

DAILY COLLEGIAN

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Photos by Josie Chen, Lily LaRegina, Noah Riffe and courtesy of Mount Nittany Medical Center



Courtesy of Mount Nittany Medical Center

Dr. Gregory Ruff works at Mount Nittany Medical Center in State College, Pennsylvania.

Mount Nittany helps patients amid COVID

By Courtney McGinley
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Since the coronavirus pandemic began in March, doctors and other medical professionals nationwide have been working on the front lines to combat the spread of the virus.

Dr. Gregory Ruff and Dr. Christopher Hester, both of Mount Nittany Medical Center, expressed what it means to be an essential worker in the State College area amid the pandemic.

Ruff is the section chief for pulmonary and sleep medicine for Mount Nittany Health and has been working at the medical center amid the pandemic, both directing and attending to the intensive care unit.

He oversees the health system's clinical approach to coronavirus and serves as the chief triage officer for the hospital by monitoring supplies, beds, availability of equipment and medications.

Ruff has been exposed to several contagious illnesses throughout his career, which he said always brings a certain level of anxiety and uncertainty.

"We are in contact with COVID-19 patients or patients who have been exposed to COVID-19 on an almost daily basis," Ruff said. "We have personal

protective equipment and protocols in place to help keep us and our patients safe, but it is always a concern."

Ruff said testing resources are not completely adequate and can raise concerns or create struggles for essential front-line workers.

"As the students return to campus, we continue to follow closely the disease trends in the community and remain committed to working with the university to be able to respond to the medical needs of the area," Ruff said.

Ruff helped to create a plan for the medical center in response to the coronavirus in the worst-case scenario.

"A lot of the planning we put in place has not had to be activated," Ruff said. "We have been fortunate to have fared much better than in larger metropolitan areas."

Hester is a healthcare provider with Mount Nittany Physician Group Internal Medicine and serves as the clinical chief officer of primary care services.

Though he would normally work on the front lines with patient care, during the pandemic, Hester has been part of implementing changes that affect patients, community members and staff at Mount

Nittany Health. He also helps to make decisions on issues involving coronavirus test collection sites, visitation policies and telehealth visits.

"Rapid change within an organization is accelerated during a pandemic," Hester said. "It's always a challenge trying to keep up with the swiftly evolving information on coronavirus, sometimes on a daily basis."

Hester and his team continue to work together to monitor and adapt to the virus, making sure to follow guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Department of Health.

"We want to do what's best for our patients, staff and this community, and we are working endlessly to best care for everyone," Hester said.

The most important thing people can do to help is to follow the basic coronavirus protocol, he said.

"Practice social distancing, wash your hands frequently for at least 20 seconds at a time and wear a mask," Hester said. "We're in this together as a community, and it will take all of us, together, to get to the other side."

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Follow her on Twitter at @court-mcginley.

How first responders operate in a pandemic

By Lilly Riddle
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

This fall, many Penn State students have been Zooming into classes from their dorms, apartments and homes.

But some, like the student firefighters living at the Alpha Fire Company, Zoom from inside of a fire station.

Christophe Cheroret, a volunteer firefighter currently living at the Alpha firehouse and a graduate student studying education, said balancing firefighting with online classes can be challenging.

"When you're in class, you can have a fire alarm that drops," Cheroret said. "There are less people now that are available to respond, so some of us, with the permission of our teachers, will respond while we're in class."

First responders at the Alpha Fire Company and State College Police Department said the essential nature of their jobs merits business as usual, even as the coronavirus spreads across the country.

This year — according to Steve Bair, the Centre Region Council of Governments fire director — there are 11 people living at the Alpha Fire Company's Beaver Avenue station out of 100 total company members.

Bair worries about a potential coronavirus outbreak within the station, which he said would compromise firefighters' ability to respond to calls.

"If you have something that sweeps through the populace... there is no one else to reach out to," Bair said. "It's going to be very difficult to make all of that work."

If 30% of the company became compromised, Bair said, Alpha Fire would reach out to other stations for help.

If the entire county became compromised, however, the company would have to reach out to Altoona, Harrisburg or Williamsport.

And though the infrastructure is in place to provide Alpha with interim staffing, it is a complex process

and may "come at a potentially very significant cost to the community," according to Bair.

Cheroret said he also worries about an outbreak of the virus, which would force him out of the firehouse.

