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Thankful For All Moments



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Graphic by: Isabella Viteri

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From Philly to State College

Campus Steaks brings ‘the real Philly experience’

By Amelia Houck
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Philadelphia meets State College at Campus Steaks, located on South Pugh Street downtown. Campus Steaks opened 15 months ago and has since become a welcomed establishment.

Owner Joe Ford said he’s been visiting Penn State since the 1970s and remembers trips from when he was as young as 5 years old.

After getting stuck in a hotel room after a football game around 15 years ago, Ford noticed there weren’t many “desirable” food establishments open later in the day. That’s where he got the inspiration to open a Philadelphia cheesesteak establishment.

“So all of our products, our meat, our rolls, everything is delivered from Philly twice a week, seven-and-a-half-hour round trip,” Ford said. “You have to give the real Philly experience, you have to have the Philly product.”

The restaurant was inspired by the Eagles slogan, “It’s a Philly Thing.” At Campus Steaks, this sentiment is represented through the Philadelphia-themed decorations inside the restaurant and the food made with Philadelphia ingredients.

Ford explained how welcomed he feels in the community as a small business owner with a little over 100 employees.

“We’re not just a cheesesteak place, we do a lot of work for THON, we do a lot of fun events here,” Ford said. “We do work for a lot of the football team now, basketball teams and stuff like that.”



Luke Kupstas/Collegian

Owner of Campus Steaks Joe Ford poses with the champion belt and “Rocky” boxing robe on Nov. 18, 2024 in State College, Pa.

Ford said it was his idea to come up with the “Cheesesteak Champ” competition, as he wanted to host a fun event that could potentially help college students win some extra money.

“So the rules are, it’s about a 24-inch, 22-inch cheesesteak, depending on the oven that day for the rolls, a large order of fries (and a) large soda,” Ford said. “You cannot get up and use the bathroom. And if you puke, you’re disqualified.”

Participants have 30 minutes to complete the challenge and reap the rewards, which includes a free T-shirt, meal reimbursement and the cash jackpot.

Ford said he starts the jackpot at \$100, and it grows as more contestants attempt the challenge. There have been four winners

thus far, and the highest jackpot amount was \$1,300.

“We actually had Molly Schuyler, the world’s number one female competitive eater — she came in to do it just for a podcast,” Ford said. “She did the whole thing in less than four minutes. She’s about 90 pounds.”

Isaiah Focht has worked at Campus Steaks as kitchen manager for about a month and a half.

“Joe, I met him about two months ago, and he convinced me to come back. And I’m having an absolute blast,” Focht said.

Focht said he previously worked two years as a food service supervisor at Penn State, working with a team of 20-40 students.

“I have (had) the opportunity to meet all types of people from all

different aspects of life, and it was (a) really incredible experience,” Focht said. “So I’ve been in the area locally for 12 years. I’ve been very involved, I love it.”

Focht said he’s seen seven or eight individuals try the contest, but has only witnessed one person successfully complete it.

“My favorite was probably watching Landon (Tengwall) complete it. It was just so impressive ...the whole bag of fries and the 21-inch cheesesteak, it’s a lot of food for me,” Focht said.

Tengwall, a fourth-year studying broadcast journalism, is a former Penn State offensive lineman who recently retired due to injuries.

Tengwall said he first heard about the cheesesteak competition last fall through other’s

attempts and social media.

“I attempted it once over the summer with former Penn State offensive lineman Stefen Wisniewski,” Tengwall said. “Neither of us completed it. Steph Wisniewski got closer than me, but I really wasn’t even close, and I didn’t eat anything the entire day.”

As a regular customer at Campus Steaks, Tengwall said he decided to give the competition another try after being enticed by a \$1,300 jackpot.

“And so I came in, I didn’t tell anybody,” Tengwall said. “I sat in the corner with my headphones in ... I was just in my own zone. That was still the hardest thing I’ve ever done, and then it came back up not too long after.”

Tengwall finished the contest with around a minute left on the clock. Despite feeling like he was about to give up, Ford told Tengwall that he could not “tap out now,” as he’d already come so far.

“I just went into a different mode, and the rest was history. I got it all down in about 29 minutes and 30 seconds,” Tengwall said. “It was something I will never do again.”

Tengwall said he loves the support that’s become ingrained into Penn’s States culture and community.

“I think it’s one of the most special places I’ve ever been, and it’s truly family,” Tengwall said. “Whether it’s alumni, whether it’s business owners in town, people are always looking to lend a hand.”

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Jonah Richmond/Collegian

Students leave candles and other offerings outside of the recently closed College Avenue McDonald’s during a vigil on Nov. 17, 2024.

Bye, bye McDonald’s

Students mourn fast-food closure

By Louise Bennett
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Candlelight lit up students’ faces as they sang “Amazing Grace” Sunday night in mourning of the closing of the downtown McDonald’s in State College.

The vigil, organized by PSU Barstool, started at 8 p.m.

By 8:06 p.m., the crowd stretched beyond McDonald’s corner sidewalk, and students stood on the road and across the street near the South residence halls with candles to pay their respects.

Nate Vincent said he saw PSU Barstool’s post and could not believe it when he spent “thousands of dollars” at the downtown and other McDonald’s locations.

“I’m just very sad what transpired with downtown McDonald’s,” Vincent, a fourth-year studying geography, said.

Although Vincent frequents the North Atherton McDonald’s more often because it’s closer to his apartment and open 24/7, he said the downtown location “always had his back.”

“I was here over the summer, and they closed at 8 p.m.,” Vincent said. “It’s absolutely heart-breaking. We knew they were suffering. We just unplugged the life support today.”

Delaney Price said she came to the vigil to say goodbye.

Price, a fourth-year studying broadcast engineering, said her and her friends would regularly frequent the downtown location for Diet Cokes and small fries.

“When we were sad, we could come here,” Price said. “Now, with no warning, it was just gone.”

Price also said this isn’t the first business to recently close in downtown State College.

“In the last year or two, they’re just taking them out one by one — that’s what’s going on,” Price said.

