The Montclarion April 14, 2022

The Montclarion

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PROFESSOR REMOVED!

Student Alleges Inappropriate Sexual Remarks Captured on Audio

Erin Lawlor
Assistant News Editor

Montclair State University professor has been removed for allegedly making inappropriate sexual comments to a student. That student, who was interviewed by The Montclarion but asked to remain anonymous, is saying the university did not react fast enough.

Michael Allen, an associate professor in the theatre and dance department, was a few months away from his 21st anniversary at Montclair State when students of his class, Playwrights of Color, received an email entitled “Michael Allen is gone.”

The student alleges Allen confessed to having sexual feelings about the student, comments which were captured on audio. He said he had known Allen prior to being a student at Montclair State, and looked up to him as a father figure.

Toward the end of September 2021, the student said Allen asked to meet with him to discuss working on a project with another student who had written a musical.

“I now realize, looking back on every conversation I had with him, he would make inappropriate comments or make sexual remarks or statements,” the student said. “But this time, he really just went full-on into extremely personal details about his personal life, feelings about students he teaches, trauma from his childhood [and] stuff about his family life that was deeply personal.”

In the almost two-hour-long conversation, which the student had been recording for note-taking purposes, Allen revealed he had sexual feelings for the student while working on a production together years earlier. At the time, the student was 15 and Allen was 61.

The student disclosed that people in the theatre industry are trained to be easy to work with and agreeable, which made it hard for him to come forward, but he knew he had to for himself and other students.

The student filed an initial report to Human Resources (HR) on March 20, when he emailed Montclair State President Jonathan Koppell, Dean Margaree Coleman-Carter and theatre studies program coordinator Jessica Brater himself.

“The student had an outcome in late December or early January. According to the student, he did not hear anything for six months, forcing him to take matters into his own hands on March 20, when he emailed Montclair State President Jonathan Koppell, Dean Margaree Coleman-Carter and theatre studies program coordinator Jessica Brater himself.”

Administration Responds to Religious Exemption Policy Reactions

Jennifer Portoreal
Assistant News Editor

Montclair State University recently announced that students with religious exemptions to the coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine are no longer authorized to live on campus beginning this summer. An Instagram post on The Montclarion’s account sharing the new guidelines immediately began to catch many people’s attention, garnering over 600 likes and over 200 comments, where many different perspectives and reactions were shared.

In an interview hosted by the university’s student media organizations, President Dr. Jonathan Koppell and Vice President of Student Development and Campus Life Dr. Dawn Soufleris reacted to these responses and explained the reasoning behind this new policy.

“Administration said. "There’s no law that says exemptions granted on this basis are somehow constitutionally protected by the First Amendment or anything else."}

Jonathan Koppell

"There’s no law that says exemptions granted on this basis are somehow constitutionally protected by the First Amendment or anything else." Jonathan Koppell

Religious Exemptions continued on Page 5

Page 7: Fourth Annual Holi Festival

An unidentified woman grabs a child from running away. Joni Mae DeLos Santos | The Montclarion
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The Montclarion has a commitment to accuracy and clarity and will print corrections or clarifications if information is found to be incorrect. To report an error of fact or a Letter to the Editor, email the Editor-in-Chief at montclarionchief@gmail.com.

All submissions to the newspaper become property of The Montclarion. We do not print articles from anonymous contributors. The first issue of The Montclarion, then named The Pelican, was published on Nov. 28, 1928. Information reported in the Red Hawk Rap Sheet comes directly from law enforcement unless information directly from the police report is incorrect. We can print an update to the events only if the newspaper is given access to relevant documents to corroborate the information.

Red Hawk Rap Sheet

**Tuesday, April 5**

Domestic Violence: Non-student Jordan Smith, 19, of Columbus, NJ, was charged with violation of a temporary restraining order, an act of Domestic Violence and contempt of court for contacting a student while they were on campus. Smith is scheduled to appear in Little Falls Court.

**Wednesday, April 6**

Sinatra Hall: A resident student of Sinatra Hall reported that a delivery driver struck and damaged a ballard outside of the building and proceeded to drive away. The reporting party described the vehicle as a new model four-door sedan, dark in color driven by a Hispanic male. This case is under investigation.

**Monday, April 11**

Bohn Hall: Two resident students of Bohn Hall reported that several items, specifically medication, were removed from their unlocked room. This case is under investigation.

Anyone who has information regarding these incidents is urged to call the police station at T-I-P-S (8477).
“I understand why people don’t ever speak up [at Montclair State],” the student said. “I essentially was gaslighting myself for six months until I realized what they were doing to me was wrong.”

After making his initial report in September, he waited four days to find out the head of Title IX was on vacation and they hadn’t moved forward with anything. The only thing he was offered at the time was assistance from Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS).

“This is beyond feelings,” the student said. “I want to make sure stuff actually gets done. This isn’t about me. Yes, he had these feelings for me when I was a minor, but I am an adult now. What worries me is that there are children in Life Hall all the time, there is a children’s center not half a mile from Life Hall, there are children in this man’s life and what disturbed me beyond belief was that I had a recording, concrete evidence and still, they had this at my very first meeting and no sooner action was taken.”

In October 2021, one month after the student’s first report, he finally got to meet with Ashante Connor and Yolanda Alvarez to go about a Title IX investigation.

He alleges that, for the six months between September 2021 and March 2022, nothing was done. The student said he was not updated on anything during these few months unless he reached out, which he said always resulted in disappointing news.

When the report made its way to Koppell’s desk on March 3, 2022, the student was told he would hear something back over spring break, but never did. Finally, on March 20, he took matters into his own hands and submitted his own report. Allen stopped teaching his courses shortly after.

“I was walking through these halls speaking to my classmates and other than two or three friends who I really trusted no one really knew,” the student said. “They got me to, for a while, he content with ‘oh, nothing’s happening,’ but then I woke up one day in February and was finally angry. I wrote to the president [in March] and said, ‘you have a pedophile walking the halls of Life Hall.’”

Besides what was said in the conversation, the student is not making any allegations that physical sexual misconduct of any kind occurred.

Other students were shocked to hear this news.

Eliza Andrus, a sophomore musical theatre major, was extremely disappointed in Montclair State when she read a post the student had made in the theatre department Facebook group.

“I didn’t know [Allen] well before, but this was mostly a BA theatre studies major [professor],” Andrus said. “But when I read [the student’s Facebook post], I made it known I was not happy about the situation and that he was still a professor here.”

Sean Simpson, a senior theatre studies major and the victim’s roommate, has heard the recording. He said he was not surprised when he heard the news of Allen.

“Sadly, I wasn’t shocked when I heard [Allen] did this,” Simpson said. “The sad thing is he did all that because he knew the department would basically protect him and he thinks he can do whatever he wants.”

Simpson said he saw how this took a toll on his roommate.

“The [victim] thought the professor with HR would be swift,” Simpson said. “But this process took months and months, and I saw him become depressed to the point where he dropped out of the senior showcase for musical theatre majors. So, the way HR handled the situation definitely took a toll on him. We’ve talked about it before or whether students’ voices are being heard, if it’s in The Montclarion or anywhere else. I always send a message and say, ‘I want to know exactly what happened in this instance, give me the story that’s not in the newspaper.’” Koppell said.

The Montclarion also reached out to Professor Allen via email to give him a chance to speak on the allegations.

“I’m not interested,” Allen said.

A number of theatre students interviewed by The Montclarion said they were told by Allen that he is on a leave of absence and will retire afterwards.

The Montclarion also reached out to College of the Arts Dean Daniel Gurskis, university spokesperson Andrew Mees, faculty union president Rich Wolfson, Title IX coordinators Alvarez and Connor, theatre studies program coordinator Brater and Qiana Watson, the associate vice president for compliance and labor relations, who all declined to comment.
Administration Answers
What Students Want to Know

Erin Lawlor
Assistant News Editor

Montclair State University President Jonathan Koppell and Vice President for Student Development and Campus Life Dawn Soufleris answered the questions the student body wants to know in an interview held with the university’s student media organizations.

