



the wingspan

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Cover photo by: Eliza Andrew



Two girls compete in the pillow fight during a past spirit week. (2009)

Photo contributed by: Eyrie Yearbook

Who We Are

As I passionately jotted down the initial premise of this article, I thought my words would shine a much-needed light on the error of our school's ways. Centennial's insatiable focus on achievement and academic excellence had deprived me and my peers of a normal high school experience. I wanted to light a match I knew was doomed to burn out, if only to briefly illuminate the naivety of giving up our traditions, events, and spirit to become one of the top schools in the state. Why can't we just have fun, be spirited, and do normal high school things like every other school?

However, as I began digging into Centennial's past for answers, I slowly came to the realization that the problem isn't this school or its culture; it is the very question itself. At the heart of this question is a feeling of dissatisfaction with the current state of our school. A dissatisfaction stemming from the desire to be more like a typical high school, and the notion that

if our school fails to fulfill this image then something must not be right. But the history found in decades of yearbooks and the memories of long-time teachers renders this desire futile and this notion misconceived. The truth? This is who we are. This is who we've been. And there's no reason to think this isn't who we'll be for the foreseeable future.

Ironically, part of this identity— part of who we are— is what we are not. Students and staff have been complaining that our school lacks spirit ever since Centennial opened in the fall of 1977.

Former teacher Linda Blakeslee, for example, held a strikingly still relevant opinion of Centennial after moving here from Mount Hebron in the 1983-84 school year.

"She finds the students here more academically oriented than Hebron," wrote the 1983-84 edition of Eyrie. "She sees our students as people who have too many things going on. Due

to this, she feels we are less spirited."

Ten years later, senior Sunny Kang similarly told Eyrie that, "Spirit has been pretty bad in the past." In the same yearbook, new principal Edgar Markley remarked that, "often students complain that we don't have enough school spirit."

Even now, long-time history teacher Rodney McCaslin provides almost the same assessment Markley did 26 years ago. "There has always been a desire to increase school spirit," he commented. "[It's] never really been the driving force of the reason people are at Centennial."

What has always been a strong driving force here is academics. Already by 1981, Eyrie noted that the school had gained a "reputation as one of the leaders in education in Howard County." In 1989, Centennial's average SAT score was 44 points higher than any other school in the county and over 100 points higher than the state average.

Chemistry teacher Robert Astri, who began teaching at Centennial in 1992, says that when he arrived here, "it was like teaching at college. The whole population was incredibly motivated and well above average."

Centennial's culture of success and excellence extends beyond the classroom as well. Perhaps even more so now than in the past, students devote a significant amount of their time to clubs, sports, music programs, and internships, among many other activities.

"It seems that most students are just involved in more things," said James Zehe, who has taught at Centennial since 1997. This high level of involvement at Centennial has created an environment where, as Zehe jokingly put it, "[students] feel like [they] must be involved in 5 million things. And not just involved in 5 million things but be a leader in 2.5 of those 5 million things."

Living up to expectations



“We must stop trying to become something that we’re not and never will be.”

both inside and outside of the classroom takes students’ time and energy away from school activities typically associated with spirit. This is a major reason why many of said activities, including the Homecoming Parade, Fat Night Follies, and Battle of the Classes, have disappeared from the pages of Centennial’s yearbooks.

When I began working on this article, I viewed these events’ disappearance as proof of a recent decline in an already weak school spirit. In my interview with Astri, however, he acknowledged their disappearance yet described the level of school spirit at Centennial as “consistently good” since he arrived. How could he think that?

I now realize that the disconnect between Astri’s perspective and mine stemmed from the ambiguity of the word spirit itself. In reality, there is far more to school spirit than the “rah-rah” behavior and events we associate with it. These are merely waves at the surface offering a glimpse of the powerful force at play below. At its heart, school spirit is an internal feeling which comes from taking pride in one’s school and being enthusiastic about being at that school.

Centennial is an extremely academically-oriented school which places an unusually heavy focus on extracurricular activ-

ities. Somehow, in our search for spirit, we’ve forgotten that. We’ve forgotten that the musician practicing all night for the band’s trip to Chicago might not have time to attend the school movie night. We’ve forgotten that the student with a leadership role in six different clubs might be more attached to those smaller groups than the larger school community as a whole. We’ve tried, fruitlessly, to be spirited in the way we feel a normal high school should be spirited. But we are not a normal high school. We are different, and we must realize and accept the fact that a different school displays its spirit differently. The musician playing his heart out for the band program is just as spirited as the student passionately cheering on the basketball team; he is simply displaying that spirit in a different way. We need to stop holding this against ourselves, stop wishing that we could be more spirited in a traditional sense. History shows that this is who we are. We must stop trying to become something that we’re not and never will be. If we instead begin embracing who we are, and celebrating our unique identity for what it is, are we not just as spirited as everybody else?

