

The Advance-Titan

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FIXED photos by Michael Cooney or provided by FIXED participants

In two years, Kurtis Rodriguez went from living on the streets, being hopelessly addicted to opioids and meth, to being clean and helping others on the path to recovery, thanks to the Winnebago County's drug court.

'Your mother just saved your life'

By Natalie Dillon
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Kurtis Rodriguez only had a few minutes to get ready in his mother's basement. His father was waiting outside to take him to the Winnebago County Jail for his drug test. Being out on bond sucked. He had to report to the jail every other day to pee in a cup to ensure his sobriety. But there was no way Kurtis could stay sober. He needed his fix to function. So, of course, he found a loophole. In his pocket, he had a bottle of clean urine he had bought at a local tobacco store for \$25 so he could pass his test. Before heading up the stairs, he took out a needle and injected the same amount of heroin he would any other day.

That's the last thing he remembered.

He woke up with two detectives, two paramedics and four cops standing over him. His parents were crying in the corner of the room. Kurtis was mad. "What the heck? What is going on? Why did you bring me back?" he yelled. *You ruined my high. That's my money, and that's my drug.* "I was fine. You could have just left me."

"You should be grateful," one of the paramedics said. "Your mother just saved your life."

2019: Living in Recovery

Today, Kurtis lives a different life. Far from the addict he used to be, Kurtis has improved his health: mentally, physically and spiritually. At 5 feet 5 inches and weighing 145 pounds, he has gained 50 pounds since emerging from the depths of his addiction. Nearing his darkest point, Kurtis lived on the streets weighing only 95 pounds. His hair, long and unkempt. Breakouts and acne dotted his face, and his facial hair was uneven and scraggly.

Now, when he enters a room, he greets everyone with a warm smile and a "Hey! How's it going?" His hair is styled into a neat flip, parted on the right side, and his facial hair is neatly trimmed. His lean muscles peeking out from his T-shirt sleeves could classify him as a welterweight boxer.

"People see the difference," Kurtis said. "Not many people have seen me at my worst, and there's not many pictures of me either because I looked so bad, you wouldn't want to take a picture of me. Now I'm the healthiest I've ever been."

Jake Wissink, Kurtis' friend since kindergarten who has also experienced addiction, agrees. Because he and Kurtis went

through their darkest moments together, Jake has seen Kurtis through his addiction and recovery. "When we were using, we were dark, dark humans," Jake said. "He only wanted to take from the world. Now, he tries putting positivity out in the world and gives advice to people who are still using."

For Kurtis, working out has been an important remedy for his addiction. Despite long hours as a construction worker out in the summer heat, he still pumps iron five days a week.

"The gym is another huge thing. It's basically free medicine; it's a free antidepressant. I don't know why more people don't do it. I learned to make time for what's important."

This change didn't come easily, though. It would take Kurtis three and a half years, counseling, prison and the Winnebago County Drug Court to turn his life around.

1999: Where it all started

Kurtis had the typical childhood of many middle-class Americans. He had two loving parents that took him and his sister to their property up north for vacations. Kurtis loved those moments — surrounded by nature, totally at peace — because

when they returned, he'd have to go back to normal life. He and his sister would have to return to school, and his parents would go back to work. His mother helped children and families as a therapist for Winnebago County Human Services, and his father provided counseling to prisons all around Wisconsin. With such a normal upbringing, his parents never would have imagined what would happen to their little boy.

"You guys ready?"

"Yeah, let's go."

Kurtis and his friends, all second-graders then, stormed the streets "chromie hunting," a game they came up with. They'd check the tires of cars they'd come across for the best valve cap for their collections. As his friends ran in all different directions, Kurtis crept up to a nearby car and checked it out. *Jackpot!* Quickly, so he wouldn't get caught, Kurtis twisted the cap off and sprinted away with his newest item.

"Guys! Look what I got!" Kurtis bragged, holding out a bullet-shaped, metallic blue cap. His friends gathered around, peering over his shoulders.

"Woah," they all gasped. "That's sick."

Oshkosh-Neenah area COVID-19 cases surge

By Sophia Voight
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The Oshkosh-Neenah area is experiencing the second-fastest COVID-19 case surge in the nation, according to the New York Times, with 1,424 active cases in Winnebago County as of Tuesday.

In addition, UW Oshkosh has the second-highest number of cases among universities in the state with 461 active cases as of Monday. However, the number of active cases at UWO declined to 395 on Tuesday, according to the university's COVID dashboard.

The Winnebago County Health Department (WCHD) reported a "significant uncontrolled spread of COVID-19 in our community" as the county experienced a 106% increase in positive cases last week.

The rapid acceleration of cases in the county is primarily driven by young adults, ages 18-24, in households, workplaces and educational settings, according to the WCHD weekly COVID data summary.

The report stated 2.5% of ages 18-24 tested positive over the past two weeks in the county. The report noted that this is likely a "significant underestimate of the true percentage of this age group currently infected."

"Cases will continue to rise at a very rapid rate," the WCHD report said. "If you do not practice physical distancing, you risk infecting others at home, work and in the community that may have serious or life-threatening consequences."

COVID-19 hospitalizations are at the highest level to date in the county, according to WCHD, with 81 patients hospitalized as of Sept. 23, which is five times higher than in August.

The UWO COVID-19 dashboard reported a 4.9% positivity rate Sept. 28, with 25 positive cases. The university has had a total of 567 positive cases, or 10.3%, since testing began Sept. 2.

As of 3 p.m., the Wisconsin Department of Health Services reported 2,367 new COVID-19 cases on Tuesday for a nearly 22% positivity rate. In addition, the

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REFLECTING ON THE LIFE OF RBG

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About the Newspaper
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Correction Policy
The Advance-Titan is committed to correcting errors of fact that appear in print or online. Messages regarding errors can be emailed to atitan@uwosh.edu.

Latest Awards
First Place Best of Show Newspaper, Associated Collegiate Press (ACP), 2020
Third Place Best of Show Website, ACP, 2020
Fifth Place Best of Show Special Edition, ACP, 2020
First Place Wisconsin Newspaper Association Foundation (WNAF) Better Newspaper Contest, 2020, in column writing, sports photography, page design and newspaper promotion
Second Place WNAF Better Newspaper Contest, 2020, in public affairs reporting, editorial writing, column writing, infographic, page design, website and advertisement creation.

Employees take furlough to offset pandemic financial hit

By Joseph Schulz
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If you’re attending classes at UW Oshkosh this semester, then you’ve probably heard professors mention spending time on “furlough.”

But what does that mean? Essentially, faculty members are taking pay cuts to get the university through a tough financial period created by the coronavirus pandemic, low enrollment and a lack of state aid.

At a virtual town hall meeting on Sept. 15, Chancellor Andrew Leavitt said UWO had roughly 6-7% fewer students than last year, which is less than anticipated.

“We were very conservative in how we budgeted for this year, assuming a larger student drop, and a GPR (general purpose revenue) reduction as well,” Leavitt said. “If things work out ... our first priority will be to move everybody off of furlough.”

Even so, UWO professors will be on a “graduated furlough” from Sept. 1 to Dec. 31, meaning the higher-paid employees are required to take more unpaid time off than lower-paid employees.

For example, UWO employees making \$60,000 or more are required to take eight furlough days during that time, a monthly pay reduction of about 9%.

