

# DAILY COLLEGIAN

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## ‘HEAL, HOLD & CENTER’

### Penn State honors Domestic Violence Awareness Month

By Rachael Keller  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Penn State's Gender Equity Center and the University Park Undergraduate Association (UPUA) have brought domestic violence awareness events to students through a combined action during October.

October is nationally recognized as Domestic Violence Awareness Month (DVAM). Around 10 million people, about one in four women and one in nine men, have faced domestic violence, according to the National Library of Medicine.

Associate Director of the Gender Equity Center Becca Geiger Wallen said the month is usually paired with a theme, and the national theme for 2024 is “Heal, Hold & Center.”

Wallen said this theme encourages people to look at the different ways survivors are able to heal, hold space for survivors and shine a light on the most marginalized of survivors.

Wallen said the center often works alongside student organizations throughout the year for numerous events.

“I like to say the students are my boss,” Wallen said. “I am here to serve them in terms of our programming and events.”

GenEq's Program Coordinator for Outreach and Prevention Sophia Mills said one thing the organizations have already done for DVAM is invite Abigail Breslin for a keynote speech.

The award-winning actress has appeared in “Scream Queens,” “Zombieland” and “My Sister’s Keeper,” but she’s also a domes-

tic violence survivor.

Wallen said that in 2022, Breslin began to share her story of domestic violence, saying she had been in an abusive relationship for around two years.

During the keynote, Breslin spoke about her experience with domestic violence, what the Penn State community can do to better support those impacted, warning signs of an abusive relationship and media representation.

“Abigail was very well-spoken, kind and forthcoming in the sense of speaking from her own knowledge,” Wallen said. “I felt that the students I spoke with really resonated with her conversation.”

Mills said the center also held “Sounds Like Treble: DVAM Karaoke,” which highlighted mainstream songs with themes of sexual and domestic violence.

“Our whole point in doing that activity was to showcase that even though these songs are very normalized and popular in our society, they can still send negative messages when it comes to supporting individuals impacted by interpersonal violence,” Mills said.

Another component of DVAM is Purple Thursday, an event nationally recognized on Oct. 17.

On this day, community members are encouraged to show their support for survivors by wearing purple, the color for domestic violence awareness.

For this year’s Purple Thursday, GenEq and UPUA en-

courage students to “paint the campus purple” by wearing the color and posting on social media why they support domestic

violence survivors.

The organizations have also partnered with the Sexual Violence Awareness and Prevention Roundtable for this event.

Akito Hatch is an at-large representative for UPUA and said it, alongside GenEq, will table in the HUB-Robeson Center from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. to hand out pins and buttons for students to show their support.

“It’s a joyful way to create connection,” Wallen said. “Domestic violence ... results in victim-survivors feeling very isolated, so if we can promote that connection in some way ... we want that to provide them with hope.”

Hatch, a second-year studying criminology and political science, said a small group of representatives worked with

GenEq to create funding bills centered around domestic violence awareness.

“I think it’s super important to be invested in how the world is, and domestic violence is a touchy subject, so I feel like people don’t talk about it as much,” Hatch said. “I feel like these events can really inform everyone.”

Hatch said it’s incredibly important to bring more awareness to domestic violence, as many people don’t realize they are in an abusive relationship until it’s too late.

“It’s definitely something I hold close to my heart,” Hatch said. “I feel like we should definitely recognize it more to help these people know that they’re not alone.”

Wallen said these abusive relationships thrive on silence, so she

hopes these events provide students knowledge and awareness to talk about these issues.

She also wants students to practice tangible action. Even though domestic violence is a mass issue, there are things students can do to create a safer Penn State.

Hatch said these survivors are not alone, it’s not their fault and there’s a community here at Penn State that wants to help them.

“You see the UPUA signs, ‘you belong here,’ Wallen said. “Victim-survivors belong here. We want them a part of our community. We don’t want to see them fail or drop out, we want to see them succeed.”

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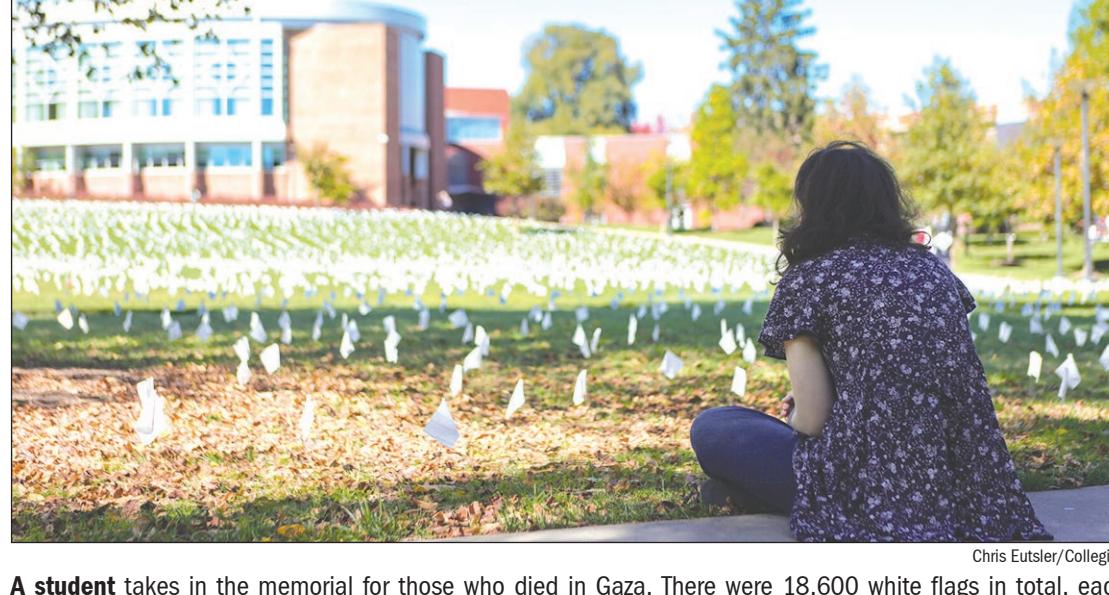


Inspirational quotes are featured on T-shirts in support of Domestic Violence Awareness Month on Oct. 15, 2024, in University Park, Pa.

