

And indeed there will be time To wonder, 'Do I dare? and, 'Do I dare?'

T.S. Eliot, *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*

EVIE ZIMMER

Our new reality is a chasm of uncertainty that at times can seem overwhelmingly frightening. Not only are we haunted by the mental, physical, and emotional toll that this virus has embedded into our daily lives, but our natural environment – a newfound source of escapism – is rapidly deteriorating as well. Oftentimes it seems that it is too late for our renewed interest in the wellbeing of our landscape as temperatures continue to rise, and fires blaze unceasingly over vast swaths of our home. This hopelessness we may feel can seem obliterating, but there are those, like **Evie Zimmer**, who refuse to be suffocated by its engulfing flames. Zimmer, an MFA student in YSU's art department, has always turned toward nature as a form of inspiration and solace for her paintings; and it is through this medium that she has embarked upon a healing process of both past and present circumstances that is not only personal, but universal in its therapeutic effects.

Although Zimmer's pieces are undoubtedly organic in nature, they combine what she describes as a "kaleidoscopic style with floral and atmospheric elements" (2020)^[1] in order to convey "a sense of time and space, movement and stillness." There's no doubt that this *groovy* quality to Zimmer's pieces takes center stage and protrudes one's immediate thoughts upon looking at the volume of her collective work. Immersing oneself into the ultra-femme hues and themes of her floral paintings, or the neon-soaked vibrations of her more abstract pieces almost transports one to



another dimension where you might find yourself falling down the rabbit hole and talking to purple cats in an overgrown garden.

The result of this work often comes out of a process that, for Zimmer, holds the added benefit of spiritual healing. At the peak of lockdown, when the world around us almost ceased to exist, Zimmer found herself hindered rather than exhilarated in her artistic pursuits. Her inability to order new materials, or gain access to her studio space not only prevented her from physically creating art, but also obstructed an indispensable route of escapism from the surrounding world. Now more than ever it seems that the pull for inspiration, pleasure, and recovery are at the forefront of one's mind, and although Zimmer temporarily relapsed from her creative passion, it was brief in its visit, and quickly and quietly checked out from her mind.

We could all use a checkout from reality sometimes, and although Zimmer has photographic representations of her paintings both on her website and social media platforms, her grippingly saturated-stained pieces are best seen and experienced in-person. There are plenty of opportunities to witness Zimmer's work, as she's been showcasing her artwork in galleries across the U.S. since 2012. Most recently, Zimmer's newest paintings will be on display in spring 2021 at the McDonough Museum on campus, with of course, proper safety precautions in place. Additionally, Zimmer has a solo exhibition scheduled for June 2022 in Columbus, Ohio, which carries hope and optimism at a time when it is so desperately needed. Zimmer's refusal to hinder her work or future progress as an artist is a testament to the notion of temporality, which should be embraced and acted upon at every opportunity. It is the promise of future shows like Zimmer's that beckon us to break free from the tyranny of our reality and immerse ourselves in the fantastical imaginations of the artistic world, if only for a couple of hours. ■

^[1] Zimmer, Evie. Personal Interview. 9 September 2020.

Practicing Intentionality Through YSU's Small Business Development Center

CODY ALLEN &
GEORGINA NORRIS

In many ways, the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic have prompted a re-evaluation of the lifestyle choices that have come to dominate our personal and professional lives. As families flock to more suburban and rural areas, leaving their past metropolitan lives like a forgotten coat in a taxi, so too does a certain attitude of slower, more intentional living ease into the routines of these new daily lifestyles. Intentionality can manifest itself in any aspect of one's life, ranging from the types of food you consume on a daily basis to choosing more locally owned businesses to shop at rather than monopolized franchises and companies. Although the trend of shopping small over the past decade or so has brought more of an awareness to the local, economic, and even moral values of these venues, those efforts have recently been thwarted in the face of financial distress that the pandemic has caused for so many. The critical condition that this has left many small businesses in means that now more than ever administrations such as the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) here at YSU and across the state of Ohio more largely have become invaluable tools for restructuring and resurrecting both the local economy and the local livelihoods of its business owners.

Two YSU graduate students, **Cody Allen** and **Georganna Norris** have been working hands-on with the SBDC throughout the pandemic and have provided an intimate look into the functionality and purposefulness of such an institution within our local economy. Broadly, the SBDC offers three different types of services: business consulting, exporting assistance, and government contracting.^[1] As interns, both Allen and Norris are responsible for a variety of more intimate tasks within the parameters of the SBDC's services such as writing loan proposals, creating content for upcoming events, researching changes in the government marketplace,^[2] learning how cash flow models operate, and creating internal budgeting sheets for grants.^[3] These services in turn communicate to businesses how they can grow their sales and ultimately survive within their local economies,^[4] a critical piece of information that provides both hope and closure for many who may not have otherwise continued in their pursuit. When working with clients, Norris often finds that it is not so much ambition, excitement, or even passion that many local business owners lack in their determination to succeed; rather, it is simply the tools needed to expand their business enterprise in new and innovative ways.^[5]

Such invaluable skills and techniques have facilitated growth for businesses ranging from beauty, 3-D printing, lawn care, educational programs,^[6] barber shops, restaurants, large manufacturing companies, and breweries just to name a few.^[7] As a result of the SBDC's diverse clientele and expert resources, they were able to provide aid to 529 businesses, create 601 new jobs, initiate \$58.2 million in sales growth, and infuse \$57.3 million back into the local economy in 2020.^[8] Without the kinds of resources that YSU's SBDC

can provide, especially during times of extreme economic distress like those experienced throughout 2020 and even into 2021, many local small businesses within the areas of Mahoning, Trumbull, Columbiana, Ashtabula, and even Monroe counties may simply have abandoned their enterprises for lack of financial confidence.