Employees making between \$46,000 and \$59,999 are required to take six furlough days, a monthly pay reduction of about 6.8%. And employees making between \$33,000 and \$45,999 are required to take four furlough days, a 4.5% reduction.

The decision of which days — or partial days — to take off for furlough is left largely up to individual faculty members, according to Political Science professor and



Courtesy of UWO Flickr

UW Oshkosh faculty members take pay cuts to get the university through its financial downturn.

Faculty Senate President Druscilla Scribner.

“It’s relatively flexible when you take [furlough]; we don’t take them when we’re teaching,” Scribner said.

Over the summer, UWO Administration met with shared governance leaders from the Faculty Senate, Senate of Academic Staff, University Staff Senate and the Access Campuses before deciding to settle on the graduated furlough.

Political Science professor David Siemers, who serves on the executive committee of the United Faculty and Staff of Oshkosh, said the graduated furloughs ensure “lower paid teachers would experience a less severe financial hit.”

Even so, Siemers wishes more could have been done to protect the “middle income” professors, which make up “the vast majority of our teachers.”

In another potential round of

furloughs, he suggests the university “take a higher percentage from “the few people making more than \$100,000 per year, as they are the most financially fortunate.”

Employees are expected to use their furlough time for non-work related activities. Faculty, however, may work on scholarship; and Scribner says many professors, including herself, work on scholarship and other projects during their furlough time.

Because academic staff are not hourly employees, Scribner explained that they often work more than 40 hours a week, so even with the furlough “you still end up doing the same amount of work.”

“Everybody’s really still doing their job,” she said.

Even so, Scribner says the furlough does create an added “financial stress,” which is part of the reason the university went with a graduated furlough.

“That was a decision the chancellor made that, I think, is supportive of understanding that burden,” Scribner said. “It’s definitely a burden for everybody, but we’re in tough times and faculty recognize that.”

In order to prevent future furloughs, the state legislature needs to make supporting the UW System a priority, she added.

“We have elected a legislature that is not particularly supportive of higher education over the long, and it shows,” Scribner said. “We’ve had declining support for a while. It’s not new.”

To see lasting change, she added that “it would take pressure on the legislature, but it also might take new people in the legislature, who are more supportive of higher education and recognize how important an investment in the UW System is for the health of the state.”

Professor sues chancellor, provost

By Sophia Voight
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Chancellor Andrew Leavitt and Provost John Koker are being sued by a UWO professor who claims that they illegally imposed sanctions after improperly investigating a complaint against him.

In a complaint filed Sept. 14, education professor Peter Meyerson argues that Leavitt and Koker violated his rights established in the university’s Faculty and Academic Staff Handbook by ignoring its rules for disciplining faculty.

Meyerson argues that the university wrongfully handled an investigation regarding a formal complaint made against him by Dean of Students Art Munin and Associate Dean of the College of Education and Human Services Eric Brunsell in February regarding “bullying behavior in the classroom.”

A document from Brunsell stated Meyerson engaged in “hostile behavior towards students, frequently targeting female students” and had a history of “aggressive behavior towards women in the department.”

Meyerson refuted the complaint,

stating in his formal complaint response that he believed it was a retaliation against him due to “petty office politics” between him and Brunsell.

According to the faculty handbook, the chancellor is given 20 working days after starting a formal review of a complaint against staff or faculty to decide if the complaint should be prosecuted or dropped.

The lawsuit said Leavitt disregarded this rule by taking 134 working days to dismiss the complaint after beginning the formal investigation.

The university claimed the ongoing pandemic pushed back the investigation and made it difficult to comply with the investigation timeline.

While the formal complaint was dismissed by Leavitt after investigators found no violation of faculty policy, Meyerson argues that Koker ignored the requirements of a complaint dismissal by initiating disciplinary actions at the beginning of September.

“While I realize that the complaint has been dismissed since the two investigators did not have



Peter Meyerson

enough evidence to support a violation of policy, I remain concerned about the allegations raised in the complaint as well as the history of student concerns in the past,” Koker said in a Sept. 8 letter to Meyerson.

Based on the complaint, Koker is requiring an individual to monitor Meyerson’s conduct in his classes and meetings as well requiring Meyerson to complete a written self-evaluation of his teaching.

Meyerson contended this goes against university policy as the handbooks states “if the complaint

is dismissed, the faculty member shall not be subjected to further jeopardy for the same alleged misconduct.”

The lawsuit claims Koker’s disciplinary actions overstep the university’s established processes for handling faculty complaints.

However, Koker’s letter references a 2017 letter from Leavitt stating, “if there are future complaints about [Meyerson’s] style with students and colleagues, we will need to treat them very seriously and we will take appropriate action.”

Meyerson’s lawsuit requests the court to force Leavitt and Koker to abide by the rule established in the faculty handbook regarding complaints and disciplinary actions.

The suit also requests the court to declare Koker’s decision to impose sanctions as illegal for its “unconstitutional deprivation of Dr. Meyerson’s due process rights because it defies the faculty handbook.”

Lastly, Meyerson asks that the court bar the university from issuing disciplinary actions against him and delete the sanctions from his personnel record.

County regains jobs lost in pandemic

By Joseph Schulz
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After exceeding Great Recession levels back in April, the unemployment rate in Winnebago County has normalized, even as issues that plagued the economy before the pandemic have been amplified in its wake.

The unemployment rate gradually declined throughout the summer as businesses reopened, according to preliminary statistics from the state Department of Workforce Development (DWD).

The August unemployment rate in Winnebago County was 5.1% with roughly 4,620 people collecting benefits, meaning 7,280 jobs have been added since April when unemployment was 13.2%, the DWD reports.

Even so, industries such as leisure/hospitality, government, education/health services and other services have not fully regained jobs lost during the statewide Safer at Home Order period, according to DWD Economist Ryan Long.

“Leisure/Hospitality — as of August — is still down 3,300 jobs from March,” Long said. “But the biggest loser is actually government, particularly at the state and local levels. Paradoxically, health care is also down 1,700. Retail is actually up 1,500.”

While the economy has proven resilient as unemployment has gone down, Fox Valley Workforce Development Board (FVWDB) CEO Anthony Snyder said employers are struggling to find highly skilled workers, a problem they faced before the pandemic.

“If you’re a large manufacturer, you are still seeking skilled labor now, just like you were in March,” Snyder said. “Nothing has changed.”

That’s because a new wave of automation — known as Industry 4.0 — is emerging, and replacing high-wage, low-skill factory jobs with high-skill, high-wage jobs. Prior to the pandemic, there were 1,500 local tech jobs that companies couldn’t fill.

A 2019 survey of 104 manufacturers in Northeast Wisconsin

found that the most in-demand jobs over the next two to three years include process engineers, data management analysts, cybersecurity officers, industrial computer programmers, data engineers, data architects and application developers.

The pandemic has forced manufacturers to continue to explore Industry 4.0, according to Ann Franz, director of the Northeast Wisconsin Manufacturing Alliance, the organization that conducted the Industry 4.0 survey.

“The Alliance’s Industry 4.0 task force is growing from a year ago, [from] 20 people to now 70,” Franz said. “Technology and having a skilled workforce is critical to this region.”

As low-skill factory jobs have become less abundant, a larger chunk of people have transitioned into low-skill, low-wage service jobs, Snyder says.

