

GROWING AWARENESS

Penn State student builds new Schreyer Pocket Garden to combat food insecurity

By Julia Mertes
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Before coming to Penn State, Schreyer Honors College scholar Vancie Peacock never stepped foot on a farm and remained “disconnected from the food system” due to her hometown’s location.

However, Peacock’s (sophomore-biological engineering) previously limited agricultural background did not stop her from proposing and leading the Schreyer Honors College and Dr. Keiko Miwa Ross Student Farm at Penn State-collaborated Pocket Garden in Penn State’s South Halls residential living area — in the courtyard next to Simmons Hall facing McKean Road.

“I saw a need for students to be able to connect with the food system, see where their food is coming from and how to grow their own food,” Peacock said. “And then at the same time, I saw that [Penn State] had this really high percentage of students who are facing food insecurity, which comes from not having access to affordable, fresh food.”

Peacock said the Schreyer Pocket Garden project addresses many of the issues she highlighted around campus and provides a central working space for students to be able to “walk by, see it, ask questions and learn about food insecurity in general and its prevalence on campus.”

A pocket garden is a garden constructed in a confined area that permits gardeners to use underutilized spaces to efficiently grow produce and other forms of vegetation, according to Gardening Know How.

Peacock’s pocket garden provides education and community engagement for Penn State students, and this spring, it will produce fresh foods for those experiencing food insecurities on campus.

She said the pocket garden’s presence on campus may inspire students to seek the resources available to them if they are experiencing insecurity and provide students with educational and community opportunities to learn how to grow food.

A nationwide #RealCollege Survey, conducted most recently in 2019 by The Hope Center, discovered 33% of four-year college students experience some extent of food insecurity, according to Penn State’s Food and Housing Security Task Force Report released in February 2021.

The nationwide survey found 38% of students could not afford to purchase nutritionally balanced meals, and 28% of college students reduce their meal size or skip meals altogether due to



Courtesy of Vancie Peacock

Students help build the new pocket garden, which is located in Penn State’s South Halls residential living area — in the courtyard next to Simmons Hall facing McKean Road.

monetary restrictions.

Through a survey Project Cahir — a Penn State student group dedicated to combating student poverty — and Penn State Student Affairs Research and Assessment conducted, more localized results about the impact of food insecurity on Penn State’s campuses were discovered.

Foremost, the survey discovered 20% of Penn State students skipped meals in the past week due to funding limitations, and 22% of students lacked a balanced meal “sometimes” or “often” in the month time period.

Rather than evaluating the healthiest food options while grocery shopping, the release said 61% of Penn State students recorded purchasing the most affordable food available — regardless of its nutritional value.

When analyzing the freshness of their food, 22% of Penn State students said they “strongly” or “somewhat” disagreed it was easy to purchase fresh produce, and 33% of students indicated that fresh fruits and vegetables were unaffordable for their budget.

The survey of Penn State students also discovered both students of color and international students faced increased levels of food insecurity while living in State College.

During fall 2019, a Penn State College Relationships and Experiences Survey was distributed via email to first- and second-year students, focusing on food and housing concerns. Survey results demonstrated 35% of respondents experienced some level of food insecurity.

Students living off campus were most likely to indicate a level of food insecurity, with 47% of respondents denoting such a situation, and 35% of respondents

residing in on-campus living fit the food insecurity threshold, the report said.

Creating the new pocket garden

“[Administration] doesn’t usually allow students to [modify Penn State grounds] because students graduate and interests change,” Peacock said. “That was a big challenge — trying to prove that this is something that could be sustainable and last even after I graduate.”

Peacock said she created a project proposal with the help of staff members at the Student Farm at Penn State, whose “backing as a credible program” helped in convincing administration of the pocket garden’s sustainability since the staff could help guarantee the garden will continue in the future.

Peacock’s project became a collaborative effort as she consulted and coordinated with organizations like the Student Farm, The Lion’s Pantry, Penn State’s Office of Physical Plant and the Schreyer Honors College.

“I really wanted the project to be interdisciplinary and to bring in a lot of different groups of people because I think that’s something special about gardening and farming and food — it applies to everyone,” Peacock said.

Various logistical considerations came into play when organizing the project, including the location of the garden, water sourcing, supply sourcing and project funding, according to Peacock.

While writing the proposal, Peacock outlined the specifics of the projects — from the operational budget to where volunteers would come from.