The skills that have fostered the development of so many businesses, jobs, and local economies have also equipped both Allen and Norris with personal attributes that have contributed to their development as students and future professionals. For Allen, who is graduating this spring from YSU's Master of Accountancy program, his time spent at the SBDC ultimately led him to the realization that rather than pursue the typical tax and audit route for his career, he has become more intent on honing in his analysis skills, which the SBDC has both initiated and encouraged during his time there. Allen has also been introduced to a wide range of local professionals, helping him to build and promote his personal network of communications.^[9] Likewise, Norris, who will be graduating in the fall of 2021 with her Master of Business Administration with a Specialization in Digital Marketing, has found that her time spent at the SBDC has helped her to establish certain traits and qualifications that match what employers often look for in Norris's position.^[10] Additionally, both Allen and Norris express that their time spent at the SBDC is a unique attribute to their résumés, equipping them with exceptional skills and experiences that help them stand apart from their peers.

The SBDC is simply more than a financial filler, it provides support, communication, and personal development for both the businesses and students involved in its creation and sustainability. There is a certain level of authenticity and transparency that evolves from relationships rooted in intentionality like those between YSU's SBDC and its clientele. This type of intentionality, perhaps not initially apparent, roots itself in the functionality of institutions such as the SBDC and takes hold beyond its immediate apparatuses into the various branches of livelihood, emotionality, and well-being. Maintaining this practice of intentionality in the future ensures the overall



Georganna Norris

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Business Development Center continued

success of our local economic development; More importantly, however, it underscores how the myriad of potentialities in shifting from inauthentic to genuine practices can present itself as a contribution to the overall betterment of our lives. ■

^[1] Norris, Georganna. Personal Interview. 15 March 2021.

^[2] Norris, Georganna. Personal Interview. 15 March 2021.

^[3] Allen, Cody. Personal Interview. 5 March 2021.

^[4] Allen, Cody. Personal Interview. 5 March 2021.

^[5] Norris, Georganna. Personal Interview. 15 March 2021.

^[6] Norris, Georganna. Personal Interview. 15 March 2021.

^[7] Allen, Cody. Personal Interview. 5 March 2021.

^[8] Allen, Cody. Personal Interview. 5 March 2021.

Norris, Georganna. Personal Interview. 15 March 2021.

^[9] Allen, Cody. Personal Interview. 5 March 2021.

^[10] Norris, Georganna. Personal Interview. 15 March 2021.

Imagine that a typical day in **Chanda Weigel's** life is like camping out in the mind of a curious child whose limitless imagination and wonder for life dictate their every experience and interaction with the world. As an artist one is expected, to a certain degree, to exemplify creativity, innovation, and originality that defines and separates their work. Oftentimes, however, society procures onto the artist the adverse effect of this creativity by boxing them in through ascribing specific qualities, methodologies, or mediums to their work so that they inherently become restricted to those pieces the outside world deems appropriate and worthy of esteem. For Weigel, her chameleon-like adaptability has helped her to avoid this restricting categorization of her work, enabling her to continuously test the limits of her creativity in often new and unexpected ways.

Weigel, a sort-of jack-of-all-trades, prefers mixed media as her artistic medium, which allows her to interweave various approaches such as painting, sculpture, collaging, etc. whose only reliability lies in the unreliable nature of the end product. This unreliability lends itself to an element of the fantastical that laces the edges of each one of her pieces, creating an eclectic, but dreamlike quality that evokes a certain degree of nostalgia within the viewer. This sensation is no accident considering Weigel draws a majority of her inspiration from mythology, folklore, ancestry, and religion. Specifically, Weigel is "interested in the symbols and rituals of our ancestors and how some of those practices have been lost or taken away over the years, especially the customs of women." (2020)[1] Weigel's rebuilding of these lost traditions and myths in her work is both literal and figurative in its application, layering various textures that build upon one another, mimicking the multifaceted cultural dogmas of antiquity.

Weigel's collaborative efforts extend beyond the physical perimeters of her artistic work, overflowing into interdisciplinary educational approaches and local charity projects such as working with peers and local school districts to create stencils for a crosswalk mural. Although COVID-19 restrictions may prevent Weigel from this type of collaboration for a time, it by no means defines or hinders her ability to create on a more intimate, temporal level. Weigel's emphasis on restructuring the esoteric invites a new interpretation that situates itself in the current historical perspective. She pays homage to the often obscured or taboo traditions that have been pushed outside the box of canonization. But it is precisely this type of excavation, this resurrection of lost artifacts that gives Weigel her niche within the artistic community, proving just how subjective and arbitrary our societal ideals are.