Koppell began by sharing his outlook on the spring 2022 semester so far.

“I’m excited about everything that’s going on,” Koppell said. “What’s happening is what I hoped would happen: the level of activities have really increased in a big way,” Koppell said.

A big question that students are curious about is if tuition prices will increase and if it will remain affordable for all. Koppell said increasing inflation has made this topic more complicated.

“It’s a huge issue,” Koppell said. “We’re going to have a presentation coming up with the board of trustees where we will be talking about this and I’ll be presenting some information on the cost of attending Montclair [State], just so students have some context.”

Despite this, Koppell said the tuition at Montclair State is one of the lowest in New Jersey.

“The amount of money we spend per degree at Montclair [State] is lower than anybody,” Koppell said. “And we do that by having an incredibly lean organization where we have fewer people working per student than pretty much anybody.”

Mental health continues to be a big issue among college students, especially after the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Montclair State’s Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) does offer resources to students but are facing a shortage of staff, and students are being turned away as a result.

“When we talk about changing expectations, that’s probably at the top of the list,” Koppell said. “This isn’t a Montclair [State] thing. It is a higher education thing. Students come to college campuses expecting to need those services.”

Koppell said this not an issue he wants to shy away from and meeting students where they are is a part of the university’s responsibilities.

“This is a real area of evolution for the university,” Koppell said. “And we’re ready to step up and meet but it’s not easy.”

Soufleris explained that the biggest challenge is finding people to hire. There are many available positions and the university is currently in the interviewing process to fill them.

“We’re having difficulty filling these positions,” Soufleris said. “It’s not because this isn’t a great place to work. It’s not because we can’t pay. People in this field feel very much burnt out because of the pandemic. It’s hard to be a counselor during these times.”

By now, many students are experiencing COVID-19 fatigue and seeing other campuses relieve their students of mask policies. Montclair State students are wondering when it’s their turn.

Koppell is looking at adjusting the policy and assessing it when it is the right time to make the change.

“I recognize the environment is changing,” Koppell said. “I want to do it at a time when I feel confident because I don’t wanna take it back a few days later.”

The university is talking with on-campus experts along with public health agencies to see what direction to go in.

“The funny part is when you think everything points in one direction, you get some data that points in another,” Koppell said. “And my sense is what has frustrated people the most over the last couple years that we have been dealing with [COVID-19] is that you get one strongly worded expert opinion that this is our decision and then a week later you get the opposite from the same people.”

Koppell also addressed Montclair State’s new partnership with Bloomfield College. He said he wanted to help Bloomfield College because their mission closely aligns with Montclair State’s mission.

“Bloomfield College is a private university since it is not funded by the state of New Jersey in the same way that we are, but it has a public-serving mission since it is creating pathways for students who are underserved by any other institutions,” Koppell said.

Koppell added that helping Bloomfield College has not put the university in a weaker spot in any way, and the money is just there to be a safety net if they ever are in trouble.

“We haven’t spent a nickel,” Koppell said. “What we did was create, in some sense, a financial safety net for Bloomfield College, so that if in the incoming years they run into a cash flow problem they can draw on our university, up to a point, about $7 million. And if they do that, it is a loan secured by real estate asset.”

Koppell explained that this is a big win for the Montclair State community.

“You have higher education now evolving, growing, redesigning itself to better serve its purpose, just to create educational pathways just for people who are often left behind in the current higher education landscape,” Koppell said.
A sophomore English major who asked to remain anonymous said she feels disappointed, and that this decision has influenced her personal religious beliefs.

“I’m honestly deeply disappointed,” she said. “I feel like the school has turned its back on me and my religious rights. I’ve lived on campus for two years now and I’ve poured my heart and money into this institution. For me personally, I don’t have [a] family to live with and no family contribution to my income, so living on campus is my only feasible option using my financial aid.”

The student also added that she sacrificed her beliefs in order to be in compliance with the university’s requirements.

“I went against my religion and my family’s beliefs to stay at school and finish my degree,” the student said. “I didn’t have another choice. To be honest, it keeps me up at night. I live every day with guilt and shame, feeling like I endangered my relationship with God.”

La’Shaye Bishop, a sophomore justice studies major, said the administration should consider accommodating students with religious exemptions in the residence halls.

“Those with religious exemptions should be placed in a dorm together,” Bishop said. “Take surveys of those [students] with religious exemptions and ask if it’s OK to place them in a dorm with another student with the same exemption due to the safety of us all.”

Soufleris pointed out that the possibility of pairing up students with religious exemptions in the dorms is not an ideal plan.

“That’s actually not recommended by the CDC and OSHA, which is our higher education group within New Jersey,” Soufleris said. “Most public health [experts] will say you don’t want to congregate people who are unvaccinated because there’s a higher transmission rate and risk rate, so that did not feel appropriate. And we also didn’t want to say, ‘OK, so everybody who is exempt and unvaccinated, you’re all going to live in this one area.’”

The administration will also provide individual meetings for students who are being deeply impacted by the new policy and that reside far from campus to possibly provide them with a solution.

“Our Residence Life staff leadership is meeting with each of those students who wants a meeting to say, ‘what are your circumstances? Let’s see what the alternatives are,’” Soufleris said. “And I think that’s very reasonable. People have been very happy to say thank you for at least talking with us individually to find out what our extenuating circumstances are, and we’re trying to make some accommodations as best we can on an individual basis.”

Mark Clatterbuck, associate professor and chair of the religion department, says the new policy shows a level of inconsistency in the university’s mandates and that an unclear message is being sent to the Montclair State community.

“I think there’s a perceived inconsistency in the university’s policy where, on the one hand, we continue to honor religious exemptions for qualifying [Montclair State] students while, at the same time, denying them something as fundamental to the college experience as a place to live on campus,” Clatterbuck said. “I think that’s a conflict in both messaging and practice the university still needs to resolve.”

Clatterbuck also hopes the university will treat students with medical and religious exemptions equally.

“The fact [Montclair State] has found a way to safely provide campus housing for unvaccinated students with medical exemptions suggests that a similar path exists for students with religious exemptions,” Clatterbuck said. “I hope that we, as a university community, will offer such a path.”

Montclair State University recently announced that students with religious exemptions to the coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine are no longer authorized to live on campus beginning this summer.

Montclair State President Dr. Jonathan Koppell said religious and medical exemptions have created significant implications for the university and students.

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Lynise Olivacce | The Montclarion

BOHN HALL

John LaRosa | The Montclarion

Mark Clatterbuck is an associate professor and the chair of the religion department.

Lynise Olivacce | The Montclarion

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Historically, women have been cast aside and conveyed as less important, but the gender, sexuality and women’s studies (GSWS) program at Montclair State University strives to empower its students and bring to life all aspects of life.

Starting March 1, 2022, the state of Wyoming passed a bill that predominantly stopped all funding to any women’s studies program, courses and extracurricular activities in universities with hopes of stopping the flow of information. While other universities’ women’s studies programs continue to dwindle, Montclair State’s program thrives.

You never know how quickly your rights can be taken away until they are, which is a sentiment Dr. Monica Taylor, the director of the GSWS program at Montclair State, instills in all her students.

“It’s our responsibility as a university to be talking about these things, especially because of legislation like [in] Wyoming,” Taylor said.

Under the last president of the United States, Donald Trump, the country has been reminded how important it is to focus on marginalized populations, like women, but also from an intersectional lens, including women of color, low-income women and members of the LGBTQ+ community.

The GSWS program at Montclair State makes an effort to educate its students and have them be well versed in different points of view that relate to oppression, minorities, race, language, class, etc.

“It’s never been a more important time than now to be fighting for gender and sexuality,” Taylor said.

Claudia Martillo, a sophomore journalism major, is minoring in GSWS. Martillo started defining themselves as a feminist when she was in middle school. This was around the time Trump had been running for office.

Martillo knew what was happening wasn’t right, she just didn’t know why. So, when she had the opportunity to learn more about it at Montclair State, Martillo jumped at the chance.

“I am a woman; a person of color; queer,” Martillo said. “All these identities combined make the subject matters of the GSWS program an essential thing to my life.