“It was definitely more challenging than [I predicted], but I’m glad that it was because I really wanted to put a lot of thought into this project and make sure that it was done the right way where I could really impact students,” Peacock said. “I feel lucky that I was given this opportunity to make such a permanent and lasting impact.”

With the proposal approved at the beginning of the fall semester after working on it for a year, Peacock said volunteers were able to break the ground of the garden and begin laying down tarps and mulching.

According to Peacock, Student Farm volunteers helped collect leftover lumber from OPP to create the raised beds necessary for production.

Peacock said building garden supplies — like the garden beds — is an activity where students think, “‘Oh my gosh. I can’t do this because I’ve never built anything before.’”

However, she said most students who volunteer are surprised about their skills and find the experience to be “empowering.”

Peacock said her own experience of volunteering at the on-campus Student Farm Club Rooftop Garden was inspiring and memorable because she’d never grown anything before and discovered she was capable of it.

A rooftop garden is a man-made green space on top of a building’s rooftop used to grow an assortment of fruits and vegetables while improving air

quality in high urban areas, according to New York Decks.

“I really want others to have that positive experience like I did — build a community with one another and have that place on campus where they can go to destress and feel safe getting active rest,” Peacock said.

Peacock, who manages the Student Farm Club’s Rooftop Garden, said her involvement at the garden helped her plan the new pocket garden project.

During the last week of November 2021, Peacock said the pocket garden held its first two volunteer days, which she said experienced “good turnout.”

More volunteering opportunities will be available in the spring semester, according to Peacock, and the first season of produce will transpire.

Peacock said she currently has approximately 25 people signed up as volunteers. However, she said she plans to expand the volunteer list in the coming weeks.

“I really wanted this to be a place that staff could volunteer too,” Peacock said. “It would be really cool for students to get to garden alongside their professors or staff members in their academic college.”

Peacock said Student Farm Club volunteers used the Rooftop Garden as a “pilot program” to prepare for the pocket garden, growing produce like kale, lettuce and broccoli to donate to The Lion’s Pantry.

She said the garden grew select produce that didn’t need to be cut or precisely handled — since many college students

don’t have access to kitchens, cooking tools or cooking education.

“It can be really intimidating if you don’t grow up around a lot of fruits and vegetables and to be handed things you’ve never seen before or know how to cook,” Peacock said. “You may just not eat them.”

Pocket garden visually represents food insecurity

Marta Plumhoff, the food systems coordinator with the Sustainable Food Defense Program at Penn State, said she joined the pocket garden project team halfway through its development when Peacock was “turning her idea into something actionable.”

Visit collegian.psu.edu to read the full story.

“I feel lucky that I was given this opportunity to make such a permanent and lasting impact.”

Vancie Peacock
Pocket Garden leader

Bendapudi to serve as next university president

By Jeremiah Hassel
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

For Neeli Bendapudi, being elected Penn State’s 19th president was “the honor of a lifetime.”

A businesswoman and lifelong academic, Bendapudi was unanimously appointed to the position by the Penn State Board of Trustees at a “special, off-cycle” meeting on Dec. 9. She is the first woman and person of color to hold the office.

“It’s a wonderful feeling to know that I’m joining such a special community,” Bendapudi said.

In a Q&A session Dec. 9 following the meeting, Bendapudi discussed her goals and aspirations for the university in the coming years.

Bendapudi’s contract will begin on or before July 1, 2022, and end June 30, 2027, the



Jackson Ranger/Collegian file photo

President-elect Neeli Bendapudi speaks during the Board of Trustees meeting at the Penn Stater Hotel on Thursday, Dec. 9, 2021.

Subcommittee on Compensation announced, with a \$950,000 annual base salary and \$350,000 annual

supplemental income.

One of Bendapudi’s major goals is fostering diversity, which she

said starts with bringing diverse voices into the decision-making process at the university.

“In a changing world that is so dynamic and unpredictable, we need people around the table that don’t all look alike or think alike,” Bendapudi said. “Diversity of thought matters in terms of tackling challenges.”

Bendapudi said diversity is already “in the DNA” of Penn State and is “not an alien concept” in its administrative processes. This was partly evident, Bendapudi said, in the Board of Trustees’ decision to elect her.

“By their selection of me, [board members are] saying, ‘It doesn’t matter to us who you are — we’re going to find the right candidate,’” Bendapudi said.

But there is still work to be done, Bendapudi said — work that requires a “laser focus

on collaboration and inclusive excellence.”