Weigel's final project in her MFA program will consist of realistic figure paintings accompanied by other elements such as furniture, porcelain, acrylic, dried flowers, laser-cut fabric, images of animals, and much more. Her pieces will be on display in spring 2021 at the McDonough Museum on campus, which as of now is scheduled to be shown in the traditional manner. I like to imagine that entering into the space of Weigel's pieces has the effect upon one of stepping into an antique store, surrounded by lost treasures that at once seem both familiar and distant, accessible and sacred. This dichotomy of emotional and historical integrity Weigel entwines into her work perfectly underscores not only her collaborative efforts as a researcher, but her innate and unswerving originality as an artist. ■



Mitchell Topf Brings Light to the 'Specter of Syria'

MITCHELL TOPF

As a first-year graduate student in YSU's History program, **Mitchell Topf** has already succeeded in what most academics might traditionally obtain as doctoral students or professional candidates: secure a prestigious fellowship for their research. Topf was awarded one of only two Arlen Specter Center Research Fellowship Awards this year, which focuses its attention on student research surrounding the impact of Senator Arlen Specter's life and work with American politics.^[1] After a discussion with one



Mitchell Topf

of his history professors, Dr. Brian Bonhomme, Topf decided to apply for the Fellowship. This not only presented the opportunity to possibly conduct a more thorough investigation of his Master's thesis topic but at the very least offered him with the experience of preparing materials for an academic position/fellowship, which would be useful throughout his academic career.^[2] Inspired by Specter himself, Topf took a chance on an

opportunity that combines his love of history, his interest in Middle Eastern politics, and even his home state of Pennsylvania, and found that his efforts and passion shone through and paid off in a big way.

Topf's research goal for this project is to delve into the life and career of Arlen Specter, specifically his involvement with the Middle East, which in turn will hopefully lead to a deeper contextual understanding of the Middle East as a region and Syria as a country.

^[3] Specter was a PA senator from 1981 to 2011 during which time he served on the Senate Intelligence Committee. Part of Specter's role on the Committee demanded that he travel to Syria on almost a yearly basis to meet with various Middle Eastern leaders residing throughout his career.^[4] Specter's personal involvement with the Middle East, specifically his travels to Syria, presents a valuable wealth of knowledge that might offer pertinent information underscoring the turmoil that has plagued the Middle East for decades. Topf's acknowledgment of this correlation, and his knowledge that both Syria and Specter himself are topics that have been largely ignored or understudied, provides the opportunity for a wealth of knowledge that may yet be uncovered, and which Topf intends on finding out. To accomplish this, Topf plans on visiting the archives at the University of Pittsburgh, which houses all of Specter's papers, memos, letters, personal recollections, official documents, and potentially other sources of information like audio recordings or photographs.^[5] In addition, Topf will be undertaking research

that specifically pertains to Syria, highlighting consistencies or discrepancies between the information presented in the archives and what is presented on Syria outside of Specter's context.

In addition to Topf's Master's Thesis, his research conducted with the Fellowship will be presented at the Arlen Specter Event Center at the University of Pittsburgh at the end of 2021. When asked about the experience of receiving the Fellowship, Topf responded that it's been surreal to be awarded this honor at such a young age but admits that sometimes it can feel a bit like imposter syndrome as well.^[6] Although Topf participated in various research projects throughout his undergraduate career here at YSU, none have surmounted to the level that this type of research requires. Even though the task may seem daunting at times, Topf is ready for the challenge and sees this opportunity as a steppingstone in advancing his future academic and professional career goals. After obtaining his master's degree, Topf plans on entering the workforce to gain applicable experience in research and writing and is potentially considering obtaining his PhD later on as well. While Topf is in no rush to sign his signature as Dr. Mitchell Topf, the award of this Fellowship, in addition to Topf's commitment and passion toward understanding the processes behind research and its application more generally throughout his graduate career, will undoubtedly provide him with the necessary experience and credentials to achieve that goal when and if the time comes. As the recipient of this award, Topf has proven to both himself and the academic community that not only is this exactly where he belongs, but it's a pretty compelling indication of where he's going as well. ■

^[1] "Research Fellowships." *Jefferson.edu*, Thomas Jefferson University, www.jefferson.edu/academics/colleges-schools-institutes/humanities-sciences/student-resources/specter-center/research-fellowship.html.

^[2] Topf, Mitchell. Personal Interview. 25 March 2021.

^[3] Topf, Mitchell. Personal Interview. 25 March 2021.

^[4] "About Arlen Specter." *Jefferson.edu*, Thomas Jefferson University, <https://www.jefferson.edu/academics/colleges-schools-institutes/humanities-sciences/student-resources/specter-center/about-arlen-specter.html>.

^[5] Topf, Mitchell. Personal Interview. 25 March 2021.

^[6] Topf, Mitchell. Personal Interview. 25 March 2021.

Connecting Past, Present, and Future through Dragana Crnjak's Latest Exhibition, *Peripheries*