“These big corporate apartment buildings are shutting down our food chains.”

Other members of the crowd agreed with the sentiment that apartment buildings are the cause of businesses closing. At

one point, the crowd began chanting “f— your high rise,” in between renditions of “Over the Rainbow” and the Penn State alma mater.

By about 8:30 p.m., mourners began booing as red and blue lights from a State College Police car lit up the front of the now-desolate McDonald’s.

The police pulled up to the sidewalk along East College Avenue for a moment before turning off their lights and pulling away. In response, the crowd roared with cheers.

Mason Koma, a community builder for PSU Barstool, said the idea for the vigil was born out of the love for McDonald’s and the outcome of the downtown Taco Bell closing in 2020, which made national headlines.

“Penn State McDonald’s is a staple. Everyone loves it. Everyone goes there from late night DoorDash to an after-class meal,” Koma, a fourth-year studying industrial engineering who passed out candles during the vigil, said. “Seeing it closed, just makes everyone sad.”

Reagan Phillips, a content creator for PSU Barstool, said she was initially only expecting a few people to join the vigil.

“We would not expect when we walked up at 8:02 for there to be like 80 people out here,” Phillips, a fourth-year studying broadcast journalism, said. “It is so awesome to see that everyone cares this much about McDonald’s closing.”

For those concerned about the closing, a new McDonald’s and high rise will take its place.

In 2022, the Borough of State College approved construction on a high rise that would demolish the Keystone Building and McDonalds on East College Avenue as well as the Armennara Office Building on Sowers Street.

Based on the developer’s proposed plans for the high rise, a new McDonald’s will be located on the building’s first floor.

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McDonald’s replacements?

Burger joints that could fill Big Mac-sized void

By Sienna Pinney
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Buckle up. It’s time for a new era of burgers in State College.

The downtown McDonald’s on the corner of East College Avenue closed earlier this week, according to a sign on its door. The building was quickly stripped of the iconic “M,” leaving Penn State students in mourning.

While many State College residents aren’t lovin’ it after the closure of the establishment, this is a golden opportunity to bring in something new, greasy and delicious.

Now is the time for Penn State students to come together and advocate for a quality burger joint to move in.

Shake Shack

If you’ve never had a Shake Shack burger with a milkshake or lemonade, have you even lived?

Despite the iconic burgers, Shake Shack began as a small hot dog stand in New York City in 2001, and has rapidly grown to

become what it is today: burger perfection.

Before we get into the food, let’s get into where it’s coming from. Shake Shack releases an annual “Stand For Something Good” summary to remain transparent in its mission to be sustainable and committed to animal welfare while giving back to communities.

On the menu, there’s something for everyone — the hot dogs that Shake Shack started with, 100% Angus beef burgers, free of hormones and antibiotics, several vegetarian burgers and sandwiches, chicken options, a variety of fries, and most importantly, shakes and frozen custard.

If you’re into beverages — let’s be real, we all are — the lemonades take Shake Shack to another level. With the classic Shack-make Lemonade and a rotation of seasonal flavors, there’s taste bud joy year-round.

Culver’s

I can’t name many things that began in Wisconsin, but Culver’s is the one thing you need to know

about. Culver’s began as a family business in 1984 in Sauk City, Wisconsin, serving “ButterBurgers” and frozen custard.

Fun fact: Culver’s is credited as the origin of the table tent, starting with upside-down foam cups with order numbers written on them.

Like Shake Shack, Culver’s is also committed to using “fresh, never frozen beef” in its burgers. Patrons can also enjoy chicken, salads, cheese curds, chili cheddar fries, mashed potatoes and more.

Culver’s also boasts a Signature Root Beer, coffee, freshly brewed sweet and unsweet tea, fountain drinks and juices.

The one thing Culver’s may be lacking is vegetarian entree options. Shake Shack has a larger menu variety with meat-free items.

In-N-Out

Maybe my California is showing with this one, but I truly don’t know of a better cost-to-bite ratio.

In-N-Out began in 1948 and is known for the Double-Double burger. While it’s no longer 60 cents, the Double-Double Combo is \$11.09 and the burger alone is \$5.89.

If you’re a secret menu fan, In-N-Out also has a “Not So Secret” menu to choose from.

It includes a 4x4 for anyone looking to hit their protein goals and the iconic grilled cheese for those looking for a vegetarian option.

According to its website, all of the food is fresh, never frozen and never microwaved. Founder Harry Snyder had the motto, “do one thing, and do it well.” From its opening in 1948 to today, the menu has undergone very few changes.

State College needs a solid burger, fries and shake joint, and In-N-Out fits the bill. Bonus points if it has late-night hours for those 2 a.m. cravings.

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Military Times ranks World Campus

By Jonathon Chiu
FOR THE COLLEGIAN

Penn State’s World Campus was ranked as one of the top five institutions in the United States for veterans by Military Times, as announced in a Penn State News release Tuesday. This marks the third year that the Penn State World Campus has been ranked in the top five.

Penn State World Campus

was also ranked as the No. 1 institution in Pennsylvania and No. 3 institution for military and veteran learners in the Mid-Atlantic region of the country, according to the release.

Penn State World Campus has received numerous awards and affiliations from the military community, with the World Campus having previously worked with the United Service Organization (USO) in 2023 to better

support military service members.

According to the release, Penn State World Campus is well-respected as a military-friendly institution for its offering of educational benefits and support services for active-duty service members, reservists, veterans and Reserve Officers’ Training Corps students.

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‘CHANGE IS IN OUR DNA’

College of Information Sciences and Technology celebrates 25 years

By Emily Lin
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Founded in 1999, the College of Information Sciences and Technology (IST) at Penn State marked its 25th anniversary this year.

What began as an experimental educational model has grown over the years, with the college expanding from an initial class of 103 graduates to nearly 3,000 undergraduate students today.

“Twenty-five years ago, no one knew if this approach would succeed,” Andrea Tapia, the dean of the College of IST, said. “It could have been a short-lived experiment, but it worked. We’ve grown significantly, and the college is thriving.”

