



The Voice



Rowan College of South Jersey's Award-Winning Newspaper

Spring 2021

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Volume 32, Edition 2

President Keating's Commencement message

By RCSJ PR. DEPT.
Staff Writer

It is my privilege to congratulate the graduating classes of 2020 and 2021. This is a momentous occasion in your lives and should be celebrated with joy and excitement.

I cannot, however, celebrate your accomplishments and commitment without significant reflection on the past 15 months — one of the most difficult times in our country's history and certainly in our society.

Each year, I usually have one word that I offer to the graduating class. For the class of 2020, that word would be fear. Let me explain why. Way back when, my athletic coach used to tell us, "never let fear dictate your fate"

and that has stayed with me to this day.

For this year's graduating class, the word I offer is resilience. A pandemic, social unrest and threats to our health and livelihood have impacted us all. Not giving in, determined to make it through — earning a degree despite it all — that is reason to applaud and celebrate.

Like the Rowan College of South Jersey graduating classes of 2020 and 2021 commemorating their academic achievements together, I join these two words: fear, never let it dictate your fate and resilience, overcoming the unique circumstances you've been through. You have proven yourself to be courageous, to be resilient, and to be fearless. You have proven that you can finish something regardless of what life throws at you.

As you prepare to move on with your life and take on new challenges, please take a moment

to thank your parents and family for their support and guidance, the college faculty and staff for preparing you for the next chapter in your life, and yourself for having the courage and ability to reach your goal.

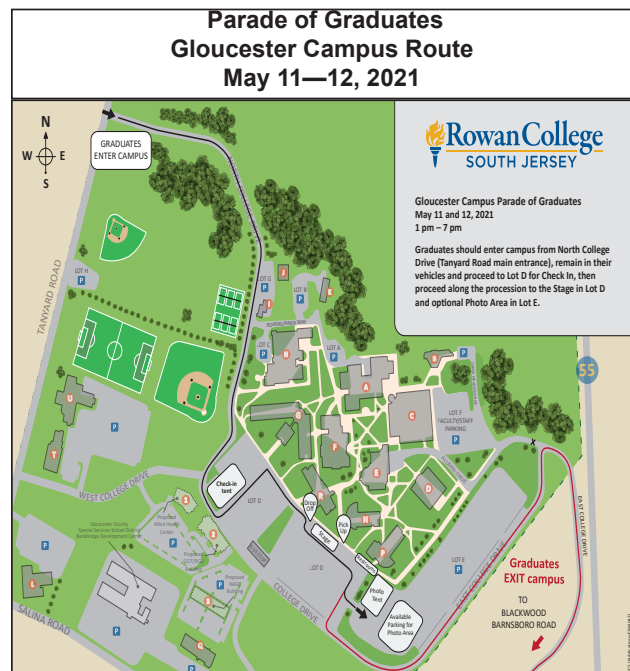
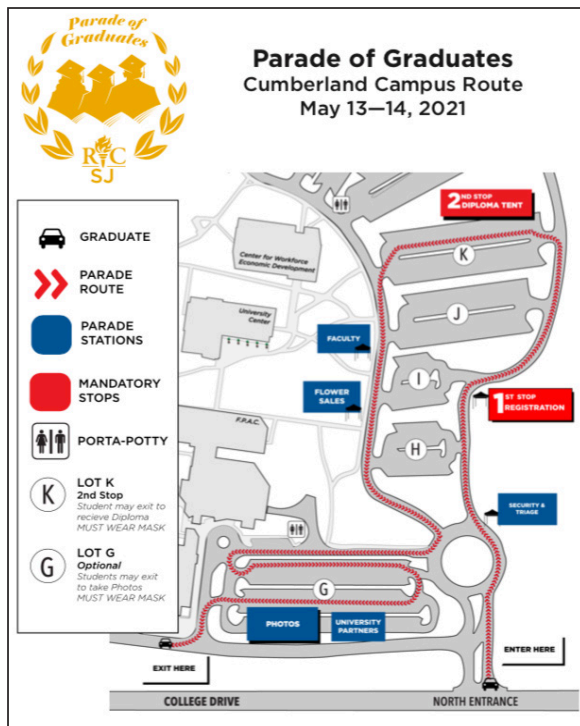
In my 50 years of education, I have never been prouder to be part of a graduating class for what you have accomplished. I wish you the best of luck and encourage you to continue your education throughout life's journey.

Pictured to the right:
Top photo: Dr. Keating, RCSJ President.

Bottom photo: Dr. Keating, RCSJ President with student graduation speakers Samantha Bicking (Gloucester), Jose Calixto (Cumberland), as well as PTK members Ashton Paladino, De'Hyna King and Smirna Hernandez Perez.



Parade of Graduates Celebrating the Classes of 2020 and 2021



CAMPUS LIFE

Faculty Spotlight: RTF Adjunct Professor Clark

By: COLLIN RAMSEY
Staff Writer

Did you know that Rowan College of South Jersey has a new program called RTF 3+1? RTF stands for radio, television, and film. This is an ideal program for anyone looking to earn a four-year degree at a reduced price: less than \$30,000 for a bachelor's degree, save on tuition and fees — three years at the community college cost and the final year at the university rate.

The program follows Rowan University's course curriculum with 300-level classes taught by Rowan College advanced-degree faculty.

A student can graduate with a Rowan University bachelor's degree in four years - three years at RCSJ Cumberland or Gloucester and one year at Rowan University. Future internships and co-op opportunities are being developed to enhance work experience and career potential.

The program gives hands-on experience using Canon cameras, lighting and sound equipment, television studio with a green screen and Adobe Premiere

editing software.

I was able to interview one of the RTF professors, Nathaniel Clark. Here is what he had to say about the program:

Q: Can you describe what the main goal of the RTF program is?

Clark: The main goal of the Radio/Television/Film 3+1 program at Rowan College is to prepare students enrolled to successfully transfer to Rowan University and complete their BA degree.

Q: What do students in the RTF program do?