Bendapudi said she expects “significant challenges ahead,” including evolving demographics, access and affordability challenges, academic delivery modes and public attitudes toward higher education. But the solution is clear, Bendapudi said.

“We all have to fundamentally rethink what higher education’s all about,” Bendapudi said. “For us to continue to be vital, competitive, we need to be a place where everybody says, ‘Penn State is the place to go because no matter who I am, when I come here, I can make a great life for myself, for my family and my community.’ Ultimately, that’s what higher education is about. It’s really about transforming lives.”

Visit collegian.psu.edu to read the full story.

Saxophonist ‘serenades’ State College

By Ava Leone
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Walking by a parking garage in State College, you might hear a reverberating saxophone concerto echoing off the walls with Joseph Hosko playing the brassy instrument inside.

At the age of 8 years old, Hosko began playing the saxophone, drawn to the instrument’s beautiful sound. From then on, he became the saxophonist for his high school in Tyrone, Pennsylvania, participating in jazz band, concert band, marching band and more. Ultimately, his devotion to the saxophone helped Hosko land a scholarship to the Berklee College of Music in 1983.

“I’m a prodigy,” Hosko said.

Now at 57 years old, Hosko is a saxophonist who gives music lessons part time when he can. However, due to the coronavirus pandemic, many of the recital halls and auditoriums at Penn State no longer allow musicians to play their instruments without masks on.

Since Hosko cannot play the saxophone with a mask on, he comes to State College from Tyrone four days a week to practice his craft in the parking garages throughout downtown.

“I play over there because I have nowhere else to play,” Hosko said.

Hosko said the parking garages have the “best sound,” even though they cannot compare to the places he had access to before the pandemic.

According to Penn State Professor and Director of Jazz Studies Marko Marcinko, the coronavirus pandemic forced all musicians to change the way they perform their craft.

“It shut everything down, shut down all the clubs and shut down all the theaters. It shut down all live music events because live music events meant people had to gather and musicians had to gather, so therefore it was not a good thing for the musicians and the artists that needed to perform,” Marcinko said. “It forced a lot of us to really go through the technology of using YouTube, using Facebook, using different platforms, social media platforms to get our music out there.”

Hosko regularly posts his performances onto his own Facebook page: “Famous Joe. Tyrone, Pa.” He has acquired over 1,000 followers since 2017 by posting his saxophone skills.

On his profile page, he has gained Facebook friends who are



Chloe Trieff/Colegian

Joseph Hosko, of State College, Pa. plays his saxophone in the Beaver Avenue Garage on Tuesday, Oct. 13, 2021 in State College, Pa.

some of the “greatest saxophonists in the world,” including Steve Weikel, Mark Sepinuck, Søren Ballegaard and Mayker Rivero.

Despite his success on social

media, Hosko said he wishes he could play inside the buildings on Penn State’s campus again.

According to Hosko, to be a great player, one has to practice every day, so he plays the saxophone about two to three hours every day. However, without access inside recital halls, it’s more difficult for him to hone his craft.

“You’re not allowed to play inside, so you have to play outside, but you’re not going to get the best sound,” Hosko said. “I’m disabled also, so I can’t get in a car to drive and carry speakers around and so forth. I am a disabled adult, I have Tourette’s and ADHD. I was born with that disorder.”

Hosko has a driver take him to State College to play the saxophone. On his own, he takes public transportation, which is how he met one of his friends and supporters, Carolyn Muse.

Muse met Hosko on the bus one day when he offered her a seat and immediately began talking about his ambitious music career.

“He says, ‘Hi, I went to the Berklee School of Music,’ and I go, ‘Well, that’s quite an interesting way to start a conversation,’” Muse said.

This interaction sparked their fast friendship. Now, Muse

watches Hosko perform about once or twice a week downtown. A music lover herself, she said she enjoys watching her talented friend “serenade State College” with his “romantic troubadour” style of playing the saxophone.

“His emotions come out in his music,” Muse said.

Six months ago, Hosko’s mother died. A big inspiration for Hosko, she always encouraged him “to be the best you can be” in music. Ever since his mother first encouraged Hosko to pursue a career in music, he has enjoyed doing what makes him happy every day.

According to Muse, Hosko has fully immersed himself in music so much it has become his “lifeblood.”

“I feel a lot of passion when I play,” Hosko said. “I actually cannot take my hands off the saxophone.”

Hosko said he hopes he can play the saxophone inside grand auditoriums again.