DRAGANA CRNJAK

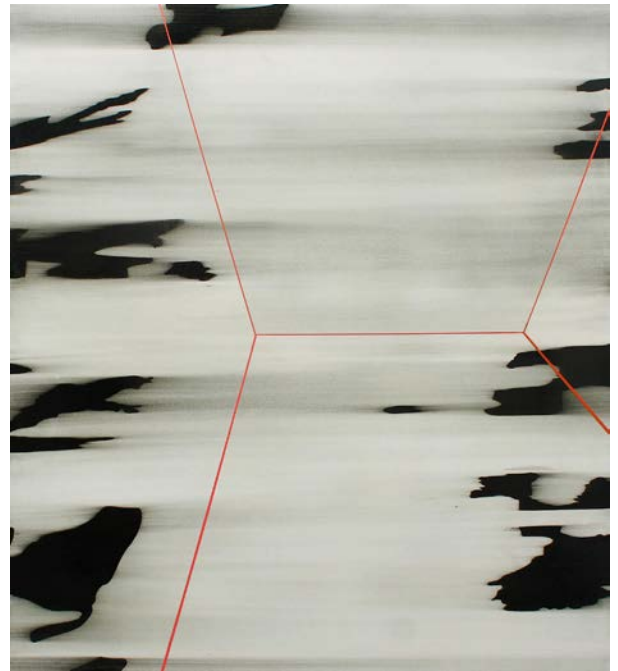
When we think about concepts or periods of time in our lives, many of us divide these moments into the categories of past, present, and future. This type of classification demarcates a separation between the events in our lives that distinguish and define our personhood. But what about the moments that transition or overlap these concepts; the ones in-between past and present, present and future? **Dragana Crnjak**, an associate professor of Art at Youngstown State University, addresses these intermediate moments of our reality in her new body of work titled *Peripheries*. According to Crnjak, the title for this collection evokes the ephemeral, focusing on those brief moments in time that usher in new beginnings or endings, events that are either just beginning or ending.^[1] Crnjak believes that we often observe our own realities from the sides of eyes, our periphery vision if you will, which in turn might afford us a more connected, emotional grounding with our environment.^[2] Crnjak permeates the entire collection with ideas of time and memory, embedding these concepts within every step of the artistic process from the initial seed of inspiration to the final brush of charcoal or acrylic paint on the canvas.

In choosing both charcoal and acrylic paint to construct the pieces within this collection, Crnjak chooses her mediums purposefully for their instability. In doing so, the pieces are able to express a certain softness and fragility, which connects to the idea of something not being easy to grasp, or moments of transition and fragmentation.

^[3] Even without this underlying knowledge, when viewing the pieces within this collection one can conclude that their hazy effects denote a kind of movement or temporality that seems suspended in the moment, while at the same time foreshadowing its inevitable fleeting nature. While Crnjak's thematic implication behind her collection renders a universal application in the sense that many of us may experience periods of transition or uncertainty within our own lives, the collection is also deeply personal and holds roots, both consciously and subconsciously, to Crnjak's experiences as a Yugoslavian refugee.

As an immigrated refugee, Crnjak carries her experiences living within "spaces of flux"^[4] from the instabilities of her past experiences, although she never directly speaks to these issues within her work.^[5] As a result of the notion of displacement being interwoven within all of her work, Crnjak's aesthetic has unsurprisingly developed into varying representations of in-between states that almost always evolve from her previous pieces or collections, once again threading the dynamics of time throughout her entire body of work. This notion of temporality, however, is not the only concept that Crnjak weaves within this collection. The inspiration for the images themselves comes from the domestic elements and patterns of traditional Serbian domestic artistry like crocheting, cross-stitching, and embroidery.^[6] These elements

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Take Off; acrylic on canvas, 50x45 inches, 2021



Soft Walk; charcoal on panel, 20x24 inches, 2021

became the starting point for the *Peripheries* collection, allowing Crnjak to manipulate these patterns digitally and translate them into new spaces and landscapes.^[7] In doing so, Crnjak transforms something intimate into a vast territory that becomes larger than life^[8], marrying once again the relationship between past, present, and future through the transition between forms and spaces, memory, and time.

While the past year inevitably delayed many of Crnjak's scheduled exhibitions, including the *Peripheries* collection at the Page Bond Gallery in Richmond, Virginia, these limitations also exposed many unforeseen freedoms in Crnjak's artistic endeavors that allowed her to re-evaluate certain strategies within her work. This reconceptualization honed in on a more personal, philosophical inquiry into Crnjak's work that addressed questions such as how she creates her work and why it matters.^[9] As someone who began her artistic pursuit as a child, Crnjak reflects on how the unrestricted nature of childhood experiences affords the opportunity of escapism through the visual record of art-making, which in turn found a similar expression of freedom within the solitude of pandemic life.^[10] This return to child-like freedom presents a new perspective and awareness to the truthful nature of Crnjak's work that evolves, rather than separates itself from her previous bodies of work. This truthful nature resonates both personally for Crnjak, but also universally, mirroring the evolution of time within the lives of all individuals. Unsurprisingly, when asked what Crnjak would be doing with her life were she not an artist, her reply was "a drummer."^[11] Following her own beat, Crnjak's distinguished authenticity shines through her work, perhaps even presenting subconscious imagery of quick, momentous drumbeats in the fragmentary, dotted nature of her *Peripheries* collection. ■

[1] Crnjak, Dragana. Personal Interview. 6 April 2021.

[2] Crnjak, Dragana. Personal Interview. 6 April 2021.

[3] Crnjak, Dragana. Personal Interview. 6 April 2021.

[4] "Peripheries: New Work by Dragana Crnjak." *Page Bond Gallery*, <https://pagebondgallery.com/exhibitions/peripheries-new-work-by-dragana-crnjak/>.

[5] Crnjak, Dragana. Personal Interview. 6 April 2021.

[6] Crnjak, Dragana. Personal Interview. 6 April 2021.

[7] Crnjak, Dragana. Personal Interview. 6 April 2021.

[8] Crnjak, Dragana. Personal Interview. 6 April 2021.

[9] Crnjak, Dragana. Personal Interview. 6 April 2021.

[10] Crnjak, Dragana. Personal Interview. 6 April 2021.

