

# the wingspan



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# The Wingspan Enters a New Era with Advisor Lauren Mancini

After forty-three years as a publication, the Centennial *Wingspan* welcomed its tenth advisor at the beginning of the 2020-21 school year. English teacher Lauren Mancini stepped up to fill the role after former advisor Rus VanWestervelt decided to step away after nine years with the *Wingspan*.

Mancini has been a teacher for thirteen years, and has been at Centennial for six of them, but this is her first time teaching a class other than English at CHS.

After being with the publication for so long, VanWestervelt was confident that Mancini was the right person to take over.

"I was so excited about Ms. Mancini coming in because she is much younger than I am," he expressed. "She has a better pulse on the technology; on how news is distributed and shared in this twenty-first century. I thought she was a brilliant choice."

Even prior to being offered the position as advisor, Mancini avidly followed the *Wingspan*. "I thought it was well-run and the students involved with it cared a lot about it, which I think is important," she stated.

Though it was her first year advising for Journalism, Mancini does have experience in the field. "I have done publication advising for a good chunk of my career, at least ten years, but usually for literary magazines," Mancini explained. "I attended the Columbia Scholastic Press Association's annual High School Publication Conference a number of times, [going] to various sessions about doing the newspaper or yearbook."

This interest in journalism and other publications has made stepping into VanWestervelt's role much

easier than it would have been otherwise, both for her and the students involved. While the first few weeks were somewhat of a learning period, Mancini and the team eventually learned how one another worked and fell into an easy routine.

The fluidity was due, in part, to Mancini already having a vision of what the *Wingspan* could become when she stepped in as advisor.



Photo contributed by: Lauren Mancini

The first piece of that vision was brought to life when, in just the first few weeks, she changed the online platform used to upload articles. Rather than using Wordpress, the staff adapted to using Sno. Sno's layout is more suitable for a publication and is easier for viewers to navigate, as everything is categorized by writer and article genre.

Other plans were put into action as well, most of which were more

dependent on the students, themselves.

"I like anything where I feel like the students are empowered to be creative and do things they are passionate about," stated Mancini. "[I wanted to give] them more opportunities to do that."

Letting the staff have freedom has always been vital in how the *Wingspan* operated, and Mancini was able to build on that tradition while still being a strong figure for the students to lean on and learn from.

"I trust [this team] to take care of stuff, and that might not be true every year. We might not always have a staff where I feel that way; where I might need to be a little more hands-on," explained Mancini. "I think what has worked well is that [they] do what [they] need to do and trust each other to get it done. And that way I am truly just an advisor and [they] are running the paper."

With the adversity faced due to the COVID-19 pandemic, having someone to look to was important in navigating what being a journalist meant in a time when hands-on investigation was difficult. In a regular environment, Journalism is a very interactive class, but it is hard to truly depend on each other through a computer screen. With Mancini's leadership, the *Wingspan* staff was able to overcome that obstacle and work together despite the physical separation.

According to Mancini, class activities would have been much more dependent on that interactivity had she taught a full year in an actual classroom. "We would be doing more team building, we would be in the room together, we would be talking things out, we would be going and sp-

eaking to sources more directly," she said. "Those are things that we just haven't been able to do."

Despite the hardships faced, Mancini gives credit to her team, and the effort they put in all year. "I think [Delanie has] done a great job just being a leader in a hard time," she stated. Although there were limited events to cover, articles were written and published frequently, and photographers worked to take photos where they could.

Mancini is not the only one with good things to say about the *Wingspan's* work this past year.

"I think [the *Wingspan* has] has done a tremendous job. I am seeing a lot more presence on social media, announcing the articles that are being published," Vanwestervelt praised. "I think [Mancini] is handling this pandemic incredibly, and she is shepherding [the rest of the team] along in the process, so I could not be more happy with the future of Journalism at Centennial under Ms. Mancini."

Her team had similar things to say.

"I think teaching such an interactive class in a virtual setting is a really difficult hurdle, and yet Mrs. Mancini was able to step into the role as if she had been teaching [Journalism] for years," said Jeramy Stavlas, the *Wingspan's* Sports Editor. "The way she was able to help us overcome certain challenges was extremely impressive."

Looking forward, Mancini hopes to implement any changes that she was unable to this year because of the pandemic. These changes include "getting out more issues, playing with things like format, [and] bringing in more digital media."

Furthermore, she hopes to teach her students a thing or two about pushing to do what needs to

be done to get the story.