"If the station gets contaminated, I have nowhere to go," Cheroret said.

In the event of an outbreak, Cheroret said the live-in firefighters would likely be relocated to a nearby hotel.

"We can't shut down. When somebody calls 911, somebody has to show up," Bair said. "Our only option, in the event that we are adversely impacted to the point that we cannot function as we do today, is to reach out to a place less affected by this thing than we are. And depending on what's going on, that could be a pretty long reach."

As for the State College Police Department, Greg Brauser, the lieutenant in charge of community relations, said implementing recent coronavirus mitigation efforts is one of the main changes brought about by the pandemic.

On Aug. 4, the State College Borough Council approved an ordinance requiring masks when within 6 feet of others, limiting gatherings and restricting lines outside of downtown businesses.

"We knew there would be somewhat of a learning curve," Brauser said.

"...The first initial phase of our enforcement was when we got called or came across violations, [and] we had handouts... to give everybody the gist of what the rules were and what you had to do."

Brauser said the most common call the department has gotten so far this school year has been for reports of gatherings larger than 10 people, the limit imposed by the borough council's ordinance.

Brauser said previous years' most common calls were alcohol- or tailgate-related.

"Most college students don't want to be sent home or have classes completely canceled, so there is a common goal that everybody, for the most part, is working toward," Brauser said.

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

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We warmly welcome
the Class of 2021
in anticipation of an
exceptional year!

Puzzles

Across

1 Sunblock ingredient
5 Court worker
10 Circuits
14 Eve's son
15 Wanderer
16 Promised land
17 Concern
19 Adjutant
20 Knitted fabric
21 Feminist Duncan
23 Beer mug
24 Explode
26 Turf
27 Actress
29 Consumed
31 Emulator
34 Provoke
35 Actor's line
39 Dishonest
41 Ebbed
43 Unnatural
44 Way of life
45 Admiration
46 Singleton
48 Terrestrial lizard
50 King of Judah
53 Social class
55 Organic compound
59 Air out
61 Store sign
62 Fem. suffix
63 Wolf spiders
66 Solar disk
67 Spam medium
68 ____ Blanc
69 Variety

Down

1 Yesteryears
2 Terminate
3 Contradict
4 Actress
5 Silverstone
5 Irritation
6 Child
7 Ostrich relative
8 Low-water mark
9 Ukrainian seaport
10 Toxic element
11 "So long!"

70 Answer
71 Conclusions

12 Argentina city, San ____
13 "Slamming Sammy" of golf
18 Harmony
22 Bond
24 Conveyor
25 Consumption
28 Pinch
30 Compass point
31 Hotshot
32 "The Bells" poet
33 Blunder
36 Crete mountain
37 Condensation
38 Dutch commune
40 Brazilian port

41 Storm
42 Greek letter
44 Caress
47 Religious holiday
49 Take for granted
50 Regions
51 Fight
52 Subsequently
54 Dishonor
56 Claw
57 Antelope
58 Reposes
60 Hire
61 Exclusively
64 Knock
65 Be in pain

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Coronavirus' impact from summer to fall

By Noor Al-Ahmad
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

During a typical year, the shift that downtown State College workers experience between summer and fall includes a dip in demand.

However, the additional pressure of a statewide shutdown of non-essential businesses in March and the danger of a highly contagious disease has only added to declining demand.

Joy Rodgers-Mernin, who has owned and worked for The Nittany Quill since 1984, reopened on May 8, but noted that the summer was “strange.”

Having worked at The Nittany Quill for 36 years, Rodgers-Mernin reflected on previous shifts she has seen in the community.

She said she watched as the Nittany Mall opened its doors and the trend for people to shop out of town became popular, later witnessing the rising popularity of Amazon and online shopping.

Given its downtown location, Rodgers-Mernin said whether they're students, attending conferences or touring the campus, her customers are somehow always related to Penn State.

Though enough locals trickled in during the summer to keep her doors open, Rodgers-Mernin said the lack of customers coming downtown to dine at restaurants and shop has indirectly affected her own business.

“We are, as a group, very dependent on each other,” Rodgers-Mernin said. “It’s really important that as a group, we get through this. It’s not an individual thing.”

Mitchell Pensak, who has worked at McLanahan’s Downtown Market since his freshman year at Penn State, said the working environment downtown in the summer as compared to the fall are “completely different animals.”