“We now call them ‘essential workers’ in many cases,” he said. “The delivery driver bringing your food to you is an essential worker. The worker stocking shelves at the grocery store is an essential worker. A lot of the time, these essential workers are the lowest paid people out there.”

To improve the quality of life for many of those workers, Snyder believes the United States needs to reinvest in workforce development to “upskill” its labor force for the jobs of tomorrow.

However, he said workforce development boards such as FVWDB are significantly underfunded to provide retraining programs because the federal government had slashed workforce development funding.

In a perfect world, Snyder says Congress would have signed another stimulus package into law this summer to fund retraining programs.

In July, Congress failed to pass another round of stimulus. Subsequent efforts have fallen through as talks between Democrats and Republicans on Capitol Hill have stalled.

If a deal can be reached, Snyder hopes Congress can increase funding for retraining programs to help unskilled workers find



April Lee / Advance-Titan

Winnebago County unemployment rate normalizes since pandemic, but some industries have not fully recovered jobs lost in the shutdown.

a career that will allow them to feed their families and meet the needs of a 21st-century economy.

“Some people never fully launched a career; they got a job after high school and they never were able to advance because of a lack of skills or a lack of education,” Snyder said. “Ideally, what I would like to do is take the underemployed cashier or the now

unemployed bartender and get them into a retraining program that we will pay for.”

Beyond covering the cost of a program, Snyder would like to cover living expenses such as rent and utilities to allow participants to focus on their education.

However, FVWDB’s funding has shrunk to the point where Snyder either has to “serve fewer

people” or “serve as many people as possible with fewer dollars,” meaning the workforce board cannot afford to pay for retraining programs without more help.

Ultimately, Snyder said increasing the pool of skilled workers during the pandemic will put the economy in a position to thrive in a post-pandemic society.

Debate erupts over future of SCOTUS

By Lexi Langendorf
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Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who fought against discrimination on the U.S. Supreme Court for 27 years, died at age 87 on Sept. 18. While leaving behind a legacy of equality, her death has caused many Americans to question the future of the U.S. Supreme Court as they know it.

In a virtual session hosted for UW Oshkosh students on Tuesday, history professor Paisley Harris described Ginsburg’s way of looking at law discrimination and comparing it to racial discrimination.

“Ginsburg was really at the forefront of gender equality struggles,” Harris said. “Her breadth of knowledge, skill and thoughtfulness were so evident in all of her hearings.”

Before her death, Ginsburg asked that her seat not be filled until after the next election.

On Sept. 26, President Trump announced: “Over the past week, our nation has mourned the loss of a true American legend. Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg was a legal giant and a pioneer for women. Her extraordinary life and legacy will inspire Americans for generations to come.”

The same day, the president also announced his selection of who will fill Ginsburg’s seat, one he is motivated to replace with a Republican Justice.

“Today, it is my honor to nominate one of our nation’s most brilliant and gifted legal minds to the Supreme Court,” Trump said. “She is a woman of unparalleled achievement, towering intellect, sterling credentials and unyielding loyalty to the Constitution:

Judge Amy Coney Barrett.”

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer and his fellow Democrats are not planning to allow Barrett to fill Ginsburg’s seat on the SCOTUS.

“Leader McConnell and the Republican Senate majority have no right to fill it,” Schumer said.

But Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell thinks that there will be enough time to get the nominee approved before the November election.

“It could seriously change things, the Second Amendment might change and health care law could be in jeopardy as well,” Harris said.

In her time serving as a U.S. Justice, Ginsburg was very politically moderate, Harris said, adding that the Court has gotten much farther right so people conceptualize Ginsburg as a liberal.

“Sometimes you wish she could’ve been a little angrier and a little more aggressive in some cases, but she stuck to ‘what’s the narrowest decision we can make?’” Harris said.

Some of her famous cases include *United States v. Virginia*, where Ginsburg wrote the majority opinion of the 7-1 case that decided not allowing females into the Virginia Military Institute violated the 14th Amendment.

Another is *Shelby County v. Holder*, where Ginsburg famously said, “Throwing out preclearance when it has worked and is continuing to work to stop discriminatory changes is like throwing away your umbrella in a rainstorm because you are not getting wet.”

In the virtual meeting, Damira Grady, associate vice chancellor for inclusive excellence and chief

diversity office, spoke about common criticisms of Ginsburg.

“There is some debate about some of her judicial opinions,” Grady said. “There was a notion that she voted for the winner.”

Grady said that as we look ahead, we must continue to keep Ginsburg’s values and gifts of equality in our hearts.

“She was quick to recognize where she didn’t have influence,” Grady said. “But she was always trying to pass laws that would have a legacy down the line and would prepare us for what comes next.”

The event was sponsored by the UW Oshkosh History Club, in partnership with the Women’s Center, Women and Gender Studies Program, Political Science Student Association, American Democracy Project and the History Department.

FIXED: ‘Getting high was what mattered’

From page 1

Back then, Kurtis never took these harmless acts of stealing seriously, but little did he know that it would lead him down a dark, troubled path.

2005-2006: A true Wisconsinite

Kurtis, now an eighth-grader, reached into the cabinet in his friend’s basement and pulled out two large glasses. A bottle of Fleischmann’s vodka rested on the table next to him, and he took it, filling up both glasses to the brim. Taking one in each hand, he downed both, one right after the other, like it was nothing. His friends looked at him in amazement.

“Kurt, that was water, right?”
“Nope.”

At 14 years old, Kurtis didn’t think he had a problem. It was normal. Everyone did this.

“It really wasn’t weird because I live in Wisconsin and everybody drinks,” Kurtis explained. “It’s not a big deal if I drink and black out. That’s just Wisconsin. That’s how you are supposed to drink.”

So, when he woke up the next morning in a pile of his own puke, Kurtis simply cleaned up, got into his mother’s car when she came to pick him up, and went home to sleep it off.

2007-2014: All in

A year later, Kurtis not only drank on weekends, but also smoked pot every day and started to experiment with cocaine, ecstasy, LSD and shrooms. 2007 was also the first time he tried Oxycontin, a potent painkiller. Kurtis was sitting in math class next to one of his friends.

“Hey, Kurt, want to try one?” his friend whispered, pulling some pills out of his pocket.

Kurtis had no idea what it was, but said, “I’ll try it.” So, in the middle of class, Kurtis popped the pill.

Oh, I really like this.
“It was a feeling of euphoria,” Kurtis recalled. “It was a warm fuzzy feeling. I didn’t really care what anyone thought, what I did, if I was judged or not. I just let go of everything.”

Even though Kurtis kept taking more and more drugs throughout high school, he still managed to graduate. In fall 2010, Kurtis attended Fox Valley Technical College for nursing, hoping to positively impact people’s lives. At the same time that Kurtis was aspiring to help others, he was hurting himself. Every morning before school, Kurtis would take some Oxycontin that he had gotten the day before from a woman who was prescribed them and drive to Appleton for classes. After a couple hours, his high would be gone, so he’d go back home to Oshkosh to get more pills. Once he got what he needed, he’d drive



FIXED photos by Michael Cooney or provided by **FIXED** participants
Upon completion of drug court, Kurtis Rodriguez is hardly recognizable compared to the 95-pound drug-addicted individual who was sent to prison 2 years earlier.

back for more classes. Again, after class, he’d need another dose to feel good. Kurtis hopped in his car, drove 25 minutes back home, grabbed more pills, and headed back. It was an endless cycle, but Kurtis couldn’t live without it. “I just couldn’t tolerate myself in my own skin,” he said.