"I want [my students] as reporters to be a little bit braver and go out on some limbs. We don't rock the boat much, and we probably should be rocking the boat more just because part of journalism is making sure we are helping to question things," Mancini expressed. "Be brave. Look at those things that people might find controversial and that are tough subjects and dig through some of those."

For future journalists at Centennial, Mancini has a bit of advice: "Remember that you are really never alone in Journalism. It really only works if you work as a collective."

- Delanie Tucker

# the Wingspan

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# Meet the



Delanie Tucker  
Editor-In-Chief

"I really don't think I could have asked for a better four years, or for a better team to end things with. The best part about journalism is the people. Everyone always gets along really well, which is why it's easy to collaborate and work together on different things."



Sasha Allen  
Managing Editor

"I have been working on the *Wingspan* for the past three years, and I love the community we have built together. It's so rewarding to see our team grow and work together, and I've had such a great experience writing for our school and community!"



Emily Hollwedel  
Copy Editor

# Wingspan!



Jeramy Stavlas  
Sports Editor

"My favorite part about the *Wingspan* is the inclusivity among the members and how coherent the publication flows."



Adithi Soogoor  
Photo Editor

"My favorite part of the *Wingspan* was wearing clay masks and pore strips in class."



Alexandra Valerio  
Online Editor

"My favorite part about the *Wingspan* is that I have made long lasting friendships and I was able to learn from skilled journalists."



Maggie Ju  
Staff Writer

"My favorite thing about the *Wingspan* is how collaborative it is! The writers, editors, and photographers work together to produce the best journalism possible."

# Seniors **Soaring** to New Heights

Centennial's Class of 2021 faced a huge hurdle this year: tackling the pandemic while also attending school and deciding their futures. However, despite the unprecedented challenges, three Seniors, Jordan Waters, Michelle Weaver and Philip Wang, went above and beyond in their interests in music, sports and STEM during their time at Centennial and will pursue their interests at a professional level.

From a young age, Jordan Waters had a passion for music inspired by those around her. Immersed in a family full of experienced singers, producers and other musicians, "My mom taught me and my sister how to harmonize, and we would go around singing to everybody whenever we got the chance," Waters noted.

"When I was around ten, I started working on my own music and thinking about my future as an artist," she continued. "I had to do a lot of research, but I also had friends and family that had experience and could answer most of my questions. Without their help, I wouldn't be doing what I'm doing."

At eleven, Waters' learned to play her first instrument, the piano. As she grew, she added the bass, guitar and the drums to her repertoire. Even now, she looks to expand musical range by learning to play the violin.

To kick start her own career, Waters researched how to perform and create some of her own music. "I watched a lot of guitar tutorials and read books. I listened to old music and the artist's techniques. I mimicked what my favorite artist did to learn the skill and then incorporated it into other things I did."

During her years at Centennial, Waters played at the White House, and in 2018, performed live at the March for Our Lives rally, where she sang with the likes of Demi Lovato,



Photo contributed by: Jordan Waters

Ariana Grande and Miley Cyrus.

Waters has paved a strong path towards her career as an artist and producer, and she plans to continue this in college by studying business.

"Music is my passion and has always been since I was little," stated Waters. "Within art, I feel music has the most influence over people. It takes you to the past. It's an amazing gift."

Like Waters, Michelle Weaver, a track and field athlete and cross country runner at Centennial, has also mapped future plans for herself.

Weaver's track journey started in elementary school, where in the second grade she ran for the Striders Club. Ten years later, she still carries a passion for the sport.

During three of her four years at Centennial, she ran on the varsity track and cross country teams. According to Weaver, her biggest sports accomplishment in high school was when she "qualified for states and placed well."

She is similarly proud of when she ran under twelve minutes for the two mile in her sophomore year. She attributed this achievement to a piece of advice from her coach,



Photo contributed by: Phillip Wang

Kevin McCoy. "[He] just said to run it like a workout and that was the day I managed to get under twelve."

Weaver happily shared her plans to take her athletics to the next level. "I'm planning on running track next year at Mount St. Mary's, so I'm looking forward to that."

In addition to athletics and music, seniors have thrived in academics. One such student is Philip Wang, a dedicated student with interdisciplinary interests who worked hard to foster his passion for STEM throughout high school. Wang noted, "I am grateful to Centennial for providing advanced classes in both STEM and in the Humanities. I think my strongest aptitude is the ability to draw connections between different disciplines."

