican candidate Bob Brooks. An ex-mayor and council member with an affinity for tax cuts, McCabe feels that Brooks' wealth, coupled with an unwillingness to address gerrymandering or propose investments in community programs like education puts Brooks in the same category of status quo politicians that the public have become fed up with.

"A lot of people say he's (Brooks) so wealthy, he's out of touch with working families," said McCabe. "You know, when's the last time his family was working paycheck to paycheck, or struggling to put food on the table? These are 2018 problems that working families are facing, but yet he's not talking with these families and, like I said, a lot of people say he's out of touch with these families."

McCabe believes that Brooks is in this race as an ego boost to end his political career on, and feels that those supposed motives are unfair to their November 6 voters.

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“We need candidates and leaders who are there to fight for justice, and fight for the people that they’re going to be representing,” said McCabe.

McCabe’s campaign has picked up tremendous momentum since he entered the race in February. At his first campaign rally, McCabe recited Dr. Hammond’s montra of “Start your own band,” meaning that change comes with being proactive. With the general elections just over one month away, McCabe feels his band is headed in the right direction.

“Our band is definitely on tour right now across our whole district, and we’re playing the tunes that we need to play,” said McCabe. “I’m really passionate about what I’m fighting for, because I come from a working class family, and I’ve felt the struggles that many other families are feeling across the district. I’m here to fight for something that I believe in, and having a candidate that’s inspiring and passionate and doing it for all the right reasons is why I think our band has been growing so tremendously.”

*Coming up in PART 2: The final weeks of rallies and events before November 6th.



CAMPUS VOICES

Preparations for Concert Band Underway

By Katie Pyle

Staff Writer and Reporter

As a sophomore, I would like to think that I have already experienced the “big, scary” transition from high school to college. I’ve learned how to adjust to having class only a few times a week, how to study for exams that could make or break your grade, how to pull off an all-night study session and *still* be able to wake up for an 8:00 AM class, and so on. Along with that, being at an awesome campus like Penn State New Kensington has definitely made my college experience a positive one so far. With all of that being said, there’s just one thing missing: a Penn State New Kensington Concert Band.

Before I go any further, let me give you all some of my personal (and probably unnecessary) background. I first picked up the trumpet when I was a little, buck toothed nine-year-old in elementary school. Since then, I’ve been playing in different music ensembles ranging from high school marching bands to state musical festivals. Several of my happiest memories have stemmed from the experiences during high school band. So, to go from having a designated class period where I could play my instrument every day since I was nine-years-old, to having nothing was probably the hardest part of my transition into college.

After speaking with other students on campus, it was a relief to discover that I wasn’t the only one going through band-withdrawal. Several different students made it clear to me that the only way to remedy these feelings was to form an official club for concert band. One of these students include freshman Taylor Mercatell, who is now Vice-President of the club . In past years, Taylor played the saxophone and was the drum major for his high school marching band. “The reason I want this club is because there’s nothing like it,” he said. “This club would let others join together in one common thing we all love to do: make music. The creation of this club excites me, because my friends and I are organizing it and it has the capability of going down in history as something passionate we all created.”

Not only would having this club make the transition into college easier for some students, but it would unite a number of individuals with a love for music, bring pride to Penn State New Kensington, create some great entertainment, and more.

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While the ensemble is nowhere close to being ready for a performance or concert, the idea of a Concert Band Club is close to becoming a reality thanks to the support and efforts of wonderful students, faculty, and staff. With instruments like brass, woodwinds, and percussion, the ensemble will be made up of students, staff, and faculty alike. Interested in joining? Send me an email at kbp5274@psu.edu – be sure to write “Concert Band” in the subject line. It would be a pleasure making music with you!