“I couldn’t sit in class; I just couldn’t. It got really out of hand.”

Around this time, finding and getting Oxycontin was becoming harder. Heroin, on the other hand, was more abundant. Plus, Kurtis could get a smaller amount for even less money. But he was hesitant. *That’s a dirty drug; I would never do that.* But Kurtis eventually crumbled under the pressure. Fine. *Maybe I’ll try it.* Pretty soon, he fell in love with heroin, too.

Mixed up in all kinds of drugs, lacking the motivation to pay attention in classes, Kurtis dropped out of college after only four semesters. Shortly after, he obtained his first Operating While Intoxicated charge in 2012. *This is just a phase in my life, whatever. I’m going to get over it.* But his mother, Luann, began to worry. She started to notice that the problem was more than just alcohol and she decided to take action. As a child and family therapist, she used her resources to get Kurtis into individual counseling. She also learned about Narcan, an opioid antagonist that reverses an overdose, and found the AIDS Resource Center of Wisconsin in

Appleton, which offered classes on how to administer Narcan. The center provided a 15-minute training and a couple vials and needles, free of charge, for her own use.

Despite a rough patch, Luann still let Kurtis live in her house until he figured something else out. “He’s still my son. I still wanted what was best for him,” Luann explained.

But this all changed when he needed another source of income to supply his habit, which was costing him \$200 a day. Shortly after dropping out of college, Kurtis began to sell drugs and steal from family, friends and businesses to make some cash to supply his habit. Luann would come home from work and find various items missing: money, medication, her jewelry — anything that was of value — even the family TV. She couldn’t trust her son anymore, and, coupled with a second OWI that landed him in jail in 2014, she ended up kicking him out a couple times. She would always let Kurtis come back, though; she loved her son and didn’t want him in any more danger than he already was.

For two years, Kurtis lived on the streets and occasionally couch-surfed when he didn’t live with his mom.

2014-2016: Life on the streets
BEEP! BEEP! BEEP!

Kurtis woke up, startled. He checked his phone. 5 a.m. He rubbed his eyes, put his phone in his pocket, grabbed his backpack from the floor of the car and got out as quickly as he could. He didn’t want the owner of the car to find him there. He shut the car door and left it unlocked, just like he found it the night before.

As he went about his day, Kurtis didn’t worry about anything except maintaining his high. To his advantage, crystal meth didn’t make him hungry, so he often neglected to eat.

“Live fast, die young,” Kurtis said. “Getting high was what mattered. At my worst point, I was 95 pounds. I just didn’t eat. Meth, heroin and cigarettes were my diet.”

If he decided to eat, Kurtis usually went to a gas station. On rare occasions, his mom or dad would invite him over for supper, but eating would ruin Kurtis’ high; so, these were the only times he splurged.

July 26, 2016:
The turning point

As Kurtis attempted to get sober, or to at least maintain the facade of sobriety, he moved into his mom’s basement where he had his own bed, bathroom and fridge. One of the requirements for his bond, which was to help him remain sober, was to submit a urine sample to the Winnebago County Jail several times a week.

So, that morning, Kurtis took the clean sample of urine from his stash and warmed it up in the microwave; no one’s pee is room-temperature or cold. With his dad waiting in the car outside to take him to the jail, Kurtis paused. *I’m still going to get high. There’s no way I can be sober.*

Luann was upstairs getting ready for work when she heard

her ex-husband knocking on the door to the basement, trying to get Kurtis to come out; they were going to be late.

As she was showering, the pleading changed to screaming; she could hear it through the floor. She rushed out of the shower, shampoo still in her hair, wrapped herself in a bathrobe, and ran downstairs to find her son—her Kurtie—lying limp on the basement floor.

“I was with my mom when she died,” Luann said. “They have this gurgling sound when they’re dying. I don’t know if you’ve ever heard that sound, but you won’t forget it if you do. I heard the gurgling sound come from Kurtis.”

She called 911 as her ex-husband stood, paralyzed, grieving over their child as if he was already gone. Luann knew she needed to immediately take action. She ran back upstairs to retrieve the vials and needles the center had given her earlier. Because they were in the back of a cupboard, hidden so Kurtis wouldn’t find them and sell them, she threw the contents of the cupboard over her shoulder until the vials were in hand. She ran back downstairs and administered one dose of Narcan.

“It was kind of an adrenaline that kicked in that I knew what I needed to do,” Luann said. “I just did what I could remember. I had filled the bottle up, and I don’t think I put it where I was supposed to. I just put it in because I knew he was dying.”

After Kurtis didn’t respond to the first injection, Luann gave him another as she waited 12 agonizing minutes for emergency services to arrive.

Two hours later, Kurtis was brought upstairs and taken away. Luann got back into the shower and went to work. She didn’t know what else to do.

Looking back on that day, Kurtis said it was his turning point; he was done doing drugs.

“It’s weird to think that my mother was prepared for this,” Kurtis said. “Thankfully she was; because I wouldn’t be here. I don’t think any parent should have to bury a child. My parents were so close to that. The longer I was sober I realized I never want to put my parents through something like that again.”

July 27, 2016 - November 2018:
A life lesson

Facing additional jail time for the manufacture and delivery of heroin, Kurtis wanted another way out. He asked his public defender what to do, and she suggested Drug Court, a program designed for non-violent offenders whose crimes are associated with drug addiction. According to the Winnebago County Alter-

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-native Programs web page: “The focus of the program is to reduce recidivism, change offenders’ lives and save tax dollars. Within the program, participants are randomly and frequently given urine analysis and are intensely supervised. They are asked to find full-time jobs, and are congratulated when their goals are met.”

But Kurtis wasn’t used to adhering to rules, no matter how small, and Drug Court sent him to the Milwaukee Secure Detention Facility to complete their criminal-thinking program.

There, in his cell with three other guys, Kurtis suffered through withdrawal.

“It’s like the flu times 1,000. You’re left in a room to shit your pants, puke, have cold sweats and feel restless. I just couldn’t sleep.”

While prison life wasn’t anything to brag about, there was light at the end of the tunnel. Each day, Kurtis had to complete a lesson with his social worker and take homework back to his cell to finish. Part of Kurtis’ success came from the motivation his social worker, Mr. Bryant, gave him.

“He believed in me and he didn’t even know me,” Kurtis said. “He sees all these people come in all the time. It was a cool thing to have him read my journals and comment on them every day.”

Never in a million years did Kurtis think he would be thanking Drug Court for sending him to prison and being strict with him, but after he completed the program in two years, he thinks of Drug Court differently.

“It was my way, at first, to get out of prison. It turned into so much more than that. Now, I’ve learned so many tools and good things. It gave me my life back.”

Nov. 11, 2019:
Finding his purpose

Kurtis sits in front of a classroom full of students in Mr. Gerharz’s health class at Oshkosh West High School, the same classroom he sat in when he was at-



To keep what I have, I need to give it away. Knowing that I could impact at least one person in a positive way, then it makes a difference, even if it is just one person.