Clark: The RTF program at RCSJ was designed to mirror the courses offered at Rowan University to ensure that RCSJ students have the same foundation of knowledge that their peers at Rowan University are receiving.

These RTF courses include Media Aesthetics, Film Production, TV Production, Foundations of Media Production, Screenwriting, The Movie Industry, and both Film and Television History and Appreciation.

In these courses, RTF students learn everything from



Photo Courtesy of Nathaniel Clark

how to operate camera equipment, lighting equipment, sound equipment and editing software to writing original scripts and creating their own short film and media projects."

Q: When did the program start, how did it originate?

Clark: I began teaching RTF courses at Rowan College Gloucester as part of the 3+1 program in 2018. In 2020, the 3+1 RTF program was expanded to the

Cumberland campus and I started teaching two courses

We have added new courses each semester since then and Cumberland now offers a full Radio/Television/Film 3+1 program. We will graduate our inaugural RTF class this semester and they will be the first students to transfer into the Rowan University RTF program.

Q: Where do you see the program in 5 years?

Clark: In a very short time, we have created a new program at Cumberland and each semester more and more students are made aware of this offering and have been enrolling in RTF courses.

We have experienced exponential growth in the number of students enrolled and I would expect that to continue for the next five years and well into the future.

Q: What has been your favorite part of the program so far?

Clark: My favorite part of the program is really my favorite part about teaching. I have a deep passion for all aspects of media making and my richest reward in

teaching these subjects is when I can convey that passion and perhaps inspire or ignite a similar passion in my students.

Q: Is there anything else you want people to know about the RTF program?

Clark: The main thing I would want people reading this to know about the RTF program is that it exists!

As mentioned, RCSJ Cumberland has, in a very short time, created a new program track and so, an important component of this is to let people know about it so they know that this is a new academic option to pursue if it aligns with their pursuits.

The 3+1 Program in general is a very cost-effective way for students who want to complete their BA degree to take courses that they need at RCSJ and then to transfer those credits to Rowan University.

The third year courses are offered at RCSJ Cumberland pricing. The more students that are aware of this program the better, and that is the way that the program will grow and develop further.

Three Cheers for Five Stars! Phi Theta Kappa Receives Top Ranking

By: RCSJ PR DEPT.
Staff Writer

For Rowan College of South Jersey's (RCSJ) Alpha Psi Pi chapter of the Phi Theta Kappa (PTK) honor society, an unwavering commitment to one another throughout a year of virtual education — and to their chapter's goals — has proven to be rewarding.

The Alpha Psi Pi chapter and their advisors, Shawn Rutter and Jackie Thomasson, began the spring semester with a reason to celebrate — their designation as a "5-Star Chapter" for the second consecutive year.

As the premiere international honor society recognizing students at associate degree-granting colleges, PTK provides scholars the opportunity to grow

and encourages dialog with college leadership and active participation in the college community.

A 5-Star status is the highest level of achievement a chapter can attain for their participation on campus and in local, regional, national, and international activities.

"This is my first full year as a Phi Theta Kappa advisor," said Thomasson. "The officers and members of Alpha Psi Pi have surpassed my expectations and impressed me in so many ways."

As part of their efforts to earn the 5-Star designation, the chapter completed an "Honors in Action" project that involved research, problem-solving and efforts to educate the community.

They addressed the ques-

tion: "Are Individuals Raised to Criticize People Based on Stereotypes?" After much research and discussion, one theme was clear — people are not always aware of the stereotypes they hold.

Students took it upon themselves to create an eye-opening video to expose this issue, which has been shared across multiple RCSJ platforms.

The Alpha Psi Pi chapter was also a recent recipient of the "Recognizing Excellent in Acceptance and Completion with Honors (REACH) Reward." This program recognizes the recruitment efforts of chapters that grow their membership over the academic year. Currently, the Alpha Psi Pi chapter has more than 240 active members.



Phi Theta Kappa Members

Photo Courtesy of RCSJ PR Dept.

"We were really excited to achieve this honor," remarked Rutter. "Enhancing our membership during this past year was challenging to accomplish while the campus was offering a remote learning environment. The Alpha Psi Pi chapter's continued growth is a credit to the enthusiasm and

dedication of its officers and members."

For information about Alpha Psi Pi and how to become a member visit RCSJ.edu/PTK or view Phi Theta Kappa's international website at PTK.org.

Rowan College of South Jersey's First Virtual Trivia Event

By: ISABELLA MUCHLER
Staff Writer

The Student Government Association conducted their annual "Student vs. Staff Trivia" game virtually Tuesday, February 9, encouraging student life and unity within the Rowan College of South Jersey campus.

Student Life Event Coordinator, Rachael Hacker, hosted Tuesday's trivia game with Student Government President, Sam Bicking, and Executive Vice President, Ashton Paladino. The trivia game was available to all

RCSJ students and staff through Zoom and Kahoot.

This is the first year that this trivia event was held virtually, as Student Government associates brainstormed new ways to continue student participation despite the restrictions of COVID-19.

Bicking drummed up this idea, collaborating with the Student Life office to create a forum for students and staff to intermingle.

Judy MacKenzie, a member of RCSJ's Communication department, explained how this event was "a fun way to interact with people."

She described how working from home has isolated her and has restricted communication with people. This virtual trivia

event provided the perfect opportunity for MacKenzie, and fellow students and staff, to correlate. "I appreciate this," MacKenzie said. "I welcome the opportunity to interact with students."

Once students accessed the Zoom link available through their emails, they were given a chance to introduce themselves and meet new students and staff.

After introductions, students and staff were asked to individually open a Kahoot game on their technological devices and log into the school's trivia game with a pin displayed by Hacker. Two members of RCSJ's staff participated and three students partook.

Kahoot is a learning platform that teachers use to trans-

form learning into fun games. The game works through technology.

Each student can access the game by their own computer, phone, tablet, etc., and a series of questions are illustrated with four possible answers. The trivia game followed this pattern with 20 questions in total. Every student and faculty member were faced with four possible answers to random trivia questions regarding the real world.