Throughout Wang's four years at Centennial, physics and history were particularly of interest. "When I took physics, I was fascinated by Newton's Laws of Motion," he stated. "I discovered the discipline of the History of Science, eventually leading to my research project on Newton."

Due to this interest Wang "conducted research on Isaac Newton under the guidance of a Professor of History, which revealed that alchemy and theology heavily influenced Newton's optics and mechanics."

Wang's hard work in research studies did not go unrecognized: his paper on Newton's studies of alchemy and theology was recently published in Harvard University's Synthesis, an undergraduate journal on the history of science. Starting in the fall, Wang will pursue a history major at Princeton University.

Our seniors have worked hard to foster their learning and passions throughout their time at Centennial, whether it be in the arts, athletics, or academics. They have paved their way for excellence and success in their futures beyond high school.

- Alexandra Valerio and Adithi Soogoor

# Centennial's Future Collegiate Athletes

In 2020, athletes worldwide, including young competitors, faced an unusual dilemma presented by the COVID-19 pandemic: how seriously did they want to take their athletic pursuits? Safety precautions were the clear priority, with leagues and practices shut down not only on a professional level, but also for amateur athletes of all sports. As some lost motivation, others had to make the decision to stay strong and continue to push towards improvement, using the challenges presented by COVID to help them grow.

In the midst of all this, Centennial High School has seen no shortage of collegiate athletic commitments among their student body, which perennially produces star athletes. Fernando Duraes, Anna Kwon, and Paul Russell are three Centennial athletes who have exhibited the necessary effort needed to further their athletic interests beyond high school despite the challenges of the last year.

Anna Kwon, a county-renowned swimmer, committed to the University of Massachusetts Amherst in September of 2020. Howard County schools do not offer a swimming program, but there is an annual county-wide meet in which Kwon was the captain twice. Many swimmers, including Kwon, also routinely com-



Photo contributed by: Paul Russel

peted with club teams.

Kwon knew from early on that she wanted to compete at a higher level, but mentioned “[she] didn’t know it would be this serious until [she] started receiving D1 offers during [her] junior year.”

Going forward, Kwon has high expectations for her collegiate career. “I would love to win some conference meets for my college,” she stated. “I am very excited to feel the camaraderie between all the teammates and to just grow as a team together. I also want to have fun with it.”

Another star athlete, Paul Russell, committed to George Mason University to play volleyball in December of 2020 after making the most of his opportunities with club and AAU teams. Russell has not been able to compete with Centennial since the school doesn’t offer a boys’ volleyball program, but Russell did spend three years on the Eagles’ soccer team.

“Although I couldn’t play volleyball here, I loved playing soccer for Centennial,” Russell remarked. “My teammates, coaches, and fans made each day of training or playing so special.”

Russell began to take volleyball seriously at a very young age. “It was certainly my goal to play Division 1. My dad and two oldest brothers played at Penn State, so I knew I had the ability to do it as well.” His brother, Aaron Russell, won a bronze medal in the 2016 Olympic Games with team USA.

Looking ahead to college, Russell is more focused on prospering as a team than on his personal success. “The biggest thing I want to do is win a national championship,” he revealed. “[That] is much more important to me than individual



Photo contributed by: Fernando Duraes

accolades.”

Finally, Fernando Duraes is a Centennial track and field/cross country runner who committed to Washington University in St. Louis in November of 2020.

Duraes was originally a soccer player who never intended to take his athletics this seriously. “I actually only ran track to stay in shape for soccer at the start,” mentioned Duraes. Three years later, Duraes said he would describe his high school running experience as “life changing.”

One issue faced by many of this year’s seniors, including Duraes, was the difficulty of online college recruiting. “While in recruitment, I couldn’t visit schools or coaches,” he explained, stressing the difficulty of gaging a school’s environment when he was not actually present.

Despite the uncertainty he faced during his recruitment process, Duraes is entering the next chapter of his life with a positive mindset. “I’m excited to see how it is to live with your teammates and go train with them everyday,” he said. “I want to win nationals as a team sometime in my four years for both track and cross country.”

Remarkable talent, effort, and achievement have gotten these students to where they are today and will continue to help them grow as they make their way through college.