Emma Lessick/Collegian

“I feel like we should definitely recognize it more to help these people know that they’re not alone”

Akito Hatch  
UPUA at-large representative



A student takes in the memorial for those who died in Gaza. There were 18,600 white flags in total, each representing 10 Palestinians who have died during the current war in Gaza.

## Students destroy memorial

By Rachael Keller  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Penn State Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) held a memorial for those who died in Gaza as a part of the group’s week of action from Oct. 7 to Oct. 11 titled “One Year of Genocide For Gaza We Rise,” last Thursday.

In a statement made by SJP on Tuesday, the group said the HUB-Robeson Center Lawn memorial was vandalized.

“The memorial was defaced by pro-Israel students attempting to intimidate and silence voices advocating for Palestinians,” SJP said in the release.

“The pro-Israel students re-

moved the flags representing murdered Palestinians, ran over the flags with their bikes and vandalized other parts of the memorial.”

According to SJP’s statement, when the vandals were asked to leave, they began saying racist remarks along with homophobic and ableist slurs to members of SJP.

Penn State also released a statement yesterday, saying the university is saddened by the hateful actions and destruction to the memorial.

“We firmly denounce all forms of hate and hurtful, biased and racist speech meant to denigrate and insult any group of individu-

als,” Penn State said in the release.

The Office of Student Accountability and Conflict Response is currently investigating the events that took place last week.

“During this particularly tumultuous time in our world, there is significant disagreement and greatly varied perspectives,” Penn State said in the release. “However, the pain and struggles of others do not diminish our own — recognizing this fact deepens our shared humanity.”

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**There will be record high voter turnout this year.**

You have the right to vote. If anyone tries to stop you, call the Election Protection Hotline at 866-OUR-VOTE (866-687-8683).

## University condemns ‘online vitriol’

By Julia Key  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Following the publication of a statement by Stefanie Tapper from Penn State Hillel on Sunday regarding the increase of bias reports on campus involving Jewish students, the university issued a statement condemning online discourse regarding “turmoil in the Middle East” and “antisemitic, anti-Arab and anti-Muslim comments,” later that day.

“We unequivocally reject all forms of hate, discrimination, harassment, and intimidation, as well as the vitriol online that perpetuates the cycle,” the university said in a statement. “These acts breach our values as an academic institution.”

The university’s statement said “subsequent targeting and doxxing” are two examples of the threats to personal safety and harassment that have been increasing in occurrence.

All students, faculty and community members are urged by the university to practice empathy, take action if they or anyone they know is facing harassment on social media, and that the university’s Office of Student Accountability is working to hold students accountable.

“We urge every member of our community to practice empathy and respect, acknowledging the complexities of each other’s lived experiences, especially when tensions are high,”

the university said in a statement. “By fostering spaces of care and support and upholding the dignity of every individual, we can create a more resilient foundation for understanding and unity.”

Tapper’s statement included emphasis on the importance of understanding free speech, allowing criticism of the government, but not crossing the line into intimidation or attacks on Jewish students.

“Criticism of the actions or policies of any country or government is protected free speech, and appropriately so,” Tapper said in the Hillel statement. “However, these critiques cannot veer into intimidation of attacks on Jewish students that create a hostile environment on campus.”

According to the statement, Penn State Hillel is engaged with the university’s senior administration, local law enforcement, Hillel international, the Philadelphia office of ADL and Jewish students “to help ensure incidents are reported.”

“We condemn these attempts to publicly intimidate students and members of our Jewish community,” Tapper said in the Hillel statement. “Nor do we support hate or hurtful language directed at any people. There must be no place at Penn State for antisemitism, doxxing or hate of any kind.”

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**Election Day is Tuesday, Nov 5, 2024.**

Paid for by VoteAmerica.org

# ‘IT CREATES A SAFE SPACE’

*Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity celebrates International Pronouns Day*

By Xandra Adams-Dennis  
FOR THE COLLEGIAN

The Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity (CSGD) hosted a table celebrating International Pronouns Day in the HUB-Robeson Center Wednesday afternoon.

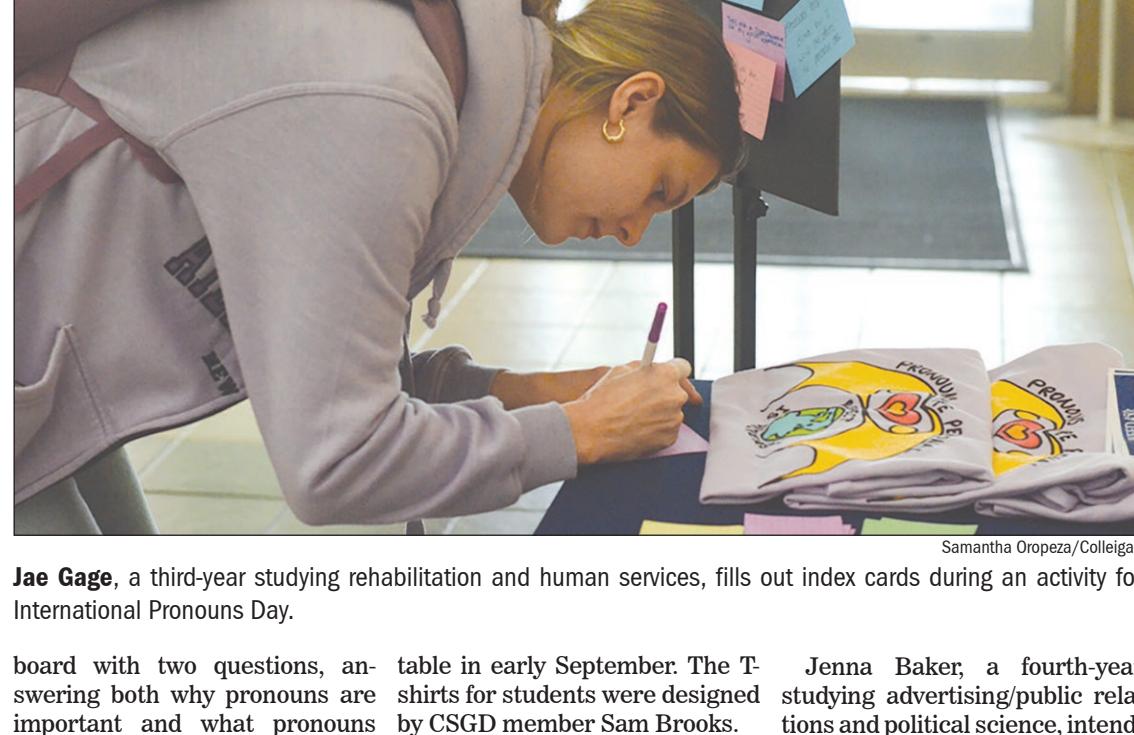
The organization's assistant director, Kate Rawson, believes LGBTQ+ education needs to make more progress. She said educating students will encourage changed behavior for people who may not be accustomed to conversations surrounding pronouns.