Martillo recalled a memory about one of their first GSWS courses, titled “Introduction to Women’s Studies.” Their professor had them call out gender roles they noticed in everyday life. One that resonated with them the most was one she didn’t even realize was happening.

“Being a woman, when you walk in public, men won’t move for you,” Martillo said. “It seems very minuscule, but the expectation to move the women out of the way.”

She describes it as a power trip for men and how women are subconsciously taught to cater to them.

Taylor is always learning from her students in moments like the one Martillo experienced. She strives to create a more democratic environment in the classroom, piggybacking off those feminist ideals.

“I’ve thought a lot about what it means to be a feminist educator,” Taylor said. “That means breaking down the hierarchy and working to collaborate and co-construct with my students.”

Heteronormativity and sexism are two big forces that work off of each other. LGBTQ+ rights also rely on women’s rights, and there’s a lot of intersection there. The wide range of courses offered at Montclair State examines the relationship between gender and sexuality in every aspect of the world including economic, political, historical and cultural ideologies.

Bailey Dunn, a junior GSWS major, appreciates how interdisciplinary the program is.

“Everything is tailored to my interests,” Dunn said.

Taylor, Martillo and Dunn collectively agreed that every student attending university should take at least one course related to GSWS. At one point or another, either yourself or someone you know will have to tackle injustice, oppression, misogyny, the patriarchy, heteronormativity and so much more.

In taking a course within the GSWS program, students are taught why these matters happen and the importance of knowing how to stand up against them.

“A goal I have is to help students who take our courses see the connection it has to the real world,” Taylor said. “See how they can apply what they are learning on the ground.”

There are a little over 80 courses available for the GSWS program at Montclair State, including subject matters regarding English, political science, sociology, anthropology, humanities, health and significantly more.

If you are interested in learning more about the GSWS program at Montclair State, the program is hosting a Zine Project celebration and showcase of “Color Theory (VOL.2)” on April 29, 2022.
The South Asian Student Association (SASA) held their fourth annual Holi festival on April 9 at Montclair State University.

Guests from the Student Government Association (SGA), Hawksquad, Alpha Sigma Rho Sorority Rho Inc. (ASR) and Delta Sigma Iota (DSI) from Rutgers New Brunswick came to celebrate the festival in person for the first time since the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Everything was a canvas that day as vibrant pinks, greens and all colors of the rainbow filled the air while people splashed and chased each other with Gulal (colored powders).

From the delicious biryani to the traditional folk music, the streets were filled with people dancing and celebrating the start of something new.

Mayra LaMantia, a graduate computer science student, and Solange Lanza Quisbert, a senior computer science major, kicked off the event, followed by accounting majors, sophomore Ansa Bijo and junior Swastika Dey, who performed a traditional dance.

To top it off, Rutgers New Brunswick’s DSI performed a routine.

The rousing energy reflected the appreciation they have for Holi, which means the arrival of spring and victory of good over evil.

Genesis Nuñez, a sophomore psychology major and the Red Hawk accreditation chair of ASR, said the energy was contagious and fun all around.

“It was one of the first cultural events I’ve attended since being a student on this campus,” Nuñez said. “Everything from the food to the music was to be enjoyed by their community and their guests. And of course, the colors were a magnificent sight to see as people laughed and screamed of joy, throwing the colorful powder at each other.”

Kaushal Patel, a junior business administration major and secretary of SASA, was pleased with the outcome of the event.

“We all feel pretty good as we were able to conduct an event in this unexpected weather,” Patel said. “We were looking for members who want to explore [Montclair State] who [were] not able to enjoy in COVID-19 times and I believe we have fulfilled that enjoyment as we all are getting [used] to the new environment.”

Patel further explained more of what the future holds for SASA.

“This event is just a new beginning for the future that is packed with new events until the end of the semester and many upcoming semesters,” Patel said.

To see the rest of Lynise’s photos, go to themontclarion.org
When it comes to being a first-generation student at a college and university, it can be the most exciting feeling ever. Yet, it often comes with a load of monumental pressure, anxiety, and stress.

That’s what much of the Generation Z population at Montclair State University feels when it comes to being the first family member to attend college. Although it is important to receive a degree, the time and work spent at a four-year college can be taxing on a young individual, especially if college wasn’t their first or only choice.

Michael Elizondo is a freshman undecided first-generation college student from Trenton, New Jersey. When it came to graduating high school, he was given two choices by his parents: either choosing to attend a university or going to work instead.

So, Elizondo chose school, given he didn’t want to “work a hard job.” He shared the standards he is held to as the first family member to attend college.

“It’s a lot of pressure on me because I feel my parents have high expectations of me since they don’t want me to struggle like they did,” Elizondo said.

Fortunately, after his first semester, things began to run smoothly. Now, in his second semester; he reports no longer feeling lost or as mentally drained as before.

“Transitioning into my second semester, I’m liking it so far,” Elizondo said. “I’m doing well and I’m ready for next year.”

Maddie Heinold is another first-generation student, the youngest of two children to go to a four-year university.

A freshman family science and human development major from Wayne, New Jersey, she is currently studying to become a teacher. Regarding her freshman experience so far, she described the responsibilities she felt fall on her shoulders.

“It’s high standards graduating at a four-year university,” Heinold said. “I want to impress and make my parents proud.”

Heinold said even though it can be challenging for her, she still feels like she is making the most out of her college experience.

“If I’m enjoying college, the campus life, making new friends and balancing my social life along with my work schedule outside of school,” Heinold said.

Felicity Ampiaw, a sophomore justice studies and pre-law major, is from Hillside, New Jersey. Since Ampiaw and her parents wanted a better life for her, they had moved from their original country to come to the United States.

“It’s a lot of pressure because you want to make both your family and parents proud,” Ampiaw said. “You just don’t want to fail. My parents sacrificed a lot to come here. [There are] a lot of opportunities in America, but in my parents’ country, [there are none].”

As a transfer student, Ampiaw said she is having a great time with her college experience.

“I enjoy this environment better at Montclair State because it is much more diverse than my former school,” Ampiaw said. “I feel more comfortable here. I feel that I have more opportunities and more experiences to grow.”

Similar to the other students, Dominique Bennett, a freshman sociology major who is also from Trenton, feels the stresses of being a first-generation student.

“It’s overwhelming,” Bennett said. “[It’s] an amount of work you’re not used to. It’s pressure, and it’s kind of hard when you want to look for advice from siblings but don’t have any to take that kind of advice from [because they] didn’t attend college.”

Bennett also recalled that around the time of her senior year in high school, she was always asked the question, “what do you want to do?” She said the military wasn’t of her interest, so she decided college would be the best choice for her.

“I’m in college for myself and my parents because my mom wants me to have the experience she never had,” Bennett said. “And then for myself, I want my future to be way different.”
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HAWK TALK
What’s the best piece of advice you were ever given?

By John LaRosa and Lynise Olivacce, Photo Editors

“Don’t care about other people’s opinions, my sister always told me that.”

Charlie Martin
Sophomore
Filmmaking major

“Don’t know how cheesy I wanna be but never give up, just keep going no matter what happens in life. It gets hard but you have to just keep an open mind and be positive.”

Alexis Laino
Freshman
Undecided major

“If you feel bad about yourself, just dress nice. I feel like when you look pretty, you feel pretty. Like even if it’s just doing your hair. Mentally, I feel like when you look better you feel better in general.”

Mariam George
Freshman
Psychology major
“Being kind is not a terrible thing because it’s rare in this world and having those kind people by your side or you yourself being that kind person, can actually help much more than you can think.”

JaTaria Monroe
Freshman
Visual Arts major

“Love myself before loving others, it’s not easy. My mother taught me that.”

Domenica Sanchez
Sophomore
Biology major

“Whatever’s going on in other people’s lives, is usually what affects their reasoning for doing things or saying [things] to you, and when you can understand that, it’s much easier to live your life that way, to not take things personally. Because it’s almost never you.”