- Jeramy Stavlas

# A Conversation With Centennial's

From one of the most adamantly chaotic school years of our time springs the Class of 2021. Despite the abnormalities, little has stopped them from making the most of their final year of high school. This includes the annual tradition of voting for the Teacher of the Year, an honor held by one staff member who then speaks to the entire class at graduation. This year, after weeks of calculating votes, the Class of 2021 selected English teacher Corey O'Brien. I had the pleasure of discussing this award with O'Brien on April 20.

O'Brien has been teaching at Centennial his entire career, starting in the English Language Arts Department in 2001. Currently, he remains in that department, also teaching extensions of the subject such as Humanities and Advanced Composition. It was the latter class in which I had the opportunity to talk with him. As I sat down with him, he was as cheerful and kind as ever, cracking jokes by comparing the English department to the Chicago Bulls dynasty in the 1990s-- just slightly off from the target audience, but still well received by those in the room.

He followed this banter by reflecting on the past twenty years, in order to put life and teaching into perspective. "For as little as you know about life, that's as little as I know about teaching," he joked.

After the fact, he shared his thoughts on the original nomination.

"It's always an honor to be nominated," he began. "A former teacher named Bruce Smith said: 'We're more like farmers who only get to plant seeds, and we never get to harvest the seeds that we plant.' It's moments like being nominated where you get a bit of the bloom of the flowers."

But, given the turbulent year sch-

ools worldwide have experienced, he noted there's a touch of irony to the subject. "In the twenty years I've been here, this year I've felt least effective at my job. But I'm not alone, around the country, it's a struggle... It's my only time being voted teacher of the year where it's been a struggle." Here he began to chuckle. "It's debilitatingly humbling."

When I asked him what had stuck with him through all these years (lessons from students? from fellow staff? general memories?) Mr. O'Brien took a long pause. The room seemed enveloped in his thoughts, the other students in the room eagerly anticipating his response.

At first, he developed a small tangent. "I went into this for selfish reasons, because I never wanted to stop learning- I figured, if that was the case, then I'll never leave a classroom. I am not here to teach as much as I am here to learn. I learn from you all every day. Multiply that by 180 school days, times twenty [years]... It's a lot."

Eventually, after a minute or so of signature exasperated noises in choosing, he answered.

"One of the strongest things that I've learned is that all anyone is really looking for is recognition and dignity, and to be treated with dig-

nity -- for other people to see you and say 'who you are is allowed and accepted,'" he reflected. "Our default is to make assumptions, to discriminate in the way we see the world. But I sincerely believe that you could learn to assume that you don't know everything. That could be the default. That's my daily workout- to curb my assumptions."

At the end of our interview, I inquired if Mr. O'Brien had any words of advice for the 2021 graduating class, especially after such abrupt changes in their expectations; seniors had to curb their own assumptions about their final year of high school due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This, coupled with various forms of discrimination finally thrust into the spotlight, sometimes became understandably overwhelming. With so much uncertainty in this world, their newly nominated Teacher of the Year had only one simple sentence to say on the matter.

"There will be a time to dance," he said. "And when that opportunity presents itself, dance."

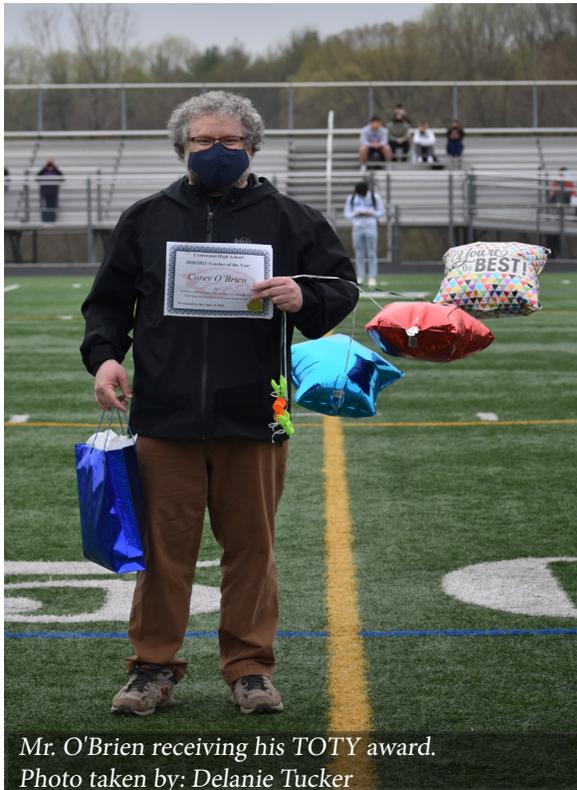
- Emily Hollwedel



"For as little as you know about life, that's as little as I know about teaching."