- Kurtis Rodriguez

tending high school in 2006. Since his overdose in July 2016, Kurtis has given more than 40 talks to various audiences, including Oshkosh West High health classes, UWO nursing students and social workers.

“Oh, hey, Kurtis, I’ve got a picture for you,” Mr. Gerharz says. He hands Kurtis a print-out.

“Oh my God, that’s me. Wow, look how bad I was,” Kurtis says, holding up a picture of himself as a freshman, unrecognizable with his pimply face. He passes it around the room for the students to take a look at.

As Kurtis gives his talk, he thinks back to when he sat in those seats and listened to prisoners from the Drug Abuse Correctional Center give their stories. He had blown them off, and now he was sitting where they were over a decade ago, giving his story.

But Kurtis wants to do this. By

sharing his story, he hopes, like he did when he wanted to be a nurse, to help people.

“A big reason I do it is to stay sober myself. To keep what I have, I need to give it away. Knowing that I could impact at least one person in a positive way, then it makes a difference, even if it is just one person.”

Editor’s note: All interviews took place in fall 2019. The FIXED Storytelling Project was intended to have an event on May 5, 2020. Because of the coronavirus pandemic, that event has been canceled. Stories from this project will be published throughout the month of October, which is recognized as National Substance Abuse Prevention Month.



COVID: UWO had second most active cases in UW System

From page 1

department reported 17 more deaths in the state, bringing the total to 1,300.

UWO closed all in-person dining areas Sept. 24 for the next two weeks in an effort to contain the spread of COVID-19 on campus.

The university also increased testing, having all residence hall students receive testing every other week, Chancellor Andrew Leavitt announced in a campus-wide email last week.

However, Interim Vice Chancellor and Dean of Students Art Munin stated in an updated email on Sept. 25 that COVID tests will be administered to students living in dorms weekly, rather than every other week.

Leavitt said the university is not currently taking steps to move all classes online as other UW colleges have been doing.

“Our data and contact tracing have led us to believe the spread of COVID-19 is not taking place in the classroom, where we see students, faculty and staff abiding by mask requirements, physical distancing and disinfection practices,” he said.

Leavitt also said the virus is continuing to spread due to students going to house parties and hanging out in large groups.

“Most students actually are taking necessary steps to protect their health and others,” he said. “But a small segment of students are not. Some are even knowingly putting others at risk.”

Leavitt said the university has increased sanctions against students who do not follow COVID-19 safety measures, including possible probation and suspension.

The Environmental Research and Innovation Center, or ERIC, will also begin regularly testing

residence hall wastewater for evidence of COVID-19.

The ERIC lab already tests sewage at local health care facilities and will begin testing the 10 residence halls shortly, a UWO press release stated.

“Monitoring the dorm wastewater on the UW Oshkosh campus for the presence of COVID-19 will assist University and Oshkosh area health officials in public health decision making, as COVID-19 can be shed in the feces of both symptomatic and asymptomatic people,” ERIC manager Carmen Thiel said.

ERIC director Greg Kleinheinz said the lab will run tests up to twice a week to get a general idea of how much COVID-19 is in each hall.

Kleinheinz said the tests won’t tell how many students in the hall have COVID-19, but they will be able to indicate if there is a spike in cases in a residence hall.

WCHD recommends that people “just stay home” and avoid any unnecessary travel that puts you in contact with people you don’t live with.

“This uncontrolled spread has resulted in the closing of Oshkosh schools and continues to threaten the ability of other schools and businesses to remain open,” the WCHD report said.

UWO students and employees who have been exposed to the virus or are experiencing symptoms can get tested at Albee Hall by appointment through the MyPrevea app. Appointments are available Monday through Friday 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. There are no Saturday appointments.

Sunnyview Expo Center in Oshkosh is also running a regional COVID-19 testing site available to any Wisconsin resident above the age of 5.

Our project and the lessons learned

By Bethanie Gengler
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John was sitting at a Narcotics Anonymous booth at the Greater Fox Valley Opioid Summit in Appleton, Wisconsin, when we were introduced on Aug. 21, 2019. He was an older gentleman with graying hair, glasses and a kind face.

I was in my last semester of college and was attending the summit for extra credit for an upcoming journalism class called J429 Special Topics in Writing/Editing. Our instructor Grace Lim sent out an email a few weeks prior to the first day of class, asking for volunteers. She didn’t specify what she needed the volunteers for, so it was quite surprising to arrive at the summit, quickly be ushered in and given a T-shirt with the word “FIXED” plastered across the front in red.

I was the first student to arrive, and I had no idea what to expect. Lim stuck a notebook and a pen in my hand and led me over to a bearded man wearing a name badge and introduced us.

“Bethanie, this is John. He’s with

Narcotics Anonymous,” Lim said. “John, Bethanie is going to ask you some questions.” Then she walked away.

John and I spoke for more than half an hour. He shared with me his troubling history of addiction. He described what it was like to shoot up heroin for the first time. He shared that even after quitting heroin, he still spent another 15 years taking methadone, a drug used to treat opioid abuse. He told me it was like trading one addiction for another.

And that’s how FIXED: Pain, Addiction and Life in Recovery began in fall 2019, with student journalists paired up with strangers to try to understand addiction and its effects on not only the person suffering from a substance abuse disorder, but also the community at large.

We partnered with Breakwater, formerly known as the Winnebago County Drug and Alcohol Coalition, to localize the growing addiction crisis in America and encourage the community to take action to help stop this epidemic.

In addition to the opioid summit, our class visited with members of Solutions Recovery Club, participants at the re:TH!NK Addiction Run/Walk, graduates of the Winnebago County Drug Court, and state representatives and the governor in the Wisconsin State Capitol among others to help give a face and a voice to the addiction crisis.

We met Nick, the manager of a local sandwich shop who has been clean for almost a decade but still needs to take a Suboxone daily to stave off the heroin cravings. We spent time with Jenna, a substance abuse counselor, who described what it’s like to grow up in an environment of addiction and abuse. From Wisconsin Rep. John Nygren, R-Marinette, we learned the heart-wrenching story of his daughter Cassie’s addiction and its effects on his family and political career. And from Luann, Kurtis’ mother, we felt the love and fear of a mother who took lessons on administering Narcan, a life-saving emergency medication for opiate overdoses, in preparation for the day she hoped would never come

— the day her son nearly died from an heroin overdose.

To truly get a grasp on how far-reaching this epidemic is, we also spoke to addiction experts, doctors, social workers and police officers who are trying to develop solutions to destigmatize addiction and prevent more deaths.

There is no one-size-fits-all when it comes to addiction; it affects our families, our friends and our neighbors. Many of those with substance abuse disorders began using drugs at a young age and more than 50% of those who overdose have a history with the criminal justice system. We learned that many who overdosed had recently lost a friend or family member due to overdose.

We also found that nearly all of those who overdose experience mental health issues and many of those issues go untreated. The FIXED Storytelling Project showed us addiction is not a choice, it’s a disease. We learned never to take our loved ones for granted because this disease does not discriminate; it affects everyone equally.

Working on the FIXED Storytelling Project showed us that those who have experienced the worst in life are also among the most kind, generous and empathetic. Rather than being bitter or resigned about their dark past, the people we’ve met are using those experiences to illuminate the path to recovery for others.