Although McLanahan’s tends to be packed with students and families in the fall, Pensak (senior-civil engineering) said more locals show up at the store in the summer.

The biggest challenge, he said, is overcoming boredom.

“You go from days where you’re doing nothing at all, you’re just sitting at the register or even just stocking, and you wouldn’t see a soul for hours on end,” Pensak said.

However, Pensak also said boredom in the time of a global pandemic was “comforting,” as it alleviated his concerns of spreading the disease to others.

Stephanie Hutton, the manager of Ikonik Ink Tattoo & Piercing Studio, said there is typically an equal distribution of demand from students and locals throughout the summer and the fall. While locals do venture into the store during the fall, Hutton said more locals historically tend to schedule when classes are not in session.

This summer, though, Ikonik Ink Tattoo & Piercing Studio closed because of the coronavirus. Hutton said most of the employees who work in the studio are 1099 employees, meaning they don’t follow normal employment classification rules, like people who are independent contractors.

Though they were able to file for unemployment, the process was more complicated than it would be for more conventional workers.

A 1099 employee is an independent contractor who works under their own guidance, unlike a permanent worker who takes direction from a company according to UpCounsel, a legal platform that aims to help businesses build their own legal terms.

Despite some returning students’ irresponsibility in regard to properly social distancing and seeing the numbers of positive coronavirus cases increase, Hutton said the return of students this fall was an economic necessity for many small businesses in the area.

Similarly, Rachel Campbell, the general manager at Duck Donuts, explained that coming back to work full-time after having a baby in April makes her “nervous” at the possibility of bringing the disease home.

“It’s a little scary,” Campbell said, “but we’re taking every precaution we can at our store and trying to make sure that our customers are safe, our employees are safe.”

Campbell said Duck Donuts usually experiences a dip in demand during the summer, as a mix of students continue to pass through its register during weekdays and more locals come in during weekends, but the coronavirus disrupted demand much more significantly.

“[The coronavirus] definitely affected our sales,” Campbell said. “People not shopping at local businesses and seeing our sign and stopping in for a day — it affected us a lot.”

The small store tucked on the side of Martin Luther King Jr. Plaza continued to operate mostly via takeout and curbside delivery Thursday through Sunday throughout the summer.

However, Campbell said the store re-opened on Aug. 17 with shortened hours as Duck Donuts continues to see a shortfall in demand compared to last fall and takes precaution in enforcing social distancing guidelines.



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				8		3		

WORD SEARCH

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Jolly Old England

Accent
Beatles
Big Ben
Bobbies
British
Castles
Chips
Country
Cricket
Crown
Darts
Empire
Europe
Guard
History
Island
Jewels
King
London Bridge
Monarchy
Palace
Parliament
Pound
Queen
Royal
Rugby
Shakespeare
Tea
Thames
Union Jack

U N I O N J A C K D P P J Y K J E B
C W S T R A D C C L H S H F J R A N
O B L U X F Q D H B E C G K A C J Q
W U G T D N A L S I R Z G E J B E G
U B Q T E J A L B A P D P U N I Y V
Y A J W N L V B N S Q S T E A P Y Y
B N T D I E O O E Y E Z N P U R P C
F Y W I M B M M P K F V G K R V D O
S W R U Z G A I A C C E N T I Z N U
E X H O F H Y H L D E X X V S N R N
L B R I T I S H I R N W O R C O G T
T E J F N S N B I N A S V P Y G W R
S Q U E P Z I P Z K G P U A M S N Y
A U D R W H M H B E A T L E S A E K
C E K K O E C A L A P D N U O P B X
T E P W S P L C R I C K E T B Z G L
Z N L A T J E S I W C P L I I X I K
M U G L O N D O N B R I D G E W B O

Kakuro (Cross Sums)

The rules are easy to learn: A number above the diagonal line in a black square is the sum of the white squares to the right of it. A number below the diagonal line is the sum of the white squares in the sequence below it. You may only use the digits 1 to 9, and a digit may be used only once in any sequence.

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8				21		7				
18					20				16	4
21								8		
		24				19	8	19		
			17	3	29					
		26								
			9			6				

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Are musicians essential employees?

By Sarah Pellis
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

When many people think of an essential worker, who or what do they think of? A health care worker? Someone who works for the government?