“There are still barriers queer people face,” Rawson said. “One of those things is being affirmed in who you are.”

International Pronouns Day is celebrated annually on the third Wednesday of October. The day was first recognized in 2018 and the CSGD has celebrated for the past two years by tabling in the HUB.

The CSGD table provided pronoun pins, Jibbitz, stickers, informational pamphlets about pronouns and CSGD and rubber bracelets to students for free.

The table also displayed a



Samantha Oropeza/Collegian

Jae Gage, a third-year studying rehabilitation and human services, fills out index cards during an activity for International Pronouns Day.

board with two questions, answering both why pronouns are important and what pronouns mean to an individual. If students answered one of the questions on an index card, they would receive a free periwinkle T-shirt.

CSGD started planning for its

table in early September. The T-shirts for students were designed by CSGD member Sam Brooks.

“Seeing people come up and enjoy (the table) is really nice,” Brooks, a fourth-year studying digital arts and media design, said.

Jenna Baker, a fourth-year studying advertising/public relations and political science, intended for this year’s Pronouns Day to be more inclusive, especially for people who are questioning their identity or people who are not yet ready to come out.

“We tried to switch it to a more generic, less queer-centric campaign,” Baker said.

This year’s campaign slogan reads “Pronouns are Personal, Respect is Universal.” Baker said its goal is to stray away from pronouns being exclusively for LG-BTQ+ people.

“It’s a great initiative to go up to people and introduce yourself with your pronouns,” Baker said. “It creates a safe space for people to share if they’re trying out new pronouns or establishing their identity.”

By the end of the event, the display board was filled with index cards. Out of the 100 T-shirts the table started with, only 15 were left after the event had finished.

Students like Jae Gage, a third-year studying rehabilitation and human services, shared how pronouns are important to them.

“I always stop by whenever I see something advocacy-related as a rehabilitation and human services major,” Gage said. “I like learning about these things.”

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## Students share experiences with unique majors

By Julia Key  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

With over 275 majors for undergraduate students to choose from, CollegeVine lists Penn State as one of the top universities for major variety.

Abigail Charnetski said she first encountered her major while on a campus tour. The unique research and other opportunities in this field immediately piqued her interest.

“People are usually surprised when I tell them about my major because they often have never heard of it,” Charnetski, a first-year studying pharmacology and toxicology, said. “I was inspired to pick this major because I was interested in the research that came with it.”

Charnetski said she enjoys the research opportunities and physical lab work specific to her major and wishes students of other majors understood the wide variety of career paths that are possible with her major.

“Many common misconceptions are that you have to go to pharmacy school or medical school after completing the four-year degrees, but you don’t have to,” Charnetski said. “It would be a great major for those paths in life, but you can take this major and go into research without ever having to go to those schools.”

Charnetski said studying a unique major has impacted her college experience while also challenging her.

“Every major has specialized classes, but compared to a more common major, (my classes) will be smaller, and it will be easier to connect with my professors,” Charnetski said. “The challenges of pursuing this major are that there aren’t many people who take it, which makes it harder to branch out and meet

upperclassmen.”

Madeline Cole said her major synthesizes many of the interests she developed in high school.

“My favorite subject in school has always been English, and as I moved into high school, I loved Spanish as well,” Cole, a first-year studying linguistics, said. “I also realized in non-language-focused classes like biology, I was getting through the class by focusing on the Greek and Latin roots of words, and I found that really interesting about myself.”

Cole said she knew she wanted to attend Penn State as soon as she learned about its linguistics program, and that she was eager to study linguistics despite still determining her exact career path. She said she’s now happy to have found a major that balances her strengths and interests.

“I am very observant, love analyzing things, love people and communication, and linguistics deals with all of this,” Cole said. “I am not sure of the career path I want to go down, but I want to do something that deals with language and the analytical skills that come with a linguistics degree, so this seemed like a good major to enter with.”

Cole said while she enjoys studying a major and finds it interesting and fun, the uncertainty of career paths after college and small classes remains intimidating.

“A major like business comes along with a huge umbrella of possible careers, while linguistics feels more specific, which can be scary,” Cole said. “The biggest downside for me is how small the classes are. I like the small class sizes academically, but when it comes to making friends in your classes, I feel like the chances are fewer and farther between.”

Kayla McMichael said her

mother was her biggest inspiration when choosing her major, and her flute teacher’s influence made her want to pursue art history at Penn State.

“My mom is a huge, gigantic nerd, and she likes to watch history documentaries, and I also really like to draw. I’ve been drawing since I was little, so ... I landed on art history,” McMichael, a second-year studying art history, said. “I chose Penn State just because my flute teacher is a big Penn State fan, and he said their art history program was good, too.”

McMichael said despite people from her hometown questioning the usefulness of an art history degree, she continues to enjoy her studies.

“People always ask, ‘What are you going to do with that degree?’” McMichael said. “People think it’s pointless because it doesn’t make a lot of money, but I find it really interesting. I’m good at it, and it’s something that’s necessary, and that’s enough for me to know it’s what I want to pursue.”