Tapia, who initially joined the College of IST in 2002, said she’s seen firsthand how far the college has come.

“I was most interested in joining IST because it was a really different form of education,” Tapia said.

According to Tapia, most colleges offered single-degree programs when she attended school, but IST’s pioneering, cross-functional approach was a perfect fit for her background in sociology.

“It’s the most interdisciplinary college that exists because we’re not homogeneous in ourselves,” Tapia said. “We bring in perspectives from fields like computer science, social sciences, law and healthcare.”

Carleen Maitland, a professor and associate dean for research and graduate affairs, echoed this

sentiment. Joining the faculty 22 years ago, Maitland was similarly attracted to the college’s unique approach.

“The fact that it’s an interdisciplinary college was really important to me because I myself am interdisciplinary,” Maitland said.

With a doctorate in economics and a career as a social scientist, Maitland said she found a unique academic home where she could collaborate with technologists in an innovative setting, beyond traditional academic boundaries.

Maitland also said the college’s constant evolution and IST’s willingness to adapt and innovate is one of the key reasons for its success.

“Change is in our DNA,” Maitland said. “Our degree programs have constantly evolved to keep pace with the changing needs of the tech world. We started with a single IST degree, but now we offer a range of programs that cover everything from cybersecurity to data science.”

Maitland also highlighted how the college’s projects in health informatics were made possible through collaborations with the College of Medicine and the College of Health and Human Development.

“As AI continues to infuse healthcare, there are so many exciting research opportunities at the intersection of technology and health,” Maitland said. “We’re already seeing amazing projects in this area, and we’re eager to involve our undergraduate students in this work.”

Faculty members like associate professor Luke Zhang also spoke about the ongoing mission to help students navigate the complexities of emerging technologies.

Zhang, who has been with the college for several years, said that while the field of information technology is constantly evolving, the fundamental challenges remain the same.

“We help students understand how technology, data and information intersect with society, preparing them to navigate emerging innovations like AI and the internet,” Zhang said.

Zhang said the college’s goal is to teach students to think critically about the systems they create and their societal impact, a philosophy that continues to inspire his work.

“That’s why I’m still loving my job to help students,” Zhang said.

As the college celebrated its anniversary, alumni returned for an open-house kickoff event at the Nittany Lion Inn.

For Tapia, the milestone of the College of IST turning 25 was especially meaningful.

“I’ve been here from the start, watching the college grow from its early days. It’s like seeing a child mature into a young adult,” Tapia said. “It’s personal for me because I’ve witnessed its entire life cycle.”

During the anniversary celebration, Tapia said she had the honor of reading a heartfelt message from Jim Thomas, the college’s founding dean, who was unable to attend due to surgery.



Megan Miller/Collegian

The College of Information Sciences and Technology celebrates 25 years at the Westgate Building on Nov. 14, 2024 in University Park, Pa.

In his message, Thomas reflected on the college’s experimental beginnings and the collective effort that turned it into the institution it is today, according to Tapia.

“It was moving to read Jim’s words,” Tapia said.

Maitland said she’s proud to be part of the IST community.

“It was amazing to see alumni from the original class return and celebrate the progress we’ve made,” Maitland said. “It’s all

about pushing boundaries and making an impact.”

Tapia said the college will launch a new undergraduate degree in artificial intelligence, with future plans to expand into graduate and online offerings.

“IST is the place where you can come and try things out,” Tapia said. “You’re part of something really exciting.”

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Penn State adds Supreme Court database

By Steven Kister
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

The United States Supreme Court Database, formerly housed within Washington University in St. Louis, has found a new home in Penn State’s Department of Political Science.

Department Head and Professor of Political Science Dr. Michael J. Nelson said he was asked to serve as a principal investigator on the database by Lee Epstein, a professor at Washington University.

“We were at dinner ... she had moved from Washington University to USC in LA. And I just said, ‘is the database going to stay

at WashU? What’s going on?’” Nelson said. “And she just kind of looked at me, and she’s like, ‘you could do it.’”

The database was first developed in the 1980s by political scientist Harold Spaeth at Michigan State University, completing his coding by hand on 3-by-5 inch note cards.

The original database was used until the mid 2000s, when it moved to Washington University as part of a National Science Foundation-funded project. “I was one of the graduate students that worked on the database, answering people’s questions, helping to code it, that sort of stuff,” Nelson said. “Last year, they were kind of trying to

figure out what’s going to happen with the database next, and Penn State said they would be willing to host it.”

Nelson attended Washington University as a graduate student in 2009, and he said the plan for the database is to make sure it continues as it is.

“This is the data that journalists are used to, the data that scholars are used to, and that information is kind of the core information about the case,” Nelson said. “It has been a huge amount of work for the people in the Liberal Arts Information Technology Department.”

Penn State’s McCourtney Institute for Democracy, led by

Dr. Michael Berkman, also had its hand in this project.

According to Berkman, the institute provides money, as well as staff and a strategic communications arm.

“Penn State has political science as a tradition of strength in the courts and study of legal institutions. We have the personnel, infrastructure to be able to do this,” Berkman said.

The goal, according to Berkman, is providing good, clean and accurate data about Supreme Court decisions of all kinds, making those available to scholars and to at least some in the media.

“We want and need to have important projects like this at Penn

State, we have expertise in this area,” Senior Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies D. Scott Bennett said.

According to Bennett, the College of Liberal Arts will support the project, providing those across the country with access.

“We have the expertise to make that available, and actually, we’ve already done things like upgrade the website so it’s easier for people to access,” Bennett said. “Our faculty will be using it as well as providing it to the entire public and to enter the academic community broadly.”

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Kakuro

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The rules are easy:
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 can only be used once in any sequence.