Angel J. Rivas
Senior
Acting major
PART-TIME BABYSITTER

Seeking a part-time babysitter/mother’s helper for one or two kids (12 mos and 3 years) in Kinnelon, NJ. Seeking a sitter for spring, summer, and fall with availability within Monday-Friday 11am-6pm (negotiable). The perfect candidate is punctual, communicative and a strong leader. We are looking for someone who is fully vaccinated and has excellent references, infant experience, and CPR certification.

Please reply to 347-870-7757 if interested.

AFTER-SCHOOL SITTER

Looking for after-school sitter for a sweet 4-year-old boy. Hours are M-F 3:30-5:30pm for $20/hr. Must be vaccinated and punctual. Opportunities for more hours and pay are available if desired. Ideal candidate is studying speech therapy or ABA approach as he is in a preschool ABA classroom with delayed communication.

Please reply to 973-495-3670 if interested.

DAY CAMP COUNSELOR & TEACHER

Ramapo Country Day Camp is seeking college students who have an interest in working with kids in their future. Perfect fit for education, psychology, sociology, and nursing students. Group counselor & teaching jobs available. Camp runs from June 27-August 19, Monday through Friday, 9am-4pm. Located 30 minutes from MSU, next to Mahwah, Ramsey, Ridgewood and Montvale.

If interested, visit www.ramapocamp.com and www.ramapocamp.com/staff-application or contact 845-356-6440.
PUZZLES

Easter Edition
By Kayla Carlamere

Across
1. This day, which is always exactly one week before Easter, marks the first day of Holy Week and commemorates Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem.
3. In this animated movie about fictional legends including Santa Claus and Jack Frost, the cool and calm Easter Bunny, named E. Aster Bunnymund, is played by Hugh Jackman.
4. This Jewish holiday, also called Pesach, celebrates the exodus of the Jewish people from slavery in Egypt and has many ties with Easter.
6. In this 2011 Easter family comedy, the Easter Bunny is preparing to pass the mantle to his son, who runs away to Los Angeles to pursue his dreams as a drummer instead.
7. The highlight of the New York City Easter Parade and _______ ________, which has been an Easter tradition since the 1870s, is the extravagant hats worn by those who attend.

Down
1. “Here comes _______ _______ / Hoppin’ down the bunny trail / Hippity hoppin’, Easter’s on its way”
2. These popular marshmallow candies are most often associated with Easter, traditionally shaped like bunnies or chicks.
5. The word “Easter” is derived from this pre-Christianity pagan goddess of spring, dawn, and fertility.

Word Search

d k x v n n x g i d q x o b j e b b o o
i h j r x b q o c m o m n h d t d b p
d q x a o a v b q f t f z e s l p t l e
c s t p i w w i m s l e t s a p b g x e
o m c w p s d e v e m j l i r p a i r g
d y p d y n o i t c e r r u s e r j e g
k q g c w u m r q s a c r i f i c e v d
x i f w q u u a s g h p c v b h u l o y
cc co ey a b p k b p x u k o o l s e
g j w q o j b g a d f g p b e x g y s u
h s d u t n u h r e g n e v a c s b a q
y f h r m r v x a a g w r c p k q e p s
e f m i x p r a d b b p w s p d k a q t
h c r a m e y s e f j g k o b h t g n
ch o c h o l a t e b u n n y t e k s a b
so n a x f c m t d e k s v s i p y y k
p l a s t i c e g g s s p r i n g t i m e
i n w y a e e m v v a y b w w m q m t j
j t a b s u f z r l t v q a s k c i h c
v k x l w r i s e p c f e y o q j x m

Sudoku

9 5 6 1
2 4
4 8 7
7 3 8 9 4
6 4 2 5
3 4 4 6 9
1 9 7

Springtime March Basket
Resurrection Plastic Eggs Egg Dye
Jelly Beans April Parade
Scavenger Hunt Chicks Pastels
Chocolate Bunny Passover Sacrifice
New Jersey’s reputation for excellence in higher education can be attributed largely to the presence of Princeton University and Rutgers University. As a public university in a state densely packed with other acclaimed academic institutions, Montclair State University is well aware of its underdog status and has gone to great lengths to match up to the Level I research institutions it aspires to associate with.

Judging by the fact that the university’s former slogan, “It’s All Here,” has become a running joke amongst students, not every effort made has been totally successful. Like any school, Montclair State could stand to improve in certain areas. The overall caliber of the professors employed at Montclair State is not one of them. Currently, Montclair State’s average on Rate My Professors is 3.79 out of 5. Since Rate My Professors’ statistics are based on student reviews only, this average comes from a limited pool of ratings that have tended to be mostly positive. It’s about on par with the rest of the average ratings for other categories, which include internet, safety, food and happiness.

Many people use Rate My Professors as a reference point when registering for classes to see what they can expect from the professors. For all the people who appreciate professors who want the best for them, there are almost as many people who complain about them for the same reason others praise them. Some reviews voice discontent over professors lecturing for too long or assigning too much homework. Others are frustrated by “tough graders,” who are often the same people who go on to say they slept through most of the class.

In the classroom, it’s not uncommon to hear these sentiments echoed. How many times have you heard someone spend the entire class on their phone complaining that they don’t know what’s going on or that the class is hard? Good professors do not have the end goal of ruining your life or breaking you mentally. Believe it or not, they want to see you succeed, and no one succeeds by staying in their comfort zone.

It’s on you to reach out and communicate with professors if you need help, and any good professor will appreciate you for doing so. Unfortunately, there will always be professors who really don’t care. It’s just like in any other job, some people simply shouldn’t be educators.

Montclair State relies heavily on adjunct professors, who are infamously paid a pittance for their services. In other words, most of them aren’t in it for the money. These are people who made a conscious choice to become professors and are taking what they can get because, besides needing to make a living, they want to teach.

For those who weren’t aware, college isn’t supposed to be easy. It’s like a crash course on how to handle the real world combined with a pressure cooker that turns you into a “real adult.” Very few people come out of high school fully equipped with skills like multitasking, time management, conflict negotiation and communication. Not to mention softer and arguably more important life necessities, like self-sufficiency and social skills.

There is not a single person who is nearly as mature as they think they are when they enter college. Everybody’s tough until they get hit with “it was on the syllabus.” It’s not mean, it’s reality, which admittedly can suck. But as an adult, it’s just what’s expected of you — not perfection, accountability.

College is one of the last places where a tangible safety net exists for any screw-ups you might make along the way. It’s a privilege to be challenged in an environment where failure is not just acceptable, it’s expected. And while it may seem ridiculous to feel appreciative of someone who seems intent on adding difficulty to your life, remember that every tough professor was once a student who felt the exact same way.

Montclair State’s perceived reputation may not be stellar, but that doesn’t mean everything here is deserving of aspiration. However, you feel about them now, whatever unsavory things you may say about them when you see your friends after their class, those professors are only working to give you the college experience you signed up for.
Knowing When to Quit

This semester has probably been the most challenging one I have ever had. The day I was supposed to move to campus, I was admitted to the emergency room. I was literally sending emails to my new professors in my hospital bed letting them know I would be absent for the week, with an IV in my arm.

I was discharged the same night and after another two weeks of doctor appointments, writing emails and different medicines, I was diagnosed with an allergic reaction to the Moderna booster vaccine. I returned at the beginning of February and it didn’t get much better. Sure, I was on campus now and I could actually attend my classes, but I was trapped in my dorm with two weeks’ worth of missing work in five classes, on top of new work assigned daily. I had to pass out before midnight every night and wake up with disappointment in myself for not pulling off an all-nighter.

Additionally, I was supposed to be creating social media posts for my internship in my major’s department, but I wasn’t fully caught up until the week I’d see multiple trending topics about it on Twitter. Naturally, that piqued my interest as I had never seen the show before and I wondered why it was so special.

After looking into it, I felt less compelled to keep going. Call me crazy, but the nudity of high schoolers, even if they’re played by adults, isn’t appealing to me. Whether the actor is actually experiencing half of these tragedies in real life, we don’t know.