CAMPUS VOICES

Summer in Peru

by Rachel Queck
Staff Writer and Reporter

I remember the day that I packed my bags and made sure I had everything that I needed for my trip to Peru. This included everyday necessities, school supplies, and a picture of my mom so that she could come with me on all of my adventures. I had to leave the house at 4 AM the next morning to catch my flight. My aunt, who is both wonderful and seems to never sleep, woke me up from my restless sleep to get ready to go to the airport.

When I arrived at Pittsburgh airport, I was somewhat confused because I had never navigated an airport by myself before

until this very moment. I managed to get to the terminal and waited excitedly for my flight to Fort Lauderdale, FL that would then take me to Lima, Peru. It seemed surreal to me at the time that in less than 24 hours I would be in a foreign country. I had never been out of the country before and it was a little nerve wracking for me. Then I had finally arrived to Fort Lauderdale and after figuring out the system in their airport, finally went to the terminal and caught my next flight to Peru.

Once I got there, I was nervous that I would not be able to find any of my fellow students from Penn State. I looked around and, luckily, I found a backpack with the Penn State logo on it. I had, in fact, met one of my classmates who would accompany me on this trip. The next day, we met up as the entire group with the people from ISA (the company who organized our study abroad trip). Looking around I felt very nervous as I was the only student who was not from University Park. However, that did not stop me from becoming friends with them.

We all stayed in a nice, coastal part of Lima called Miraflores. They showed us around Lima and how to get back and forth from place to place. Then, they took us to our homestays. I was nervous as this was the first time I had met my roommates and my



Visiting Mount Machu Picchu (Photo Courtesy of Rachel Queck)

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host-mother as well. I was pleasantly surprised as my roommates were some of my best friends on the trip and my host-mother treated us like she would her own children.

The next day we had an opening lunch (lunch in Peru is like dinner in the United States and is the biggest meal). I remember I got to meet some of the Peruvian students who would help us navigate both the city, the culture, and the school. They were all very welcoming and very kind as well.

Believe it or not, I did not experience much culture shock when I was down in Peru. The biggest difference for me was the language change. While there were differences, I did not find it hard to embrace them. The culture, accent, history, and everything about Peru is very rich and very engaging. The food was some of the best food I had ever tasted in my life. The infrastructure was beautiful. The bus systems were far better than what is here in Pittsburgh. Also, I feel like this is something I have to add: the traffic was crazy.

The food could have an entire page written on it. The food was so delicious. I ate many things. I have to admit that sometimes I had no idea what I was eating, but I did know that it was going to be delicious. I ate foods like lomo saltado, canchita, choclo, tallarines verdes (which is one of my now favorite foods), causa, arroz con leche, and many other things. I even tried some of the things that in the USA we would consider odd like cuy, alpaca, and llama as well. I tried some of these things in Cusco, but many of these foods I tried in Lima.

Lima was everything you could picture a big city being, but with a much richer feeling to it. The culture was so much more laid back and also it seemed much happier. It seemed like everyone knew how to dance and everybody knew how to enjoy life. Another thing to know about the culture, my Peruvian friends told me this for a fact, is to expect people to be a half an hour late to an event and also expect parties (both with family and friends) to start late and go until very early the next morning.

Overall, the program itself was an amazing experience as well. We went to see many sites while in Perú. We went to many different places like Huaca Pucllana, the historical part of Lima, and we also had the opportunity to even go to Cusco. Cusco was an experience in and of itself.

The altitude sickness, or soroche as they call it, was not very bad for me. I loved being up in the highlands (the Andes Mountains). It was one of the most tranquil and beautiful experiences I have ever had. I got to see Machu Picchu. I climbed Mount Machu Picchu, which I must add is different than the ruins themselves.

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While it was physically challenging to climb the mountain, it was a spiritual experience to finally get to the top. The whole thing was amazing. I would go back to any part in a heartbeat. I would go back to Perú in a minute with that being said.