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Sudoku

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Word Search

Green Things

A S P A R A G U S B H M X B R P T X
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Asparagus
Avocado
Beans
Broccoli
Cabbage
Emeralds
Fatigues
Frogs
Geckos
Grass
Jade
Leaf
Lettuce
Limes

Money
Moss
Olives
Parakeets
Peas
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Across

1 "Roots," e.g.
5 Discussion group
10 "That was close!"
14 Air force heroes
15 Convex molding
16 Theta-kappa
17 Lone-Star State
19 It may be proper
20 Single or double
21 Mayberry minor
22 Young child,
24 Like some fans
25 Brewski
29 London's
32 Ancient Greek
33 Petty quarrel
34 Olds of old
36 Actually
39 Persian spirit
40 Harmonia's father
41 Fine thread
42 Primitive
44 Austere
45 Kind of school
46 Dance partner?

47 Assessment
50 Newbies
51 Unruly head of hair
54 Like Darth Vader
55 Magical command
58 Brazilian soccer
59 German wine
60 Bator,
61 Teller's stack
62 Where to see "The
63 Smart-alecky

Down

1 Window frame
2 Super berry
3 Lady's man
4 Solid rock center?
5 Entree with a crust
6 Steer clear of
7 the wiser
8 High priest at
9 Shiloh
10 Water sport
11 Gangster
12 Small ornamental
13 Diminish
18 Roman Catholic

devotion
23 "Sweet as Apple
Cider" girl
24 Nuclear reactors
25 Great balls of fire
26 It's sold in bars
27 Ford flop
28 Like some
goodbyes
29 Floor it
30 Most trifling
31 Plain plinth that
supports a wall
33 Sharpener
35 British submarine
gun
37 Parasite in the
intestines
38 Strip the blubber or
skin from a whale
43 Miner's find
44 Slacken
46 Medicinal plant
47 Debtor's woe
48 Neck and neck
49 Loathsome
50 Singer Diamond
51 Stag
52 Sharif of film
53 Cooped (up)
56 Fraternity letter
57 Have dinner

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DAILY COLLEGIAN

MY VIEW | JADZIA SANTIAGO

Stand up for yourself

Picture this: it's April of my first year of college, and I'm sitting in the HUB-Robeson Center Starbucks, getting insulted by someone I considered a friend. Record scratch, freeze frame. Let me tell you how I ended up in this situation: I stood up for myself at dinner a few nights before.

Yes, that's it. I know from hearing similar stories that it's a common situation; you tell someone to stop doing something that bothers you, and their response is completely out of proportion to what you said. In this case, my friend felt the need to list all of the things they didn't like about me, some of which weren't relevant to the problem at hand. I should have told them that they had no right to say these things to me. Instead, I said nothing. Sorry for starting another column with me going through it, but I share this anecdote to demonstrate a time when I both

succeeded and failed to stand up for myself — especially since I've been seeing a lot of discussion about what standing up really means in the compassionate world we're working toward. In a conflict like mine, you might ask yourself whether you or another person set a boundary or attempted to avoid accountability, and whether you responded correctly. This is especially true for college students as we enter the workforce and navigate adult relationships. Sticking up for ourselves is important in a world that values overworking, and we want to know that we're balancing that importance with our obligation to help others. I have tough news for you: there's no way to be sure. I can't give you a formula that works in theory, because it definitely won't be effective for everyone in every situation. However, I can give you some things that have guided me in practice. First, before you stand up for anything, you need to know what you're standing up for. By extension, when you stand up for yourself, you need to do it because you know who you are.

In your daily life, make a point to become familiar with your own strengths and weaknesses — it's a lot simpler than it sounds. Take a look at what you've done in your life and what you think you can do. Listen to the feedback of people with your best interest at heart, and don't be afraid to be honest. Even if you're still figuring out your identity, there are probably things you've always known about yourself. For me, I've always known that I'm intelligent and write well, which is how I know that I'm good at what I'm doing right now. I also know from feedback and my own satisfaction that I'm thriving in college. Additionally, I know that like every human, I deserve a certain basic level of respect and compassion. Because I know myself, I trust myself. I know when something isn't right — with my health, with a situation or with anything else. Thus, when someone violates something that I hold true, I know I should stand up for myself. This leads me into my next

point: standing up for yourself can look different depending on multiple factors. Sometimes, it looks like telling someone to stop, correcting them or otherwise verbally setting a boundary. But sometimes, standing up for yourself can be nonverbal. For example, if someone tells you that you can't do something, you can go out and do it. If someone says something that's not true about you, you can refuse to believe it and live your life in a way that proves them wrong. Lastly, whenever you stand up for yourself, you need to lead with compassion. Wait, wait, hear me out! To live in a compassionate world, we need to be intentional in what we say and do. Once we know ourselves, we need to weigh our actions against our self-knowledge to see if they align with our values. We also need to treat others with the respect everyone deserves. You also need to be compassionate with yourself, not only when you don't stand up for yourself, but also when you do. My main advice at the end of the day is to make peace with

being a problem. No matter what you do, someone is going to disagree, even if you're in the right. And because you're human, you may not be sometimes. You will inevitably mess up, stray from your values, allow someone to disrespect you or even unintentionally disrespect someone else. However, you have to know and trust yourself enough to know that you did the best you could. When I was 18 years old in that Starbucks, I did the best I could and so did the person insulting me. We did what we thought was right, and while I can't quite find it in me to forgive them, I do know what I can do — live my life and prove them wrong. Sometimes, that's the best way to correct them.

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Cartoons by Nate Campbell

MY VIEW | TERESA PHELAN

Learn to fall in love with who you are

Here I am at 20 years old with a boyfriend count of zero. I wish I could say that I'm simply not in a relationship right now, but the truth is, singleness has been the story of my life. I guess I'm what my friends and I call "chronically single." I'm not going to lie, it's an awful feeling watching my friends be in happily committed relationships while I rewatch "How To Lose a Guy in 10 Days" just to feel something. It seems like every piece of media I consume is centered on relationships. I can't scroll on TikTok or read a book without a lovey-dovey couple being shoved in my face. I know I sound jealous, but truth be told, I am. There's a social stigma that denotes women and men who aren't in relationships as having something wrong with them. Sure, we all have our flaws, but there is nothing foundationally wrong with not being in a relationship. On a college campus espe-

cially, there's a culture that feeds off single individuals. With a strong hook-up scene, those who choose not to participate are the odd ones out. I'm not insinuating a hook up is always going to precede a solid relationship, but weirder things have happened. With this being said, I'm no stranger to the looks or blank stares I get when I tell people that I don't have a boyfriend — as if it's some guaranteed amendment right. As I continue to navigate my "chronic singleness," I've taken away a few things that don't make the waiting game as lonely. The first step is acknowledging that a relationship is something that I want, but realizing that I'm not a worse person because I lack it. So many of my amazing friends aren't in relationships, and I would never think less of them for it, meaning the same goes for myself.