- Caleb McClatchey

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A Decade of Centennial Athletics

Centennial High School is known for its dual identity as a top school in Howard County athletics and academics. Over the last 10 years, Centennial's sports programs have found success everywhere from the field to the classrooms, uniting the student body.

One of the key moments of the past decade for Centennial athletics was their basketball class 3A boys' state championship in 2015. Led by coach Chad Hollwedel, the Eagles capped off their season with a 57-43 win over Westlake at the XFINITY Center, redeeming their 2011 state championship loss.

"It looked like this red mountain of fans. It was really cool," said Hollwedel, who believes this win brought spirit and excitement throughout the whole school. "It helped unite the players to the student body, to the faculty, and to the community."

The most accomplished

sports program of the decade, Centennial wrestling, won nine state championships and had a second place finish in 2013. Coach Cliff Kraisser and his sons Nathan, Austin, and Jason will forever be remembered within the Centennial wrestling program.

Nathan Kraisser won the first two state championships of the decade, and Austin Kraisser followed with three of the next four. Finally, Jason Kraisser finished the decade strong by winning four straight state titles from 2016 to 2019. He became the eighth wrestler in state history to accomplish this.

The Eagles boys' and girls' cross country teams were also highly successful in the 2010s. The girls' team won state titles in 2013 and 2015 under coach Kevin McCoy, while the boys' team won a state title in 2018 under coach Al Dodds.

Centennial's Allied Sports program, which began at the

start of the decade, has also found major success. The Allied sports program gives special needs students at Centennial a chance to compete and socialize with other special needs students county wide.

"When the allied sports program first started here about ten years ago, there wasn't a lot of participation with the special ed students," said coach Colin Moe. Now through the soccer, bowling, softball, and newly added golf teams, the program has expanded not only at Centennial but throughout the county.

Just in the last five years, Centennial has won county championships in Allied soccer and Allied bowling.

"The students got to receive a trophy and medals so it was pretty cool to watch that," said Moe.

Jean Vanderpool, Centennial athletic director from 2004 to 2018, knows that the sports identity of the school goes far

beyond medals and trophies. The athletes work their hardest every day after school to constantly improve at their respective sport.

"I think that athletes are working harder to be fit. Not only working out in the weight room, but eating better and taking care of their bodies better," Vanderpool said. This dedication goes beyond sports, and shapes Centennial student athletes to work harder towards all their goals in life.

According to Vanderpool, the sports programs' success has also helped bring the school together as one.

"I think when your sports teams are successful, you have more participation by the student body to cheer them on and be supportive and proud to be an Eagle."

- Jeramy Stavlas

Centennial's Spring Sports' Teams Gear Up for the 2020 Season

After a long off-season filled with hard work and preparation, Centennial's Varsity spring sports teams and athletes are eager to get back on the field. Throughout the fall and winter, players have put in the time and effort to improve in their sport, whether it be participating in offseason team workouts or practicing individually.

With the first game just around the corner, it is important to reflect on last year's accomplishments.

Starting with lacrosse, the boys' team was knocked out of the playoffs by rival Mount Hebron in the regional quarterfinals. However, the team returns valuable players from last spring and will have a new head coach, Ken Senisi. Senior attackman Connor Carpenter, who was one of the team's top goal scorers last year, is looking forward to stepping back on the field for the Eagles.

"We want to have a successful year, be one of the top teams in the county and make a deep run in the playoffs. We lost a lot of senior leadership, so players this year will have to step up on and off the field," said Carpenter.

High school sports have such a strong impact on the community because they bring people together to enjoy something they love. For Carpenter, playing lacrosse at Centennial is more than just a game.

"It means that I am part of a treasured history of lacrosse in

Howard County. We are playing for more than just our team. We are playing for a dedicated lacrosse community," Carpenter stated.

For the girls' lacrosse team, they finished fourth in the Howard County standings after ending the 2019 season with a record of 6-3 against county opponents. There are also skilled players returning to the girls' team, such as Lou Lagera. She was named to the all-county second team last year as a sophomore for her stellar performance at attack.

In addition to the lacrosse teams, the Centennial baseball team is looking to improve after the 2019 season. They finished with an overall record of 11-10, and had an impressive playoff run.

Numerous key players will be back on the baseball field for the Eagles, including juniors Jack Pistner and Chris Betler, and senior Zack Steen. All three were named to all-county teams last season.

"Our goal is to win states, and to improve off of our good season last year," said Steen. "We can improve our pitching depth, situational hitting, and not leaving players on base."

For the Centennial softball team, the Eagles placed fifth in the county standings after finishing the season with a 9-6 county record. They were led by star shortstop Lauren Marcotte who returns this year for her senior season after being named



The Centennial boys' Varsity lacrosse team warms up during workouts. Photo by: Sara Ferrara

to the all-county first team for the past three years.