People are more than what is reflected on the surface. By telling the stories of people like John, Nick, Jenna, Luann and Kurtis — compassionate individuals who have been directly impacted by addiction— we hope to compel action to solve this crisis and provide hope to those who need it the most: those who experience pain, addiction and are seeking a life in recovery.

Editor’s note: All interviews took place in fall 2019.



Sports

UWO alumna gets Appleton West coaching job

By Cory Sparks
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Basketball season is something of a routine at Appleton West High School, bringing about the familiar sound of squeaky basketball shoes abruptly stopping on hardwood as someone hits a pull-up jumper or attempts to fake out their opponent. One key difference this season, however, is the person calling the plays for Appleton West while observing the team from a courtside view.

This past June, recent UW Oshkosh alumna Ally Gwidt was named the head coach of the Appleton West girls basketball team. “I was surprised, yet excited to hear I got the job. I am appreciative of an organization like Appleton West that looks beyond age and focuses on the dedication and readiness of a coach first and foremost,” Gwidt said.

Gwidt, 21, may be on the younger side when it comes to those taking head coaching duties, but what she lacks in age she makes up for in coaching experience. “I started coaching as a junior in high school. I have coached 13 seasons between [Amateur Athletic Union] AAU, club and school ball. I started with a fifth-grade elementary school team in my hometown of Watertown, Wisconsin,” Gwidt said. “I then coached for Winneconne at the seventh-grade and eighth-grade levels and for Wisconsin Blaze from ages 12U to 17U. I found my way into West last year and coached their freshman team before moving onto this position.”

New to the head coaching job, but not to the sport or program at Appleton West, Gwidt will be coaching a Terrors team that went 14-10 overall last year with an 11-7 record in Fox Valley Association (FVA) conference play.

That conference record was good enough for fourth in the FVA behind Hortonville (17-0), Appleton East (14-3) and Kimberly (13-4) high schools out of a total of 10 teams.

Lack of players in past years has made Gwidt’s varsity team one with a ton of experience against top-level competition in the FVA. “A large portion of my varsity team has one to three seasons of experience under their belts at the varsity level due to low numbers last season,” Gwidt said. “That early experience in one of the most competitive conferences in Wisconsin will pay off for them this year.”

Gwidt is taking over for former coach Jim Brown who had been the coach at Appleton West since 2016. Last year, Brown led the team to notable wins over Appleton East 56-45, Kaukauna 57-34 and 54-

I found my way into West last year and coached their freshman team before moving into this position.

- Ally Gwidt, Appleton West head coach

49, and Appleton North 57-38 and 49-42 in a playoff game before falling to Kimberly by a score of 30-61 in the second round of the playoffs. Gwidt is very decisive in terms



Courtesy of Ally Gwidt

Appleton West went 6-4 in the last 10 games of their season, and their final game was a loss to Kimberly, who had the third best conference record (14-4).

of how she wants to impact the Appleton West program as their next head coach. She said that she will bring culture to the basketball program so that the girls on her team can feel unified. “My priority is not to make them fall in love with basketball; it is to make them fall in love with belonging to something that requires hard work and selfless dedication,” Gwidt said.

Overall, Gwidt is very determined to impact her players outside of the game of basketball, just as much as she is interested in improving their performance in the sport. “Basketball is a team sport,” Gwidt said. “There are challenges that can be learned on and off the court. It can teach you things unrelated to the x’s and o’s of the game, and that is why I love it.”

An open letter to Roger Goodell: I’m sorry for doubting your judgment

By Cory Sparks
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As an avid football fan, I wanted nothing more than for this horrific year to be punctuated by another football season of big plays and crowds of thousands exploding in the enthusiastic chants many other fans have become accustomed to hearing. As a realist, I knew that this probably shouldn’t occur consid-

ering the health consequences that could come from allowing fans into a stadium during a pandemic. Due to the direct contact aspect of football and the numerous players who opted out before the first week of the season, I was fearful that there wouldn’t be any season at all. When I heard that Roger Goodell, the NFL commissioner, was not following the “bubble” system that the NBA and NHL were, my fears for the health of many play-

ers and of the season’s chances of occurring increased. The football fan in me is happy to say that I was utterly wrong. According to NFL.com, of the 44,510 tests administered to players and team personnel going into the first week of the season, the combined positive testing rate across the league came back as 0.017% , significantly lower than the national positive rate of 8.2% reported by the Centers for Disease

Control and Prevention. I then heard, despite the fact that players are allowed to make contact with one another for 60 minutes of playing time, jersey swaps are not allowed. The ban on this tradition, which has way less direct contact than the in-game procedures, really had me scratching my head and questioning Goodell’s logic. Nonetheless, the miniscule amount of players and team personnel having COVID-19 has

shown that this procedure hasn’t hurt the league through the first two weeks. Considering football demands direct contact between players, I believe that the precautions put in place have had a sizable impact on the low rate of positive cases found in the NFL. One NFL procedure that I admire for being cautious is the fact that after testing positive, whether the person is asymptomatic or not, they must isolate out of the team’s facility for at least 10 days. Even if that player was asymptomatic, they have to have had two negative tests at least one day apart within a five-day period after the initial positive test, according to the NFL’s Football Operations website.

On top of these league-wide precautions, certain teams, such as the Denver Broncos, have sanitizing spray machines that cover nearly the entire body of each player as they walk into the team facility. With all of these precautions being taken, I truly believe that NFL fans will be able to see a full season this year, including the new 14-team playoff format for this year. The only hiccup that has occurred so far has been the Tennessee Titans having to close down their facility due to the reports by Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) saying eight combined players and team personnel had recently tested positive on Tuesday. Even with that instance occurring, the NFL seems to have the appropriate precautions in place judging by their low testing rates, and I hope that the final 14 weeks continue to prove my initial response as an overreaction.



Courtesy of Sam Benson Smith / WEBN-TV

The last time an NFL game was cancelled was on July 22, 2011, when the first preseason game of the year (the Pro Football Hall of Fame game) didn’t happen due an ongoing lockout that had been occurring that year.

Opinion

Reflecting on the legacy of RBG

By Lexi Wojcik-Kretchmer
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The UW Oshkosh History Club co-hosted a discussion of Ruth Bader Ginsburg’s passing on Sept. 29, 11 days after her death, to discuss her legacy.

The guest speakers, professors at UW O as well as representatives from the Women’s Center, Political Science Student Association and American Democracy Project, all seemed to have very strong opinions about who she was and what she did.

Professor Paisley Harris of the history department started off the discussion by saying that RBG was at the very forefront of gender equality struggles. She then went into a brief discussion of how the late justice got into that side of politics; Harris said RBG was discriminated against in law school and even had a hard time getting a job as a lawyer after graduating, despite being at the top of her class.

Once she got a job as a professor, she was asked by her students to teach a sex discrimination class in relation to politics, something that wasn’t ever done before.

Harris also said that before RBG was on the Supreme Court, she looked for cases that the all male courts could relate to, looking at situations in which males were discriminated against or very obvious cases in which women were discriminated against. Obviously she knew what she was doing, trying to make it as simple as possible for the white male judges to understand her.

This also clearly worked for people to notice her because in 1993, President Clinton nominated her to the Supreme Court of the United States.