With over 33 million American workers unemployed since the spread of the coronavirus started, the definition of an essential worker has shifted.

Musicians work daily to provide people with entertainment, however some people might not define them as essential workers. Many artists themselves believe their work is a necessity to their community.

In State College, musicians are everywhere.

From music majors to bands that perform downtown, some may say musicians are essential to the basic function — especially at Penn State.

Outdoor music has been popular since before the start of the coronavirus and is continuing in popularity as the spread continues. Places like J.L. Farm and Cidery and Cafe 210 West have had musicians perform, mostly outdoors, at a safe distance.

Anna Pearl Belinda, a local Penn State musician and a spring 2020 graduate who majored in anthropology, performed at Cafe 210 West on Saturday, Sept. 12.

Though currently working for the College of Engineering as an international experiences assistant, Belinda has been an advocate for music since she was little.

“Music is universal,” Belinda said, “You can find it in every culture and it is something that is constant for everyone. It’s all interconnected and music works with all the working pieces.”

“If all these restaurants have shows, more people might come and benefit, not just the restaurant but the musician as well.”

There are also musicians around the area who still perform at local bars, mostly solo, due to social distancing guidelines.

The local band Lowjack, having performed at THON and bars in downtown State College before the coronavirus, has continued to be a contributor to the local musician community.

Jason Davoli, one of the members of Lowjack, has always had a “passion and addiction” to music.

Davoli has been performing every Saturday at The Phyrst during the spread of the coronavirus, and said he is “lucky” that he has a consistent show.

“I do feel like music is very important for people, but it is just a really tricky time to do that,” Davoli said.

Davoli said although music is important for many people even during the coronavirus, he said, “You have to do it right, and you have to do it safely.”

“[Music] is essential and important, and you feel it when it is live and people are singing along. It’s almost like an escape. Music is one of the things that brings everyone together, and it is especially needed right now,” Davoli said.

Even though live music is important, many artists have found ways to work around the pandemic. Most bands and musicians are recording music and writing. Some are even putting out live streams on social media.

Luke Cimbala, who works for The Band Junkies, has been promoting local artists and networking businesses to these artists before the spread of the coronavirus and especially now.

According to The Band Junkies’ website, the group provides “Local networking for a thriving musical community.”

Recently, the Band Junkies have been interviewing artists on its Instagram TV.

One of its videographers who helps with the production of the interviews is Matt Jacobs, who is also a musician himself.

Jacobs (sophomore-film) said he performs a lot of live original music as well as covers. He said he is planning on professionally recording his second song this week.

Jacobs said he uses music as “an outlet” for what he is feeling and believes others use music in that same way. He added music “brings people together,” especially in more difficult times.

“Everyone listens to music in the car when they are feeling a certain way,” Jacobs said, “To a lot of people, it is important to their emotional and mental health.”

Another local musician William Ryan has also been on The Band Junkies’ Instagram TV. As a graduate student in agricultural science and a local fireman, Ryan has played many shows around the State College area.

According to Ryan, the pandemic has halted live music and music in general, even though artists have found ways around it.

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



Local musicians Jake Finkbiner and Anna Pearl Belinda, of State College and Ivan Zvorsky, of Pittsburgh, perform at Cafe 210 West on Sept. 12.

Respect essential workers

Grocery store employees, food service workers, teachers and construction workers.

Medical professionals aren't the only essential workers deserving of praise in 2020.

Anyone who provides or contributes to something that is essential in the structure of everyday lives — food service, transportation, education, information, hospital services, etc. — is an essential worker. These workers are currently putting themselves at risk to add normalcy to a society plagued by the coronavirus.

And as America has been adjusting to a new normal, appreciation for essential workers is dwindling.

All essential workers deserve respect during these trying times, and this respect must be

OUR VIEW

The coronavirus pandemic hasn't ended, and neither should respect for front-line workers

equal and consistent among professions.

Workers in services like retail and food don't receive the respect they truly deserve typically, and this lack of respect has become especially apparent in 2020.

These workers are underpaid, underappreciated and not taken seriously. Sometimes, these workers' health and safety are not even looked after by their employers.

During the pandemic, Americans should remind themselves how everyone's lives would be affected if essential workers didn't put themselves at risk to keep other lives going.