"Playing for Centennial has been such a great experience. Being able to represent Centennial for these past three years has really been a privilege," stated Marcotte. "Playing for Coach Grimm and Coach Maria, and with some of my best friends on and off the field, has made each season so special."

The outdoor track and field team is also coming off an impressive season last year. At the regional track and field meet, the boys' team finished third while the girls' team placed fourth.

"To run for Centennial to me is an amazing thing because the team as a whole has an amazing energy," said senior sprinter Thomas Altman. "Whenever someone on the team steps up to run an event, the entire team will be there on the sidelines cheering you on."

Track and field athletes are also able to compete in the winter indoor track and field season to continue sharpening their technique. Altman took advantage of this and had an impressive indoor season, finishing with one of the fastest times in

Maryland for the 500-meter dash.

Lastly, Centennial's tennis team has been one of the top programs in the county for multiple years. Their impressive 2019 season concluded with winning the 3A state championship after scoring an overall 62 points as a team.

An all-around impressive performance by the tennis team at the state tournament secured the Eagles the championship. Danny Ho and Ryan Huang made it to the finals in the boys' doubles bracket, and Olivia Tsai and Christopher Chen achieved third place in the mixed doubles bracket. Additionally, Rose Huang placed third in the girls' singles bracket, and Shreya Vallimanalan and Abby Jackson finished in second place in the girls' doubles bracket.

Having the chance to put on the Eagles uniform is not an opportunity the players take for granted. With the start of a new decade, teams and athletes will continue to display excellence on and off the field and make the Centennial community proud.

- Joey Sedlacko

TRAVER:SEASON 1

For the first time in over a decade, the Centennial High School theater department has a new director. Jacob Traver, a 2018 graduate of St. Mary's College, is a first-year teacher starting his career here.

"I have enjoyed being here at Centennial every day," remarked Traver. "There are always challenges associated with change, but I am embracing the challenge and continuing to work on both my approach to teaching and theater."

These changes, however, have not been easy for Traver to implement. He has taken this year to experiment with different aspects of the program and to take risks with the productions.

Traver's first play, *Sense and Sensibility*, was produced with modern twists, using dubstep instead of classical music at the beginning of the play with more interactive staging to engage the audience.

"I feel like I am bringing a fresh approach to the 'how' theater can be done," said Traver. "I think outside of the box when it comes to how people work together to create theatre arts, whether that be in the productions or in the classroom."

Throughout this period of development, Traver also has the support of many Centennial teachers to help him adjust.

"Ms. Clark and Ms. Pasciullo have been excellent," said Traver. "But everyone here at Cen-

tennial has been exceptional at assisting me getting started."

Traver has worked hard to build a positive atmosphere between him and his students, and it has not gone unnoticed.

Lacey Gelfand, a senior and sound director for the backstage crew, has recognized Traver's accomplishments in connecting the group.

"His door is always open, both figuratively and literally," said Gelfand.



Traver instructs his theatre one class.
Photo by: Zach Grable

Kai Daley, a junior and an actor in the program, has noticed similar developments of communication.

"[Traver] asks for the actors' input," said Daley. She has also noticed Traver's efforts to improve communication among everyone involved in theater.

"One of the things that has always annoyed me in high school theater is the divide that just seems to be put up between

tech and the actors," stated Daley.

This year, Traver has strived to bridge the gap between the two groups. Daley said this is in part due to "tech days" that Traver has been implementing. Every Friday leading up to a show, the actors and tech crew work together on the behind-the-scenes aspects of the productions with everyone working on building sets, making props, and making costumes.

has decided to take more creative risks with his future productions.

"Oh yes, I am changing things for *Chicago*," Traver exclaimed. "I'm both excited and terrified, but that is an excellent place to be when working on a production."

The changes that Traver is implementing can be risky, and to create the perfect show Traver tries to focus on the positive.

"You can stress and worry and drive yourself crazy trying to get everything perfect, OR -- you can focus on what is going well, what works, what looks excellent, and what needs work," wrote Traver in an email. "Focusing on these things and continuing to work toward opening night gets you there and creates, in the end, what I believe to be a successful show."

- Sasha Allen

CHICAGO

The audience chatters softly in anticipation while the auditorium's closed red curtains reveal nothing of the cast's excitement and nerves. The audience is suddenly hushed when the lights dim and the curtains open to reveal the iconic opening number, "All that Jazz."

Under the direction of the new theater director, Jacob Traver, Centennial is performing the musical *Chicago* on March 19 through March 22.

The musical follows the ambitious Roxie Hart as she claws her way up to the vaudeville stage, trying to escape her mundane life with her husband Amos. One of her idols, Velma Kelly, an established club singer, is threatened by Hart's star power. As they fight to be the main star of the show, the two establish an intense rivalry.