Until then, he will continue blasting ballads from downtown State College parking garages.

To email reporter: azl271@psu.edu.
Follow her on Twitter at [@AvaLeone5](https://twitter.com/AvaLeone5).



Chloe Trieff/Colegian

Joseph Hosko, of State College, Pa. adjusts the \$600 mouth piece in his saxophone in the Beaver Avenue Garage on Tuesday, Oct. 13, 2021 in State College, Pa.



Joeshp DiDomenico/Colegian file photo

Penn State Health Children’s Hospital on Tuesday, Oct. 18, 2016. The hospital was the beneficiary to a recent THON toy drive.

THON drive brings over 750 toys

By Caitlin Concannon
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

With THON Weekend 2022 right around the corner at Penn State, THON committees and other student-run organizations are raising money in various ways for children and families impacted by pediatric cancer.

This past holiday season, THON held its annual Hershey Holiday Toy Drive — which donated 758 toys to children being cared for at Penn State Health Children’s Hospital.

THON is the world’s largest student-run philanthropy that aims to provide emotional and financial support to families affected by childhood cancer.

According to members of THON’s Supply Logistics committee, such as Supply Logistics Captain Sonia Petrucci, planning for the holiday toy drive usually begins at the start of fall semester.

“Once the toy drive started on Nov. 15, people from anywhere would go on [an Amazon registry] and purchase a toy,” Petrucci (senior-industrial engineering) said.

Petrucci said she and another member of the Supply Logistics committee Emma Jaffe worked to create the Amazon registry, which showed a list of toys for people to select and donate.

“It takes a lot to make [the toy drive] successful,” Jaffe (senior-supply chain and information systems) said, when talking about the lengthy process the committee went through this fall.

Jaffe said she believes THON holds a lot of meaning to each of its committee

members since it has a large effect on Penn Staters.

“For my senior year, I wanted to be more involved and just make a greater impact on the THON community,” Jaffe said.

The toy drive, specifically, has given THON organizers the opportunity to be hands-on — which helps members see the direct impact their fundraising makes, Jaffe said.

“Being able to do the toy drive and kind of see the process from start to finish, that has definitely been the most rewarding thing I have done as a THON volunteer in the past four years,” Petrucci said.

For Julia Semmer, Supply Logistics director for THON, her favorite part was delivering toys to the hospital since “the toy that we deliver will end up in the hands of a child.”

Once the toy drive ends yearly, members are able to see their direct impact through the overall statistics of donations, according to Semmer (senior-supply chain and information systems).

The estimated value of the 758 toys donated is \$11,000, according to a THON release — an increase compared to the 709 toys donated in 2020.

“There were almost 200 donors that contributed,” Jaffe said.

“We are very thankful for everyone who participated and helped with the toy drive.”

To email reporter: ckc5547@psu.edu.
Follow her on Twitter at [@daily_concannon](https://twitter.com/daily_concannon).

New year, new you?

By Ella DeCecco
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Each year, many people attempt to remake themselves with New Year’s resolutions. However, some set aspirations for the upcoming year without considering their ability to actually complete the challenge.

Although Penn State students have just recently gotten back into the swing of things, there are many attempting to reinvent themselves this upcoming year.

Divya Tyagi said one of her resolutions is to “go to bed” at an earlier time and meet new people.

“I want to be asleep by 1 [a.m.] and meet three new people in all of my classes this year,” Tyagi (sophomore-aerospace engineering) said.

However, Tyagi said she hasn’t set her plan in motion yet, “but it’s gonna start soon, hopefully.”

Anna Kenney-Hynes said she wants to “write more.”

“My resolution was to journal most days before I get into bed and to take breaks in between studying, so I can be more productive,” Kenney-Hynes (sophomore-social data analytics) said.

Other students’ resolutions are more specified toward becoming physically healthy, such as exercising and eating right.

Brenna Sposito said she wants to focus on “health stuff” during this next semester.

“I really want to try to run more consistently, and I want to drink more water,” Sposito (freshman-biomedical engineering) said.

And, Nicholas Alfree said he wants to “do more running and lift more.”

“I lifted a lot last semester, but I want to run again,” Alfree (sophomore-aerospace engineering) said. “I did cross country in high school and felt really great when I ran.”

Aside from exercising, Alfree said he’s also trying to use his phone less in the morning.

“Getting out of the habit is really hard but I’m still trying,” Alfree said.