# 2021 Teacher of the Year



Mr. O'Brien receiving his TOTY award.  
Photo taken by: Delanie Tucker



Photo contributed by: Lauren Mancini



O'Brien with 2020 TOTY, Thomas Wheeler

Photo contributed by: Cate Beckner

# A Season Stripped Away

## *What our Winter Athletes are Doing Next*



Bryson Baker  
Howard University  
Boys' Basketball  
"My favorite HS memory would be scoring 25 points against Marriotts in the playoffs."



Liam Lovering  
Lehigh University  
Boys' Basketball  
"My favorite basketball memory was my first varsity game against Hebron at home."



Tim Woerner  
UMD  
Boys' Basketball  
"My favorite HS memory comes from soccer and scoring the game tying goal against Hebron with one minute left."



John Sedor  
Virginia Tech  
Wrestling  
"My favorite HS memory is Mr. Whitakers AP World class."



Andrew Hockersmith  
Virginia Tech  
Boys' Basketball  
"My favorite HS memory would be yearbook misunderstanding our lacrosse motto of FSG."



Shane Taylor  
Florida Gulf Coast  
Boys' Basketball  
"My favorite HS memory is playing in the Hebron games, beating Marriotts in the playoffs, and just playing in front of the student section in general."



Chris Lee  
HCC  
Wrestling  
"Best memory would be getting my hand raised for the county championship."



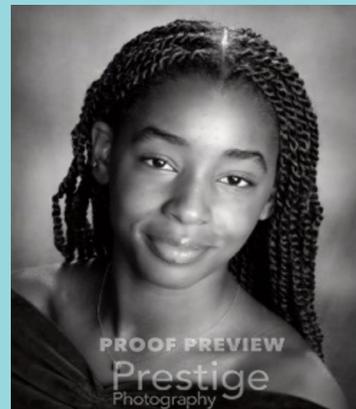
Matt Harris  
 USC  
 Wrestling  
 "I remember all the helpful animal metaphors Coach John would use to help us get the correct technique. Light and fast like a cat."



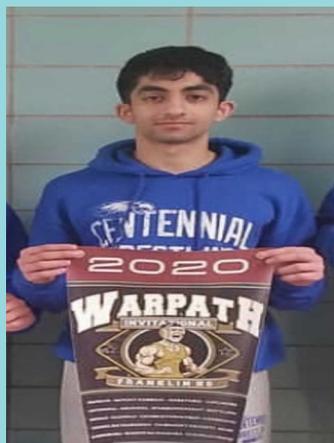
Briana Fant  
 Towson University  
 Girls' Basketball  
 "My favorite memory is definitely sophomore basketball season."



Charlie Schmitt  
 Allegheny College  
 Wrestling  
 "Favorite memory: Beating Long Reach in the last minute this year in our last football game."



Tori Pearson  
 Howard University  
 Girls' Basketball  
 "My favorite HS memory is every team dinner and post-game dinner. It was always the highlight of every season."



Ibaad Shaikh  
 HCC  
 Wrestling  
 "Favorite HS memory: chilling with my friends and teammates on the bleachers before wrestling matches."



Ale Urquiaga  
 UMD  
 Girls' Basketball  
 "My favorite HS memory is beating my personal record in cross country by five minutes."



Nour Eloesily  
 UMD  
 Girls' Basketball  
 "My favorite HS meory is hanging out with my friends and taking naps in Madame Doff's room during lunch."

# Class of '21 Senior Playlist

A small playlist commemorating the graduating Class of 2021, including songs from both the past and present, in hopes of celebrating the future.

- “Prom” by SZA
- “Heat Waves” by Glass Animals
- “Classic” by MKTO
- “The Adults are Talking” by The Strokes
- “Basket Case” by Green Day (clean)
- “Cigarette Daydreams” by Cage the Elephant
- “How Far We’ve Come” by Matchbox Twenty
- “Replay” by Iyaz
- “Kids” by MGMT
- “Die Young” by Kesha
- “Crazy, Classic, Life” by Janelle Monae (clean)
- “I Know the End” by Phoebe Bridgers
- “Fast Car” by Tracy Chapman
- “Ribcage” by Lorde
- “Midnight City” by M83
- “Telephone” by Lady Gaga and Beyonce
- “I Did it All” by Vince Meyers
- “Don’t Stop the Music” by Rihanna
- “Dreamland” by Glass Animals
- “Night Changes” by One Direction

# Music Through a Screen: Resilience Despite a Difficult Year

Due to the confines of a Google Meet, students in Centennial's regionally and nationally recognized music programs were relegated to small rectangles. Where the room would once burst with rich sounds, students now played or sang on their own. Teachers required cameras on while performing, but due to an audio delay, microphones needed to be muted.