Traver is looking to give the beloved musical's captivating story and timeless songs new life at Centennial.

"I love *Chicago*. Ever since I was young, I've been singing the iconic numbers such as 'Roxie' and 'Mr. Cellophane.' I chose to do *Chicago* at CHS because I thought that I could bring a different spin to it than what has been seen in the county before," Traver states.

Having had a triumphant fall production of *Sense and Sensibility*, Traver is looking to recreate the success of the previous show, but wants to continue to

improve the theater program. Traver explains, "There are a lot of factors that a director keeps in mind when working on a production [such as] the amazing capabilities of our students, the potential of our theatre space, and the ability to take on a challenge. [These] were all elements of *Sense and Sensibility* that I hope to showcase even more in *Chicago*."

"I thought we had the right student body for the show and



The cast of *Chicago* rehearses for the March show. Photo by: Adithi Soogoor

I like the challenges that [*Chicago*] presents in its story," he expresses.

With this optimistic outlook, the preparation for the musical began on January 2.

According to junior Julia Berkley, the actress portraying June, the expectations for the cast are to "show up, work hard and try to be nice."

Having already started preparations on January 3, the tech

crew is also busy building the sets for the musical. Junior Sanjan Pilla, a tech crew member, is excited to work on the set. He says that his favorite part of the play is the people.

"Tech crew is for people who don't think they can act, but still like to watch plays and be part of the play," he says.

Pilla also believes that sometimes, "it gives people confidence to audition the next time. One person was in tech crew

last year, but now she is in the play."

As the date of the musical's opening approaches, the members of the show express their nervousness.

Junior Lilly Rainey, who plays Roxie, says, "I am the most nervous about the scene where I get lifted into the air. I really don't want to fall."

Junior Adam Goldstein, a pit member, is concerned about

"getting all the hits [for the shots]. People get shot in the musical which is represented by a rim shot on the snare and the base drum."

Despite their reservations, the members are very enthusiastic for *Chicago*'s opening.

Rainey believes that, "the musical is on a good track because the numbers are really coming together. We have more energy this year."

Junior Maria Daly, who plays Mama Morton, agrees, saying that "it is really shaping up to be a great production. I am excited to put on the show and have it all come together, because I know that it'll look good and I think the audience will love it."

The cast and crew are not only excited about *Chicago* but also about having Traver as the director of the theatre department.

"Traver's a good director and he's fun to work with," Daly says. She recommends everyone join theatre if they can.

The spring musical *Chicago* will be on March 19-21 at 7:00pm and March 22 at 2:00pm in the auditorium. The tickets will be \$10 online for students, \$12 for general admission, and \$15 at the door. The cast of *Chicago* hopes to see you there!

- Sarah Paz

Alexandra Valerio contributed to this article.

A Phone's Place in School: The Pocket or the Palm?

Technology has been developing at an incredible rate in recent years. Phones have become smartphones, watches have become smartwatches, even fridges, lights, doorbells, and more average household appliances are becoming “smart” through internet connection. Our world is rapidly advancing and we’re often slow to adjust to these constant changes.

Schools, especially, have been slow to adjust to the advancements of the recent decade. That’s not to say that they’re ignoring it and not reacting—they’ve had policies for phones since they presented the possibility of problems. Schools have just been slow to refine these policies and, in some ways, still need to do some fine-tuning. One thing is for sure: the rules are much looser now than they used to be.

Alex Berry, a class of 2015 Centennial alumna, experienced the more restrictive set of rules during her freshman year.

“There weren’t very specific rules. Basically, no one was allowed to use electronics in school— whether you were in class, in the hallways, or at lunch,” Berry reported. “People broke the rules all the time... everyone would text friends under the desk or in their lap or pull their phones out in the hallway between classes.”

Berry disregarded the rules twice herself and was punished for it; both of the situations were ones where using your phone would be acceptable today. Neither offense happened during

an instructional period— she used her phone in the hallway the first time and during lunch the second.

“I had to go to after-school detention for the first time and Saturday school for the second time,” Berry recalled.

While these rules may seem outrageously strict and unfair, it’s important to be aware that, at the time, it was unclear just how much phones would impact the school environment. As schools grew acclimated to the technological advancements, they’ve been able to better gauge how much they affect education and adjust their procedures accordingly.

The HCPSS Student Code of Conduct is still vague in how it addresses phones: instead of having one iron-clad rule for every school in the county, each school has the freedom to determine what needs to be done. Centennial has a section on their Canvas page regarding the acceptable use of technology, and on it they list out the consequences for violating the policies.

“1st violation: Warning; student picks up phone from front office at the end of day. 2nd violation: Detention; parent pick-up of device. 3rd violation: Saturday school; student leaves device in the front office at the beginning of each day for length of time to be determined. 4th and subsequent violations: Consequences determined by administration.”