One distinct question that sparked conversation involved Valentine's day: "What creature will the Bronx zoo let you name after your lover on Valentine's Day?" Believe it or not, the zoo will let you name a cockroach after your lover!

Student participation

and interaction is the main goal of this trivia event. Hacker said how participation has "definitely" decreased during this time due to the pandemic, as "students are exhausted;" however, through this struggle of connection, the trivia game provided an outlet to promote a new forum of community called "grab and go," a way for students to connect through crafts. The students simply grab a craft donated to the school, bring it home, and share their creations with others through Zoom.

Overall, this trivia event provided an outlet for communication and sharing of ideas. Students and staff enjoyed this experience, meeting new people despite the difficulties of a COVID-19 constrained world.

SPORTS

What's Next for Vineland Native & RCSJ Alumni Jose Rodriguez?

By DIVINE CARDONA
Staff Writer

Jose Rodriguez Jr., also known as "JoeJoe", started playing baseball at the age of four years old. He found inspiration and influence from his father Jose Rodriguez Sr. and his two older cousins also Vineland Natives, Allen Rivera and Holvin Figueroa.

Rodriguez played on Rowan College of South Jersey's (or formally known as Cumberland County) baseball team. In May of 2019, the Dukes won the school's first-ever National Junior College Athletic Association World Series title in Greenville, Tennessee. Rodriguez was a significant factor for the team as a standout pitcher. He started in nine games and pitched twenty of them. When asked the feeling he felt after winning he said, "It was the best feeling of my life. Being they never won a World Series, doing something that put them on the map was a major accomplishment."

Not long after this mile-



stone, the Cincinnati Reds drafted Rodriguez in the 20th round. He declined his offer to further his education and baseball career at St. John's University with a full scholarship. "Ultimately my decision came from my parents constantly reminding me that education is key. I knew I needed to improve and my goal isn't just to play professional, it's to play Major League Baseball. Going to St. John's I felt confident I'd be put in the best hands," Rodriguez stated.

Although he knew St. John's was the next step in ensuring a future for his baseball career, he gives credit to the growth he endured while playing for the Dukes. "My first few years I wasn't as good but the coaching staff helped me get into shape as well as giving me opportunities to improve. They set me up to understand what is expected of me at a higher level," Rodriguez explained.

Rodriguez faced academic challenges because the curriculum is harder and the student population is larger. There is a 17,514-student population difference being at St. John's. He didn't face many challenges when it came to baseball. "I wasn't



worried, I'm a hard working guy. Being recruited meant they saw potential in me and I just had to show them that," Rodriguez said.

When asked if he's progressed and how Rodriguez explained, "Absolutely. I have a better understanding of my major and the opportunities I have if baseball doesn't work out for me. Although I don't get that one on one interaction as frequently as I would at a smaller school, I've learned to communicate with my professors more efficiently about what's expected of me. As for baseball I've changed in ways such as managing an extra two pitches, maturity on the mound, and understanding pitching better.

St. John's coaching staff is reputable. In general, coaches have a significant impact upon their players. I asked Rodriguez how the coaches have helped him throughout his time there and he said, "Multiple ways; mentally and physically. They've emphasized the significance of the mental side of the game. In a physical aspect, I gained velocity on pitches, and enhanced off speed pitches."

With that being said, opening day is right around the corner. February 26th St. John's

will be playing their first five games at home giving them home field advantage. I asked Rodriguez what to expect to see this season from not only him but his team as well and he stated, "Expect to see St. John to be on top. You expect me to give it my all. I can't give you stats because that's just not the type of player I am. But I'm going to give it 110% when I go out there."

Although Rodriguez was offered a spot to play for the Cincinnati Reds he declined, because he emphasized that his education is imperative to his future. Still, it makes you wonder whether this opportunity will come around again. When asked if he were to be drafted again, would you take

"... I'm out on the field this season with his number, number 11 on my back. I'm going to the top for you, just continue to help me pave the way. Long Live Ayden. I love you baby boy."

it this time around, he responded, "Without a doubt. I'm more prepared than I've ever been. I've worked on a lot of aspects as a player, that I'm more confident and mature than the player I was in 2019. It's not just a game anymore."

Rodriguez has been



playing baseball for seventeen years. I asked, what is your dream team to play for and why, he said, "The Yankees is my all around favorite team so it's between them or the Dodgers. The Yankees is also majority of my family's favorite team. If I had the opportunity to play for them I would do it for my family too. I respect both of their organizations because they're rich and precise." I asked who is your favorite player in the league, Rodriguez answered, "Marcus Stroman, he's a pitcher for the New York Mets. His growth is inspiring. I love the way he plays. He's always full of energy, passion and heart."

Rodriguez has played baseball for just about seventeen years and has had more than a dozen coaches. A coach, player relationship is more influential than one could imagine.

When asked who was your favorite coach and why, Rodriguez explained, "I would have to say my dad. He never showed favoritism. I played on travel teams that did and yet I'm his son and he would still bench me. He always showed me what hard work consisted of. He's coached me my whole life, I've learned how to deal with situations that happen on the field that could happen off the field."

Family holds sentimental value when it comes to Rodriguez. He expressed their influence on his decision to continue his education. It is clear they instilled values and beliefs that are fundamental and reflect on his character. "It's extremely hard being away from home to pursue my baseball career. I make a lot of sacrifices. I can't see family or attend family trips. Being away from my family is the hardest part."

What inspires Rodriguez on the field? He answered, "My family and my doubters. The people telling me that I would never make it to be a Division I player doing the things I'm doing. I want to make my parents proud of the son they raised and provide them with the best life possible. I hope to set an example for my siblings and cousins and make my grandparents, aunts and uncles proud." Rodriguez added, "But most importantly, I'm doing it for the person who wasn't only my brother, but my better half and my best friend, Ayden."