Remember: “Euphoria” is written by a fully grown middle-aged man. “Euphoria” hasn’t born from the perspective of a fellow teenager or young adult, but a 37-year-old industry plant named Sam Levinson.

Levinson, the son of Academy Award-winning director Barry Levinson, did in fact have substance abuse problems in the past. That I can see and can accept as appropriate. However, I doubt Levinson had problems being a cam-girl while still in high school.

Even for the men, the amount of graphic sexual scenes we see is too much. You can still have a locker room scene of high schoolers without the nudity of high schoolers, even if they’re played by adults, isn’t appealing to me.

The show was airing its second season, every week I’d see new trending topics about it on Twitter. Naturally, that piqued my interest as I had never seen the show before and I wondered why it was so special.

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Knowing When to Quit

We are all raised in a culture where we are taught to pull up our bootstraps and keep going, no matter how much it hurts or how much you’re struggling. It is what the generations before us lived by, which is why whenever we share what we’re going through, they tell us to shut up. They tell us we haven’t earned the right to be tired of life.

But that’s the thing: you don’t need to earn the right to not feel anything, but you don’t need to feel anything. Call me crazy, but the nudity of high schoolers, even if they’re played by adults, isn’t appealing to me. Whether the actor is actually experiencing half of these tragedies in real life, we don’t know.

As one of the most popular shows in most recent years, “Euphoria” has quite the grip on popular culture and social media.

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Even for the men, the amount of graphic sexual scenes we see is too much. You can still have a locker room scene of high schoolers without the copious amounts of genitalia present. Every single scene that includes nudity and sex is uncalled for. The show can’t be the real lives of people who are young and experiencing deviances and fantasies. I think they are recreating these fantasies over and over again in media.

When it comes to minors, we can leave certain elements out for the comfort of the viewers and minors everywhere.

I am only 18 years old. I graduated high school less than a year ago. With that being said, even I feel disgusted about seeing 16- and 17-year-olds being depicted in such a graphic way. Real things other young people and I have experienced feel like they’re being exploited as sick fantasies for Hollywood executives.

As a film and television major at Montclair State University, I hope to contribute to an industry that portrays the real lives of people who are young and going through real issues, without making it dark and twisted. I hope to help these kids feel like they’re not alone and have something they can relate to while not exploiting them or their pain as sexual fantasies.

Hollywood, do better when it comes to how you portray minors in television and film.
“Animals” – Alex Pavljuk

Finally, a moment's rest, the man thought as he sat down on the toilet. He looked at the words inscribed by years of led-tipped pencil etchings and pocket knife carvings dug into the wall of the stall. Obscenities and gestures, far beyond the morality of what high school students should be projecting, lined the streaks and gashes of the pseudo-plastic partitions.

With a deep sigh, the gentleman tossed his loosely adorned suit tie over his shoulder to keep it from dipping into the depths of the porcelain bowl. His phone buzzed, he dug for it in his lowered slacks. Digging beyond his brown belt he pulled up his phone and glanced down at the text message.

“Hey, James! How much longer are you gonna be? I can only cover the class for a few more minutes. These kids are animals.”

James rolled his eyes and simply typed, “Okay.”

Then just as he was beginning to find his moment of peace the door to the men's room swung open. He closed his eyes and inhaled sharply at the sound of juvenile delinquency mounting. There is no escape. The two boys laughed and talked feverishly without much filtration. Their conversation didn't halt even as the sounds of the toilet paper dispenser flipped wildly.

“Alright, alright…I already gave you the money, where is it?” The younger and more nasally boy asked. James could have sworn he recognized the kid's voice. He peeked through the awkwardly placed gaps in the door. A sliver of the interaction was in his line of sight.

“Well, that's what I gotta talk to you about… I need another thirty,” the older boy said. James recognized the voice instantly as Skinner Browne, his least advantageous student who was a less than active participant currently on his third attempt of English I.

“Well, that was before, now I need another thirty. Come on, give it up,” Skinner then demanded before the flip of a switchblade echoed through the restroom.

Then, just as the young kid's eyes grew wider than a quarter, the toilet flushed.

Both boys looked at each other and then at the stall door which was slowly pushed open. Then, with the wooden soles of James' twelve dollar thrifted dinner shoes cutting through the low hum of the ventilation unit that echoed amongst the stalls and sinks, the young kid darted out the door. James rolled his eyes and flipped his tie from over his shoulder as he now stood square with the super senior.

“Come on, give it to me, Skinner,” James asked softly. He really didn't wanna file the paperwork on this one. He started to step in closer.

“please kid come on, don’t make me—”

The puncture of Skinner's small knife halted James' words. Looking down at the entrance wound of which the knife was still hanging out he grasped the hilt and winced. Blood staining his hand he looked up at Skinner who looked back at him just as shocked at his own action.

“Dude…” James muttered before collapsing to the sticky floor of the men's bathroom. Skinner, with words lost on him, shuffled away and exited quickly. As the door slowly closed the echoes of his stomps danced in the distance.

Groaning through the pain, he laid there in the pooling of his own blood before reaching for the phone in his pocket. As he dialed 911 only one thing was able to escape the pain mounting on his lips,

“What a bunch of animals.”
Have a thought about on campus or off campus matters?
Write for Opinion!
Email: montclarionopinion@gmail.com

Room 2035, School of Communication and Media in Upper Montclair, NJ, 07043

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ROOM 2035, SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA IN UPPER MONTCLAIR, NJ, 07043
Without any previous training in acting or comedy, Vick Gonzalez, a fifth-year filmmaking major, has an impressive track record that dates back to sophomore year of high school when they unexpectedly got a leading role.

Gonzalez described the part as comedic. "I knew I was 'funny,'" Gonzalez said. "But getting to actually play a role where I was actively being funny in front of people was very interesting. I was like, 'I think I like this.'"

Gonzalez has been a member of Montclair State University Players and Montclair Improv League of Friends (M.I.L.F.) group since his freshman year.

Dr. Everett V. Scott in "The Rocky Horror Picture Show" one of the brothers in "The Odd Couple (Female Version)" and Colonel Mustard in the virtual production of "Clue (Stay-at-Home Edition)" are among some of the roles they have played since joining Players.

Currently, Gonzalez is playing one of their dream roles, Roger in "Grease (The Musical)," on April 22, 23 and 24 at the Red Hawk Nest.

Not only is Gonzalez extremely talented onstage, but he also admitted he's notorious for having a strong, personal voice when it comes to writing. He cites American actor and SNL performer Fred Armisen as his biggest inspiration in comedy and writing. "Being able to deliver a really authentic script that comes from my mind is my biggest strength," Gonzalez said.

When discussing the production process of their senior thesis, Gonzalez confessed it was difficult, especially when the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic arose. With a limited amount of funds and no defined set, they had to get creative.

"I improvised, if you will," Gonzalez said. "I shot [my thesis] at my own house and bought little costume pieces. It was such a great set. I [was with] all my friends, my parents and my dog. It was the perfect way to end filmmaking at Montclair [State]."

The end product, "Two's A Crowd," tells the story of two polar-opposite best friends who find a dead body in the woods, which comes back to life and follows them back home.

Close friends of Gonzalez who have worked by his side in Players are witnesses to his commitment, whether it be filmmaking or performing.

One of them is senior filmmaking major Zach Abbruscato, M.I.L.F.'s director, who praises Gonzalez for their creative journey in college. "[Gonzalez] has grown so much since we first joined M.I.L.F.,” Abbruscato said. “He always shines with characters, and you never really know what you are going to see next.”

Additionally, Abbruscato can attest to the range of characters Gonzalez can portray. "They have a stupidly good Cher impression that is always a treat to see," Abbruscato said. "I could write a whole Wikipedia article on the characters [Gonzalez] does in M.I.L.F."

Third-year political science major JC DeMaria, the president of Players and fellow M.I.L.F. member, discussed how much he admires the person Gonzalez has become. "They are extremely dedicated to their craft and pour their everything into all that they do," DeMaria said. "I am so proud to call [Gonzalez] my friend and comedy partner. The two of us can quip off each other for hours at a time."