These consequences are rarely acted out, however, despite

students rarely following the Code of Conduct. This is largely in part due to teacher interference; if a teacher catches a student on their phone, they will often handle the disciplinary action themselves rather than report it to the administration. The consequences teachers deal out are similar, except most are more lenient in terms of severity.

It would be hard to find a student who doesn’t prefer this method of discipline, as indiscriminately giving detention to a student for using their phone two times is unreasonable, and that may be one of the reasons why this system came to be. There are certainly instances where using your phone, even during educational time, is acceptable, or at least understandable: if you get an emergency text from your parents or other family members, then that should take precedence over the 30 seconds of learning that it takes to respond.

However, there are also downsides to this leniency. Even though the official punishments are overreactions in the vast majority of cases, they’re great deterrents and motivate students to stay off their phones during class. While there are situations where using a phone is justified, there are also situations where it isn’t. Cheating has been an issue in education for as long as schools have been around, and now cheating is more streamlined than ever before thanks to phones. Students can share

answers instantaneously, search for an answer online, and often the answer key for entire assignments can be found online.

With the leniency many teachers give, once the student notices that they don’t get reported to administration, they may grow bolder and more belligerent with their phone usage, eventually pushing the teacher to the point where they need to report the student to administration. A student who might’ve otherwise followed the rules out of aversion to punishment could be lulled into a sense of security, believing that the rules won’t be enforced, only to deplete the teacher’s patience and force their hand.

Ultimately, it comes down to the students and teachers to regulate phone use in school. The only way to effectively deal with phones is to trust the students to be responsible with them, even if they’re using them in class, but also be aware that there’ll be those who aren’t, and to treat the two situations differently.

- Xander Mauer

The Power of Arts at Centennial

When someone says they're interested in the arts, there's a flicker of hesitation in the other person's eyes. Maybe even a purse of their lips, or a pause. People are often uncertain as to why anyone would pursue such a difficult and consistently overlooked line of work. Regardless, it's nothing new to the student—they've been dealing with the stigma for their whole life.

Unfortunately, we live in a society where the arts are associated with less value than STEM. Students pursue their careers with the same heart and effort as any other individual, but they are not revered in the same way. We appreciate the arts of the past, and at the same time we push away creators during our own time. This is no different than the rest of history; yet, the artists persist.

Centennial has many students involved in the arts. Past and present, they face the same adversity.

David Stishan, a former student turned actor from the class of 2007, is working on a film with Ed Sanchez, who helped produce the horror film *The Blair Witch Project*. He is also starring in an upcoming ABC show and aims to become a recurring character. In our interview, he spoke of what first inspired him to pursue the arts.

"I was a jock my whole life," Stishan said. "Junior year I got cast [in Centennial's produc-

tion of *Guys and Dolls*], fell in love with it... I was like, 'This is what I want to do. I want to be a performer.'"

Another alumni from 2016, Isa Hanssen, shares her work on various platforms of social media while she finishes school. She discussed her own experiences in finding her passion as an artist.

"Art [had always been] for the most part just mine," Hanssen noted. "For me it was never a question of 'will I be an artist?' It was, 'what kind of artist will I be?'"

Yet, as students continue down the path, they often find a great deal of opposition. Stishan notes that he's still combating the stigma. "It's an ongoing thing," he said. "Find the joy in what you're doing, how other people are enjoying it as well... take stock in what you've done and how it's been celebrated to give you a little boost."

Hanssen briefly considered settling on merely having art as a hobby. "It wasn't overt... it was the prevailing notion that I had chosen something easy, something less important, something ultimately that made me less valuable," she said, in regards to how people reacted to her career choice. "[But] I'm lucky—I have a very supportive family."

Both artists, however, had very different experiences with the trials and tribulations of high school. Stishan found a great deal of inspiration from



Centennial alumni David Stishan poses for his headshot. Photo contributed by: David Stishan

inside Centennial's walls. "It's not without its growing pains, but I really did enjoy my time here," Stishan said. "The fact that I was able to pursue that as well as sports and a bunch of other stuff helped me, for lack of a better cliché, 'find out who I was.'"

Hanssen's experience starkly contrasted Stishan's. "[At Centennial] I was so terrified of being written off as a 'dumb art kid' who didn't need to try academically," Hanssen noted. "I encourage everyone at Centennial to think about how they evaluate success and what they genuinely want out of life. I am happy where I am right now. That's all I can ask for."

Stishan had a prominent word of advice to students struggling with the war on the arts. "For anyone that really feels it and wants to do it, just do it!... Exercise all possibilities. Sate yourself in it."