At the beginning of the shutdown, citizens and businesses were more mindful and appreciative of essential workers.

Tide offered free laundry services for front-line workers through its "Loads of Hope" program at the start of the pandemic.

Similarly, Starbucks, McDonald's and Chick-fil-A were among chain establishments to offer free food to workers and communities impacted by the coronavirus.

Why have these programs slowly fizzled out over time?

And why were many of these offers only available

for healthcare workers?

Don't overlook the worker who opened the gas station this morning so people had enough fuel to get to work or a doctor's appointment.

Remember the stocker at the grocery store who constantly keeps the shelves full so families can be fed.

Don't forget the mechanic who risked his safety to fix your car for your safety.

Everything that essential workers do for their communities should not go unnoticed. Many of these workers deserve more appreciation than they are given as the pandemic continues.

To show an essential worker they are appreciated, make them dinner, give them a phone call, or let them know they are respected and valued.

The pandemic isn't over, and respect for essential workers shouldn't be, either.

And when the pandemic eventually ends, our respect for these people should continue, no matter the circumstances.

And testing negative before being sent home isn't a fool proof plan — a student could test negative the day before traveling home and contract the virus right before leaving, or contract it through a method of transportation while leaving.

At this point, there is no safe and foolproof plan to send students home — and there may never be.

MY VIEW | Jade Campos

Journalism is an essential job — pandemic or not

On March 11, Penn State announced classes would be remote until at least April 3 to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. For most students, the move to online classes meant an extended spring break.

For student reporters, it meant our work was only just beginning.

As a reporter for The Daily Collegian, I truly wasn't prepared for the way things hit the fan.

After the announcement was made, it was all hands on deck — literally. We began a group chat for everything related to the coronavirus and reporters were churning out stories that night.

Initially, I was so overwhelmed. It was the first real breaking news I had ever covered.

One second I was getting my retainers and the next I was frantically contacting professors for their thoughts on the university's decision.

My first story for the beginning of our coronavirus coverage was done in a matter of two to three hours, just like most other reporters who suddenly had their spring breaks interrupted.

We dedicated every second of every day afterward to reporting on the coronavirus. It didn't matter if you were an arts reporter, sports reporter or anything in between — everyone was now on the coronavirus beat because that's what mattered.

Reporters and editors were up nearly all hours of the night putting in work because people relied on our coverage. There was news breaking every second, so we constantly had our eyes glued to our phones for new assignments.

While I could have kicked back and enjoyed my time at home, there was an overwhelming sense of urgency to not slow down. During my short career as a reporter so far, this was the most crucial moment for good, honest journalism.

At the Collegian, our spring staff transitioned immediately into our summer staff after the semester ended. It ended up becoming one of the most successful summers we've had in recent years, because of how necessary all of our content was.

A few weeks later, I moved my life from rural Virginia to Pittsburgh to take on an internship with the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette.

I was balancing two media outlets at once, but the audience's needs were all the same. Every story was vital, no matter how small it may seem to another person.

At the Post-Gazette, I often joked with the other interns that every story we wrote followed a set formula: "How has 'blank' changed during the pandemic?" We sat at our desks for eight hour shifts discovering new facets of the community to investigate.

I found myself consuming the intricacies of 5Ks, voter registration and even cannabidiol oil to learn how they were all impacted by the coronavirus. One of the more bizarre stories I wrote was on martial arts studios functioning in the age of the coronavirus — and it was wired across the country.

To an outsider, it all seems random and perhaps unimportant, but for some people these little things are their entire lives.

The way these small aspects of life were disrupted by the pandemic matters to them — and for some, martial arts studios are so meaningful that the country was listening for a brief moment.

We weren't just wasting our time looking for things to do, we were searching for new voices that didn't have the chance to tell their story yet.

Sure, not everything is breaking news, but that doesn't make it insignificant. What would happen if we weren't there to tell the news, to share the stories?



Courtesy of Jade Campos

Campos (junior-digital and print journalism) poses in front of the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette during her summer 2020 internship as a news intern.

Yet, it's so much more than ensuring people are informed right now.

People often say that a day old headline is practically useless — and while that's true for a couple of days, it becomes history after that.

Since the pandemic began in March, I sifted through the Collegian's archives several times to get an understanding of how landmark the coronavirus shutdown was in Penn State history.