Gonzalez has achieved great things during their time at Montclair State, and their aspirations after graduation are more than promising. "My goal is to get my license, work somewhere that's transferrable, save up money and eventually I want to move out to [Los Angeles]," Gonzalez said.

Gonzalez fell in love with the west coast metropolis during his spring break trip, astonished by the number of work opportunities for aspiring filmmakers.

We wish them the best of luck in their path to stardom.

You can follow Gonzalez on Instagram @greasetwo and the Montclair State Players account @msuplayers.
Student Artist Profile: Lance Trusty

Avery Nixon
Assistant Opinion Editor

After discovering Lance Trusty’s remarkable talent at a Montclair State University Open Mic Night, I knew he was going to be a star. He shined that night and was quite the memorable performer. I described him as having “suave dance moves and a soothing voice.”

Trusty is a senior television and digital media major at Montclair State, where he has also branched out into writing, producing and performing music.

While he does have a passion for music, Trusty dreams of working in a television studio.

“I just want to go work at a studio, or do a bunch of side jobs or just freelance work,” Trusty said. “Just stuff like that because I think I’m pretty good at editing.”

His time at Montclair State has given him experience, opportunities and connections for the journey he will embark on after graduation. Being a television production major, creating and telling stories comes naturally to Trusty.

“I’ve always just found it interesting when, the people I listen to, how their stories kind of pushed them to make music or how they just [have] been naturally gifted at some things,” Trusty said. “I was really just inspired. In high school, there’ll be times where I didn’t know what to do, after my high school, college and all that. So, music was just something I picked up.”

In his debut album “Gas Clouds Above The Park Bench Where We Kissed,” Trusty is telling the story of his life, love and a dystopian tale under his stage name UPinTheAir.

“One thing it [kind of] taught me [was] what you see [and] what you read has an effect – how you perceive it,” Trusty said. “The capitalization is like that because I could have had it be all spaced out like ‘Up In The Air’ or like ‘upintheair’ and lowercase, but I kind of wanted to have more impact when people look at it and be like, ‘Oh, like why is it like that?’ The story behind the album is two people sitting on a park bench and talking about what’s going to happen in life. The album will be over 10 tracks along with some dialogue and interviews intertwined within the record.

Trusty’s favorite song on the album is “Sour Diesel” because it pushes him vocally and musically. “Sour Diesel” is a perfect blend of drums, guitar and bass along with soulful vocals.

He also gave a shoutout to his two close friends, Simon Hardhat and fellow artist Vonilla, who have inspired him to be a more creative artist.

“They [are] just two people who just took me to the next step musically and show me that I could do more than what I was doing before,” Trusty said. “Before, I was just rapping over a beat or just not really pushing myself when making music. They showed me how to make more [of] art.”

Two more of Trusty’s friends, who are both senior sound design majors at Montclair State, Mark Szvetecz and Alex Damas, gave insight into Trusty’s work ethic and his growth as an artist.

“Within seconds of meeting [Trusty], I saw where he was going,” Szvetecz said. “At the time, I was only working as a recording and mix engineer as well as a producer for a few years. After only meeting him a few times, he blew my expectations away and always seems to amaze me with anything he delivers. Sitting with him and talking as a friend in the studio without recording makes the process that much more enjoyable because it’s not just about the track. It’s about the whole day with him.”

Damas was also able to chime in with his own experience with Trusty. “[Trusty] is one of the best artists I’ve encountered,” Damas said. “Anytime we work, I am constantly in awe of his ear for the right melody or cadence or flow. I’ve seen his progress over this last year and have been floored by the progress he’s made. It’s to the point where he has literally made one of my favorite songs of the year.”

“Gas Clouds Above The Park Bench Where We Kissed,” debuts in May 2022.
BBC America’s Emmy Award-winning show, “Killing Eve,” has released its final episode, concluding the series with what is now being hailed as the worst finale since “Game of Thrones.” Originally, the show was based on the “Codename Villanelle” books by Luke Jennings, which are okay (though I much prefer their ending to the show’s) but lack the onscreen chemistry Jodie Comer (Villanelle) and Sandra Oh (Eve) exude even when they aren’t face to face.

The first season, adapted and directed by the amazing Phoebe Waller-Bridge, showcases her absolute mastery of building tension through dialogue. And though she is only credited as a writer on four episodes within the first season, the intersection of action and comedy that allowed it to gain its notoriety can only be attributed to her brilliance; thus its decline can be pinned on her absence in the second through final seasons.

There’s a reason why the show has an almost exclusively female cast, and it’s not just because Comer looks fantastic in Villanelle’s tailored suits. Waller-Bridge’s “Killing Eve” is a paragon, showing how femininity can be weaponized. It can be violent, awful and unfeeling, yet it can be playful, brilliant and stubborn — flawed in the same way we are used to seeing male characters who are terrible but universally celebrated.

In its second and third seasons, we dance with Eve and Villanelle as they orbit around one another, getting closer and closer until they inevitably implode and send each other into hiding or to a hospital. Each season they inevitably reunite, their strings of fate becoming untangled for mere moments before they finally have a choice whether to leave or stay.

There’s something about the push and pull of Eve and Villanelle’s relationship that, for the first three seasons, subverts the classic, queer-coded love stories traditionally seen in television. Villanelle’s attraction to Eve is made abundantly clear from the very beginning, and Eve is given the space to figure out her feelings for Villanelle on her own.

The fourth and final season of “Killing Eve,” especially its finale, is a slap in the face to viewers. The cat-and-mouse chase that fueled the earlier seasons should have stopped on the bridge at the end of season three, and even if it didn’t, there was no reason to wait for eight full episodes to have Villanelle and Eve together again.

Every single thing I loved about this show was destroyed in about 45 seconds, four seasons of character arcs absolutely obliterated by sloppy writing and allusions to a spinoff.

It genuinely felt like the writers just wanted to go home and be done with the show; making some of Eve, Villanelle and especially Carolyn’s actions feel incredibly out of character and leaving me with more questions than answers.

In its prime, the romance in “Killing Eve” had the potential to change the narrative of tragedy being interwoven into queer love stories. And for a period of time, I had held on to the fact that Fiona Shaw (Carolyn), an openly gay woman, would never let an ending like this happen. I won’t get too into it, but the “bury your gays” trope is so 2014, and I did not deserve to watch that unfold at 3 a.m. Honestly, I deserve financial compensation for watching the last two minutes of this show.

I’m not kidding: BBC, please send me a check or voucher for therapy. “Killing Eve” is a great show; it’s dramatic, thrilling and deserving of praise. But as a long-time fan, its end left me feeling hollow and confused. I will continue to recommend this show to anyone who asks, but if you do decide to watch, save yourself some mental anguish and turn the last episode off before it hits the 38-minute mark.
But more importantly, she brings forms of martial arts via an interdimensional lens, her character learning various necessary physicality to the role, which of Evelyn masterfully. She brings the fight sequence where the goal is to play keep-away with a sex toy.

Oh, and the multiverse is falling apart because of a malignant force hell-bent on revenge. Fans of Disney's recent animated outputs "Encanto" and "Turning Red" or failed to portray her varying degrees of language fluency across the multiverse, but Yeoh makes it look easy. Rounding out the supporting cast is Ke Huy Quan, who some may recognize as a grown-up Data from "The Goonies," as Evelyn's husband, Waymond Wang. Quan balances a great mix of comedic timing, physical prowess and the tender sadness of a man lost in his own love. There is also the hilarious James Hong as Gong Gong, who makes the most out of the small but pivotal role of Evelyn's father, as well as Jamie Lee Curtis, whose IRS agent Deirdre Beaubeirdra provides some of the funniest moments in the film, both deadpan and slapstick. Last but certainly not least, Stephanie Hsu plays Joy Wang, Evelyn's first-generation American daughter, who is the emotional crux of the film. We see how the weight of her mother's expectations has taken their toll on her, driving her to be self-destructive, angry and desperate to escape the life she leads. Hsu, a much younger performer than Yeoh, takes on a role that is equally difficult and truly brings it to life, making Joy an absolute (no pun intended) joy to watch.