Despite the intimidation of small classes, McMichael said she’s happy knowing what career she wants to take up after college and accepts having smaller classes if it means having a greater bond with professors.

“I want to do art restoration and put back together pieces of art that archeologists find so that they can go to museums,” McMichael said. “Even though I don’t often meet people who share a major with me in my other classes, you can talk more to your teachers because they don’t have a whole lot of students, which I like.”

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## Spooky spots at Penn State

By Carolena Bongi  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

leading you in circles.

Every identical hallway seems to promise an exit, but the walls only close in tighter. The low hum of fluorescent lights is your only comfort.

Some students even report seeing the same doors over and over, somehow ending up back where they started — as if the building itself is testing their will to leave.

### The steps to Old Main

Old Main is beautiful, no doubt. But something about walking up those steps under the pale glow of streetlights in the early morning hours feels... chilling.

You feel the weight of history on your shoulders as if every former student who’s made that walk in the past 150 years is watching you. The empty silence, the splendor and the slight creak of your footsteps create an atmosphere of ghostly grandeur that leaves you looking over your shoulder.

### The Pollock Testing Center

If you’ve been here, you know that the Pollock Testing Center is a unique kind of dread. It’s the kind of place where you enter as a bright-eyed student and leave wondering if you’ll ever feel joy again.

As you prepare to take a test you know you probably should’ve studied a bit better for, you can’t shake the feeling that this experience will change you forever. Once you’ve finally escaped this haunted building, you realize you are no longer the same bright-eyed student who once walked in.

Who needs ghost stories when campus life provides all the scares we need?

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## Pop Up Avenue returns to downtown State College

By Michelle Diamond  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Pop Up Ave took Fraser Street by storm from 11 a.m.-6:30 p.m. Saturday, offering a variety of pop-up shops for State College community members to explore.

“I was just walking by, and I saw these really pretty stores, and thought, ‘I need to check them out,’” Aasmi Nagrecha said.

Nagrecha, a first-year studying mechanical engineering, doesn’t frequently attend downtown events; however, she decided to see what Pop Up Ave had to offer.

“The jewelry — it is so good. The jackets are also really good. I found some L.L. Beans, and that was really cool,” Nagrecha said.

A variety of jewelry options were sold all day long. Whether bookish earrings — including children’s books and classic literature — birthstone necklaces or beaded bracelets, there was a piece of jewelry catering to any style.

In addition to jewelry, attendees of the event could find

crochet hair accessories, flowers, home decor and an assortment of unique clothing.

“I started (Go State Design) my sophomore year — I just loved going to football games and wearing unique things,” McKenna Kimmel said.

Kimmel, a Penn State alumna who graduated in 2021 as a double major in finance and Mandarin Chinese, brought her work to sell at Pop Up Ave.

“I decided to start first with upcycling jean jackets and painting on them, and then from that just decided to start upcycling other pieces of clothing and, now, I do them fully by hand,” Kimmel said.

Kimmel makes sweatshirts out of raw material and cuts thrifited shirts, and it can take anywhere from three to 10 hours for her to make one.

Go State Designs also sells baby tees that Kimmel sews denim and other materials onto. All of the designs sold are “unique” Penn State gear.

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Kimmel makes sweatshirts out

# •We want people to feel connected'

*My Hero Zero builds connections with students, State College community members*

By Evan Smith  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Students and community members flood the bars in downtown State College on Friday nights. At Doggie's Pub, a local band is drawing the largest crowd, putting on weekly shows to remember.

My Hero Zero has been growing rapidly over the past few years to the point where its Friday shows draw a line around the corner of College Avenue.

"This band is awesome as hell, you have to go see them." Lori Angelet, a fourth-year studying strategic communications, said.

Jason Olcese, Eric Damiano, Mike Lee and Ethan Stewart make up the squad, known around town for creatively bending genres of famous songs to create a viewing spectacle for their bar crowds.

Throughout a set, My Hero Zero pulls out everything from "Starships" by Nicki Minaj to "In the End" by Linkin Park, all mixed through their own signature sound and faded between songs in a way that blends the setlist smoothly.

"The fans' reaction drives the style of our show," Olcese said. "If we realize a song isn't hitting

in 30 seconds, we'll find a way to change the energy or shift to a new song."

Last Friday, the show shifted from a cover of "Superstition" to "Save a Horse (Ride A Cowboy)" quickly enough that the crowd didn't notice until the chorus hit.

Olcese and Damiano split the singing duties. Olcese drives songs with a voice reminiscent of the 2000s emo scene, reminding crowds of singers like Alex Gaskarth of All Time Low.

Damiano joined the band in 2022 after reaching out to the band's manager, Angel Mariotti, during his final year at Penn State. He began writing for the group before being invited to sing with them.

"Jason asked if I wanted to come out to a show and try singing a couple songs," Damiano said. "It was just a vibe, so I joined for the summer."

After that summer, Damiano was offered a full-time spot in the band. As Lee put it, "we couldn't get rid of him."

Stewart, My Hero Zero's drummer, moved from bringing energy to campus in the Penn State Blue Band to bringing energy to the band, moving behind his drum set throughout the show.

Lee founded the band along-



Joey Tiger/Collegian

**Guitarist Mike Lee** poses while playing during a My Hero Zero concert at Doggie's Pub on Oct. 10, 2024 in downtown State College.

side Olcese in 2010, and they began touring the Midwest and East Coast playing small cover shows. In 2012, the band started writing original singles and breathed a new life into the endeavor.

"I had a full-time, 9-to-5 job, and I gave it up to do this, which was one of the best decisions of my life," Lee said.

My Hero Zero continues to tour when it isn't in their local studio or playing State College bars. The band's footing around Penn State contributes to the atmosphere at its traveling shows.

"Whenever we go out, it's like a Penn State reunion happening," Olcese said. "When we say 'we're from a small town in Pennsylvania called State College,' people go crazy."

The ties to Penn State see the band offering university-accredited internships to students and receiving opportunities such as opening for Quinn XCII and taking the stage at THON annually.

"THON is pretty phenomenal. It's not often you get to play in front of 17,000 people for an amazing cause," Lee said.