As I was scrolling through all of the headlines and bylines from nearly the past 50 years, it occurred to me that these reporters who passed through the Collegian never realized that I would one day be analyzing every aspect of their articles — especially the small updates that were less than 500 words.

It just doesn't occur to you while you're reporting that you're practically writing history. All you can think about is working as fast as possible, getting the story in on deadline and moving onto the next job.

Over the past few months, I've seen photographs I knew would one day belong in history books. When we look back on 2020 — a year of the coronavirus, racial tensions and one of the most inflamed presidential elections in recent history —

these are images I know students will be asked to memorize for their AP exams.

Eventually, our stories will become history and people will look back on our articles to understand what life was like in the age of the coronavirus. Our work will become the most accurate representation of what the pandemic looked like, even the most minute pieces like those on martial arts.

Since March 11, I've been working nonstop covering the coronavirus pandemic, and so has every journalist from student news outlets like the Collegian to the national ones such as the New York Times.

One of the many icebreakers I've been hit with since this all began is "what is one good thing that's come out of the pandemic for you?"

Well, I learned that what I do is essential and incredibly worthwhile. And I'll continue to pull late nights and forfeit my school breaks to help tell the essential stories of a truly unprecedented time.

Jade Campos is a junior majoring in digital and print journalism and is the assistant lifestyle editor for the Daily Collegian. Email her at jmc7727@psu.edu or follow her on Twitter at [@jademccaaartney](https://twitter.com/jademccaaartney).

We want to hear from you

Send us your comments on our coverage, editorial decisions and the Penn State community.

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Letters should be about 200 words. Student letters should include class year, major and campus. Letters from alumni should include graduation year. All writers should provide their address and phone number for

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About the Collegian

The Daily Collegian and The Weekly Collegian are published by Collegian Inc., an independent, nonprofit corporation with a board of directors composed of students, faculty and

professionals. Penn State students write and edit both papers and solicit advertising for them during the fall and spring semesters as well as the second six-week summer session. The Daily Collegian publishes Monday and Thursday. Issues are distributed by mail to other Penn State campuses and subscribers.

Complaints

News and editorial complaints should be presented to the editor. Business and advertising complaints should be presented to the business manager.

DAILY COLLEGIAN

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How the BJC works as classroom

By Morgan Boll
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

While those working in downtown businesses and healthcare facilities may be more commonly known as essential workers, the cleaning staff inside the most used athletic facilities and on-campus buildings are the far less public faces of making sure everything is safe amid the coronavirus pandemic.

In just a matter of months, the Bryce Jordan Center went from hosting basketball games to hosting socially-distanced classes in its area for the first time.

The arena portion of the BJC was converted into a socially-distanced classroom due to the coronavirus pandemic, which has drastically altered student life at Penn State.

In 2019, the BJC was home to over 20 men's and women's basketball games, a wrestling match, and several high profile events including THON and a concert from the Jonas Brothers.

BJC General Manager Al Karosas said regardless of the event, he and his team work to ensure things are as safe and entertaining as possible.

"Whether it is a concert or a basketball game or whatever type of event we host, just dealing with people and providing entertainment for them is the best part," he said.

But times have changed for Karosas and his team, as the BJC is now primarily used as a classroom space.

"This is the first time we have



Collegian File Photo

The Bryce Jordan Center on Aug. 7, 2019 in State College, Pennsylvania.

used the arena as a classroom, but the Bryce Jordan Center has hosted classes in our meeting space for I think 20 years," the BJC's Director of Marketing and Public Relations Kate Bean said.

Bean and Karosas work closely with the rest of the arena's staff to ensure things are safe and sanitary.

Though it's unknown when basketball will resume, Bean and others are ensuring the facility will be ready for when games begin — but the safety and upkeep of sanitation is more important now than ever before.

Even before the Nittany Lions step out on the court, though, the arena is still being filled — just by students, and not necessar-

ily by fans. The BJC needs to accommodate space for at least 150 people to be socially distanced this fall semester, and Karosas said workers planned this out by dividing the arena into quadrants.

One issue that came into play, however, was the sound system and determining how a lecture could be delivered in a space so large.

Normally, the sound would bounce from wall-to-wall in the BJC, but with classes being held it became a priority to isolate it into separate quadrants.

"This isolated sound system makes it a more enjoyable experience," Karosas said.