Our classes that we took in Perú were a fair balance of challenging and easy. We took classes from professors from Penn State University and from the Peruvian university we were attending. The university that we attended is called “Universidad Nacional de Ingeniería” or also called “UNI”. We did not attend the main campus, but we went to their research center in a part of Lima named San Borja. This branch of it was called INICTEL. It was about the size of the Penn State New Kensington campus. However, we did still go to the main campus a few times and the campus was beautiful both at INICTEL and the main campus of UNI.

I loved my experience in Perú. It was one of the best times of my life and would willingly go back anytime. It changed my view on the world and the way I saw life. Believe it or not, I did not experience culture shock until I came back to the USA. When I came back it really shocked me how differently I saw life here. I would suggest studying abroad to anybody here on campus or in the university for that matter. Penn State offers many great programs to students during any part of the year. For more information, talk to your advisor and check out global.psu.edu for programs available.



SPORTS

The Truly Magnificent Seven: PSNK Women's Volleyball Shows Poise and Grit Despite Short Bench

by Scott Sinclair
Director of Visuals

Imagine yourself at PPG Paints Arena at the start of a Penguins game and the public address announcer comes on and says that due to unforeseen circumstances only Crosby's line and the defense pair of Letang and Maatta are available to play tonight. It looks like both you and the team may be in for a long night.



PSNK Women's Volleyball Team (L to R): 1. Erin Tumas, 2. Kaylea Flick, 3. Brittany Kotvas, 4. Janet Surma, 7. Lindsey Hessom, 8. Cora Rejniak, 11. Bethany Baney (Photo credit: Scott Sinclair)

While this may be an unrealistic scenario, it attempts to paint a picture of a similar situation that we have here on campus.

The Penn State New Kensington Women's Volleyball team has seven rostered players. Add to that fact Sophomore Janet Surma is out with a knee injury and that leaves six, or the exact number of players required to be on the court during play.

Now I'd love for this to be the part of the story where I proclaim that despite the roster deficiency, PSNK is undefeated and embarking on a championship run but that simply is not the case. It doesn't matter.

Anybody who has ever tried to play a sport with a thin roster, present company included, knows the physical and mental fatigue associated with the inability to catch a breather. The overall athletic ability doesn't suddenly diminish, nor does the athlete suddenly crumple to the ground pleading for water, but at some point, suddenly the details just aren't there. A routine play made early in the contest just somehow eludes the athlete later with no tangible explanation. I've been there; and it's a helpless and indescribable feeling.

That's the great part about this story, despite all of those circumstances, as a consumer and a fan, I'm getting some damn good volleyball. These athletes deserve all the credit and

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praise for delivering this. In fact, in a recent contest against Greater Allegheny, the team actually got stronger in the third and fourth sets, giving those in attendance much to get excited about.

Drawing from *The Big Book of Sports Clichés*, I could begin to wax poetic about digging deep, going the extra mile, leaving it all in the court or whatever, but this night was so much better than clichés, it was people I knew, in some cases classmates and friends, in some cases just those I know in passing, competing hard and putting on quite the show for the fans. In short, it was awesome.

There may be some people out there that feel like maybe Women's Volleyball isn't one of the "big four" sports or that PSNK Athletics isn't maybe on par with what they consume on TV so therefore these athletic accomplishments aren't as big as they are being reported on this page. I can respond to those cynics with a simple one-word rebuttal.

Let's put it to the test; spend the next hour sprinting, both forward and backwards in short bursts of stops and starts. Occasionally move laterally left and right, mix that with vertical leaps and add a dash of diving onto a hardwood floor. Go ahead, I'll wait.

We haven't even included the ball skills at this point, including precision digging, setting and spiking. The ball still needs to go in the right direction at the right time whether it's one minute into the contest or an hour and a half. And these ladies deliver that, night in and night out. It's impressive. Right about the time you think fatigue may be taking its toll, there will be a 10-point rally, or a nearly impossible individual effort, like Kaylea Flick scoring one over her right shoulder while running away from the net against Beaver (we'll get that video on the web soon).