On December 24th, Rodriguez lost his brother Ayden in a tragic accident. "God opened up the gates of heaven to welcome his most peerless angel. He was always the reason I've worked so hard at securing a successful future for myself. Being an older brother, I always felt the responsibility of "paving the way" as he would say. Anywhere I was, he was right by



my side. We went through it all together, the good and the bad.

When I left for St. John's, the very first time he said to me 'I'ma miss you, you're like my idol, it's hitting me, seeing you go, but do ya thing out there and don't let nobody get the best of you; this isn't a good bye, it's a see you later.' I can't begin to describe the toll Ayden's passing has taken on me."

Rodriguez continues, "But knowing I was his idol, I'm doing this for him now more than ever. He had a heart of a lion and I know he'll strengthen my heart with the same passion when I'm out on the field this season with his number, number 11 on my back. I'm going to the top for you, just continue to help me pave the way. Long Live Ayden. I love you baby boy."

OPINION

Kicking Beauty

Standards to the Curb

By DIVINE CARDONA
Staff Writer

When you look in the mirror, what do you see? Envisioning a world where idealization of a woman's image isn't plastered everywhere is unorthodox.

If you were knowledgeable of the effects prompted by these standards and glorification would you still use them?

Although this is an issue that happens to women more than men; men too face societal standards and body shame; which can result in similar (if not the same) effects.

As a woman living in the Digital Age Era, I understand and experience first hand; the harsh criticism women subconsciously project upon themselves.

Society and sometimes the people closest to you bring upon the most negative effects of beauty standards. Brown University conducted a study on men and women and the standard set about weight and appearances.

Young adults in high school bring one of the largest impacts of these standards. A high school student stated, "I think that beauty standards impact all people.

It seems as though some submit to or ignore the toxic culture of beauty standards and social media simply to reap the benefits.

It seems as though some accept that their bodies have become pawns in a never-ending competition of who looks best, as long as they receive the validation that follows, although the risk of developing mental health issues remains." Although a student in high school made this statement the context is universal because of how rapidly social media is evolving.

According to Cambridge University beauty is defined as "the quality of being pleasing, especially to look at, or someone



or something that gives great pleasure, especially when you look at it."

Everyone has a different definition of beauty, as Margaret Hungerford a famous 19th century romance novelist Irish, once said, "beauty is in the eye of the beholder." At a time when young adults are trying to find themselves and create their own identity self-esteem plays a significant role in that. It's imperative to eliminate these standards in order to promote self-acceptance.

Although body image

isn't a mental health condition there are risk factors including: distress, unhealthy eating behaviors and eating disorders.

Modern and social media plaster images of idealized bodies emphasizing slimness, youthfulness and flawlessness. For men, they idealize muscularity.

When people can't achieve most of these characteristics it triggers anxiety, self-disgust and suicidal thoughts. Hannah Lewis, a policy officer at Rethink Mental Illness, believes that how

we see ourselves is a public health issue. Lewis stated, "People with poor body image are at risk for self harm and of potentially harmful sexual behavior." Negative body image can further undermine the wellbeing of people who already have mental illness.

As a woman, I understand how idealizations can trigger young adults' insecurities. I encourage everyone to be kind to one another. Martha Beck, an American author and life coach, said, "Standards of beauty are arbitrary. Body shame exists only to the extent that our physiques don't match our own beliefs about how we should look."

For more on body image and mental health, visit, www.theguardian.com/society/2019/may/17/poor-body-image-mental-health.

Why You Should Watch Attack on Titan

By COLLIN RAMSEY
Staff Writer

Attack on Titan is an anime based on the manga of the same name by Hajime Isayama.

The plot is humanity is stuck living behind gigantic walls due to titans. Titans are huge creatures who resemble humans.

The reason humanity is stuck behind these gigantic walls is because titans eat humans. As you watch the show, you will see various types of titans as well.

The main character, Eren Jaeger, along with his friends; Mikasa and Armin would go on to join the Scouts.

There are plenty of characters that viewers will come to relate with and care for while watching. Some of these characters are a part of the Scouts, while others are not. The Scouts' objective is to complete missions beyond the walls which entails fighting titans.

These missions are very dangerous with around 30% of the Scouts dying each time they go beyond the walls.

Be prepared for twists and surprises as they come quickly, within a few episodes. One of the biggest reasons I would

recommend Attack on Titan to anyone is because you don't have to be a fan of anime to watch it. One could easily watch it as they would any other show. I've known people that do not watch anime but they genuinely enjoy watching this show.

There are three completed seasons, with the fourth and final one currently releasing episodes weekly. In these modern times of streaming, it is no surprise that Attack on Titan is



available to watch on Hulu. If you are a fan of anime, or shows with exciting fight scenes, this show is definitely for you. This series also makes it easy to become attached to characters. You will witness their growth and development throughout episodes and seasons alike. That is...if they survive!

The show can be gory at times, contributing to its TV-MA rating, showing the likes of people getting eaten by Titans like they are nothing more than candy. It is very entertaining to watch and could be considered a psychological thriller as well.

There are many moments where you will find yourself on the edge of your seat, filled with excitement on what has happened or what is about to happen. It's one of those shows where many times you will go into the next episode not knowing what to expect.

The storyline is easy to follow and has many twists and actions which will take you by surprise. The story progresses at a pretty steady pace as well. The ending of each episode will keep you wanting more.

Almost every episode ends on a cliffhanger, leaving the viewer with a sense of excitement and anticipation about what is to come. It is easy to find yourself binge watching it if you are not careful.

Then, again, maybe that is just a testament to how captivating Attack on Titan truly is.

Does Traveling Benefit You?

By DIVINE CARDONA
Staff Writer

Sue Fitzmaurice a recovering corporate executive and author, once said, "You must go on adventures to find out where you truly belong." Travelling is attached to young people who are on the search for challenges, change, and new atmospheres. There is a significant impact in travelling physically and psychologically. There is a sense of pleasure and excitement you feel when travelling somewhere new.

Travelling is a way for people to relate to the world. Many of times when you grow up in your hometown, one will deprive themselves from seeing different parts of the world.