On days when I've seen one too many couples downtown, I first absently complain to whoever I'm walking with, but after I've done my fair share of moping, I remind myself that looks can be deceiving. What looks like a happy couple could be a relationship that is mentally, physically and emotionally abusive, in which being single is better than the current situation. There are exceptions, but no matter what, there's a lot of baggage that comes with intertwining lives with another individual. If HDFS 129: Introduction to Human Development and Family Studies taught me anything, it's that we're all responsible for our own happiness. Right now, my source of happiness isn't in the form of a relationship, and that's OK. It comes in the form of phone calls with my best friend and

iced cold chai. Learn to fall in love with a new coffee shop, the falling leaves and the version of yourself that doesn't need romantic validation. Distinguishing between the desire for a relationship and my need to be the best version of myself for the people who do truly love me has changed the way I view being single. Fortunately, both mindsets can coexist. I can be satisfied with my current life, and still yearn for the dream life 16-year-old me thought she would have after watching one too many rom-coms. Stop waiting for someone to buy you flowers — go to the store and pick the ones you love. Don't wait for someone to come and sweep you off your feet, take charge of the life you want to live. Fall in love with yourself and not the boy who doesn't give you the time of day.

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‘The ultimate Penn State fan’

Blue Haired Guy’s journey from enigma to Penn State hockey icon

By Evan Smith
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Section 121, Row L, Seat 113. Blue shoes, white socks, blue hair, no cares. Every game but one.

Fans experience many constants after walking through the glass doors of Pegula Ice Arena before game time. Between the Roar Zone introduction, the mid-game dance and the post-game salute, the program has been building culture since 2013.

One tradition has remained a constant for Penn State hockey longer than it’s been housed in Pegula. Right next to the Roar Zone, in Section 121, Row L, Seat 113, sits Richard Seifert, better known as the “Blue Haired Guy.”

Seifert’s passion for hockey, dedication to the team and friendly personality has transcended him from a fan to a tradition in himself.

In 1990, Seifert moved to Happy Valley to be a mechanic for Leitzinger Racing. The newly estranged New York Rangers fan was unaware Penn State had a club hockey team.

“I was talking to a friend who also loved hockey, and he said we should go to a Penn State game,” Seifert said. “I said, ‘Penn State doesn’t have hockey,’ and he told me about the club team.”

It didn’t take long for Seifert to get attached to the team.

“I got really hooked because they were a really good club team,” Seifert said.

Seifert followed the team over the next couple of decades until the program moved to Division I ahead of the 2012-13 season. His



Linsey Fagan/Collegian file photo

Richard Seifert leads a “We Are” chant with the Roar Zone in the game against Sacred Heart at Pegula Ice Arena on Nov. 14, 2015.

favorite memory was opening night at Pegula Ice Arena.

“Me and that same friend always said it’d be cool if (Penn State) ever went D1,” Seifert said. “We both went crazy the night they announced it.”

Fast-forward a decade since that opening night, and Seifert has appeared at Pegula more than the Nittany Lions’ home white uniforms, having missed just one home game since the team joined the NCAA.

Seifert is a superstitious fan, always wearing his white socks, blue shoes and long sleeve shirt.

“I won’t wash that if we’re on a streak,” Seifert said after Penn State swept St. Lawrence. “We’ve won two games in a row, so it’s

hanging up and won’t go through the water.”

Seifert’s presence has enamored fans of all ages and even indirectly recruited Penn Staters.

“Back in 2014, my sister and I were entranced by the Blue Haired Guy; he could immediately liven up a room,” Roar Zone Vice President Brenna Bordner said. “The atmosphere (Seifert) was able to create was one of the main reasons that I fell in love with Penn State hockey.”

The students hold a special appreciation for the Blue Haired Guy to the point where one Roar Zone member dressed up as Seifert for Halloween.

“He’s secured his spot at the top of the all-time fans list,” Roar Zone President Austin Craig said.

“I have no doubt he’ll still be in the crowd when my kids come here someday.”

Seifert’s back-and-forth chants with the student section are a staple of the Penn State hockey experience, ending with Seifert ripping his jersey to reveal one of over 20 T-shirts to the crowd.

“I found a Penn State shirt at Goodwill and took it to a seamstress to Velcro it,” Seifert said. “My favorite (shirt) is, ‘It’s all your fault.’”

It’s not just the fans who admire Seifert for his commitment. Coach Guy Gadowsky lit up when asked about the fan turned friend.

“I remember watching him since Day 1 and thinking I’d never seen something like that,”

Gadowsky said. “I think he adds something special to the Pegula atmosphere.”

The players agree that Seifert’s hype keeps their energy up on the bench as well.

“We love having him; he gets everyone going, even gets me going,” forward Aiden Fink said.

Seifert interacts with the team through booster events and appreciates the way the team introduces him to younger players like an old friend.

His newest form of interaction was the introduction of personal trading cards that he’s shared with fans for the last four years. The cards are inspired by old bubblegum cards from Seifert’s childhood.

“We change the picture, but the back has stayed the same,” Seifert said. “It’s stayed the same because I still haven’t gotten to drive the Zamboni.”

Seifert has long dreamed of driving the Pegula Zamboni. This year, he’s taken steps all the way up to speaking to a labor union about the possibility.