As for Hanssen, she highlighted the importance of art

in societies past, present, and future. She noted that art "reflects the world as we know—all the good, the bad, the completely stupid, the weird, the gut-wrenching, the genius. It makes people feel things. It's everything from a terrible, funny, cartoon that makes your friend laugh, to the painting hanging on a museum wall that takes your breath away, to the complete full orchestra and the score that makes an entire audience cry without fail."

It's true. Through cultures and emotions, moments of grief to those of love, art has always been a powerful force on Earth. And for those who want to be a part of that world, there should be nothing that can stop them.

"As a certain art teacher is so fond of saying," Hanssen said, "creativity takes courage."

- Emily Hollwedel



STILL MY TOWN: NEVER-ENDING HOPE

Natalie Knight-Griffin proudly poses in front of an Ellicott City sign.
Photos by: Eliza Andrew

I moved to Ellicott City the summer before eighth grade, in 2015. My mom and I walked down Main Street for the very first time the day that we moved. We got coffee, walked into each shop, spoke to the locals and the store owners. We laughed with them, listened to their stories. We felt the difference. I finally understood why my Mom had wanted to move here. It wasn't just for the amazing schools, and college readiness. It was for the community. For the town that, no matter where you went, felt like home.

My mom said something that day that I've never forgotten. "It's like that town Stars Hollow. From Gilmore Girls."

If you've ever seen Gilmore Girls, you know that the imaginary town it's based in, Stars Hollow is filled with charming shops, gazebos, coffee-obsessed characters, and an abundant charisma that made it so lovable. I thought to myself, that's



“For the town that, no matter where you went, felt like home.”



a pretty good point. She told me that since I loved the show so much, I'd probably love to work on Main Street. At the time, I was just thirteen. The

idea of working at all, let alone in a foreign city, felt completely alien, and years away.

I have now worked two jobs on Main Street, one at Little Market Cafe, and one at Su Casa. If you visit frequently, you've probably seen me reading outside of the cafe, or drawing on the chalkboard outside of Su Casa. This town has become my life. In the summers, I spend nearly every day there.

If I had to describe the sense of community surrounding Old Ellicott City, I'm not sure I could. It's the kind of thing you really just have to see for yourself.

During the time I've spent on Main Street, I've gotten to know many of the people I had met that day all those years ago. What I'd say I've learned, most of all, is that this community is strength.

2011, 2016, 2018. Main Street finds itself struck again by vicious rain, wind, and floods.

The loss is devastating. So much so, that small business owners, having spent all of their savings to rebuild after the initial two floods, could not afford to come back.

In the past eight years, Main Street has changed significantly. The community has been struck time and time again, forcing major structural, economic, and social changes. It may be easy to think that because of this, Old Ellicott City is not the same, nor will it ever be. But that's the thing: it is. And I don't think it will ever change.

Maxwell Kiely, the current manager of Little Market Cafe, has worked on Main Street for eight years. Kiely experienced the 2016 and 2018 floods, resulting in a tremendously difficult time.

"I lost my job twice as a result, and they've definitely given me a mild level of PTSD," said Kiely. "Aside from the financial hardship I endured while I was

living on my own and paying my way through college, it tested my ability to push myself at a challenging time.”

One may think there must be some sort of solution to Old Ellicott City’s financial troubles. Such as what so many other communities have done; allowing chains and big business on Main Street. Old Ellicott City is among one of the only remaining towns that contains exclusively small businesses, as places such as Fells Point, downtown Annapolis, and the Inner Harbor have slowly seen more and more corporate storefronts entering their community. Keily, among many other locals, agrees that allowing big businesses on Main Street would only do harm.

“They would easily take away from the charm the historic town has, and would break down the relationship of the community,” declared Kiely. “People visit the town for

the local gems, not big chains. There was previously a Subway on Main Street years ago, and the store did terribly and closed down, not because of flooding, but because it wasn’t making money.”

Among the many things I’ve learned in my years living here, it’s that Main Street is worth fighting for. Old Ellicott City’s tagline is one of pure honesty. You can’t bring this good town down.

“It’s extremely wholesome and tightly knit like a family. I’ve met so many people who’ve told me they’ve never seen a community like this, and I too have yet to find one as well,” Kiely concluded.

As I continue to observe the many wonders of Main Street, its unbelievable sense of hope transcends its struggles. These businesses work tirelessly, not for wealth, nor for their expectation of riches. Instead, for the brilliant smile of loyal cus-

“Old Ellicott City’s tagline is one of pure honesty. You can’t bring this good town down.”

tomers. The conversations of shared hopes. The lit faces of those experiencing Main Street for the first time.

The sunshine after the storm. “I [have] met so many people and had so many awesome experiences,” said Kiely. “Although there may have been opportunities to seek out more money or get a jump start on my professional career, it was a huge source of happiness in my life that I couldn’t bear without it.”

Despite the years of weathering financial troubles, and seemingly hopeless moments, we do not give up.

Instead, we flourish.