The connection runs deeper with the crowds though, as a hallmark of the My Hero Zero experience is the interactions with the crowd both on and off stage.

Throughout their Friday shows, the band members take breaks from playing to talk to anyone who comes by, hand out stickers and tattoos to the crowd and have some fun at the bar. The antics occasionally feature a panda costume as well.

The band notices local regulars at its shows, as well as students who the band has a two-year window to remember.

"It feels like we're graduating every year," Damiano said. "It's like this went by really fast, and some of these people will only get to see us when they visit now."

The band has used these connections to build a deeper following than other bands playing bar shows, and it has helped them elevate their careers.

My Hero Zero continues to grow outside of live shows, releasing its album "Echoes of an Open Heart" earlier this year. The song "Nothing But Love" has

become a cult favorite.

"Part of what I love about that song is that it feels the most like what a My Hero Zero show feels like," Olcese said. "The energy is high; there's rock omens, but it's catchy."

The group looks to continue growing, not only as a band, but as individuals. Members market their independent work using social media like TikTok.

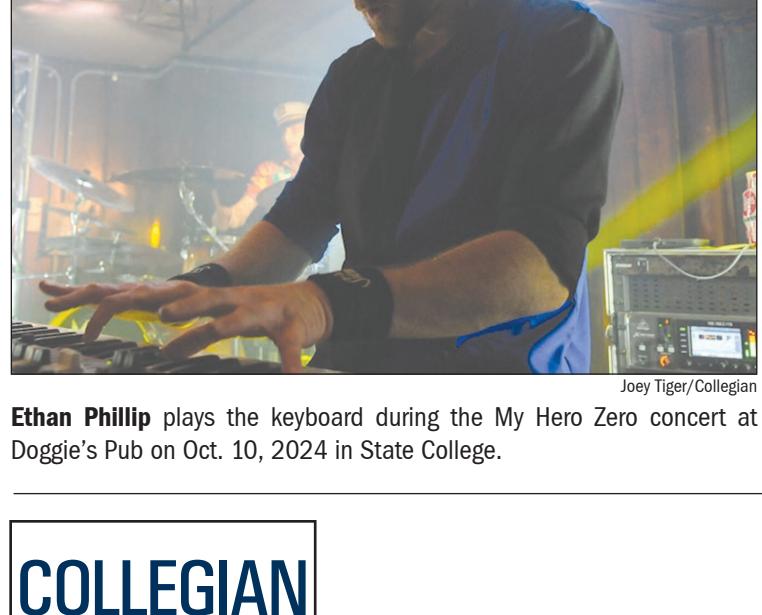
"The internet is an opportunity to provide our live experience digitally to reach a larger audience," Olcese said.

Olcese works with local musicians in the studio often, and Damiano plans on releasing a solo EP later this year.

Wherever the band goes, its home will be in Happy Valley. It continues to evolve its shows to provide its audience with a night of sonic bliss.

"When we play, we want people to feel connected," Damiano said. "Give us five songs, and you'll hear one that you like."

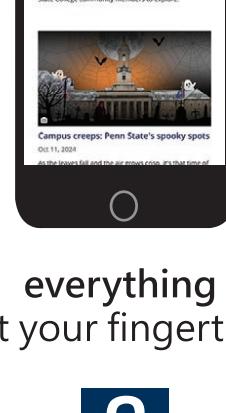
To email him: [ers5828@psu.edu](mailto:ers5828@psu.edu).  
Follow him on X at: [@evanrgsmith](https://twitter.com/evanrgsmith).



**Ethan Phillip** plays the keyboard during the My Hero Zero concert at Doggie's Pub on Oct. 10, 2024 in State College.

**COLLEGIAN**

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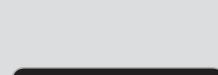


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## Crossword



**Across**

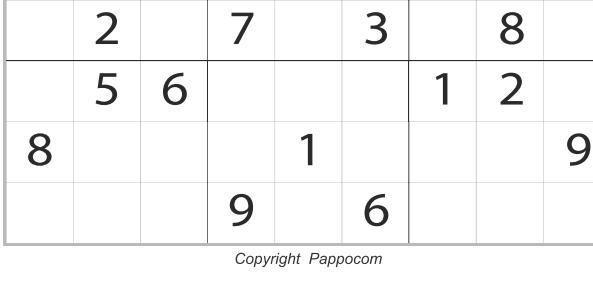
1 Quarterback's option  
5 Electronics pioneer Nikola  
10 Spawning fish  
14 Came to rest  
15 Writer Chekhov  
16 Bindle bearer  
17 Away from the wind  
18 Tearful  
19 Flamboyance  
20 Man of many words  
22 "\_\_\_\_ in Seattle" (Hanks, Ryan comedy)  
24 Home on the range  
26 Kind of wave  
27 Surgeon's tool  
29 Ensembles  
33 Notre Dame niche  
36 Groundskeeper's supply  
37 Jelly ingredient  
38 Hundred Acre Wood denizen  
39 Summer mo.  
40 Antiquity, once  
41 "Wheel of Fortune" request  
42 Dishevel, as hair  
44 Lobster — Diavolo

**Down**

45 While lead-in  
46 Gesture indicating indifference  
47 Move like a running back  
49 Howled  
51 Some kind of a nut  
54 Unfinished business  
55 Fancy purses  
60 Piedmont wine center  
61 Had a bug  
63 Narrow margin  
64 Used a firehouse pole  
65 Martin or McQueen  
66 Snick's partner  
67 Water carrier  
68 Pitched  
69 Hess who was a dame  
70 Groundskeeper's supply  
71 Tearful  
72 Flamboyance  
73 Man of many words  
74 Home on the range  
75 Kind of wave  
76 Surgeon's tool  
77 Ensembles  
78 Notre Dame niche  
79 Jelly ingredient  
80 Hundred Acre Wood denizen  
81 Summer mo.  
82 Antiquity, once  
83 "Wheel of Fortune" request  
84 Dishevel, as hair  
85 Lobster — Diavolo

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## Sudoku



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# OPINION

Amy Schafer  
Editor-in-Chief

Maddie Seelig  
Opinion Page Editor

PAGE 4

FRIDAY, OCT. 18, 2024

MY VIEW | MERCEDES HAMILTON

## What America can learn from other countries

Many of the stereotypes about how Europeans perceive America are true — at least in my experience studying abroad in Dublin.