On top of his eccentric fandom and memorable gimmicks, Seifert used one true superpower to enshrine himself as a legendary figure in the State College community: his ability to foster positive connections.

“The best thing about him is he’s just a really great guy,” Bordner, a fourth-year studying hospitality management and Spanish, said. “We’re so thankful for everything he brings to Pegula.”

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Early conference woes

By Chase Fisher
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

After fireworks in a thrilling overtime defeat to Wisconsin last Friday, the Nittany Lions’ conference woes continued as their comeback bid fell short on Saturday.

The story of Penn State’s in-conference struggles has mirrored its nonconference games, with slow starts becoming costly.

The Nittany Lions have now given up the first goal in three of their four Big Ten contests. These deficits have proven insurmountable to come back from against tough Big Ten competition.

Entering the 2024-25 season, the Big Ten was well represented. Five of the seven programs were ranked inside the top 20 of the USCHO poll, including Wisconsin.

“This is the monster,” coach Guy Gadowsky said. “You come to Penn State because it’s Penn State, but you also come to compete against the best of the best in hockey.”

The problem against Big Ten opponents goes beyond just this season. Penn State’s 0-4 start in conference play is its worst mark since it started 0-4 in the 2021-22 season. The Nittany Lions went 7-14-3 against the Big Ten last year — the second-lowest mark in the conference.

What’s gone wrong

Penn State’s two conference series couldn’t have been more different from one another. The blue and white struggled on offense against Minnesota and struggled on defense versus Wisconsin.

The Nittany Lions started conference play two weeks ago

against a high-powered Golden Gopher offense. Despite Minnesota entering its matchup with Penn State recording 5.5 goals per game, the blue and white held its opponent to just four goals in two contests.

Even with Minnesota scoring just three non-empty-net goals, Penn State couldn’t gain a point in the standings.

Aside from a Reese Laubach breakaway goal, the Nittany Lions couldn’t generate any offense, recording 50 shots on goal and just one score in two games.

Penn State entered the Wisconsin series off of a bye week. Throughout that time, Gadowsky and Penn State had to figure out what was causing the underperforming offense.

“We have to get back to being Penn State and start filling the net,” Gadowsky said. “(We have to) get real nasty around the net.”

Despite the losses to Wisconsin, Penn State got back to that tough, nasty play by crashing the net, which resulted in some crucial tallies.

Penn State’s series against Wisconsin unfolded in a surprising way, with its defense — one of its strongest units — being the main area of concern.

The Nittany Lions allowed 11 goals over the two contests, raising their 1.86 goals-against average up to 2.63.

For a team ranked No. 18 entering last weekend, Penn State has yet to collectively play a complete 60 minutes of hockey.

Fixing Penn State’s struggles

The aspect everyone can point their finger to is the slow starts, but the cause of Penn State trailing early pertains to the

careless turnovers.

In arguably Penn State’s biggest game of its young season, Saturday began with a costly turnover at center ice, which led to a Wisconsin goal just nine seconds later.

Matt DiMarsico skated with the puck early in Game 2 before lobbing it toward center ice, where a Wisconsin player gained control and whipped the puck around the boards. Kyle Kukkonen gained possession near the right dot and shot a wrister past Arsenii Sergeev for Wisconsin’s first goal.

Instead of being careless with the puck and flipping it toward center ice, DiMarsico could’ve looked to his right and passed to one of his teammates trailing.

After allowing two more goals, another turnover in its offensive zone led to a 2-on-1 rush where Tyson Dyck shot a wrister past Noah Grannan, giving Wisconsin a 4-0 lead.

These two instances are just a microcosm of the Nittany Lions’ sloppiness with the puck early in games.

Less than eight minutes later, DiMarsico skated with his back toward Wisconsin’s net, before losing the puck and leading Wisconsin on a 2-on-1 break.

If DiMarsico made a safer decision and backhanded the puck deeper into Wisconsin’s zone instead of trying to make a tough play, there’s a chance Wisconsin doesn’t take a 4-0 lead.

These mistakes regarding puck control and trying to do too much have been costly, but they are aspects of Penn State’s game that are fixable.

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Tyler Mantz/Collegian file photo

Guard Jayla Oden talks to head coach Carolyn Kieger during the WBIT quarterfinal game against Mississippi State on March 28, 2024.

Playing with pace

Sam Krasowitz
FOR THE COLLEGIAN

In her first five years at the helm, coach Carolyn Kieger wanted to win games by wreaking havoc on the defensive end of the floor and creating easy offense from it. Through their 5-0

start, the Lady Lions have done just that.

Penn State averages 94.4 points per game, while only allowing 61.6 on average, breaking the century mark in its past two games against Niagara and Monmouth. Causing 25.4 turnovers

per game and creating fast breaks has been a focal point to creating these points.

“We always want to push tempo,” Kieger said. “We create more possessions on the defensive end, and we try to find the first great shot available for Penn State.”

This tempo has caused potential problems for the Lady Lions as well, as they average 21 turnovers per game themselves. While Kieger acknowledged this number in media availability Tuesday, she noted that her and her staff are focused more on a different statistic.

“What we focus on is our turnover percentage because we’re probably going to have higher turnover numbers than a lot of teams because of our pace,” Kieger said. She wants

to limit possessions ending in a turnover to 15%.

While Kieger has employed these principles in her first five years as head coach, she believes that added depth will create more success this year than ever before. With so many transfer and freshman players, Kieger noted

“We always want to push tempo. We create more possessions on the defensive end, and we try to find the great shot available for Penn State.”

that bench assets like Grace Hall, Talayah Walker and Tamera Johnson have been vital to start the season, and will continue to be as the team looks ahead at their schedule.

“I think this Florida swing is going to be really important for us, especially with

only one day rest in between,”

Kieger said, “It mimics a post-season feel, where depth is really important.”

The ‘Florida swing’ Kieger mentioned is the WBCA showcase, a neutral site tournament in Orlando, where Penn State will take on Marshall on Thursday, followed by Georgia on Saturday, before coming back to the Bryce Jordan Center to take on Drexel. All three of these teams play at a slower pace, looking to get into a set offense, combating the pace the Lady Lions look to play at.