- Natalie Knight-Griffin



Main Street on a busy night.

Teachers Look Back on Ten Years at Centennial

Ten years ago, you might've been running around in naïve childhood bliss. Back then, there were no responsibilities, test scores, or Canvas grades to worry you. But, we've entered the 2020s now. Not only have we flipped the page to another year this January, we've also closed the book on the 2010s— It's a new decade, and the 2020s are a way to start again.

In the upcoming ten years, we will be graduating from this school. Some of us finishing off our final years of education, some of us going off to college— No matter where we're headed, we will be using our knowledge from high school as the foundation for what we want to do. For us, our time spent here, despite being unforgettable, is a short, four-year process. Its purpose is to prepare us for what comes next, and the majority of that preparation is provided by the teachers we see every day. And although not one of us was

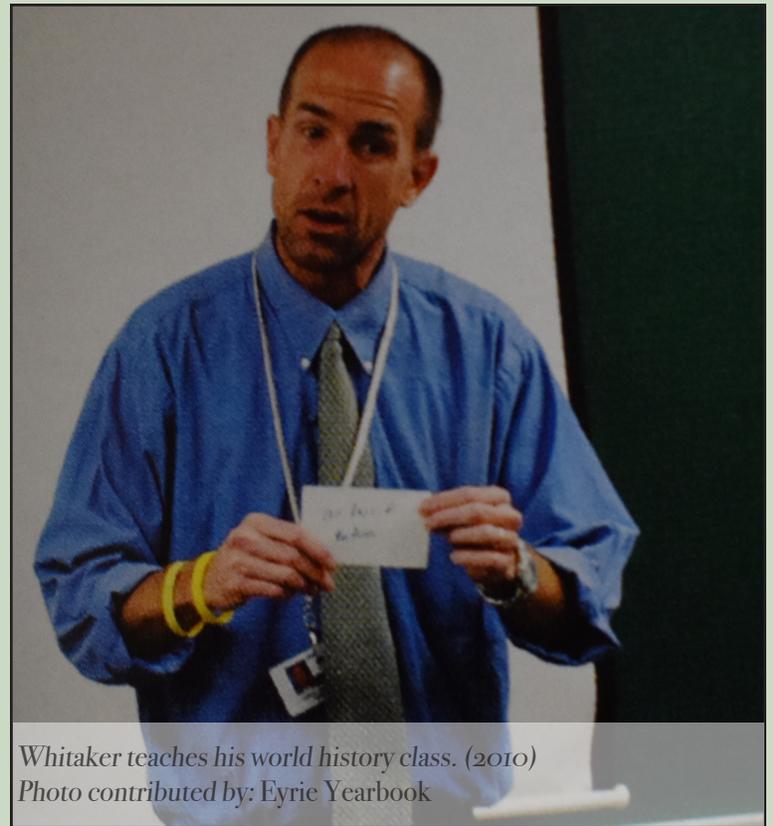
here a decade ago, some of our teachers were.

For the past decade, and for some, longer than that, these teachers have fostered unique experiences in their classrooms. Much of our environment here is thanks to them, as well as the knowledge we will all eventually take with us past the doors of high school. Their job for the past ten years and beyond has been to provide a space at school for us to express ourselves and learn, and in a decade, that goal has not faltered.

In 2010, it seemed like 2020 was too distant to imagine. But upon reflection, Jeremy Whitaker says it feels like no time at all.

"Time flies. I feel like I just started here," said Whitaker, who specializes in world history. He began teaching in Howard County 13 years ago. When he was new, his time teaching was split between Centennial and Long Reach.

"I had no idea of where I



Whitaker teaches his world history class. (2010)
Photo contributed by: Eyrie Yearbook

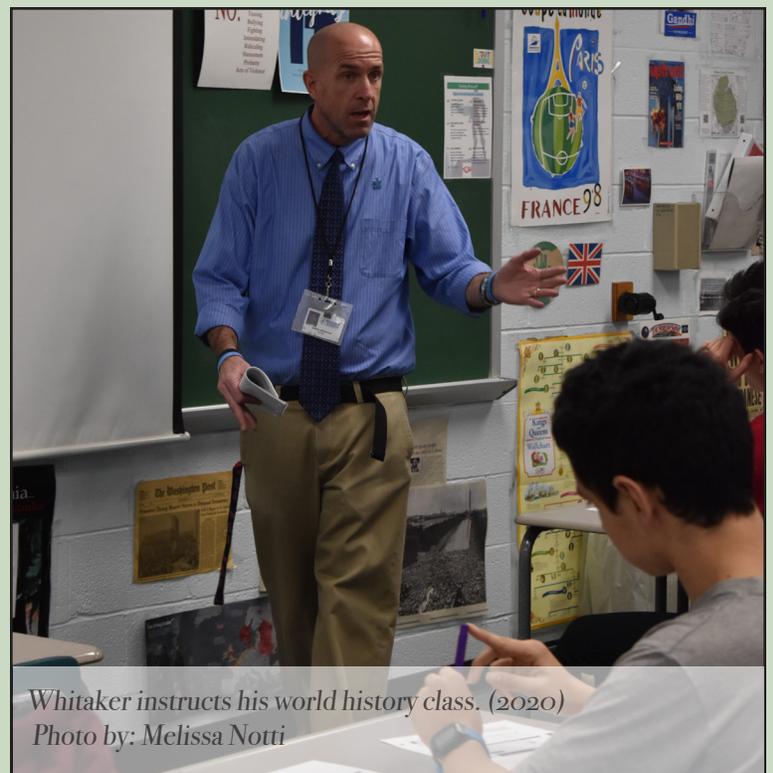
would be in 2020," he admitted.