Tour guides and locals alike frequently capitalize on clichés about American hustle culture,

consumerism and unhealthy dietary habits for a good laugh. But beyond the surface-level judgments of America, there's something deeper to be learned from approaches to politics and governance in other countries.

I've seen the faces of Donald Trump, Kamala Harris and other American politicians often accompanied by headlines that evoke confusion or disbelief on newsstands around Dublin.

Conversations about the absurdity of American politics, from the policy failures behind mass shootings to the "broken" health care system, come up more than

I expected.

### Gun violence

Gun-related violence is rare in Ireland due to low civilian gun ownership and strict gun laws in comparison to America. In 2022, there were 10 deaths caused by guns in Ireland while 48,204 died in America that same year, according to the National Safety Council.

While many Americans view gun ownership as a fundamental right and key component of self-defense, guns are viewed as tools for recreational activities like hunting in Ireland.

Both mass shootings and homicides continue to worry Americans, becoming a key topic in the upcoming presidential election.

### Health care

Ireland has a hybrid public-private healthcare system. Many basic health services, like hospital visits, provided through the Health Service Executive are

free, while others may be subsidized or free based on income.

However, health care is largely privately funded in the United States, leading to higher costs and greater disparities in access.

51% of working-age Americans struggle to afford health care and 32% are in medical debt, according to a 2023 Commonwealth Fund survey.

International Citizens Insurance ranked Ireland No. 23 and America No. 69 on its list of best health care systems in the world in 2024. Singapore was ranked No. 1 with its hybrid approach of public and private health care, supported by mandatory savings and government-backed funds.

### Political landscape

Like many countries, Ireland also has more than one political party that causes a bit of commotion between its citizens. I mean, what's democracy for?

However, America is notorious for its deeply divided politi-

cal landscape. According to the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, American politicians have become highly ideologically polarized, consistently supporting and voting for different sets of policies with minimal overlap.

Such polarization has led to social division, a decline in trust in democratic institutions and a growing perception that the government is unable to effectively address urgent national issues, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

A survey conducted by the Pew Research Center this year found that 22% of Americans say they trust the government to do what is right "just about always" (2%) or "most of the time" (21%). A survey carried out by Ireland's Central Statistics Office this year found that 47% of Irish respondents reported high or moderate-high trust in government.

American politics has also become highly theatrical with presidential campaigns shaped around media spectacles, reli-

ance on viral moments, social media engagement and dramatic public appearances for voter attention, which tends to overshadow deeper policy discussions.

No nation nor its politics are perfect. From social justice to the economy, every country has its challenges and shortcomings — Ireland included. But reflection on the values that shape governance in Ireland inspire a deeper understanding of the work I'd like to see done back home in America.

With a global light cast on the nation with the 2024 election, I hope to see a constructive democratic process with meaningful dialogue about the policies that truly impact Americans.

**Mercedes Hamilton** is a columnist and DEI committee member for The Daily Collegian. She is a third-year double majoring in English and digital and print journalism. Email her at [Mjh7337@psu.edu](mailto:Mjh7337@psu.edu) and follow her on X at [@\\_mercedesh](https://x.com/_mercedesh).

Cartoons by Nate Campbell

MY VIEW | JULIA FREDERICK

## 'The beat goes on:' Music brings people together

"Name three songs!"  
When I walked into the AAA location to get fingerprinted for my summer job, the employee sitting across from me immediately commented on my Beatles T-shirt.

After I had proved my merit by naming three tracks off of the White Album, we started talking about music.

By the time I left, we'd had an in-depth, wholesome conversation about school, careers and my goals for the future — all because of the Fab Four.

In almost any setting, music is an important topic when getting to know someone. During my time at Penn State, I've found music to be more influential than I realized.

There are few things that can instantly turn absolute strangers into a community quite like music does.

Think back to the last concert you attended, the most recent party you were at or even game days at Beaver Stadium when "We Will Rock You" or "Sweet Caroline" booms through the speakers.

Music brings people together like nothing else can.



A collage of albums from Frederick's favorite artists, including Queen, The Beatles and David Bowie.

When someone mentions Taylor Swift or Zach Bryan, it seems like instant friendships are formed. Music is something so personal and central to our being that we can't help but be excited when it's shared with others.

Music not only has the uncanny ability to help you bond with peers over a mutual interest, but it also allows you to connect with those of other generations and backgrounds.

Thanks to my dad, I grew up listening to The Beatles, and classic rock continues to be a huge part of our relationship.

Though we grew up in different times and are at different stages of life, music is something that we can share.

Sometimes my latest find is a song that he hasn't heard in 20 or 30 years and takes him back to a certain time in his life. Hearing these stories from his youth prompted by a playlist

makes those moments all the more special.

Our car ride sing-alongs are a testament to music's timelessness and universality. It doesn't matter if it was recorded 50 years ago, as Ringo Starr of the Beatles said, "the beat goes on."

Through my time spent in record stores, I've met incredible people that I wouldn't have otherwise. Introducing yourself becomes a lot less scary when you both like Tom Petty, Sabrina Carpenter or Noah Kahan.

It showcases that we all have more in common than we think.

Something as simple as a Queen laptop sticker or a David Bowie T-shirt represents your interests and has the possibility to spark a conversation that can make a world of difference.

Music is the language of understanding. It bridges generations, geographical boundaries and party lines.

Especially in our divided world, this common ground is more valuable now than ever before.

**Julia Frederick** is a columnist for The Daily Collegian. She is a third-year studying English with a minor in technical writing and a business fundamentals certificate. Email her at [Jmf7052@psu.edu](mailto:Jmf7052@psu.edu) and follow her on X at [@julia75826](https://x.com/julia75826).

**DAILY COLLEGIAN**

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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 profession-

als. Penn State students write and edit both papers and solicit advertising for them.