Karosas has been working at the BJC since 1995 and explained

how the operating hours are one of the most challenging parts of the job.

"We work when other people play, and so it is a pretty crazy, demanding time schedule and commitment we have," Karosas said.

On the other hand, Karosas's favorite part of his job is interacting with people and the crowds that show up for events like games or concerts.

Karosas explained how these workers are constantly cleaning during the evening as part of the routine they are keeping up with on a daily basis.

"We clean throughout the day, and right now we have classes so we are cleaning different places,"

Karosas said. "When one class leaves, we are re-cleaning and sanitizing certain areas and have it ready for when it is time for the next class."

With the efforts of his staff, Karosas hopes for a smooth transition of getting the BJC up and running when the time comes to host its first sporting event.

"The BJC workers are always prepared for the day when athletics come back, and a lot of the cleaning and set up we did to prepare for classes is going to transform pretty easily into hosting a basketball game," Karosas said. "Penn State athletics obviously does a lot of the coordinating and planning as we provide the facility space, all of the staffing security and the concessions so it is a joint effort when it comes time for a Penn State basketball game."

But for now, the BJC will remain a classroom.

Karosas is confident though that if and when basketball does return, students may have to transition to having class online rather than in the BJC.

In the meantime, he's been impressed and pleased with how everyone has handled the situation and has been flexible to what might happen in the future.

"There has been a mutual understanding between everybody involved," Karosas said, "and the professors and instructors have been amazing."

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CCRRA adapts during pandemic

By Quincey Reese
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Joanne Schafer, the deputy director and recycling coordinator at Centre County Recycling and Refuse Authority, said she has taken on a new role since the coronavirus pandemic began.

"I've sort of become known around the office as the mask police," Schafer said, jokingly.

When the coronavirus pandemic began impacting various aspects of daily life, CCRRA had to continue its typical services in a modified manner to ensure the safety of its employees and the community.

Schafer said like other organizations, CCRRA did not know how the pandemic would spread back in March.

Because of this uncertainty, CCRRA paused its curbside recycling program for approximately one month after two collection workers picked up recycling from a home with a confirmed positive coronavirus case.

At the time, Schafer said the virus was thought to have a high surface transmission, so CCRRA quarantined the two employees for 14 days and shut down curbside pickup in order to prevent a spread of the virus through the collection process.

To inform people of the switch, CCRRA Education Coordinator Amy Schirf said she had to get the word out to approximately 25,000 homes throughout Centre County within a matter of days, and the authority had to add 20 new recycling drop-off locations to account for the change.

Despite the addition of multiple drop-off locations, Schirf said they still filled up quickly, prompting her to check on them throughout the week.

If a site was close to overflowing, she would inform the collectors, who she said often showed up to take care of the overflow either later that day or early the next morning.

According to Schafer, this quick turnaround often required her to bring in a few employees on their days off or at unscheduled hours.

Schafer added that the authority also had to make various operational changes to its

physical locations, including its office, municipal waste transfer station, scale house, recycling drop-off locations and interpretive center.

Although some employees, including Schirf, have been working from home since the pandemic started, the office layout has been adjusted for those who still need to attend each day.

Schafer said they spread out the seating in the lunchroom, transitioned to virtual board meetings and closed the office to the public to prevent nonessential interactions.

Social distancing and mask-wearing are also being enforced at each of the authority's locations, according to Schafer.

CCRRA Executive Director Ted Onufrak also said the authority initially broke its staff into two shifts to minimize and control contact, but ended up doing away with this method after about six weeks because Pennsylvania's coronavirus protocol no longer required it.

Onufrak said much of the authority's operation does not involve significant human interaction, with the exception of the scale house, where community members can turn in recyclables for a price depending on the item's weight.

He said this location sees approximately 200 vehicles per day, so they have encouraged visitors to pay with a card as opposed to cash and asked them not to sign the weight slips to prevent unnecessary interaction.

CCRRA also closed its interpretive center and suspended tours of the recycling plant for the rest of this year, but Onufrak said CCRRA will reevaluate this decision in January.

Onufrak said the center, which is primarily used as a space to educate the public on proper recycling and waste management, typically sees 10,000 to 12,000 people per year.

According to Schafer, about 5,000 people also visit the recycling plant for tours annually.