Overall, "Everything Everywhere All at Once" lives up to its exceedingly verbose title, delivering everything you could want from a great science fiction action film, including personal, heartfelt character arcs, breathtakingly choreographed action sequences and some of the most laugh-out-loud comedic beats of any film I've seen in a long time. The film is a testament to the power of kindness and accepting the fleeting joys of life, and one that demands to be seen on the big screen as soon as possible.

We all have at least one neighbor we can't stand, but for Mac (Seth Rogen) and Kelly Radner (Rose Byrne), their neighbors might just be a nightmare we all never want to face. The 2014 comedy film "Neighbors" follows the story of new parents, Mac and Kelly, as they settle down in their quiet, suburban humble abode.

The problem is only Ted and Saul are the only known sellers of Pineapple Express, the fictional strand of marijuana the film's two main characters, Dale Denton (Seth Rogen) and his friendly drug-dealer Saul Silver (James Franco), find themselves fiending for one of them. There's one thing for sure: the neighborhood only has room for one of them.

"Neighbors" is indeed that film that will have you cackling until your stomach hurts. Plus, who doesn't want Seth Rogen and Zac Efron to grace their screens?

- Sekhena Sembenu
Assistant Entertainment Editor

"Pineapple Express" is named after the fictional strand of marijuana the film's two main characters, Dale Denton (Seth Rogen) and his friendly drug-dealer Saul Silver (James Franco), find themselves fiending over. But their guilty pleasure puts them in serious trouble when Dale accidentally leaves his joint behind at an active crime scene involving Ted (Gary Cole), a gun-flinging (second) drug dealer.

Terriified the shooting seller might hunt him down for witnessing his crime, Dale decides to flee, taking Saul along with him. The problem is only Ted and Saul are the only known sellers of Pineapple Express, making the two easily identifiable as witnesses.

Rogen and Franco play off each other in this comedy movie, highlighting one another's abilities and leaving viewers wanting more movies of them together.

- Megan Lim
Entertainment Editor
In a family where athletes seem to grow on trees, junior infielder Jenna Meluso has risen to stardom at Montclair State University. It’s not often you find a family with one collegiate athlete, never mind multiple. Meluso’s sister, Nikole Meluso, played volleyball at Fairleigh Dickinson University, and her cousin, Alexa Saccomano, plays softball at Rowan University. And to top it all off, her uncle Joe Saccomanno is a baseball hall of fame member at Bloomfield College and even got drafted by the Atlanta Braves in the 61st round of the 1988 MLB June Amateur Draft. It’s safe to say the baseball and softball ability runs in the family.

The Red Hawks are currently sitting with an overall record of 18-11 and only 2-6 in conference play. However, with the combination of elite pitching and a high-powered offense, they are confident they can compete with anyone, including the entire New Jersey Athletic Conference (NJAC).

“I have a lot of confidence [in the team],” Meluso said. “Before conference games, we really gelled really well. We had a really good team energy and I think that is kind of what makes a difference going into the remainder of the season.”

Prior to suffering an undisclosed injury on April 5 at Kean University, Meluso was having as good of a season as anyone in the entire NJAC. With a batting average of .494, she still ranks as the best hitter in the conference and also ranks among or at the top in other categories such as on-base plus slugging (OPS), hits and doubles.

Head coach of the softball team Anita Kubicka recognizes the impact Meluso has on the team with her position. And how much that impact can turn negative when an injury takes her out of the action.

“Jenna is a team leader,” Kubicka said. “Her injury has a tremendous impact on the team. Jenna is a top-of-the-order hitter who could really put a charge in the ball.”

Throughout the season, Meluso had many multi-hit games, however, none of them compared to an outing on March 20 at DeSales University. Meluso accumulated four hits with two of them being doubles, two RBIs and one run scored during an 8-1 victory.

Meluso believes because she knew this would be her final season due to her graduating early, along with the multitude of honors she has won throughout her career, that she was able to play at an even higher level than ever before.

“Just the energy going into it,” Meluso said. “Kind of knowing that this was the last opportunity I had to really make an impact, it kind of motivated me to keep my energy up and have a short memory for failures and a long memory for success.”

The 2022 season is shaping up to be her best yet, senior catcher Danielle Sibilio considers Meluso a phenomenal teammate and an even better person for this ball club.

“It’s been the best, I think,” Sibilio said. “I came in when she was a freshman so it was my first year too. She’s always hardworking, always gets there early, gets things done and does everything how it should be. She’s just like a staple on the field.”

Even Sibilio was mesmerized at times this season by the way Meluso played.

“She was batting second and I would get ready to go to bat because I was fourth and I just knew that she would get on base somehow,” Sibilio said. “And it was just insane, I would just watch it and she would get a double.”

Every team, no matter the sport, needs a player like Meluso. Someone who always gets the job done and off the field while being a great leader is all a coach ever asks for.

“She defines student-athlete,” Kubicka said. “She is the type of player a coach wants to have as part of their program. Big heart, great teammate willing to raise her other teammates up.”

Jenna Meluso currently has a .494 batting average with 20 RBIs.
Rob Lindenbaum (far right) said athletic trainers do a lot more than giving athletes ice. Photo courtesy of Brynn McDonald Media

The Athletic Trainers of the Red Hawks
Go All In, All Day, Every Day

Matt Orth
Assistant Sports Editor

All of the cameras filming the action; all of the opinions and hot takes being carried over the airwaves — everything is focused not only on the coaches running the athletic programs at Montclair State University but also on the players pursuing their passions.

But up until recently, not a lot of coverage has been spent on the individuals who help to rehabilitate, freshen up and heal the student-athletes who go out every day, improve themselves and fight for glory on the field or the court.

The athletic trainers of Montclair State athletics are a crucial part of every team. This is a major theme that Rob Lindenbaum, assistant athletic trainer and former New Jersey EMT, emphasized in discussing the importance of their job.

“The biggest thing is communication, and that goes back to how an athletic trainer has adapted over the years,” Lindenbaum said. “And, in reality, we are a part of the coaching staff.”

All athletic trainers carry a vital role of being a catalyst to these players and how they continue to stay successful. For Lindenbaum, his Red Hawk connection dates back to the beginning of the last decade.

He graduated from Montclair State in 2015 with a bachelor’s degree in athletic training, and then immediately became a part-time athletic trainer. The year after, he joined the staff full-time, and for the last six years, Lindenbaum has only strengthened his connection with the athletic department and the campus community as a whole.

“My relationship with student-athletes is really good,” Lindenbaum said. “[With] the administration, my relationship is fantastic. I have had no issues with the coaching staff. [With] me being one person and having all of these teams, what helps is that understanding that there is only one guy. As a coach, I get asked, ‘What do you think you want long term for the goals of the team?’ and that’s when you get a sense that you are an integral part of the inner workings and the core of the team.”

Another key component of some of the teams here at Montclair State is an assistant athletic trainer in her first year with the Red Hawks. She has already developed close connections with the students and staff of teams like women’s lacrosse, women’s soccer and women’s basketball.

Aneika Daley completed her master’s degree in advanced athletic training at the University of South Carolina last May, and was formerly the primary athletic trainer for basketball and softball at Claflin University. Also located in South Carolina, Daley helped the student-athletes of the Division II Historically Black College or University (HBCU) get back into shape, as well as develop the coronavirus (COVID-19) protocols for the general student population.

Even with the increased stress of putting it all together and facilitating so many students and players to get multiple weekly tests, Daley is proud of the work she has accomplished there, especially with the school being an HBCU, which means a lot to her.

“For the athletes, seeing someone that looks like them and understands where they are coming from, they are able to trust me more and develop a connection with me,” Daley said. “I feel like I would possibly go back and work with another HBCU because it is a very family-oriented environment, but I feel like I get that from working here too.”

When speaking about the main concepts of team chemistry and a family-like bond between the athletic programs at Montclair State, that same sentiment applies to the athletic trainers. Being around so many students, connecting with them and making sure they are in the best possible shape, it’s hard not to create a bond that can last for plenty of years. Daley harps on this due to her prior local experience.