Change is scary for a lot of people. Stepping out of your comfort zone at a young age, will allow one to continue exploring different places later in life. It also allows you to immerse yourself in other cultures. If one travels outside of their country, they get a first-hand experience of what life is like for that country. The foods they eat, the music they listen to, and the lifestyle they live. Sometimes, you see the hardships and obstacles they face due to lack of finances or supplies. It allows you to truly appreciate and cherish the people and freedom you possess.

Someone who travels by him or herself finds a sense of independence in doing so. When you're younger, you travel with parents or family, but when you go by yourself, you have to learn how to fend for yourself.

Knowing how to budget is important because if you're eating out and doing activities everyday, then you're going to spend your money quickly. It's import-

ant to keep moving while you're young; the younger you are, the better shape you're presumed to be in. It also allows you to meet new people that you possibly could become friends with, and travel to see in the future.

As someone who moved across the country to California alone at 19, I can say it was life changing. I just graduated high school and I was unsure of my purpose in life and what I wanted to go to school for. I didn't want to waste money to eventually change my mind half way through college. So, I decided to leave my hometown and remind myself that there is more to life. It can be toxic and draining to be surrounded by the same people doing the same things everyday. Moving away made me realize it wasn't the place but the people in my life. I believe I would've figured that out along the way, eventually, but not as fast as I did when traveling alone.

During my time in California, I met life-long friends. After high school, I lost my passion for Cosmetology, specifically hair. I ended up working at a hair salon that sparked an interest back into the industry. I worked with women who inspired me and were educated. They stayed current on the latest trends and styles. I found peace and clarity during my time living in California. I was able to realize the things I did and did not want in life, as well as the things I was and was not willing to sacrifice.

Ultimately, I came back home to reconnect with family and friends. I took the risk and opportunity to travel and this journey helped me find myself.

THE VOICE

The Voice is the student newspaper of Rowan College of South Jersey and opinions expressed therein are not the opinions of Rowan College of South Jersey.

The Voice welcomes responses to our editorial pages and strives to present its readers with accurate and fair reporting. If you should wish to submit a letter to the editor, request a correction or contribute a story idea, please email the faculty advisor directly. All articles and letters submitted to The Voice may be edited for clarity, professional standards, correctness and space restrictions.

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

RCSJ's Theatre Department presents . . .

By RCSJ THEATRE DEPT.

FRINGE FESTIVAL

Friday, March 26 @ 7pm
Presented by The Theatre Department of RCSJ and No Pants Productions presented 10-minute plays including new works written for the event

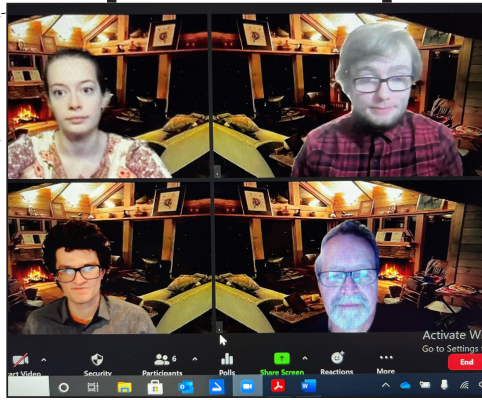
The Cumberland Campus Theater Department and No Pants Productions invited viewers to attend their Virtual Fringe Festival on Fri., Mar. 26 at 7 p.m., held via Zoom.

"On the Fringe," directed by RCSJ Director of Performing Arts, Deborah Bradshaw, featured five staged scene readings, including two new and original works – all written by South Jersey playwrights and performed by students, alumni and friends of the Theater Department and members

of the local community.

Viewers enjoyed a lineup of: "Canker Sores" by Christopher Durang; "American Prologue" by Mike Loperogolo (new); "The Blizzard" by David Ives; "The Zoom Meeting" by George Scully (new); and "Fly the Metaphorically Friendly Skies" by Michael John McGoldrick.

Admission to "On the Fringe" was free and all were welcome, but pre-registration was required.



The Cast of *The Blizzard*
by David Ives.

RCSJ THEATRE ALUMNI: No Pants Required

April 9 at 7pm
Presented by The Theatre Department of RCSJ and No Pants Productions RCSJ Theatre Alumni are back on ZOOM!

Join us as we feature updates and performances from RCSJ

Alumni Theatre Students in a fun evening of scenes and monologues.

THE RCSJ ACTING CLASS

An Evening of Scenes and Monologues

We hope you will join The Acting Class of RCSJ presenting their final exam of scenes and monologues.

April 29 at 7pm

Presented by The Theatre Department of RCSJ and No Pants Productions
Directed by Deborah Bradshaw

This webinar is free but you do have to register by following this link:

https://rcsj-edu.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_M6yoW8CuRw-CU5mo85hQ-dg

For the Love of Art, Express Yourself

By DIVINE CARDONA
Staff Writer

Throughout life, there comes times where your skills of communication disappear. As you grow up and become an adult, these skills can either grow or exacerbate. Although there are times where you can be lost for a feeling or emotion, in life you'll find something that will make you lose track of time. That lost time is captivated by something you have the utmost connection to/with.

As a sophomore in college, I've had my fair share of different emotions and lack of communication until I indulged in the world's most unique form of expression that captured my attention. It can alter opinions, instill values, self-awareness and translate emotions to other human beings. That form of expression for me is

creating visual art.

The perspective of society among the works of art is a revolving door. Art is a form of communication between people who sometimes don't even know each other. The power of art is stretched across the whole world, as nearly everyone experiences a feeling art gives you.

The voice of art is known to be very powerful because it takes reality and presents itself in a way that changes perspective. In fact it is stated that art works as a catalyst that takes fact and adds imagination to it to make it one. According to Accent Frame and Art blog, "Art surrounds life, all people in every location, without us being aware of it."

People typically correlate art with painting and drawing, but there are so many forms of art that are strongly relatable to.

For example, music is another form of art. The lyrics and sound, causes a rhythm and dance. Music is something that I consider to be my escape route from the world.