The solitude sapped the heart of making music together. "Ensemble music is a very collaborative activity," said band director James Kranz. "It was difficult to translate that into an online format where we couldn't hear our students and they couldn't hear one another."

That changed with the hybrid model, when a handful of students returned to the building masked, well-distanced, and ready to perform. Morale brightened considerably, even for virtual students, who could now hear fellow musicians through the teachers' Google Meets.

Managing two formats at the same time was a new experience, but instructors handled it well. "This year has been a lesson in flexibility, grace, and resilience," said choir director Rebecca Vanover. As a self-described perfectionist, she is working on maintaining a work-life balance while adapting her classes as the situation calls.

"The pandemic has challenged music educators to find new strategies and methods," orchestra director Allen Leung explained. Most music classes utilized a software called Soundtrap to enhance the virtual experience. Similar to GarageBand, Soundtrap lets students upload recordings into individual tracks, and the combined result closely mimics an in-person group performance.

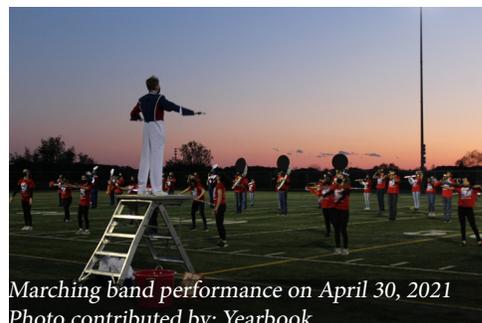
"Singing by myself was not fun at all, but that made me enjoy hearing all of our voices compiled in Soundtrap even more," remarked freshman Joanna Blackman. She is a member of Bella Voce, Centennial's women's choir, and will be rising to Chamber Choir next school year.

Directors worked diligently to ensure students understood the new collaborative resources when creating their final projects. The choir program recorded both department-wide and ensemble pieces. Orchestra students formed small groups and presented a Soundtrap recording of a self-selected piece, ranging from "Toxic" by Britney Spears to the Howl's Moving Castle soundtrack. In addition to the band's virtual productions, the marching band, which had resumed in-person rehearsals in March, performed at the Centennial stadium at the end of April.

An entire year without live recitals was an extreme change for most seniors. From seasonal concerts and musicals to the annual Pops Concert, to special performances like the spring trip, most opportunities to showcase Centennial's musical talent were stripped away. Even with a wildly different final year, seniors still expressed their appreciation for their teachers.

Senior Noah Herren has played the viola for all four years of high school. "Mr. Leung has put in so much care and effort to make the best of our situation," he said.

Centennial's music community has adjusted more than just its curriculum. The Tri-M Music Honor Society, which comprises over one hundred members, sought creative



Marching band performance on April 30, 2021  
Photo contributed by: Yearbook

virtual service opportunities. Where they once ushered concerts and sorted music, Tri-M now records nursing home performances and instructional videos. "It's really exciting to see members continue to offer so much support for our community in the virtual setting," remarked Tri-M president Cissy Wang.

With many students and staff already vaccinated, there is hope on the horizon for next year's students to fully return to classrooms. "The focus is almost 100% on the in-person kids," said sophomore Michelle Bank, a percussionist. She looks forward to performing with the entire Wind Ensemble again.

Centennial's musicians have missed the unique community that comes with face-to-face instruction, and they eagerly anticipate socializing with students in the fall.

"I hope we can come back together and make more music soon," said Vanover. "I'm ready."

- Maggie Ju

# 26 Years of Immigrant Customs Enforcement in Howard County Comes to an End

For the last 26 years, Howard County has been benefiting from their contract with ICE, or US Immigrations and Customs Enforcement, receiving roughly \$2.8 million a year from the majority privatized imprisonment system. According to their website, ICE's mission is to "protect America from the cross-border crime and illegal immigration that threaten national security and public safety." However, many of the ICE detainees are mistreated and develop health problems as a result of their imprisonment, according to reports from the Department of Homeland Security. Since 2003, there have been at least 185 deaths nationwide, many the result of medical neglect.