Also interested in spending more time at the gym, Benjamin Cutuli said it’s his goal to “bench 200 pounds by the end of the year.”

“I haven’t really started working on it yet, but it’s gonna happen,” Cutuli (sophomore-aerospace engineering) said.

Suzuka Yamane said she previously hasn’t made any New Year’s resolutions.

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Rural hospitals need more support amid pandemic

After facing high influxes of coronavirus inpatients, Mount Nittany Health announced on Friday that Mount Nittany Medical Center would resume some surgeries on Monday.

Endoscopy procedures will return fully, while elective surgeries that require a one-night stay will be available on a “limited basis.” The pause comes after the facility planned to postpone these specific surgeries through Jan. 5 as it sees an influx in coronavirus inpatients.

Mount Nittany tended to 219 coronavirus patients in December, a daily average of 60 patients, a 17% increase compared to December 2020. This led to the Medical Center placing its Emergency Department on diversion status on Dec. 3, meaning it couldn’t take anymore patients in until the next day.

Throughout the entirety of the pandemic, Mount Nittany has been continuously bombarded with coronavirus and non-coronavirus patients. As outside citizens, it’s hard to imagine what the front lines are like for healthcare workers.

It’s even harder to imagine considering that Mount Nittany is the sole hospital in Centre County, taking care of both local residents and Penn State

OUR VIEW

Mount Nittany Hospital taking on more than it can handle to support local community

students alike.

Seeing that these surgeries are resuming is a welcome and necessary sight, as even though they may be elective, that doesn’t mean they should be postponed — delaying could lead to further issues down the line.

While the long term availability of these surgeries seems unlikely, Mount Nittany made the right decision to support as many patients who are in need as it can. This plan can easily be retracted, as the center said it will continue to observe the impacts of the omicron variant on the community.

If cases do begin to run rampant and the hospital is overrun by coronavirus inpatients, Mount Nittany has the ability to stop surgeries without it being a huge catastrophe. Until said cases rise, the top priority should be completing these surgeries in a timely manner.

Penn State students often add

an unnecessary burden to Mount Nittany, often utilizing the hospital for non-emergency related care. While the health services on campus may be less than desirable to some, the hospital trips are creating a strain on employees that is already exponential from the influx of coronavirus cases.

2022 is already seeing a rise in coronavirus cases in Centre County as Jan 1. saw a record 319 recorded cases. Six days later, 308 cases were added — the second highest daily total.

Ultimately, It’ll be difficult to avoid the omicron variant, and Mount Nittany continues to advocate for masking and vaccination, while also avoiding large gatherings. The facility recently mandated the vaccine for its employees, with the deadline set for Feb. 28 barring a medical or religious exception.

Over 90% of Mount Nittany’s faculty is vaccinated, and while

this may come later than other medical providers, this decision will better protect its employees and, in turn, the patients. While omicron is highly transmissible compared to previous variants, vaccines serve as the best option toward slowing down the spread while also keeping people out of hospitals.

The last thing Mount Nittany needs is a staffing shortage due to an outbreak, even with the CDC lowering the required quarantine time. This doesn’t change the fact that healthcare workers are limited — nearly 20% have resigned from their job amid the pandemic as of October.

Mount Nittany is not the only medical facility facing issues with omicron looming. Centre County’s coronavirus testing site has had to close down on multiple occasions due to a supply shortage — quickly running out of the 450 tests it can give daily. This is also

coupled with hours spent waiting to take a test.

This is not the fault of Centre County or the testing center, rather the federal government, as many communities across the country have made it obvious there is a lack of testing present. If you live on the edge of Centre County and there’s no other testing sites available, is it worth the travel to wait in State College just to possibly be sent home without a test?

The lack of testing and long wait times is worrying considering how easy omicron spreads.

Rural areas may find themselves lacking the necessary resources to help communities compared to urban areas. And while this can happen in larger cities, the residents of smaller areas may feel neglected. This isn’t how it should be — not in a nearly three-year long global pandemic.

But this rural area houses one of the largest universities in America with students that use the same hospital as everyone else. Mount Nittany is just one example of a rural hospitals that exist across the country that are caring for more than they can take on. With the heavy load its been handed, the medical center is doing the best it can.



MY VIEW | **Kyle Hutchinson**

Comics by Maddie Seelig

1st day proves students are safe on campus

As Penn State announced classes would start in person this semester, my State College friends’ group chat buzzed with sighs of relief.