“These will be three really great games coming up where we have to dictate the tempo and generate the pace we want to play at,” Kieger said.

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Ryan Copeland/Collegian

Penn State goaltender Noah Grannan focuses during the men’s ice hockey game against Wisconsin at Pegula Ice Arena on Nov. 16, 2024.

BRINGING OUT THE HERO

Alliance of Heroic Hearts empowers children, gives back to community

By Daniela White
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Alliance of Heroic Hearts, a student-run nonprofit, works to bring out the hero in everyone by dressing up as superheroes and princesses.

Traveling to children's birthday parties and community events, the members of Alliance of Heroic Hearts dress up as different Marvel, DC Comics and Disney characters. At events, members teach positive lessons and host activities like making balloon animals.

Founded in 2014, the Alliance of Heroic Hearts doesn't charge for events, and any money received is donated to pediatric cancer research and other charitable causes.

"No matter what," President Brandon Badrick said. "Everything we do is giving back to the community."

Badrick, a third-year student studying kinesiology, said all of the events the organization attends are very special, but his favorite is Night to Shine.

Night to Shine is a prom for anyone aged 14 or older living with disabilities, according to the event's website.

"It's really a wonderful event," Badrick said. "We make everybody so happy, and that makes me feel really good just knowing that we have such a positive impact on people."

One of the club's most involved events is Tides, a grief counseling event for children, teens and adults who've lost someone important in their lives.

"Last year, we had them make their own superhero mask and cape and gauntlet," Badrick said. "And then ran them through a treasure hunt to find candy that was hidden by the Joker."

After the treasure hunt,



Courtesy of Brandon Badrick

Alliance of Heroic Hearts members stand at a table during the downtown State College Fall Festival. Members dress as superheroes and cartoon characters and travel to birthday parties and events to empower children.

Badrick said they gave the kids paper and an invisible ink pen with a blacklight, so when they wrote the name of the person that died, they could shine the light and always see and be with them.

Maya Shenoy created Alliance of Heroic Hearts with her peers in 2014 with the vision of helping the community and being heroes.

"Not everyone can make it to Disney World — not everyone can make it to Universal Studios," Shenoy said. "And so we wanted to show people that there can be heroes in your own community."

Shenoy said there's two main goals of Alliance of Heroic Hearts — going into the community and inspiring children to be heroes, and then setting members up for success with

leadership skills and learning about responsibility.

"Being in a club and taking on that responsibility sets you up for the future," Shenoy said. "It sets you up for a great career — it helps you meet great friends."

Viviana Smith first learned about the club at Happy Valley Comic Con years ago, and said she immediately joined the organization when she got to Penn State.

"(Alliance of Heroic Hearts) helps people, mainly younger children, feel welcome and empowered, and just happy and motivated, to do good," Smith, a first-year in the Division of Undergraduate Studies, said.

Smith said the club has had a positive impact on her, as she's met new people and participated in fun activities. She said one of her favorite events so far was

walking in the Homecoming Parade.

"We do great things for the community," Smith said. "We bring joy to the community and do lots of philanthropy work. We empower children to do good."

Badrick said he joined the club because he's always been a giant nerd. He said joining Alliance of Heroic Hearts as a first-year was an opportunity to be a nerd and make people happy.

With Alliance of Heroic Hearts being a major part of his life ever since he got to Penn State, Badrick said he's given nothing but his best to the club, whether it was by going to events by himself or driving 45 minutes to a kid's birthday party at the drop of a hat.

"I'm also autistic and have ADHD as well," Badrick said. "So being able to give back is

really special for me."

When the club first started, Shenoy said it wasn't just about spreading hope and kindness in the community, but also building brand awareness since no one knew what the organization was about.

"We were just doing a handful of birthday parties," Shenoy said. "And then we started going to hospitals, and we started doing larger events. I think we went to a camp for children with autism, so we kind of just started expanding and showing that any one can be a hero or princess or whatever they want to be."

Badrick said the club used to visit kids with pediatric cancer in hospitals, but ever since the pandemic hit, they haven't been able to visit due to health concerns.

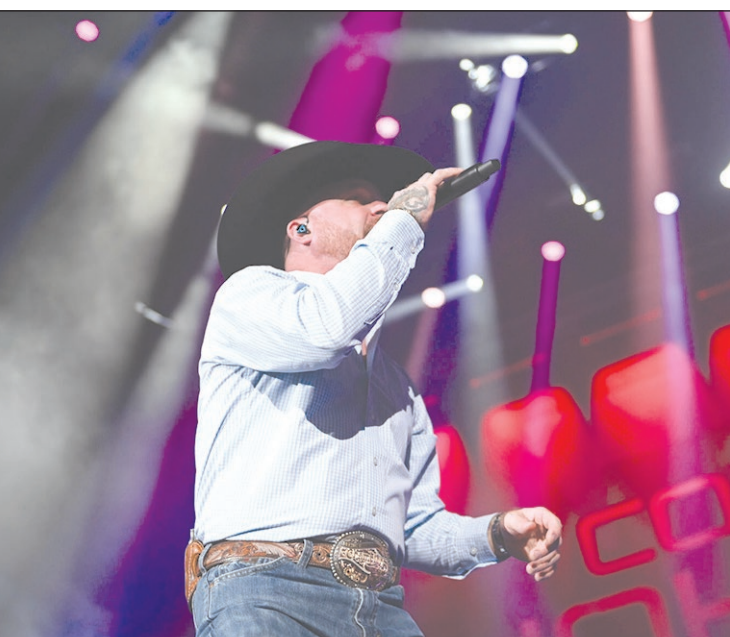
Badrick said there's something in the organization that will interest everybody, and it's a way to uplift fellow students and the local community, as well as making everybody's day a little bit happier by being there and doing what they do.

"When else are you going to get the chance to dress up as your favorite superhero and go make people happy and have the high-quality costume paid for," Badrick said.