RBG made decisions both in the majority and in the dissenting opinion. One of her most important majority decisions was in *U.S. v. Virginia* in which she wrote the majority opinion of

the 7-1 case that decided not allowing females into the Virginia Military Institute went against the 14th Amendment. It 100% did violate the equal protection clause and the one dissenting opinion of Justice Scalia was, to put it simply, wrong.

While she did have other crucial majority opinions, many of her notable cases are of her dissenting. RBG said that “dissents speak to a future age. It’s not simply to say, ‘My colleagues are wrong and I would do it this way.’ But the greatest dissents do become court opinions and gradually over time their views become the dominant view. So that’s the dissenter’s hope: that they are writing not for today, but for tomorrow.”

She got her nickname of “the Dissenter” during *Bush v. Gore* in which she believed there needed to be a recount; it was during this decision that she said her most famous line “I dissent” instead of the typical “I respectfully dissent.” I think that a recount should’ve been done to get the most accurate decision possible, and I would’ve dissented with her.

Arguably, her most eminent dissenting opinion was in 2013 during *Shelby County v. Holder* that allowed ignoring of a part of the Voting Rights Act. RBG said “throwing out preclearance when it has worked and is continuing to work to stop discriminatory changes is like throwing away your umbrella in a rainstorm because you are not getting wet.”

This voting rights issue was important, as was her opinion on it, because she believed it would lead to discrimination in voting, which it definitely would’ve.

For most college students, RBG was a judge on the Supreme Court since before we were born, and because of her feminist opinions and some of the decisions previously discussed, we saw her as a liberal.

However, Harris and Associ-

ate Vice Chancellor of Academic Support of Inclusive Excellence Dr. Damira Grady both said that she was actually more moderate during her time on SCOTUS.

Dr. Grady argued that while RBG did have some decisions that didn’t always impact her life in the most positive way as a person of color because of her moderate voting, she did still do good for her as a woman.

While it may be true that she is more moderate, I believe that us seeing her as liberal is correct because of how far right and conservative the Supreme Court has become in recent years.

An important thing to note as a seat opens up on the court is the fact that we could have a 6-3 majority if President Trump gets his nomination, Amy Coney Barrett, through.

If this happens, we’re screwed.

Reproductive rights is an issue RBG fought for, specifically forced sterilization, and when she spoke about it in the Senate, only three people voted against her because of her knowledge and compelling argument. If Trump was in the Senate, he would’ve probably been one of those three because one of his campaign promises is to limit reproductive rights and access to facilities like Planned Parenthood.

With a conservative majority, many of those rights would be gone. Dr. Alicia Johnson, director of the Women’s Center, said that if reproductive rights do get revoked, abortion in many places, including Wisconsin, would be criminalized.

I don’t think that nine people should get to choose this and honestly, it shouldn’t even be a discussion for people to have an opinion of what others get to do with their body.

Another reason we’re screwed, if Barrett gets through, is because she is tied to People of Praise. Dr. Harris was concerned about this and briefly described People of Praise as those



Ruth Bader Ginsburg served as an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court from 1993 until her death earlier this month.

who have the idea that the wife follows the husband and they pledge to live by the doctrine of what’s essentially a cult.

It is 2020, so I really don’t think we need someone on the highest court in the country who thinks wives should follow their husbands and dutifully listen to them.

Decisions and how they are related to the laws we already have in place all depend on the judiciary’s ability to interpret them. If President Trump is able to get his nomination through, voting rights, reproductive choice, the Second Amendment and health care may be able to be interpreted in a way that does not do the most good for the most people.

Trump and other leaders should respect Ruth Bader Ginsburg’s dying wish of not being

replaced until after the election is over.

While I think this discussion was important to remember Justice Bader Ginsburg, I think we should’ve taken more time to see the implications of her death and the future of our country without her vital opinion, no matter if it’s moderate or liberal. I’m hoping the History Club will host a new meeting soon about this issue of a vacant seat as well as how it may impact presidential campaigns.

Please make sure you’re registered to vote. Visit vote.org or myvote.wi.gov to request an absentee ballot if you don’t plan on going out to the polls on Election Day. It is the most important election that most of us have ever voted in.

Why I deleted my social media accounts

By Ian McDonald
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I deleted my personal social media accounts. All of them — Twitter, Facebook, Instagram — gone within the matter of a few minutes. It’s all been gone since Sept. 14 and I feel no different; I don’t feel disconnected, but maybe that’s because I was never really “connected.”

It all started when I watched my 12-year-old sister receive her first phone and instantly become devoured by social media. That was a feeling I strongly recall from when I was 12 and created my Facebook account. I wanted to see what others were doing, what pictures they posted or if I could find old friends or distant family members.

Watching my sister today was



like watching myself 10 years ago. And frankly, I didn’t like what I saw.

According to the Child Mind Institute, children between eighth and 12th grade saw a 33% increase in severe depression between 2010 and 2015. During that same time period, girls in that age group saw a 65% increase in suicide rates.

Social media has poked holes

of vulnerability among children who barely have a grasp of their own identity.

10 years ago, Facebook was nothing like it is today, and that goes for all social media. Behind the screen we look at today is a virtual embodiment of who we are, what we’re interested in and what keeps us hooked.

Our data has become an identity that has been sold up and down the market from Amazon to Google and plenty of political markets. The more time we spend on social media, the more time we build our virtual self to be used and abused by the powers that be. That’s the way it’s designed.

When current and former Facebook employees don’t even allow their children to have social media, you know there’s a

problem.

For example, the foundation of the business model for social media is to keep you on for longer periods of time. As a result, the identity you create on these social media platforms are sold off to advertisers.

The time spent posting a black square for Black Lives Matter, or reposting pictures that promoted social justice, may have had less of an effect on helping oppressed minority groups and more of an impact on Instagram’s net worth.

Even though my outlook on social media is generally negative, I can’t say that all of it is bad. I believe that these platforms should be used as a tool, and not as a place for personal acceptance.

When a business can use so-

cial media to sell a product or a service, or a campaign can use social media to raise awareness for a cause we begin to take advantage of the system that is taking advantage of us.

As you continue to scroll through your morning feed, I want you to ask yourself, am I or is social media the one benefiting from this experience?

I hope to pass these beliefs on to my sister and others before they feel like social media is telling them how to look, feel and think.

It’s strange to think how tied our identity is to social media and how dependent on it we’ve become. I fear that with the almost unchecked power that social media has, it will soon snowball into something we can no longer control.

“Whatcha Think?”

What is your biggest pet peeve with online classes?



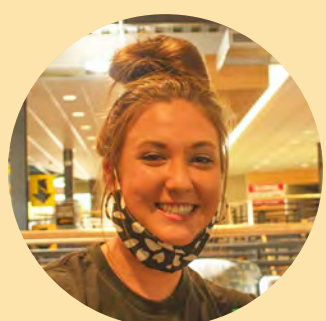
Brennan, sophomore
“I think it’s the fact that the professors don’t have the feedback that they would have in the classroom, so they go through the curriculum at a faster pace and do not have that feedback to make the learning process happen.”



Robert, sophomore
“For me, I think Collaborate Ultra works well for what it’s supposed to do, but the professors sometimes go much too quick, and I think that they could work on that.”



Ryan, junior
“It’s just so easy to get distracted. If you’re in a classroom, you’re more focused and feel more motivated to put your phone away, but when you have an online class in your bedroom, you have access to distractions.”