I've been involved with sports for a long time, I've played, I've coached, I've succeeded, I've failed, but I know this for sure, I am a fan of this team because I recognize the effort, focus and attention to detail required to do what they are doing. When I talk to Surma in one of the many classes we share this semester, she speaks highly of her team but maintains a modest tone, so I'll brag for her, this team and these athletes are impressive, period. Their efforts go beyond the scoreboard and are responsible for the very survival of the team itself. It would be a privilege to share a field, court or rink with athletes of this character.

These ladies are your classmates and people you pass in the halls every day, they are doing great things right next door at the gym. All I ask of the readers is to head over and show your support. You won't be disappointed.

EDITORIAL

The Plastic Straw Ban: Why It's Controversial

by Kierstin Flickinger
Managing Editor

One of the biggest and strangest controversies of the year came from something completely unexpected. It's known as "The Plastic Straw Ban".

Using a plastic straw is something that all of us don't usually think about. I know that I go to restaurants, bars, and the drive-thru and drink almost every drink with a plastic straw. I even would consider myself an environmentally conscious person. But the fact is that I don't have a recycling system set up at home, and I rarely find myself seeking one out anywhere that one isn't conveniently placed for me, and that's probably a big reason that plastic pollution exists: because a lot of us do this.

Seattle and San Francisco were the first major cities to announce a ban on single-use plastic straws and utensils. Soon after, companies like Starbucks, Aramark, and American Airlines all began to follow suit by all vowing to stop offering plastic straws (Business Insider), with Starbucks new lids being the most well-known of them to the general public. Business Insider also gives reasons why this is a good thing to happen in the United States. Plastic straws are not the largest cause of plastic pollution, and will not eliminate the issue of pollution, but environmentalists say that this is the first step in a "much-needed larger behavior change" (Business Insider).

However, there is a major reason that this issue is controversial. Despite the fact that 300 million metric tonnes of plastic is consumed each year, many people are not on board for the entire ban of single-use plastic straws, and that's because many disabled persons cannot have a drink without one. An article posted on NPR in July 2018 discussed this issue in depth. As it turns out, plastic straws are really the only option for many who need extra assistance to drink. A resource specialist explains that rubber straws are not a sanitary alternative, paper straws are not a convenient one, and that this new policy is forcing disabled persons to figure out for themselves how to drink, when it is not an issue that anyone should have to deal with (NPR).

As with most controversies, I believe that there is a middle ground that can be met in this scenario. I believe that plastic straws should be able to be given out upon request in restaurants, movie theatres, zoos, and anywhere else that typically serves plastic straws. However, I also agree that the ban is a gateway ban that will get many people to

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recognize the harm that single-use plastic has on the environment, or at least encourage people to educate themselves and others more on the plastic pollution problem.

In a class that I am enrolled in this semester, a group of students have to do something called a dialogue discussion on some type of controversy. My group chose to use my idea of the plastic straw ban controversy, where we realized that there are a lot of ways that people will be affected by the ban.

From the perspectives of restaurants owners and plastic manufacturers, we realized that a lot of business can be lost. Not only could jobs potentially be lost, but customers who demand straws without needing them, or who simply feel inconvenienced without a straw, are likely to stop going to places where they feel inconvenienced. Also, bars and restaurants are placed with the difficulty of finding a replacement for these, and honestly, there's a reason why plastic straws are the first choice. Reusable straws are more expensive, disposable straws made from bio-plastics are hard to dispose of in a technical sense, and paper straws are usually not quality ones (VICE).

If nothing else, researching this topic has made me aware that there are so many more ways that I can be more aware of how I am treating the Earth and how to change my behavior to be more environmentally friendly.

https://www.vice.com/en_nz/article/9kvwb3/what-the-plastic-straw-controversy-means-for-bars

<https://www.businessinsider.com/plastic-straw-ban-why-are-there-so-many-2018-7>

<https://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2018/07/11/627773979/why-people-with-disabilities-want-bans-on-plastic-straws-to-be-more-flexible>

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EDITORIAL

I Never Thought I'd Meet Drake Bell, But I Found a Way

by Ryan Fiore
Editor-in-Chief



Me and Drake Bell (Photo courtesy of Ryan Fiore)

I can't remember exactly the first time I ever saw Drake Bell on television, but it was most likely when he was doing his "Totally Kyle" bit on *The Amanda Show*, one of my favorite shows growing up.