Other times, I use music to put my emotions and hardships into perspective. Music has a powerful influence on human beings. It improves memory function, reduces anxiety and depression, and provides comfort according to the American Music Therapy Association.

This particular embodiment of art captivates the mind in an indescribable way. When you can't explain how you feel, there is always a song that'll describe just that.

On the other hand, I have the same connection with actual drawings and paintings. In fact, my favorite piece of art is

"The Scream." It shows me how frustration looks in a common matter. It also reminds me of how in a world of chaos; you do not know what goes on in somebody's head.

Art enhances the beauty of places we visit and makes the time we spend there, more interesting. We gain an understanding of culture, history and tradition through art.

Fashion is another form of art that is particularly popular within society. Fashion is constantly and consistently evolving. Through fashion, you one can integrate energy through their creation.

Although, historically fashion was rarely thought of as art compared to painting and music it is one of the purest expressions of art. Fashion expresses personality.

Deborah Sebrov a

fashion blogger, states, "The way one dresses can represent different aspects of his or hers personality." People tend to express themselves through the clothes they wear. Trends and styles are constantly changing and repeating. You can give two people the same shirt and jeans and they won't wear it the same. One person may add accessories or the other alters the illusion of the clothing.

Fashion icon, Coco Chanel once said, "Fashion is not something that exists in dresses only. Fashion is in the sky, in the street, fashion has to do with ideas, the way we live, what is happening."

In life, you always find something you gravitate towards. Art is a universal language worldwide. How will you express yourself? Give art a try in any form.

Digging into Lauryn Hill's First and Only album

By DIVINE CARDONA
Staff Writer

Lauryn Hill had an outstanding music career. She started her career as a lead singer in a well-known band, The Fugees. They released their album on February 13, 1996 entitled, *The Score*. The Score peaked as the number one spot on the Billboard 200, and the top R&B/Hip-hop albums chart that year. This album went certified platinum in sales six times.

Hill decided to break free from the band after breaking up with one of the band members, Wyclef. She decided to move forward with her solo music career. Hill's most popular album "The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill" set off her solo career.

To this day, this album remains a landmark record for hip-hop and Neo-soul. The album won five Grammys. Unfortunately, it was her first studio release and her last due to personal and professional issues.

A few of her well-known

songs include, *Killing Me Softly*, *Ready or Not*, *Doo Wop*, and *Can't Take My Eyes Off Of You*.

Hill portrayed messages through her 'Miseducation' album. She begins the album by explaining her relationship with Wyclef. She gives insight to people listening that, although he was willing to throw dirt on her name and failed to reflect on his mistakes in the relationship; she still wished him happiness, reality, and realization.

This speaks volumes about her character and maturity. The next song, *To Zion* featuring Carlos Santana exemplifies the love she has for her son and how he changed her life forever.

At that point in time, she was considering having an abortion but she followed her heart and he became her reason for living.

In the album, she goes on to talk about women's self worth and self love. She wanted young women to understand that if you don't show respect for your-

self how can you expect men to.

At the same time, she wants men to understand that they have to meet women half way.

Through her album, you will understand why she creates music. While some artists just want the fame and glory her intentions remain genuine and authentic.

She talks about the hardships she went through that made her the woman she is today; hardships including education love, her personal life, and spirituality.

The most important message of the album was growth. With God in her heart, following his faith and testimony, her growth promised abundance.

Carvell Wallace, a *New York Times* bestselling author, writer, podcaster and contributor for Pitchfork described the album as a "declaration of independence. It is a break-up letter to the bullshit routine of dealing with men who can't stop hurting the women who love them. And it is a love to

the liberated self, the maternal self and to God. It is an album of junctures: Between adolescence and adulthood."

Her word choice was detrimental to the message she was portraying in each song. In one of her songs, she explains that she doesn't care if she only has an eighteen solid fan base; at least she knew it was for being real. She created music to give people something they can relate to and grow from.

Hill created "The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill" not knowing it would be her first and last album as a solo artist. Hill told *Rolling Stone* she didn't make another album because of the lack of support from her label. Hill also stated, "After the Miseducation, there were scores of tentacle obstructionists, politics, repressing agendas, unrealistic expectations



and saboteurs everywhere... People had included me in their own narratives of their successes as it pertained to my album, and if this contradicted my experience, I was considered an enemy."

She felt freedom from creating Miseducation but the pressure of putting out a sophomore album that would live up to the first's hype was enormous, according to *Enews*. The powerful legacy of Miseducation lives on.

NATION AND YOU

Tackling Mental Health: Acknowledgement is not enough

By DIVINE CARDONA
Staff Writer

Undeniably, every American has heard about the mass shootings that have taken place throughout the last couple of years in America. Everyone including myself is tired or ashamed of this phenomenon.

While many politicians and concerned parents debate whether gun restrictions will solve this crisis, I see a far more important underlying issue here. Tackling mental health would alleviate most of our problems in society.

It's not simply enough to acknowledge that the perpetrators of these hate crimes are mentally ill, our country needs to take action.

Mental health should be put on a pedestal. Judging from our history, I can't say the same about American society as a whole.

As I read the headlines on opposing sides brawling over what to do about the increase of mass shootings it was extremely frustrating. It's no secret that physical health is prioritized over mental health.

We go to monthly or yearly checkups at our local doctor's office but most Americans have never sat down and actually talked to a therapist.

Similar to troubled teenagers who plan these mass shootings, we aren't encouraged to receive a psych evaluation until something irreversible happens. Behind every planned mass shooting, gang affiliation, suicide, and other tragedies that occur everyday in America, there is a root problem.

Depression is a factor of mental illness that affects everyone. In a national survey, it was found that 16% of college students reported being diagnosed with a depressive disorder.

Suicide is a leading cause of death among college-aged students in the United States. Depression takes a toll on a student's ability to perform academically.

This time of transition can bring enormous social and emotional pressures. Facing unprecedented levels of loneliness students struggle with their health and their academic performance.