We all feared the return to remote learning — albeit temporarily — and believed the university made the right decision in sticking to its original in-person plan.

Now, back here in State College with classes resuming, it’s clear students are about as safe here as they could be anywhere else.

Penn State students, without being required to, are 89.7% fully vaccinated. This number is significantly higher than the majority of communities in the United States.

While more transmissible, the omicron variant, now the dominant strain, is not as deadly, with one study showing it is half as likely to lead to hospitalizations as the delta variant, according to the New York Times.



Hutchinson

In regard to students, deaths in the age group of 18-29 account for about 0.06% of the over 800,000 coronavirus deaths in the U.S., meaning the death rate for college-age students is exceptionally low. With omicron being even less deadly than previous strains, students shouldn’t feel worried.

With the Penn State community being relatively vaccinated, the chance of death is minimal for those who got the jab.

I don’t feel unsafe in State College. In fact, I feel safer here than being back home. Back home, I’d still be going out to bars or restaurants, working at my job in food service or hanging out in groups.

Some may argue just because the students are safe and university employees are fairly well protected, the influx of people back is a danger to the State

College community. Centre County is about 57% fully vaccinated as of Jan. 11.

The data is clear — if you’re unvaccinated, you’re at a greater chance of both contracting the disease and dying from it. In Pennsylvania alone from January 2021 to December 2021, 85% of positive tests and 86% of coronavirus related deaths were unvaccinated/non-fully vaccinated people.

There have been three working vaccines available for months. If someone chose not to get vaccinated, that’s their freedom of choice. If they die from the coronavirus, that’s on them.

Although I never mind being away from campus, I have plenty of friends who I know struggle with being back home and have a difficult time mentally being away. For the student age group,

it’s in all likelihood far more damaging to struggle with the mental effects of staying home, rather than the mild coronavirus symptoms our age will likely face.

Students have shown in their first days back that they still understand the masking rules and they’re willing to follow the university’s rules that kept students safe in the fall.

As it’s becoming evidently clear that the coronavirus is going to become something we have to live with rather than something we can eradicate, students still have a responsibility to keep their community safe.

To continue making sure the spring semester can go as smoothly as the fall, Penn Staters must keep following university guidelines and getting tested when feeling sick to make sure we can stay here and in person.

Kyle Hutchinson is a junior majoring in criminology and is a columnist for The Daily Collegian. Email him at kkh5359@psu.edu or follow him on Twitter at [@kylehutchhutch](https://twitter.com/kylehutchhutch).

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‘POTENTIAL FOR GREATNESS’

Former Penn State wrestler, Olympian Kerry McCoy fosters sense of community in Lehigh Valley

By Ben Serfass
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Greatness is not born — it is instead slowly crafted through years of dedication and resilience toward one’s craft.

WRESTLING Former Penn State wrestler, two-time Olympian and member of the National Wrestling Hall of Fame, Kerry McCoy is one of the most decorated athletes the sport of wrestling has ever seen and has now been handed the reins to the Lehigh Valley Wrestling Club.

McCoy has since invested himself in a community that already produces some of the most elite wrestling talent in the country.

However, the former Nittany Lion said he believes he can continue to mold current and future generations of athletes from the area and not only produce world-class athletes but world-class people.

The New York native previously spent roughly a year at the California Regional Training Center, but his familiarity with the Lehigh Valley played a role in his decision to relocate.

Out of high school, McCoy was recruited to wrestle at Lehigh where he would eventually serve as an assistant coach at the school from 2000-2005.

“The relationship that I had with the area, with the university, with the people involved, was a big thing, and I knew that the potential for greatness was very strong here,” McCoy told the Daily Collegian.

“Being tied to Lehigh University, being in the Lehigh Valley, getting closer to home and getting closer to an area where I spent a lot of time was just great to be at a place that I really felt that we can be successful.”



Courtesy of Gueseppe Rea

Former Penn State wrestler and two-time Olympian Kerry McCoy has taken his expertise to the Lehigh Valley Wrestling Club and has immersed himself in the community.

McCoy’s resume speaks for itself.

The former Penn State wrestler was a two-time Olympian, finishing fifth and seventh in 2000 and 2004, respectively, was a nine-time member of U.S. National teams, and was named the Outstanding Wrestler of the 2003 Pan-American Games where he took home a gold medal.

Those training at the Lehigh Valley Wrestling Club, and now under the tutelage of McCoy, have the privilege of having one of the most decorated and experienced athletes the sport has seen in their corner.