“Coming into Montclair State, because I went to Kean University, which is kind of a rival for the Red Hawks, it was just [a matter of] getting used to how the people are here,” Daley said. “And now, I have developed a lot of trust for the athletes I treat, as well as the coaches, and help facilitated the growth within that [connection] for however long I am here for.”

Some of the athletes at Montclair State can speak from experience that the athletic trainers, whether they are around their respective teams once in a while or on a daily basis, are important to how the team functions.

Kelly Weckstein, a senior distance runner for the track and field team, recognizes the initiative these athletic trainers put in every day.

“The athletic trainers are so valuable,” Weckstein said. “Especially since I do track and cross country, there are a lot of times where you need ice and see them periodically because if you don’t look out for a little soreness, it can turn into something worse.”

Christian Boyle, a senior attacker for the men’s lacrosse team, has a lot of interaction with people like Lindenbaum and Daley, and for someone who just crossed 100 points in his career, Boyle is more grateful than ever for their efforts.

“In my time here, they have been extremely helpful,” Boyle said. “I’ve had bumps, bruises, tweaks, nothing ever serious, but whatever injury I have had, they have helped me out immediately. And they have always been serious and professional. After they treat me, they are back to being friendly and down to earth.”

That down-to-earth and respectful quality of athletic trainers mixed with the family bond that Montclair State teams embrace is what makes the athletic trainers on campus so special and important. People like Lindenbaum and Daley have made it especially clear they do deserve more appreciation.

“It would be nice as a medical profession to get a little more appreciation, [considering] you need a higher degree to do [this] and need to continue your education to do [this],” Lindenbaum said. “People say ‘Oh, they just do ice.’ There’s a lot more we do. Typically, the last thing I do is give ice. Most of the time I am rehabbing someone or providing one-on-one mental health care. And it’s not just athletic training. We are all one unit trying to achieve that individual’s main goal of athletic performance.”
PHOTO ESSAY:
Baseball Sweeps Ramapo College

Freshman pitcher Matt Pontari pitches the ball toward the batter.

Chris Krusberg
Staff Photographer

The Montclair State University men's baseball team swept Ramapo College in an afternoon doubleheader on April 10.

The first game between the Montclair State baseball team and the Ramapo College Roadrunners had the Red Hawks in cruise control.

The elite offense of Montclair State started strong with two runs in the first, thanks to a couple of walks and a couple of RBI singles from senior outfielder Andrew Ollwerther and junior utility Miles Feaster. Even with a five-run eighth inning from the Roadrunners, the damage was already done by the Red Hawks as they secured a 14-5 victory.

With the bases loaded, senior infielder Jason Moore, who was put down four times prior, hit a beautiful line drive to left field to bring in the winning run for the Red Hawks, prompting them to storm the field.

The sweep helps the Red Hawks keep pace in the New Jersey Athletic Conference (NJAC) standings, as they currently are in a three-way tie for first place in the conference with a 20-7 (5-1 NJAC) record.

To see the rest of Chris’ photos, go to themontclarion.org
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Tara Mastroianni Is Stepping Up
For Not Only Her Team, But Herself

Corey Annan
Sports Editor

Upon the start of preseason training, Tara Mastroianni was the last female thrower left on the Montclair State University women’s track and field team. Graduation losses included some of the best Red Hawk throwers in recent memory such as Christine Grillith, Lena Bilotti and Stephanie Eastman. For most people, it would’ve been a frightening thing to hear. However, the junior thrower out of Robbinsville, New Jersey, seemed to be motivated by this challenge; she wanted to bring more attention to women’s throwing here at Montclair State.

However, head coach Ian Carter didn’t want her to fight that battle alone. “[For] the first two practices of [indoor track], I was all by myself,” Mastroianni said. “Carter kept me company during practice at that point. After talking with him, he told me he didn’t want to see me alone like that because I would get in my own head at competitions. Having someone be by my side [was great because] she could help me and I could help her.”

Sports anxiety is something Mastroianni has been struggling with for quite a few seasons now. She describes it as “blackout,” whenever she enters the circle. She’s unaware of everything around her, from the placement of her feet when she’s spinning for a discus throw to the throwing technique of an eight-pound shot put.

Throughout her first few years of her college career, mentors such as Grillith, Bilotti and Eastman were crucial in ensuring she remained calm in the circle and less anxious. With them gone, who could fill the void as that shoulder to lean on during meets? Thankfully, prior to the start of the indoor season, Carter was able to land Mastroianni a new companion – Eve Rosado.

Due to [the coronavirus], it’s been really hard to differentiate who I can and can’t bring based on their times and throws,” Carter said. “But I know [Mastroianni]. She’s a very social person, so I knew it would be beneficial with her if we brought someone else on. I did my research, threw a couple flyers out and then we [got in contact] with Rosado, who I think has been a great addition to the team. They’ve sparked a really good friendship that has been beneficial for them on and off the track.

Currently a sophomore on the team, Rosado hadn’t competed in a throws competition in a few years — since high school to be exact. While Mastroianni is the more experienced out of the two, they both help each other out in similar ways.

[Mastroianni] and I practice really well together,” Rosado said. “We are always pushing each other, even when we are getting kind of tired [of practicing]. It’s always ‘let’s do one more throw.’ Or, if I’m having a bad day at practice, I’ll tell [Mastroianni] I’m just not dealing with it today, and she has that experience to be like, ‘you can just call it here, no need to push yourself further or beat [down] on yourself’.”

Off the track, Mastroianni has helped Rosado adjust to the team’s social dynamic. Her leadership goes beyond her abilities inside the circle. For years, the track and field program has lacked a strong presence on social media, hindering the program’s ability to m a r k e t themselves to the public eye, particularly the university community. Mastroianni decided to take the initiative and serve as the program’s social media director for the season.

“[Tara Mastroianni and Eve Rosado] have created a strong friendship with each other on and off the track.

It was the first indoor track meet of the season and I noticed the girl who ran [the social media] before graduated, so nothing was being posted,” Mastroianni said. “I went up to Carter and I told him I would volunteer and run it. I didn’t mind because I always wanted to get involved in something like that, and everyday I’d learn something new by messing around with Photoshop, PixArt and by looking at other social media pages to see what they do and how they promote their team.”

But make no mistake about it: Mastroianni can get it done in the circle. In terms of her events for outdoor track and field, she competes in shot put, discus and hammer. She’s particularly strong at the discus, hitting a personal record of 34.57 meters at the Oscar Moore Invitational on March 26, the team’s first meet of the season. She followed that up with a 33.79-meter mark at the Ramapo College Invitational about a week later.

Her mark at the Oscar Moore Invitational is currently good for eighth in the conference, only a few feet off from some of the best throwers in the conference and the qualifying mark for regionals.

Early on her college career, Mastroianni focused more on shot put, throwing as high as 34 feet in her freshman year, but she quickly turned her attention towards discus after some strong practices during the preseason.

Part of her motivation for achieving a personal record in discus, however, ironically came from one of her worst performances in shot put.

“It was almost expected I would [go above my personal record] or come close to my [personal record] in discus since it was looking so good in practice,” Mastroianni said. “When we got to that [Oscar Moore] meet, I decided I was going to put more of my focus to hammer and discuss and not shot put, like how I would my freshman year. I didn’t do so well in the shot put that meet, so I told Carter that I knew I had to come back strong for discuss cause I can’t end on a bad note. My form [for discus] was looking good, and I know something good is going to happen when I step into that circle and have a positive mindset.”

And while it’s a simple concept, having a positive mindset has truly helped Mastroianni manage her sports anxiety. For her, it’s been about improving her confidence, and being optimistic that every time she steps into the circle, it’s an opportunity for a huge personal record. Proper breathing techniques and a change in her pre-game music playlist have also been helpful.

While the pressure may be on her to continue to raise more attention to the women’s throwing team, Carter believes her future is certainly bright.

“The biggest thing is her self-confidence,” Carter said. “She’s her own worst enemy if she talks herself out. But when she’s on, she can compete with the best of them. I really want to see her get top three in the conference for discus.”