Jordan, sophomore
“Personally, my professors, record their lectures, and it may be a 15-minute lecture, but they whiz through everything so fast. They just go so fast and you can’t ask them questions.”

‘Bill & Ted Face the Music’ is pure fun

By Nolan Fullington
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“Bill & Ted Face the Music” is another soft reboot of a comedy series from 25 years ago. This film joins many other films that fall into that category such as “Blues Brothers 2000,” “Clerks 2,” “Dumb and Dumber To,” “Ghostbuters (2016),” “Zoolander 2” and “Super Troopers 2.” The list goes on, but the difference between those films and this third “Bill and Ted” movie is that “Bill and Ted Face the Music” was not painful to watch.

Once told they’d save the universe during a time-traveling adventure, Bill (Alex Winter) and Ted (Keanu Reeves) find themselves as middle-aged dads still trying to crank out a hit song and fulfill their destiny.

It felt so good to watch a movie again that has low aspirations, and I mean that in the most positive way. It’s so tiring nowadays to watch a film with larger-than-life stakes, “saving cinema” and revolting action scenes that go on for 45 minutes that some poor visual effects artists had to work on for months.

“Bill & Ted Face the Music,” though very flawed, feels so genuine in just providing you with a good time. 90 minutes, you’re in and out, and it’s exactly the type of movie we need right now; two completely optimistic characters try to unite time and space through positivity and music.

This third “Bill & Ted” movie feels like the writers combined “Excellent Adventure” and “Bogus Journey” to deliver a slightly watered-down version of the two, but it’s quality entertainment even though the plot makes no sense. A film like “Bill & Ted” gets a pass for having a plot that makes no sense

because it’s a “Bill & Ted” movie, but something like “Tenet” doesn’t.

Similar to the first two “Bill & Ted” films, there isn’t much to say other than it was pretty funny because when it comes to comedies: they’re either funny or they’re not, and that’s the review without just spoiling jokes.

However, one aspect I could not get over was how awkward Reeves felt. He looked like he’s struggling to smile and deliver lines in the film. Ted smiled all the time in the first two films, but Reeves looked like he’s lost the ability to play Ted again.

Winter, though, is still wonderful. He feels appropriate for the age these characters are now, but Bill and Ted’s two daughters assist in lifting up the lack of youthful energy. Those two go on an “Excellent Adventure”-esque adventure where they assemble a band of famous musical figures from the past like Mozart and Jimi Hendrix.

So I got my “Excellent Adventure” fix fulfilled, because that is my favorite of the three, due to the fish-out-of-water humor that the film was full of. While the daughters do that, Bill and Ted go on a “Bogus Journey”-esque adventure where they go farther into the future to steal “the song that will unite time and space” from their future selves only to realize that their future selves are pathetic nobodies. Then they eventually meet up with Death again, so William Salder returns, who was always a wonderful presence.

The newest character that everyone seems to be discussing was Dennis the Robot. I figured they would take the steam out of his character early on, but what surprised me was how similar he was to Death in “Bogus Journey.” Dennis was appropriate for the world of a “Bill and Ted”



film, and though funny, his character is just Death from “Bogus Journey.”

The worst part of the entire film was anything to do with Bill and Ted’s wives. Once again, the princesses are shoved into the background and completely forgotten about, which has to be the longest-running joke ever. In context of the film, that is funny, but it really is a subplot that is hardly ad-

dressed. This film is so pure and has such low intentions that it feels out of its time, but it was a soft reboot I welcomed and thoroughly enjoyed. Compared to most other comedy films that get a sequel ten-plus years later, “Bill & Ted Face the Music” was surprisingly pleasant and entertaining.

In praise of physical textbooks

By Owen Peterson
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I love textbooks. More specifically, I love physical textbooks.

This may be because opening up a textbook at my desk with a notebook and pen is a part of school that I have become nostalgic for, or it may be because I have a soft spot for all forms of physical media.

Regardless, I have become a physical textbook purist.

This semester, I have seen more people using online textbooks than ever before. This is no doubt because many professors have decided to use the websites provided by textbook publishers (such as McGraw-Hill Connect) for homework due to the shift to mostly online classes.

Because of this change, it was simply more convenient for many to just purchase the online textbook in a bundle with an access code to the website.

Needless to say, this was a mildly upsetting revelation.

Despite their higher price tag, physical textbooks are worth it, and here’s why:

Firstly, and most importantly, studies have shown that students retain more information from physical textbooks than they do from online textbooks.

A 2017 study by Lauren M. Singer and Patricia A. Alexander for “The Journal of Experimental

Education” discovered that students reading informational passages in print retained more information than those reading the exact same text digitally.

So, seeing that most exams sometimes just love to test you on the most obscure little details (that of course always happen to be in those extra information boxes that nobody likes to read), reading from a physical textbook is beneficial.

Secondly, physical textbooks can be much less annoying and distracting.

I love that with a physical textbook, you can easily distance yourself from distractions (like your phone) and allow you to be in a setting more conducive to learning. However, when you are reading an online textbook, this luxury is forfeited because you are always one click away from accidentally sinking hours of your life into Twitter.

On top of that, reading an online textbook obviously requires you to spend an extended period of time staring at a screen, which is harmful for your eyes.

Not only that, but the light from the screen suppresses your melatonin production, meaning that you will not sleep as well, which is not good considering you were probably only reading it because it is 1:45 a.m. and you are cramming for that exam you have in eight hours.

But possibly my biggest annoy-

ance with online textbooks is when they buffer. Seeing that dreaded loading circle when you turn the page crushes my soul every time.

I can’t think of a more Gen Z problem than having to wait for the page of a book to load.

Thirdly, I believe physical textbooks have psychological benefits when it comes to learning. By this, I mean that there are a lot of little things about engaging with a physical textbook that have a subtle impact on how well you learn.

Simple things such as the act of turning a real page and seeing the amount of pages left get smaller can help instill a sense of progress that makes the experience less tedious, which is a feeling not quite replicable by the scrolling of online textbooks.

Also, the ability to scroll while reading an online textbook happens to make you more likely to start skimming the text.

Another one of the neat benefits is that after reading a physical textbook, you are able to visualize the layout of the pages and where certain information is located within a certain page, which can help you recall that information when needed.

Lastly, there is the issue of cost. At first glance, you will see that online textbooks are almost always cheaper than the physical option, but this may be misleading. Even if you pay more upfront for your

textbook, with a physical textbook you have the option to sell it back to the bookstore or sell it to another student.

You also have the option of buying physical textbooks from many other websites for extremely cheap prices, so if you are willing to put the effort in and use a site like slugbooks.com, you can get physical copies cheaper than the online version. It is even possible to turn a profit by buying these textbooks for super cheap and then selling them back to the university for more.

That being said, the issue of which version is cheaper usually comes down to a textbook-by-textbook basis, so I will not claim that one is a reliably cheaper option.

In the spirit of fairness, however, I must admit that there are some things that I do enjoy about online textbooks.

I enjoy that online textbooks do not have weight, as the lugging around of multiple textbooks at a time has resulted in a couple of torn backpacks in my life. I enjoy that I can highlight and annotate online textbooks without feeling like I am vandalizing them. I enjoy that online textbooks are environmentally friendly.

But that’s about it.

Next time you have to go textbook shopping, keep all of this in mind and remember the benefits that come from physical textbooks.