Darian Cruz is one of those athletes and has spent his entire wrestling career in the Lehigh Valley.

The Bethlehem Catholic High School graduate wrestled collegiately at Lehigh, where he was a three-time All-American at 125 and finished tied for second all-time in program history with 120

career wins. “It’s an incredible thing knowing that this man is going to prepare you for what you want to accomplish,” Cruz told the Collegian. “It’s going to show obviously in the future, leading up to the World Championships and Olympic Games, but like I said — we’re just getting started.”

Cruz currently represents Puerto Rico in the World Championships and will do so again in the 2024 Olympic Games.

However, Cruz is not the only member of the current Lehigh Valley Wrestling Club who has spent the majority of his life in the Lehigh Valley and is now competing on the world stage.

Gueseppe Rea, who attended high school in Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania, and wrestled collegiately at Wilkes University where he accumulated 121 career wins, is also currently wrestling at the national level and representing Ecuador.

Rea said he believes in just the

short amount of time McCoy has spent with the club his presence has been felt.

“In just the few months he’s been here with us, he’s made a big difference in us competing, getting us out there, and the coaching aspect too,” Rea told the Collegian. “He’s a great coach, and he’s an even better person.”

Being from the Lehigh Valley, both Cruz and Rea understand the area and what it means to be a part of the community.

Understanding the work ethic and the mentality of the valley is a step in the right direction toward immersing oneself among its neighbors and building a strong foundation for the program.

McCoy said he is also in tune with the character of the community and understands the blue-collar work ethic of the people who call the Lehigh Valley home.

In his coaching, McCoy emphasizes working hard, but with a plan.

“We want to make sure we come in, we work hard and give everything we have,” McCoy said. “We’re smart, a tagline I say is ‘train hard, train smart.’ It’s not just about just doing things to do things.”

That mindset is one that doesn’t just stay in the wrestling room either.

McCoy understands the importance of community impact and what making a meaningful difference can do for the future of a community as well.

“We try to have them be able to perform at a high level personally at all times and knowing that to give back to the community it’s not, ‘Every day we’re just going to go and do something just to do it.’” McCoy said.

His staff attempts to teach its wrestlers to constantly perform at a high level personally, McCoy said.

“We want to make sure we have an impact.”

For McCoy, though, earning national recognition on the wrestling mats is not the only goal he has for his club.

The former blue and white wrestler is also focused on shaping men and preparing them for life after the sport.

McCoy encouraged his athletes to get involved in the area around them and speak with people who work in their desired career fields.

“That’s what’s incredible about coach McCoy, he’s never bigger than himself, and he’s so selfless,” Cruz said.

“Wrestling is such a minute part of being a great man and building your character.”

However, McCoy is not only focused on the current generation of Lehigh Valley wrestling but the future generations as well.

Visit collegian.psu.edu to read the full story.

MY VIEW | Joel Neuschwander

Schumacher-Cawley is the perfect hire

With a multitude of options to replace seven-time national champion Russ Rose, Penn State opted to choose his successor from within the program — a hire that brings leadership and experience as the Nittany Lions transition into unfamiliar territory.

WOMEN’S VOLLEYBALL Katie Schumacher-Cawley was tabbed as the third head coach in the blue and white’s illustrious history Monday, with the announcement coming just over two weeks after Rose announced his retirement.

Schumacher-Cawley is no stranger to Happy Valley, having been a two-time AVCA All-American and member of Penn State’s first national-title squad in 1999.

She returned to the Nittany Lions in 2018 to serve as an assistant coach — a role she continued to hold through the 2021 season.

Ultimately, Penn State’s decision to make Schumacher-Cawley the next face of the program was a phenomenal one.

The rumor mill swirled for a couple weeks as the calendar flipped to 2022, and the Nittany Lions could have gone in a number of different directions with the hire.

A handful of Rose’s former players hold coaching positions themselves across the country, and one of them — Salima Rockwell — was named head coach at Notre Dame on Friday.

In the end, it was the former player on Penn State’s own bench that earned the nod.

Schumacher-Cawley knows the Penn State program inside and out and has nearly a decade of head-coaching experience on her resume.

She won 113 matches in her eight seasons at the helm of the University of Illinois-Chicago, becoming the third all-time winningest head coach in Flames’ history after spending six seasons as an assistant.