"Totally Kyle" was this segment Drake Bell did on the show where he dressed up as a surfer dude with a guitar who wasn't very bright and he would tell stories that never seemed to make sense. My favorite was "So this one time, I saw a spider, and I was like, 'Ahhh spider!' and the spider was like, 'Ahhh Kyle!'"

One of my favorite parts of *The Amanda Show* was a segment called "Hillbilly Moment". It was so stupid, but funny because it was stupid. It featured Amanda Bynes and Drake Bell dressed up as hillbillies and Amanda Bynes would tell a knock knock joke and then proceed to hit Drake Bell's character with whatever object

she used in the joke. It was hysterical. I even watched a clip while typing this article and found myself cracking up.

When I told my mom that I was going to see Drake Bell in concert, she hardcore judged me. I mean, it makes sense. I'm 21 years old and I was going to see a guy that all the girls were in love with when I was in the fifth grade.

I was never crazy in love with Drake Bell like the girls were when he was on *Drake and Josh*. Don't get me wrong. He was attractive, especially in the first season, but his hair became such a turn off; that, and the fact that I like women. However, I digress.

The concert was at Jergel's Rhythm Grille, which is kind of like what the Altar Bar used to be. First things first: we arrived there an hour early, which is ALWAYS a good idea. You'll get first dibs at a spot by the stage and at the bar, and if you get a nice security guard, like my friends Sarah and Katia, and I had, he'll let you stand inside the foyer to charge your phone while everyone else that's general admission is standing outside.

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It was a good time waiting because they had on this late 90s-early 2000s playlist on. I'm talking Backstreet Boys, *NSYNC, Britney Spears, and Nick Lachey. It was the perfect way to warm up for any event.

Once we got in, we headed right for the bar (don't judge us). The bartender we had was super nice. Because it was a mostly standing venue, we had really great spots in the front, so we didn't want to lose our place. So, when we ordered food, our bartender let us keep the food at the bar, even if us three were all by the stage.

Bell had three opening acts: the first was a band called ALBVS. It was a Pittsburgh pop band with these two lead singers, Joey Albus and Ralph Parissi. They were actually pretty good. I enjoyed their music.

The second was this Pittsburgh rapper named Jordan York. He was a very talented young guy, but I didn't really enjoy his session because I'm not a huge fan of rap. He reminded me of the Christian rapper TobyMac. What was funny was that I found out that I actually graduated high school with his cousin.

The third act was Kira Kosarin. She was Demi Lovato meets pop Taylor Swift meets Selena Gomez. The songs she sang sounded like something those three would write and she actually sounded a little like Camilla Cabello. I really liked her music and I got to get a picture with her as well. I especially wanted to get a picture with her to show my younger brother and sister because they used to watch the show she starred on, *The Thundermans*.

Once Bell came on, obviously, the crowd went wild. I mean, why shouldn't they? It's Jared Drake Bell! I found it very sad that there were probably only 100 people there. I honestly thought there'd be a bigger turnout than that. I'm not complaining because it worked out in our favor and I even got to meet Bell, but it saddened me that there weren't more people there to appreciate his music.

There was this drunk girl behind me that was in love with Drake. It was insane. I'm surprised I still have hearing in my ears. This girl screamed before and after every song. She even called him, "Daddy". That was....interesting.

His set included his popular songs such as, "Down We Fall", "Bitchcraft", "Makes Me Happy", "Hollywood Girl", as well as covers "Blackbird" by the Beatles and "Gucci Gang" by Lil Pump. He ended the show with the *Drake and Josh* theme song, "I Found a Way", and it was the perfect end to a perfect night, but somehow, the night just got better from there.