"I was just trying to adjust to a new county— and hoping to be in a single school the next year."

Whitaker, now with a resident spot in room 906, explains that his goal has always been to give students a better perspec-

tive of the world.

"I think the most important thing that I have learned from my students is to always try and keep it real," Whitaker said. "In other words, [to] make the topic that we are studying real to them, and find ways to connect



Whitaker instructs his world history class. (2020)
Photo by: Melissa Notti



*Collins assists a student in art class. (2009)
Photo contributed by: Eyrie Yearbook*



*Collins helps a student during class. (2020)
Photo by: Melissa Notti*

with it on a personal level... To be able to make connections with people and cultures that we aren't familiar with— and seek out common ground."

Similarly, science teacher Shalonda Holt began 13 years ago at Centennial. She says that her motivation comes from the support of her students. She can recall moments that reaffirmed her decision to teach.

"A couple of years ago I was speaking at a conference, talking about why I became a teacher," she said. "I was thinking about one student I had during my first year, thinking, what happened to her? At the end of the speech, she came up to me, and she was now becoming a teacher. I immediately started crying! She said, 'You're one of the reasons why I'm sitting in this audience today.' It was a full-circle moment."

For the first time this year, Holt is the instructional team leader of the science department, but she says that school is more than just memorizing subjects.

"I tell [my students], it's okay if you don't remember the equation of photosynthesis," she said. "But the skills of critical-

ly analyzing, using evidence to support a claim, working with other people— these are life skills, and that's the goal. I'm always challenging students to grow and step out of their comfort zones, to take a risk... I just hope that when students leave my class, they leave a better person."

Stephen Doff, who teaches both Spanish and French, shares a similar perspective to Holt, but has been at the school for over 20 years. He started in the world language department in 1997.

"Never thought I'd make it this far," Doff reflected. "[It] seems like such a long time... It's hard to believe how much time has passed."

Doff says the impact he leaves is difficult to imagine because he's spent such a long time teaching at Centennial. He finds that after all this time, things can get muddled.

"It's hard to think about... [how] I have changed the lives of those students," he said. "But, when I hear that a former student has chosen to use world language in their career, I do, to some degree, feel that what I taught them created a positive

lasting impression."

Four years prior to Doff, art teacher Nan Collins became a member of Centennial's staff in the fall of 1993. Previously, she taught at Atholton, and moved to Centennial when the Humanities program began.

"I don't know that I've changed [students'] lives, but I've had some impact on them," she said. "Maybe I made them laugh, maybe I taught them an art technique they became confident in. Hopefully I've done some of those things. I think this place changes their lives, and I'm a cog in the [machine]."

Altogether, the last ten years have been a blur. But, for these teachers, they don't see an end to their teaching in the foreseeable future. There's a consensus that the best thing they've found about their teaching thus far, is the people they share this building with.

Whitaker notes that the best thing about having a diverse student body is that everyone has something different to bring to the table. In his 13 years, his students taught him just as much as he taught them.

"It is a privilege to work with young people," Whitaker said.

"The students have so much great background knowledge and interest in so many things. It really drives me to keep up— and keep it interesting."

Collins says that she comes back each year to learn from those around her.

"The only reason I stay here is because the students are stimulating, they're interesting and they're funny and they're smart," Collins praised. "My colleagues are brilliant... and the administration is supportive. The reason I stay is because of the people."

- Natalie Keane

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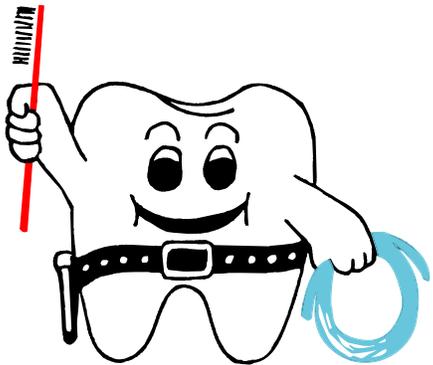
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