[11] Crnjak, Dragana. Personal Interview. 6 April 2021.

Maestros of Mechanical Modernization

IT DEPARTMENT

The word 'technology,' according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, is defined as "The branch of knowledge dealing with the mechanical arts and applied sciences."^[1]

Contrasted with what most people would probably associate the term with – computers, video games, social media, etc. – an apparent divide arises between the physical objects that become a product of technological development, as well as the mechanics and engineering that provide the foundation for the conception and materialization of these products. Even further removed is any semblance of human interference or oversight during this process. If there is personal recognition, it is often on behalf of CEOs such as Steve Jobs or Mark Zuckerberg who, by the time recognition is actually achieved, are so far removed from the inner working and processes of their own companies that the work and development of their products are placed in the unnoticed hands of their countless employees. And why shouldn't these employees, or even smaller companies or departments in general, be recognized for their contribution to what has become one of the most prolific enterprises of the twenty-first century?

These thoughts seem all the more relevant as we continue living through this pandemic, which has, for many, amplified the dependency we have on technology and its abilities to connect us with family, friends, co-workers, and educational institutions. At YSU, however, the efforts of their **IT Department** seem to have garnered the recognition of both faculty and students alike for their swift and accommodating resources both at the onset of this pandemic and as it continues to evolve throughout the year. I sat down (virtually) with YSU's IT manager, **Rosalyn Donaldson**, to obtain a more comprehensive overview of how they accomplished this abrupt

and difficult change, and how they are continuing to adapt to the shifting landscape of the classroom and workplace.

One of the first modifications YSU's IT Department developed and implemented was a cloud application that contains high-end technology that is often found in labs and engineering programs. Although this is important to recognize for its ability to withstand high productivity levels, it is equally as important, and a point which



Anna Leko



Tyree Becker, graduated Fall 2020

Donaldson stresses, that the IT Department also made many other accommodating changes that often lie outside of the inner workings of technological development. For example, IT purchased a number of new laptops, web cameras, and mobile hot-spots to lend to students, faculty, and staff who may not have access to these resources on their own. In addition, they have employed new options for remote desktop support, which enables them to screen-share and troubleshoot customer issues from remote locations.

The IT Department also took into account those students and faculty who may not have a choice, or who simply may choose to do their work on campus. Recent accommodations such as LabFind, which is an app that helps identify open labs on campus where they can use technology to join virtual classes or complete work, provide a safe and socially distanced environment for learning. Similarly, a Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) Lab, another new development on campus, "provides space, connectivity, and printing from your own personal device"^[2] if you prefer to work in a more traditional manner. The IT Department has also collaborated with a number of programs such as Cyberlearning (formerly Distance Education), and the Institute for Teaching and Learning "to offer a series of workshops to help faculty learn more about Blackboard and videoconferencing software."^[3]

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IT Department continued

With the number of first day of semester phone contacts and service tickets having risen by 96% and 107%, respectively, according to Donaldson, it is clear that these technological accommodations have not been unnoticed nor unused. Donaldson has also attested that more students have been reaching out for support through the IT's client portal and email options, with an additional 10% of clients still receiving aid through face-to-face interaction on their campus location.

The current hours of availability for their department, located in Maag Library are: Room 406C:

Monday – Thursday 7:30 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.

Friday 7:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Saturday by phone from 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

In addition, they have two other locations on campus called the Penguin Plug-In Centers which reside in Kilcawley Center near the Cove and on the Moser end of the Moser/Cushwa bridge. These centers assist with issues such as help with downloading software, connectivity, system optimization, and malware removal. Overall, the number of students and faculty reaching out for technological support has been tracking higher this year than the previous.

The achievements of the IT Department during this time are astounding considering most of it was accomplished within a thirteen-day period after the decision on March 10, 2020, to transition to fully online courses. What's more, IT managed to account for all these changes, while also overseeing the influx of customer support, within their current number of staff members. Although they could greatly benefit from an increase in staff, their efforts by no means mirror this discrepancy. Indeed, IT has not only adequately equipped YSU's campus during both spring and fall semesters of 2020, but they have also fully equipped all faculty and staff to either return online full-time in the event COVID-related issues become worse, or, conversely, to return fully in-person in the future. No matter your opinion or preference for learning in this unknown and challenging time, one thing is certain: our understanding of technology, and the essential role it now plays in our lives is only part of the equation in a much larger and more intimate relationship between our technological conveniences and the maestros of mechanical modernization. ■



Dan Clements

^[1] "technology, n." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, September 2020, www.oed.com/view/Entry/198469. Accessed 28 September 2020.

^[2] Donaldson, Rosalyn. Personal Interview. 24 September 2020.

^[3] Donaldson, Rosalyn. Personal Interview. 24 September 2020.

Recruitment Resilience

LEXI RAGER

The 2020-21 academic school year has been a perplexing one, to say the least. Many students, teachers, and staff have faced an onslaught of uncertainties that fundamentally affects both the internal and external characteristics of academia. Perhaps the most challenging debate that many schools were confronted with is the decision to educate their students in person, remote, or through a hybrid of both in an effort to ensure the overall safety and productivity of their students. However, there are other factors looming behind these types of decisions that influence their choice in the matter. One such issue is enrollment and state funding; which, if not met, could leave many schools, particularly universities, in a precarious position. Of course, these concerns are perpetually prevalent in academia, but have been particularly heightened due to the extreme uncertainty surrounding the health and safety of our citizens. It is this heightened awareness that drove YSU graduate student, **Lexi Rager**, to explore this unique opportunity in relation to the recruitment processes of various universities within the surrounding area, and how the effects of COVID-19 have potentially altered the overall success of those tactics.