I'm a sophomore in college and I've been diagnosed

with depression. It's more common than people think. It causes students to take a leave of absence or drop out of college all together. Even though resources are available to students, they aren't utilized.

Anxiety is prevalent among college students and it's not surprising. Students have to manage heavy loads of coursework as well as extracurricular activities and full or part-time jobs.

Being a student with anxiety reflects in your work if not taken care of. Anxiety can impair student's ability to work or study and affect their personal relationships; making it hard for them to concentrate in class or complete classwork.

Again, being a student who has been diagnosed with anxiety, I've experienced firsthand the hardships.

Anxiety and depression go hand in hand. The lack of comprehension of anxiety and depression leads to isolation. While I can say my school cares and advocates resources, I can't say the same for every institution.

Bullying affects mental health and can result in suicide.

The three common types of bullying include physical, emotional and social.

People who are bullied are more likely to experience depression, anxiety and sometimes long-term damage to self-esteem.

The negative impact bullying has on young adults is distressing. There was a study that showed those bullied by the media are at a higher risk for depression.

Reporter Colleen Long of *The Associated Press* stated, "Most students who committed deadly school attacks over the past decade were badly bullied, had a history of disciplinary trouble and their behavior concerned others but was never reported, according to a U.S. Secret Service study."

While it's normal to gravitate the attention towards the person being bullied it's detrimental to understand why the bully is bullying. We are so quick to shame and blame the person who bullies without understanding the underlying issues they might be enduring.

Lack of concern and empathy can lead them to committing these horrific tragedies. If not addressed or confronted, these problems manifest into men-

tal illness as these young kids grow into adulthood.

If we were able to find the stem of these issues in adolescence, I believe it would make a significant difference in the way we handle mental health.

Combined with physical health requirements, I strongly suggest that psychological evaluations and therapy sessions should be mandatory for all persons, especially K-12 children.

I believe children are more susceptible to change and advice. If we take action now, we could live in a world where we won't be frightened every time we send our children off to school.

If you or someone you know is suffering, please contact RCSJ's Cumberland Wellness Center at wellness@cc.rcsj.edu or 856-200-4761 or RCSJ's Gloucester Counseling and Wellness Center at l Lawson@rcsj.edu or 856-464-5236.

You can also text HOME to 741-741 to speak with a certified crisis counselor 24/7 from the Crisis Text Line or call the New Jersey Hope Line 856-654-6735. All information is confidential. For emergencies, dial 9-1-1.

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CAMPUS LIFE

Fearless About Education: Griselda Bautista Lauds CCOG Program

By AHMAD GRAVES-EL
Staff Writer

Griselda Bautista, a Social Services major at Rowan College of South Jersey's (RCSJ) Cumberland campus, possesses the traits of her favorite animal — a lion — when it comes to confronting her fears and keeping watch over her four-year-old son and her mother. Fearlessly, tirelessly and astutely she conquers life's obstacles to create a better future for her family through education.

Like many non-traditional students who have taken a longer and oftentimes bumpier road to attain their college degrees, Bautista's determination is paying off after discovering she met the requirements for the Community College Opportunity Grant (CCOG) and was eligible for free tuition. A single mother working full time as an aid in the Vineland Public School District, Bautista is grateful to be participating in the program.

"I never thought that I would be pursuing my dream towards becoming a teacher," said the Vineland resident after making the decision in 2019 to enroll at RCSJ. "For me, just having this opportunity made me more motivated to finish what I want to finish, what I want to accomplish in life."

CCOG, signed into law by New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy in February, was estab-

lished in 2019 to provide free tuition and educational fees to students previously unable to meet the challenging, financial demands of attending community college. To be eligible for the grant, students must enroll in at least 6 credits per semester and have an annual household adjusted gross income of \$65,000 or less.

"It's been really, really helpful. There are no words to describe how much this has helped me," Bautista revealed. "As a single mother, it's been really beneficial.

"For me, just having this opportunity made me more motivated to finish what I want to finish, what I want to accomplish in life." - Griselda Bautista, Social Services major, RCSJ Cumberland.

I have to think about rent. I have to think about feeding my child. Now, I don't have to worry about how much I'm going to pay for my tuition. With this, it's like seeing the light at the end of the tunnel."

When Bautista resolved to return to school, there was someone else on her mind as well. Tears fill her eyes when she talks about her son and the decision to go back to school.

"Basically, I always wanted to go back to school," said Griselda. "I always wanted to pursue higher education when I was younger. I consider myself a high achiever, so I like to pursue big things in life. When I had my

son, I still wanted to go back to school because I wanted to give him a better life, give myself a better life."

A CCOG success story, Bautista will graduate from RCSJ in May with a 3.4 GPA. Her hard work, dedication and perseverance hasn't gone unnoticed by members of the campus community.

"Griselda is a determined and conscientious student," said Iris Torres, student development advisor for Las Vias — a Title V funded, student support program initiated to improve the Hispanic graduation rate. "She takes her education very seriously and always strives to do her best."

Torres, who advised Bautista to apply for CCOG, marveled how she remained resolute even with the considerable challenges of being a single working mother. "Despite the many obstacles she has faced, she continues to persist and is determined to achieve her educational goals," said Torres.

"RCSJ is a really good school," said Bautista. "It's really helpful with everything and anything. They understand you. They give you everything you need. It's a really good school that provides you with a lot of tools."

The future teacher speaks glowingly about her time at RCSJ and Cumberland's faculty and staff (even though the pandemic has kept her from enjoying the full college experience). She also offers sound advice for future non-tradi-



Photo Courtesy of RCSJ PR Dept.

RCSJ-Cumberland Social Work major and CCOG grant recipient, Griselda Bautista.

tional students who may be leery about returning to school after an extended hiatus.

"It's never too late for a person to pursue their dreams or go back to school," Bautista declared. "Going to college gives you the opportunity to have more doors open in your life. It also gives you the foundation and the knowledge you will need to pursue a successful career. Without a doubt, you will learn something new every day that gives you another perspective on life."