In her lone season at Penn in 2017, Schumacher-Cawley guided the Quakers to a 7-7 conference mark, recording the most Ivy League wins by a first-year head coach in program history.

While the Big Ten isn’t the Ivy

League nor the Horizon League, Schumacher-Cawley’s extensive Division I head-coaching background can only be seen as a plus. Add in her championship experience as a player and Schumacher-Cawley knows what it takes to win at the highest level.

The Big Ten is arguably the most competitive women’s college volleyball conference in the country — the conference has boasted at least one team in the national semifinal for 14 straight years and was represented by both squads in the 2021 national championship game.

As Penn State enters a new era, it will benefit from having someone familiar with the conference and what’s required to be successful in it.

Though it’s too early to tell whether or not the Nittany Lions will have immediate success under Schumacher-Cawley — if things take a bit longer to develop, Penn State fans must exercise patience.

It won’t be an easy task — the blue and white needs to replace a large part of its core from 2021, as it lost a few stars to the transfer portal and to graduation.

With several notable contributors of seasons past moving on — seniors Jenna Hampton and Gabby Blossom among them, with Kaitlyn Hord still in the portal — Schumacher-Cawley and the Nittany Lions have their work cut out for them.

Luckily for Penn State, Schumacher-Cawley has proven to be effective at developing and maximizing talent, and with the blue and white lacking experience across the board in 2022, she’ll be tested right away.

For the first time in more than four decades, it’s a season of change for Penn State, and while there is no replacing the impact Rose left on Happy Valley, it’s important that the Nittany Lions begin to take steps forward.

With Schumacher-Cawley leading the way, the blue and white is poised to return to its familiar position among the Big Ten’s best.

Joel Neuschwander is a senior majoring in digital and print journalism and is a Collegian volleyball reporter. His email is jun40@psu.edu.



Caleb Craig/Collegian

Forward Seth Lundy (1) flexes after a successful defensive shutdown during the men’s basketball game against Indiana on Jan. 2 at the Bryce Jordan Center.

PSU beats Rutgers with ‘solid’ defense

By Alexis Yoder
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Following Tuesday’s 66-49 win over Rutgers, Penn State coach Micah Shrewsberry emulated how his team defended the Scarlet Knights in his postgame media availability.

Spreading his arms and showing how he’s “covering more ground,” the first-year head coach said all his team changed in its defensive attack was how it stood with its arms out.

That change, though small, helped the Nittany Lions force the Scarlet Knights into 15 turnovers, which the former converted into 18 points.

“All we changed was this,” the two toughest defensive assignments — and they’ve delivered. Shrewsberry said as he spread his arms. “It looks like I’m in two different places at once. The more success you have at something, the more buy-in you get. Our guys have taken a hold of that, and it’s helped us.”

The team-wide effort on the defensive side of the ball sparked Penn State to a Big Ten victory and a .500 record in conference play.

Despite highlighting the defense against Rutgers as a “total team effort,” Shrewsberry and forward John Harrar pointed out a few players in particular that spearheaded the blue and white’s defensive effort.

Seth Lundy and Jalen Pickett, who rank first and second, respectively, in points per game on the team, consistently draw

On Tuesday, Lundy guarded Rutgers’ Ron Harper Jr., who came into the contest averaging a team-best 16.3 points per game — he scored a combined 49 points in the Scarlet Knights’ last two games.

The senior finished with seven points and had more shots than points against the Nittany Lions, a goal Shrewsberry and the team set prior to the matchup.

Following Tuesday’s game, Shrewsberry pointed out how nobody expected Lundy to be an all-Big Ten defensive team contender, but he and the rest of the team saw how crucial his defensive efforts are to a winning result.

“I think Seth Lundy did a heck of a job,” Harrar said. “All the big games that they’ve won, Ron Harper [Jr.] goes off for 20 plus, so Seth Lundy was all over him. We want other people to make plays.”

Lundy and Pickett brought the same energy to their defensive assignments, Shrewsberry said.

“Seth Lundy has guarded one of the best players on every single team this year,” Shrewsberry said. “I thought he did an excellent job. Kudos to Jalen Pickett for guarding Geo Baker in the same way.”

Pickett held speedy guard Geo Baker to seven points and one assist on Tuesday, putting him alongside Lundy as a defensive standout.

Visit collegian.psu.edu to read the full story.



Caleb Craig/Collegian

Coach Micah Shrewsberry encourages his team to shoot during the matchup against Indiana on Jan. 2.