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###

# Penn State soccer's 12th man

By Sofia Miranda  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

At every Penn State soccer home match, one aspect is certain: Park Avenue Army's chants, costumes and traditions.

Its goal of being the loudest and best student section in all of college soccer is evident at Jeffrey Field, creating a raucous environment that explodes at the sight of a Penn State goal.

However, the group didn't start as it is today. Until 2021, there were actually two fan bases at Jeffrey Field, the Sons of Jeffrey and the Park Avenue Army.

"There were the Sons of Jeffrey, which was for the men's game, and then the PAA for the women's, but a few years ago, they merged," Lucas Lipinski, president of Park Avenue Army, said. "The students come to games and they enjoy soccer, but they want to support it here on campus, and it is something we've continued."

Lipinski joined the PAA during his sophomore year. At his first game, the Mount Laurel, New Jersey, native met a few people who introduced him to the student section, and he's been going back ever since.

Executive officer Aaron Klein experienced a similar introduction to the PAA. Klein said joining the PAA gave him a place to do something besides just yelling at the games.

"We're here rain, shine, hot, cold. We've been here through



The Park Avenue Army celebrates a goal during the Penn State women's soccer match against Liberty at Jeffrey Field in University Park, Pa. on Sep. 8, 2022. Penn State defeated Liberty 2-1.

all of it," Klein said. "Getting that recognition, knowing that even if it's just 10 or 200 of us, is nice to hear."

The fan club has been praised by women's soccer coach Erica Dambach and men's soccer coach Jeff Cook.

"You see them running down the benches when there's the corner kick and the excitement that brings," Dambach said. "My own daughters talk about the banana and the cow and how they're always in the stands bringing an air of excitement and fun to the event, and I think the community really enjoys it."

Both coaching staffs understand the importance of having such passionate fans and how it affects play on the field. The Park Avenue Army has been recognized for its efforts to not only encourage Penn State programs, but also mess with their opponents.

"When Caden (Grabfelder's) ball went in, I actually thought to myself, 'I think the crowd is going to drive us forward, and we're going to get something out of this,'" Cook said following Penn State's draw versus UCLA.

One of the biggest examples of that occurs during corner kicks.

When opposing players place the ball near the corner flag, PAA members go running in the stands, waving flags and banging drums to make as much noise as possible in hopes to distract the opposing players.

"That was when I was a freshman or a sophomore, so a few years ago," Lipinski said. "Basically, we just had a lot of flags. But it's funny, so we just kept doing it. So it's been ever since."

The process of getting to the games is not as easy as some may think. While most members of the club arrive around one hour before the starting whistle is blown,

the president of the PAA works from early in the morning to get everything settled.

"From the mornings, I sent out messages and we talked to other serious sections," Lipinski said. "Get marketing out, but then show up early, get all the drums and costumes out of the car, the little banana, the cows..."

Klein and Lipinski have post-season aspirations as the women's soccer regular season comes to an end.

"I think we have enough depth in our team to go for the final," Lipinski said. "I think we're going to see Michigan State again in the championship game, and I think we've learned a lot from our last meeting. Hopefully we'll make it to the NCAA," Klein added.

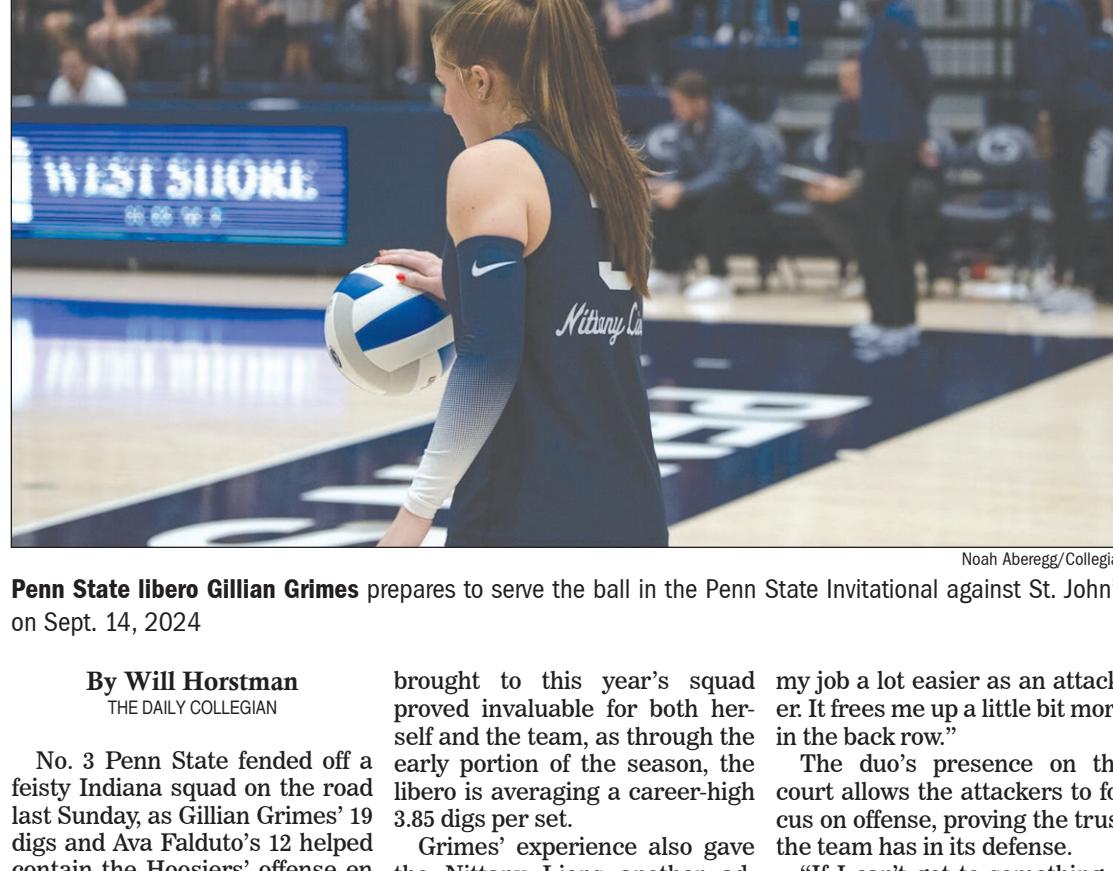
After all home games, students sing the Penn State Alma Mater. The Park Avenue Army and the soccer players come together to create a unified moment, holding the definition of the blue and white's "We Are" to its maximum.