Bautista understands the pitfalls of succumbing to fear.

"When you have fear in your life, it doesn't give you the opportunity to succeed in life. Trust me, it has not been easy, but you can conquer anything you want by having a positive attitude, that positive energy that you want to put into yourself. Just go out and enjoy."

For more information about the Community College Opportunity Grant program and eligibility requirements, visit RCSJ.edu/CCOG.

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THE LAST WORD

Mental Health: Awareness of an Epidemic

By LEEANN BOHN
Staff Writer

Where to begin? There are many families out there who have been affected by addiction in one way or another. Whether it has been a sibling, a cousin, a child, a parent, even a grandparent, someone knows someone affected.

Although in most people's minds, when they think of a drug addict, they think of the traditional sense of what an addict is. A street junkie who lives on the street, a prostitute who lies, steals and cheats.

In reality, the addict is much more complicated than just the stereotypical labels that we as a society have been shown via the media for many decades.

By this, I mean, there are "in the closet" addicts. To me, this is a person, who on the outside, lives a very normal life. They work every day, have a house, pay their bills, and take care of their kids.

Some of these people even have important careers such as lawyers, doctors, and so on. Family and friends have no idea the secret life of this in the closet addict.

When I was growing up, my father was a functioning alcoholic. This is exactly what the "in the closet" addict, a functioning addict. He does everything he can to keep this part of himself hidden from the rest of the world.

I'm not talking about people smoking weed. I am talking about people who are doing heroin, meth, pills, cocaine and the list goes on.

There is an inner turmoil these people are hiding because they are worried about what their family is going to think, or if they

lose their job, or if family members come forward and says they need help, will they be judged for going to rehab.

These are all things that keeps silent addicts sick and suffering. More than likely, they will not speak out about needing help for fear of criticism.

They think that if they act as normal as they can, live as normally as they can, keep up on everything that makes them parent of the year, employee of the year, and so on, then everything is okay.

They do not want people to think of them as a parents, or that all the good that they do is a fraud.

Drug addicts are always associated with being bad people. That is a stigma a house mom, or a working career woman, a man taking care of his family or running a successful business are not willing to be labeled.

I have first-hand knowledge and experience of not realizing a loved one was in trouble with addiction and mental illness, until it was too late. On January 16, 2021 at 4:00am I received a phone call that I will never forget. I was told my children's father committed suicide.

Talk about feeling like I was drowning as I was listening to the person on the other end of the phone tell me what happened.

The man I knew, my children's father, the man this person was talking about worked hard, drove a BMW, and had just spent big money on Christmas presents for our sons.

Comprehending that he was battling this addiction that nobody knew he was going through is still something that I am struggling with over months later.

How did I not know,

why did I not see the signs? I have asked myself this every day since January 16, 2021. I did think he did not seem himself for the last few months of his life. He would tell me that the pandemic was getting to him, not being able to do the things he did before all the regulations.

I should have pushed to find out what was really going on. Not only was he battling addiction, but he was also dealing with mental illness that was brought on by the drugs he was addicted to.

After his death, I discovered all the things going on with him that I was not aware of because he was very good at acting like there was nothing wrong, and that he was doing so great in life.

From my understanding of what he was going through, he started doing meth about two years ago. At first, it was just a few times a month. At the year mark, something changed. He went from doing it a few times a month to several times a week until it became an every day habit.

The meth was keeping him up for many days at a time. This was causing his mental health to spiral out of control. He started to keep notebooks that he was writing everything down that he thought was happening to him. He wrote that he thought people were out to get him and that people were following him.

He lived in Lancaster, Pa. and by the summer of 2020, with the pandemic in full force, he only saw our boys a hand full of times. When we saw him, he acted normal as can be.

On Friday January 15, 2021, he called his mom and said, "Mom, I am tired, I am tired of my life, tired of living period. I have become a burden to most people, my kids hate me, and I am

the worst dad."

She thought that he was just being down on himself and told him "I love you son; you will get through what you're going through" Never in her wildest dreams did she think this was him saying goodbye. That night he sent text messages to our kids telling them that no matter what he loves them; no matter what and don't ever think otherwise.

At 10:30 that same evening, his girlfriend went to bed. He told her he was going to bed a little later. She woke up at 1:30 and realized he was not in bed yet. She went to look for him and found him unresponsive sitting on a chair. She tried to save him, but he had already been gone for a couple hours.

The coroner's report determined he took a deadly combination of fentanyl and meth. The levels in his system were enough to kill a 1,000 lbs. man. The meth caused a massive heart attack, and the fentanyl stopped his lungs instantly. There was no saving him. The coroner said he made sure that there was no way he would be saved.

The reason I am sharing this story that is still so raw and so personal is in the hope that my story and experience will help others.

Please, if you feel that there is something wrong with a loved one, ask questions. Assure that person that no matter what it is they are going through, that you will be there for them and will be right by their side to help in any way that you can.

Tell them that you are not here to judge, you are here to help. Tell them that your love for them will not diminish or change.

Maybe if I had not taken is answers as the truth and had

said to him, I am here for you, the kids will still love you no matter what, maybe I would be writing a different piece on awareness right now.

I do believe that all things happen for a reason. I'd like to think that his death, even though it is hurting my kids, all of our family, friends, and me, that I can talk about the things that people try to sweep under the rug. That through my experience I can help as many people as possible and show others the strength you think you don't have is actually right there in front of you.

Thank you to all who have taken the time to read my story. I really hope that I can help another person, another family, and most importantly, an addict who is still sick and suffering. The addict who thinks that ending his or her life is the only way to get out of the situation that he/she feels stuck in.

I would like to end on a quote that I read by an anonymous source: "Without communication, there is no relationship. Without respect, there is no love. Without trust, there is no reason to continue."

If you or someone you know is suffering, please contact RCSJ's Cumberland Wellness Center at wellness@cc.rcsj.edu or 856-200-4761 or RCSJ's Gloucester Counseling and Wellness Center at llawsonb@rcsj.edu or 856-464-5236.

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