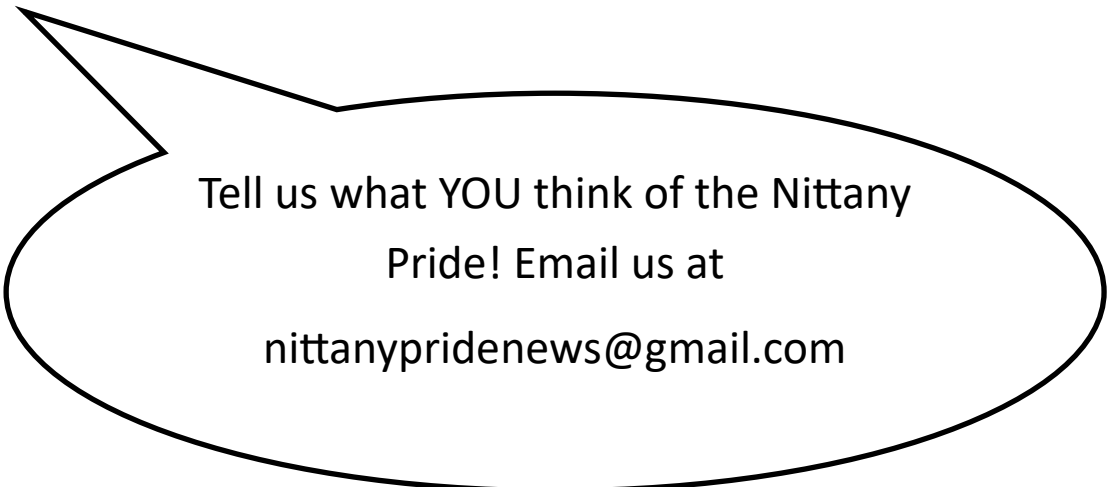
So, when I went to go buy a shirt, they told me that anyone who buys any of Drake's

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merchandise will get a selfie with him after the show and the ten year old child inside me lost it. If you don't know me that well, one of the things I really love is meeting famous people. I even have an photo album on Facebook dedicated to all the famous people I've met and/or seen perform.

Long story short, Drake signed my t-shirt, which looks really cool because it has four polaroid pictures of him on it and where he signed his name looks like it came on the shirt. He also got a picture with me, which turned out to be a little blurry on Drake's face. I'm trying not to be upset at the security guard for not letting me back in to take another picture, as if I'll ever see that security guard again or he cares that I'm mad. It was all made up for however because right before the picture, I said, "I'm getting a picture with 'Totally Kyle'" and Drake Bell replied in the surfer dude voice, "*Totally.*"

The night was better than I expected it to be. I think I appreciated the show more not only because I was able to drink, but because I was older and my friends and I were able to go grab lunch and then go to the concert, instead of having to go by a parent's schedule if you were younger. That night was awesome, one that I can't forget, and one that when I think about, "makes me happy."



Tell us what YOU think of the Nittany
Pride! Email us at
nittanypridenews@gmail.com

Meet Your 2018-2019 Newspaper Team!



Front Row (L to R): Ryan Fiore, Kierstin Flickinger, Rachel Queck, Ashton Caldwell

Second Row (L to R): Janet Surma, Melissa Braun, Adam Johnson, Scott Sinclair, James Binnix, Nico Regoli

Not pictured: Mack Adams, Ryan Pawloski, Katie Pyle

Editor's message: I'm really excited about this year and what this talented newspaper team has to offer! I have been dreaming about being the editor of this newspaper since I joined my freshman year. We hope you enjoy the six issues we plan to release this school year. Check out our website www.nittanypride.wordpress.com to read our "online only" stories, look at previous publications, and more!

Ryan Fiore, Editor-In-Chief