Rager discusses a wide variety of withstanding recruitment approaches that universities have recently reevaluated in order to boost their enrollment numbers for the 2020-21 academic year. Some of these tactics include personal contact with potential and incoming students, adjusting financial concerns such as “revising payment deadlines, offering in-state tuition to out-of-state residents, discounting tuition, reevaluating financial aid packages, deferring fall tuition payments to spring, offering free tuition in the fall...” (8)^[1], and accepting students based solely on GPA rather than in conjunction with standardized test scores. When polling various incoming students, all of the participants in Rager’s study expressed a unanimous belief that their tuition would be decreased for the 2020 fall semester. Not only does this unveil students’ receptiveness to this financial recruitment tactic, it also highlights a certain expectation these students have for a semester that might not be categorized as “traditional.”

Although Rager’s study was unable to specifically mention any statistical number comparing the enrollment of the previous academic year to the current one, her study did unveil an increase in communication between incoming students and recruitment faculty. This increase in communication has unveiled a rather unanimous insistence among incoming students on the level of transparency that they expect universities to disclose within the recruitment process. Although this type of transparency can prove difficult due to the ever-changing details of COVID-19, this does afford some students a certain degree of autonomy when deciding what the best type of altered college experience is right for them. For example, two of the students in Rager’s study expressed their decision to either live on or off campus for the upcoming fall 2020 semester, which may have been the result of either receiving a

tuition cut or not depending on whether the student has chosen to live independently or at home.

Traditionally, students who may not have the financial opportunities to live on-campus might now be able to do so due (in part) to these tuition cuts. However, many students may also conversely be trapped into a certain living condition due to scholarship terms or a lack of financial ability. These types of circumstances can drastically alter the decision of prospective students based upon what they are looking for in a college experience, prompting students to push for this type of transparency during the recruitment process. Regardless of the choices that incoming students make, it can be assumed that most freshmen entering the 2020-21 academic school year knew that there would be a degree of uncertainty and difference shadowing the beginning of their college experience. What is left to be seen, and what will arguably pose an even greater challenge to the recruiting process, will be the next round of recruitment for the 2021-22 school year.

The main difference between the 2020-21 and 2021-22 academic school years is that the majority of incoming freshmen for the former most likely made their college decision well before the impact of COVID-19 had hindered traditional recruitment tactics, such as touring universities in-person. Current high school seniors might not be afforded this type of opportunity depending on their location and the universities they are interested in, which means that a more comprehensive effort on both the students and recruitment staff is needed in order to address the needs and concerns that come with choosing a university to attend. Many students will be looking at altered ACT or SAT testing protocols, potentially limited or nonexistent access to high school college reps, and limited accessibility to touring universities in-person. All of these factors stress the importance of communication and transparency that Rager has undermined in her study and seen first-hand as the Coordinator of Student Recruitment & Engagement at YSU’s Honor’s College.

Rager graduated from YSU in the summer of 2020 with an MA in Communications and is currently pursuing a Graduate Certificate in Data Analytics. In addition to her scholarly qualifications, Rager’s personal experience as an honors recruit and leader in teaching several Introduction to Honors seminar courses to first-semester freshmen has equipped her with the means necessary to provide an in-depth look into the upcoming changes in recruitment processes across university campuses. Rager has been able to witness firsthand many of the fears and expectations that incoming freshmen students have faced during their hybridized college experience, noting that many of these students still display high levels of optimism about the beginnings of their college experience, often finding themselves surprised at how much they have received out of the semester than they were originally anticipating. Many of

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Rager continued

these students have expressed that they have been able to connect to the university, build relationships with faculty and other students, and progress unhampered in their studies, even though they have not had a “normal” freshmen experience.

What is normal though, and what has become evident in both Rager’s study and her personal observations, is the fundamental core of what attending a university should procure in its students. Receiving an education, building relationships, and making connections has withstood in the ambitions and actions of students regardless of its method. Although Rager’s study may be limited in its scope, the results of these observations cannot and should not be excluded from the more general freshmen population. The large continuance of incoming freshmen, whether they choose to remain on or off campus, showcases just how resilient and eager they are in trying to make the best of an unusual and possibly even frightening situation. Instead of fearing the unknown, these students have embraced its unpredictable path and taken the road unknown. ■

^[1] Rager, Lexi E. *The Impact of Covid-19 on Recruitment, Enrollment, and Freshman Expectations in Higher Education*. 2020. Youngstown State University, Master’s Thesis.

Dr. Cory Brozina uses NSF Grant Money to Research Student Commuter Success Rates

CORY BROZINA

There are certain characteristics that come to define college campuses for their uniqueness as a university set apart from others. For Youngstown State University, there is one feature in particular that tends to stand out as a distinguishing aspect of students' campus experience: the large number of commuter students. For many traditional universities, most, if not all undergraduate students live on campus in some type of housing full-time, especially freshmen students for which these universities often mandate this as a requirement for their incoming students. Living on campus full-time allows these students greater and more convenient access to a variety of campus activities, not to mention the sheer proximity of living around other students 24/7, which increases students' social interactions and skills throughout their time spent at the university. Research has proven many benefits of this type of social interaction, but what happens when this type of integration may not be readily available to students? YSU's Dr. Cory Brozina, an assistant professor of engineering, has recently set out to address the implications of this question for YSU's commuter students; specifically, engineering students.