Badrick said it's special to see people who haven't gotten a "fair shake in life" walking away with a smile on their face because of what he and his peers have done.

"Everyone you know has a piece of a hero or a princess in them," Shenoy said. "Everyone has good in them, and so this is a great opportunity to bring that out, but then also to learn about skills like time management, responsibility and also just giving back to the community."

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Kayla McCullough/Collegian

Cody Johnson performs during "The Leather Tour" in the Bryce Jordan Center on Nov. 1, 2024 in University Park, Pa.

Johnson brings 'honky-tonk' to BJC

By Aria Eichhof
FOR THE COLLEGIAN

Cody Johnson took the stage at Penn State's Bryce Jordan Center last Saturday night as a stop on his most recent tour, "The Leather Tour."

"If you came searching for country music tonight, you came to the right place," Johnson said.

His most recent album, "Leather," came out in November 2023, and was successful enough to sell out the multipurpose arena.

The show opened with Braxton Keith and Ashley McBryde, building anticipation for the platinum recording artist and Academy of Country Music Entertainer of the Year nominee.

Johnson took the stage and kicked off the "honky tonk" around 9:30 p.m., starting with "That's Texas."

"Grab your partner, do-si-do, let's go," Johnson said to a crowd that was happy to oblige.

Fans traveled all over to see Johnson's show, including DeLaney Newcome and her friend Aubrie Darnall.

The two 15-year-olds from Virginia traveled about three hours to see the show.

"We're looking forward to all the songs," Newcome said while waiting in line for merchandise.

Fans dressed in denim, flannels, chunky buckles, cow print, cowboy hats and boots were encouraged to dance, sing along, clap and wave their flashlights throughout the night.

Two 16-year-old fans from Indiana, Pennsylvania, took the

evening as an opportunity to match outfits.

In dresses, jean jackets and cowboy boots, Taylor Row and Lilli Fleming attended the show with Fleming's mom, dad, aunt and her aunt's friend.

"We've been fans for a while," Fleming said. "We're big country fans."

Averie Hess, a 24-year-old teacher from Jersey Shore, Pennsylvania, drove about 40 minutes to see the show with her boyfriend.

"I've been listening to him for the last two to three years," Hess said. "I hope he plays 'Ride With Me' or 'Dirt Cheap.'"

Kendall Buchkovich, a 22-year-old nail technician from Altoona, Pennsylvania, was excited to see Johnson for the second time this year.

"He's got a couple gospel songs that I really like," Buchkovich said.

The multi-year fan saw Johnson in late June in Tennessee, but in an attempt to beat traffic, her friends had her leave the show early, missing out on hearing her favorite song, "The Painter." Buchkovich said she was looking forward to staying the whole time and hearing her favorite song live.

Beyond that, Johnson also played crowd pleasers like "Leather," "Dear Rodeo," "People in the Back" and even a cover of "God Bless America."

"There's no place I'd rather be than here with y'all," Johnson said.

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Twirl into competition

Penn State Club Twirling welcomes members of all levels

By Xandra Adams-Dennis
FOR THE COLLEGIAN

The White Building gymnasium is often occupied Tuesday and Thursday evenings. Penn State Club Twirling uses the space for rehearsal.

Twirlers filled the gymnasium during the club's practice for the Tyrone Christmas Parade last week. Secretary Mikayla Trubilla started twirling over a decade ago but said she knew she belonged in Club Twirling because it includes those of different twirling levels.

"I remember watching (Penn State Club Twirling) as a little girl and being like, 'That's something I want to be a part of when I'm older,'" Trubilla, a second-year studying elementary and kindergarten education, said. "It's full circle."

Trubilla said one of her responsibilities as secretary is ordering apparel for the team. Treasurer Sam Vermeulen said she's in charge of "everything related to money," like collecting dues and ordering batons or costumes for the club.

Vermeulen, a fourth-year studying health policy and administration, said she started twirling when she was in fifth grade. She heard about Club Twirling from a friend last year and joined because it was looking for more members.

"I was nervous during my first practice because

everybody knew each other," Vermeulen said. "But they welcomed me right away."

Vermeulen's favorite memories with Club Twirling are car rides to competitions and getting ready together. She said members "blast" music and talk the "whole way through."

Social Chair Chrystin Love plans bonding events throughout the year, such as Secret Santa, Valentine's Day gift exchanges and Friendsgiving.

Love, a second-year studying criminology and sociology, said she knew she belonged in Club Twirling when she texted another member for help before a competition, and the member "immediately made time" for her. She said she never twirled before joining the club.

President Alina Mathew said Club Twirling doesn't hold formal auditions. Members join from the Penn State Involvement Fair, where they can find the club's GroupMe and attend the first interest meeting.

Vice President Regina McCloskey said the Involvement Fair convinced her to join. She said she initially wasn't going to join because of the time commitment, but the interest meeting gave her a fear of missing out.

"There's not much you need to know (before joining); any level of experience is welcome," McCloskey, a fourth-year studying English, said.

McCloskey said Club Twirling

provided her first opportunity to participate in community service. She said the team volunteered at a haunted corn maze this year.

Mathew said new members are "always welcome" throughout the semester.

The club competes in Tournaments of Bands competitions through the Tournament Indoor Association in Region 4, which covers the Susquehanna Valley.

Mathew said its big competition is the Atlantic Coast Championship in Wildwood, New Jersey.

Competition season takes place during the spring semester, so the fall is focused on performances in the community.

Mathew said the club performed "HOT TO GO!" by Chapel Roan at the 2024 Homecoming Parade with glow sticks glued to their batons.

Talia Welsh said she'd never seen majorettes before coming to Penn State.

Welsh, a first-year studying premedicine, said it's been helpful for her to have Club Twirling as a "mandatory study break."

Welsh said she's most looking forward to making friends outside her major in the upcoming season.

"I'm so glad I joined," Welsh said. "I've always liked trying different things."

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Courtesy of Alina Mathew

Members of Club Twirling at Penn State pose for a photo together in their team costumes. The club has performed at events like the Homecoming Parade this fall.