"I know almost every sport and student section does it, but they don't do it as closely," Klein explained. "They don't have the entire team yelling 'We Are' at you, coming up and giving you high fives and being able to just congratulate them. It's really important, and I think it's probably special for them as well."

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# Defense makes offense

Gillian Grimes, Ava Falduto lead Penn State women's volleyball



Noah Aberegg/Collegian

Penn State libero Gillian Grimes prepares to serve the ball in the Penn State Invitational against St. John's on Sept. 14, 2024.

By Will Horstman  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

No. 3 Penn State fended off a feisty Indiana squad on the road last Sunday, as Gillian Grimes' 19 digs and Ava Falduto's 12 helped contain the Hoosiers' offense en route to the Nittany Lions' 3-1 win.

The blue and white's libero, Grimes, and defensive specialist, Falduto, have been a mainstay in the back row for Penn State.

"They have high energy, they're fast, they're both great passers for us and defenders," coach Katie Schumacher-Cawley said. "I love when they're both on the floor and they generate a lot of points for us."

Grimes entered the 2024 season as the team's libero for the second straight season. Being the leader of the blue and white defense is something the West Chester, Illinois, native takes pride in.

"The libero position, I mean, it's definitely a step ahead of the DS position, because you are taking that leadership," Grimes said. "Being the libero on the Penn State team, you have to be proud to be there."

A defensive specialist in her 2022 freshman year, Grimes played in 34 matches — including 29 starts — averaging 1.84 digs per set. The Nittany Lions' libero in 2023, Grimes played in all 120 sets for the blue and white, accumulating 429 digs.

"I have a lot of games under my belt," Grimes said. "Playing in tough crowds and tough environments has definitely helped with my confidence."

Grimes

brought to this year's squad proved invaluable for both herself and the team, as through the early portion of the season, the libero is averaging a career-high 3.85 digs per set.

Grimes' experience also gave the Nittany Lions another advantage: the ability to develop younger players.

Falduto came to Penn State as the No. 5 overall recruit by Prep Volleyball in the Class of 2024. Entering early in the spring of 2024, the Elmhurst, Illinois, native has taken advantage of the opportunity to learn under Grimes.

"Gill and I are pretty close. We get along really well," Falduto said. "It's great to look up to someone, such a great player like her. For me to be under her is just incredible. It's honestly an honor playing next to her. She's super cool on and off the court."

Falduto came to Happy Valley ready to go and has adjusted well to the collegiate level, averaging 2.33 digs per set. Working together, Falduto and Grimes have continued to improve.

"I think Gill's gotten better because of Ava, and I think Ava's gotten better because of Gill," Schumacher-Cawley said. "They both push each other and understand where their role is right now, but they'll do anything to help each other out."

Anchoring the back row, Grimes and Falduto help the Nittany Lion attackers, making their jobs much easier.

"They're both very feisty and they both want to take as much court as they can," Jess Mruzik said. "It's so nice passing next to both of them, because they make

my job a lot easier as an attacker. It frees me up a little bit more in the back row."

The duo's presence on the court allows the attackers to focus on offense, proving the trust the team has in its defense.

"If I can't get to something, I know that (Gillian) can," Camryn Hannah said. "Giving her a little bit more space allows me to focus on other things."

Grimes and Falduto thrive when they have space to roam free, attempting to contain opposing offenses.

"When we're having fun together and when we're free, we have a lot of fun," Falduto said. "We do a lot of really good things."

Grimes and Falduto have extended their impact to the service line, racking up 20 and 18 service aces, respectively.

Grimes knew before the season started that confidence would be key to unlocking her service game.

"I would definitely say my confidence has been up," Grimes said. "Just go for it and rip the ball as hard as I can, so I can get points for our team, too."

Penn State ranks No. 3 in the nation with a 16-1 record, including 6-0 in the Big Ten. A strong defensive effort continues to give the Nittany Lions increased chances at potentially making a deep NCAA Tournament run.

"Without Gill and Ava on the floor, I think it would be a different story," Schumacher-Cawley said.



Guard Jill Jekot (24) blocks an opposing player at the Penn State Women's Basketball media availability in the Bryce Jordan Center

# Media moments

By Noah Aberegg  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

termination was evident during drills and in the overall energy of the team.

"We do stuff creatively that we practice, and for them, we're really trying to get them to understand what it looks like to compete to exhaustion," Kieger said.

Following an offseason where Penn State lost eight players to graduation and the transfer portal, the team enters the 2024 season with four returners, four transfers and five freshmen.

With a fresh season ahead, here's what stood out from the blue and white's open practice.

## Jill Jekot

Jill Jekot is a leader.

Despite being a freshman, Jekot's leadership was evident on the floor and in the ensuing comments from her coaches and teammates.

During Tuesday's practice, Jekot volunteered to take charges for the team, putting her body on the line in a strong display of leadership.

"You guys all saw (Jill) on the bench last year," coach Carolyn Kieger said. "She came a semester early, which I think has really helped her to be that vocal leader of the freshman class."

With Lady Lions basketball running through the veins of the Jekot family, the freshman guard already knows what's expected on the court.

"Obviously, her sister Kelly played here, so she's been coming to Lady Lion games for a while now, but she finally gets to lace 'em up and put the jersey on," Kieger said.

## Hustle, hustle, hustle

At the end of warmups, freshman Shaelyn Steele spun a "prize wheel" to determine how long the team would run sprints before drills began.

While the Lady Lions only

ran for 30 seconds, the duration could have been a lot worse as indicated by their screaming cheers when the running time was announced.

"It's not just her height, it's her skill," Kieger said. "Obviously she's 6-foot-6 and is a commanding presence inside for us down low, but she's really, really skilled. Her footwork is next level."

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