Cory Brozina

Dr. Brozina plans to accomplish this research through the funding that was recently awarded to him through a grant provided by the National Science Foundation (NSF), which is one of the most prestigious and competitive government agencies that supports research in fields such as mathematics, computer science, and the social sciences. Every year the NSF puts out a call to researchers across the U.S. to apply for S-STEM funding, for which only one proposal can be submitted per year, per institution. Dr. Brozina, who had previously applied to the institution for three consecutive years, finally garnered the foundation's attention with his proposal titled, "Developing and Encouraging Engineer Professionals within a Commuter Student Population." Through Dr. Brozina's award, which surmounts to almost a million dollars (\$999,971.00) for research to be conducted over the next five years, Dr. Brozina and his co-investigators (Dr. Hazel Marie and Dr. Kathleen Cripe) plan to investigate the relationships between engineering commuter students at YSU's campus and their retention rates in an effort to increase graduation rates for those students, which in turn increases the regional economy through subsequent job stimulation.

Dr. Brozina and his co-investigators have already begun recruitment processes that will garner the participants for the

research at hand. A large portion of the grant (\$624,000) is dedicated to student scholarships that will be awarded to incoming freshmen students selected to participate in the program, which includes a cohort learning community, programmatic activities for both participants and non-participants, and mentorship. Participants must be PELL eligible, which is a grant awarded to undergraduate students who qualify for exceptional financial need (*Federal Student Aid*)^[1] and exhibit academic talent, which is characterized by an ACT score of 27 or above in math in addition to good high school grades. Twelve to fifteen participants will initially be selected to receive an estimated average scholarship of about \$5,200, which will be funded for a total of four years to each student. Subsequent participants will be selected over the next 2-3 years as well. Dr. Hazel Marie, who is heading the recruitment processes, is specifically looking for female applicants in order to help bolster the number of female engineering students currently enrolled at YSU, which only amounts to about 15-25%. Their goal is to strengthen those numbers to over 30% of female students who enroll and succeed in obtaining degrees within YSU's engineering program.

What's most crucial throughout the course of this program, however, is the level of integration that student participants will be expected to partake in throughout their four years at YSU. Certain cohort enrichment activities, such as community building and mentoring amongst others, will encourage various social interactions not only for the students selected to participate in this study but for STEM and engineering students more generally as well. Research has shown that social interaction amongst undergraduate students, in general, tends to correlate to a higher success rate within their environment. For Dr. Brozina's work in particular, he will be referencing the model of co-curricular support, which states that academic, social, professional, and university integration are key elements in supporting student success.^[2] On a basic level, integration equates to involvement which can range from simply talking to other peers to participating in co-curricular activities. Furthermore, research has shown that higher social interaction levels amongst students, particularly engineering students, will likely lead to persistence in engineering programs and higher engineering graduation rates.

The need for this type of research, especially on YSU's campus, is supported through comparing historical research statistics for 6-year graduation rates of engineering students nationally (about 60-70%) and the corresponding rates of engineering students at YSU (about 50%). The critical period for student engineering graduation success rates lies in the first 1-2 years of their undergraduate career. One of the biggest opportunities that this program can offer the engineering program at YSU is the increase of retention rates for engineering students. About 45% of students in the engineering program at YSU, either in their first or second year in the program,

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either switch majors, switch schools or drop out altogether. This is especially true for high-achieving, low-income students, which comprise about 10-20% of the total engineering student population at YSU.

What Dr. Brozina and his co-investigators hope to contribute to this existing research is the added level of commuter-student status, which has not been explored within previous research that draws upon the model of co-curricular support. In addition, Dr. Brozina's research will address the misconception of commuter students traditionally being connected to non-traditional students. YSU's commuter-style campus offers an alternative to the term "commuter student," opening up new possibilities and discoveries that have gone unnoticed within research focusing on the correlation between commuter students and success rates. Dr. Brozina is also adding another dimension to his research by observing engineering students in particular, rather than commuter populations more generally. Not only will this research aim to help strengthen enrollment and graduation efforts for YSU's engineering program, it also (if successful) will in turn help strengthen the regional economy by filling the many local job opportunities geared toward engineering degrees with a focus in technology. In the meantime, Dr. Brozina also hopes to offer a short-term solution to this gap in our local economy by offering participants within the program summer internship opportunities with local businesses.

Dr. Brozina and his co-investigators' groundbreaking research

over the next five years will offer valuable contributions to both the national field of research and our own local institutions and economy. In addition to the NSF grant he received for this project, Dr. Brozina also obtained another NSF award this year for \$300,000 to study student support and success of non-traditional students (commuters, full-time jobs, possible children, financially independent, etc.) in engineering. Both of these projects compliment the other and will most likely offer new insights that have previously been unexplored. As a 3-time award recipient from the NSF, Dr. Brozina's research effort and success speaks for itself. The collaboration between Dr. Brozina, the NSF, and the student participants create a beneficial outcome for all parties involved, but most importantly offers potentially life-changing opportunities for students through their education, their environment, and their economic prospects.