ICE detention centers have been known to use inhumane practices on their detainees, and immigrant advocacy groups in Howard County have been fighting for years to end the government's contract with ICE. In October of 2020, a Homeland Security report was released detailing numerous human rights violations by the Howard County Detention Center (HCDC), specifically.

"We determined HCDC excessively strip-searched ICE detainees leaving their housing unit to attend activities within the facility, in violation of ICE detention standards and the facility's own search policy," stated the Homeland Security Report. "In addition, HCDC

failed to provide detainees with two hot meals per day, as required. For those in segregation, HCDC did not consistently document that detainees received three meals a day and daily medical visits. Further, HCDC did not properly document the handling of detainee medical grievances." Despite these numerous violations, it wasn't until March 22, over a year later, that the contract was ended with ICE.

Before March 22, there had been other attempts by legislators to end the contract or at least make significant changes. In September of 2020, Calvin Ball announced that the detention centers would only house detainees convicted of violent crimes as opposed to general crimes, which had been the rule before. Violent crimes include murder, rape, manslaughter, and robbery. However, this change came after Howard County Councilmember Liz Walsh introduced a bill, CB51 in September of 2020 by which aimed to formally end the ICE contract.

"The final push [to propose CB51] was the advocacy we saw over the summer, and that there seemed to be momentum growing locally in support of ending the contract," said Walsh. "The Hoco for Justice group came out and marched with the same immigration advocates that had been working on this for years, and it was

really cool and really moving to see those different groups coalescing around the same issue. When I saw that, I felt like it was time. Well, it was really past time, but it couldn't wait any longer."

The Bill that was sponsored by Councilmember Walsh passed 3-2, but Howard County Executive Calvin Ball vetoed the vote. This meant that, despite the vote from the council members, the HCDC would continue to function.

Local advocacy group Howard County Coalition for Immigrant Justice, or HCCIJ, with ties to Centennial through the Young Socialist Movement, expressed their disappointment with the decision. The HCCIJ is composed of around twenty different advocacy groups and named ending the ICE Contract in their mission statement. They have not let the decision on CB51 interfere with their work, however.



"Working with the community has always been first and foremost."



"I was very emotional when I heard that he vetoed it, especially because I was a fan of Calvin Ball in the past, but we stayed the course," recognized Thai Moreira, a member of the HCCIJ. "[But] we understood that it would not be a smooth sail, and we expected bumps in the road. We [kept the focus] on our messaging and on why we were doing this."

Despite the veto, the HCCIJ continued advocating to put pressure on the Howard County Council.

"We did a lot of grassroots mobilization," said Moreira. "We also had the big events prior to the pandemic;

we had a lot of town hall meetings in which we invited people who had been personally affected by the ICE Detention Center [to talk]. I think that was very impactful to hear what the detention center or being detained did to the family.”

Ying Matties, another member of the HCCIJ, agreed that they worked to put the affected community at the forefront of the issue.

“We really try to center the voice and the experience of the people who have been impacted. Many of the coalition members work with people who have been detained,” said Matties. “Working with the community has always been first and foremost.”

In March of 2021, the Maryland state legislature passed the Dignity not Detention Act, which aimed towards preventing the state from entering into any agreements with private groups facilitating immigrant detention. The passing of this act put even more pressure on the Howard

County legislature, and just days later, on March 22, Howard County passed a bill that formally ended the ICE contract.

The legislation, once ending the contract, required a 60 day notification period, so the detainees were allowed to be held until May 18. After May 18, Howard County removed all ICE detainees from their facilities, fully shutting down the program.

The HCCIJ was thrilled with the outcome, as it was the result of years of hard work from all of the groups included.

“It was [the] sheer persistence of those advocates, they are very persistent [and] they are highly organized,” recognized Walsh. “They wanted that contract canceled and they hounded it. They started showing up at press releases and conferences [with] their signs, and people don't like when you do that, but it sure makes a point. At a

certain point, they could have done everything they possibly could have done, and I thought it was my turn to do what needed to be done.”

The HCCIJ and Councilmember Walsh are currently working to inform voters about a referendum aiming to overturn a sanctuary law. For more information on the HCCIJ, visit their Twitter (@HC\_Immigrants) and Instagram (@hcimmigrantjustice).

- Sasha Allen



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