To make up for the temporary suspension of tours, Schirf said CCRRA is partnering with local news organization WPSU to produce a virtual tour of the recycling plant.

She said WPSU is planning to film a whole series of virtual tours of places throughout Centre County, but the recycling plant is the first one in the works.

Schafer said offering this virtual tour to the local schools, which usually bring their students in to learn more about recycling, will help CCRRA continue to meet its goals amid the challenges presented by the pandemic.

"Part of our mission at the authority is to educate people about solid waste and recycling," Schafer said. "We've really had to do an about-face [to continue these efforts]."

Until the virtual tour is finalized, which is estimated to occur in a couple of months, Schirf said she has also continued her job of educating the community through increasing the authority's social media presence, sending newsletters and answering community members' questions via phone calls.

"At work, a lot of my time is spent doing different things now," Schirf said. "I've just been trying to find different, creative things to do that I would never have had to do before."

As time has passed, Onufrak said the authority has made sure to take into account new information experts have learned about the virus and the state government's latest coronavirus mitigation recommendations.

Onufrak said cleaning frequently touched surfaces, wearing masks and gloves and using hand sanitizer at any of the CCRRA's locations or out on a collection route have remained essential, but the authority has also added Plexiglas dividers throughout the office to enforce distancing between employees.

With some of the local school districts shifting to temporary remote instruction, Onufrak said he is preparing to make arrangements in case any of his employees who cannot work from home end up having to care for their children during their regular working hours.

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



Lily LaRegina/Collegian

The State College Borough Municipal Building on Monday, Sept. 14, in State College, Pennsylvania.

Public Works Division deals with coronavirus

By Brendan Morgan
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

State College's Public Works Division is in the middle of a coronavirus balancing act.

The division has put protocols and safety measures in place to protect its workers while still continuing with the essential services the division provides to the community.

State College's Public Works Division's mission is to "provide cost-effective and high-quality services to the public in a number of different areas," according to the borough's website.

"[The Public Works Division has a] remote facility away from the borough building downtown on Allen Street, "Kade Cramer, a street and sewer foreman for the borough, said. "We're limiting who comes in and out of the building, and in all borough facilities there are temperature scanners for anyone coming on-site before they can access the buildings, and everyone is asked to self-monitor every day."

Cramer said in addition to those protocols, personal protective equipment was provided to all of the workers.

Inside the division's facility, the workers have split into groups and begun their workdays with staggered shifts in order to limit exposure.

"We staggered crew starts from 6 a.m. through 7 a.m. in smaller groups," Cramer said. "Regardless of what their start time was, we didn't physically want them in the building until 10 minutes before their start time. That gives the crew before them five minutes to get out of the area and cap door limits at all times."

Though some government workers are able to do their jobs from home, those who work in the police or public works departments are not in a position to do so.

"[The public works department] still has to pick up the refuse, they still have to go out and do the various things

they do to keep our community safe and keep things operating because there are regular maintenance projects that you can't fall behind on," said Douglas Shontz, the communications assistant to the borough manager. "Pandemic or not, that's dangerous and lowers the quality of life for our residents."

In order to continue essential projects such as maintaining traffic signals and sewer systems while limiting the potential spread of the coronavirus, crews were split into three different shifts. "The crew works one week on, two weeks off," Cramer said. "That's in case one whole shift of crew members would come down with something, we still had two-thirds of the crew to work with. And it also gave us the opportunity to quarantine for 14 days at a time."

Maintenance specialist Shannon Dunlap said the new protocols made him more cautious on the job, especially when working on the sewers.

"[I've been] trying to limit exposures of stuff you wouldn't think about normally, like, getting a little debris on you or whatnot," Dunlap said. "It was always constantly in the back of your mind [before the coronavirus]."

Despite the workers' positive response to the coronavirus regulations that were put in place, the Public Works Division has still been forced to deal with both staff and equipment issues and shortages.

"Due to budgetary constraints because of all the unknowns, there was equipment that was scheduled to be purchased this year that was deferred," Shontz said. "The crews out there again were able to adapt and change and make sure the other equipment was upheld and maintained so whenever they did need to use it, they were able to."

In addition to having outdated equipment, the department has also not been able to utilize court-assigned volunteers for certain jobs.

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



Collegian File Photo

Bales of recyclable materials are sold to recycling plants by the CCRRA.

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