*Dr. Brozina is currently seeking two graduate students from YSU, either in an engineering or professional communications program, to work as research assistants for both NSF research projects. Positions are fully paid, and potential applicants can find information regarding the abstracts for the "Developing and Encouraging Engineering Professionals within a Commuter Student Population" [here](#),^[3] and the "Studying Student Support and Success Experience to Improve Persistence of Nontraditional Students in Engineering" [here](#).^[4] For more information, please contact Dr. Cory Brozina at (330) 941-3028 or scbrozina@ysu.edu. ■

^[1] *Federal Student Aid*, studentaid.gov/understand-aid/types/grants/pell.

^[2] Leshay Hall, Janice, et al. "Toward a Measurement of Co-Curricular Support: Insights from an Exploratory Factor Analysis." *American Society for Engineering Education*, 2019, pp. 1-15. *Google Scholar*, <https://par.nsf.gov/servlets/purl/10092335>. Accessed 12 March 2021.

^[3] Brozina, Cory. Developing and Encouraging Engineering Professionals within a Commuter Student Population. 16 November 2020. *National Science Foundation*, https://www.nsf.gov/awardsearch/showAward?AWD_ID=2030894&HistoricalAwards=false.

^[4] Brozina, Cory. Studying Student Support and Success Experiences to Improve Persistence of Nontraditional Students in Engineering. 24 February 2021. *National Science Foundation*, https://www.nsf.gov/awardsearch/showAward?AWD_ID=2044347&HistoricalAwards=false.

Fresh Air, Fresh Food, Fresh Finds in the Fight Against COVID-19

KAITLYN DAFF

If there's one thing we've learned from living with COVID-19, it's the importance of ventilation, airflow, and protective equipment to prevent the spread of respiratory droplets. With this emphasis, which necessitates practices such as wearing masks and social distancing, one might wonder how factors such as diet and nutrition have any direct correlation to those suffering from COVID-19.

Kaitlyn Daff, a recent graduate from Youngstown State University with a Master's of Gerontology, has brought a critical eye to this often overlooked and undervalued contribution to the healing of COVID-19 patients both in her thesis and professional career.

In doing so, Daff's expert pursuit and studies have enabled her to see firsthand just how crucial a nutritional impact can be to those suffering and recovering from COVID-19 and makes a compelling case for its immediate integration.

While Daff does acknowledge that COVID-19 primarily targets the respiratory system, she contends that this does not necessarily mean the damage this disease inflicts on the body is only constrained to the lungs. This damage not only "puts an additional stress on the rest of the body to heal injured lung tissue,"⁽¹⁾ it also disrupts how the rest of the body functions on a regular basis, which may cause many processes and systems to slow down. Of course, this may come as no surprise in terms of critical patients who often see multiple organ system failures as a result of their contraction of the disease. However, Daff points out that sidelined consequences, such as clinical malnutrition, might equally serve as a major contributor to the overall denigration of patients suffering from the disease. For example, as the body tries to heal itself, muscle tissue might be burnt as fuel, which leads a patient feeling even weaker than before and causes them to lose weight. Additionally, patients may also experience a loss of appetite, which can take away from the body's ability to support the extra energy being expelled during the healing process.

In order to prevent these types of cascading consequences, nutritional rehabilitation is essential in helping to preserve the body's muscle tissue from being used as a replacement for the energy that nutrition should be supplying. Daff insists that efforts to prevent malnutrition in patients should not only be restricted to those who may be considered a higher risk, such as the elderly. The full-body response that COVID-19 triggers in patients is happening to anyone who contracts the disease, Daff explains. This means that regardless of the severity with which your body experiences the disease, it is still dependent upon a greater need for nutritional



Kaitlyn Daff

benefits to repair even the slightest damage that may be inflicted. In many cases this might be likened to the weakness you may feel when catching a cold and only being able to sustain a diet of chicken noodle soup for a few days. Moreover, more severe cases, which can develop regardless of age or any type of preexisting medical history, prove to be even harder to nutritionally rehabilitate patients. According to Daff, this happens because doctors are not only trying to replenish the nutrients lost to the actual disease itself, but they may also have to treat the effects of any preexisting forms of malnutrition in the patient as well.

In order to obtain the most beneficial results, treatment for nutritional deficiencies and malnutrition should not be restricted to patients' hospitalization stays. It is important to maintain a post-hospitalization treatment plan, especially when

considering high-risk patients. Although many patients who are high-risk will probably spend a good amount of time either in a hospital or assisted living facility to begin with, which requires the staffing of clinical dietitians to provide medical nutritional therapy, these practices may end once the patient is sufficiently recovered to be discharged and sent home. Regardless of whether these dietitians educate their patients on post-hospitalized nutritional rehab, many of these patients may be unwilling or financially unable to maintain these types of practices at home. For some, their communities may already have the infrastructure to provide services such as nutrient information and programs that offer free or affordable food services that could ensure the ongoing success of their residents. However, there are equally, if not more, communities who are unable to provide these types of services, putting many disadvantaged groups of people in greater jeopardy when it comes to the recovery process. Without this type of medical care, patients in general are prone to suffer higher infection rates, high remissions back into the hospital, higher mortality rates, and even a rise in healthcare spending. Daff's study not only addresses this issue but also offers cost-effective proposals on how to amend this economic discrepancy.

As a clinical dietician, Daff possesses the experience and expert knowledge on malnutrition and its effects on the body. She is trained to reflect how different diseases and their various states might precipitate a state of malnutrition in the body, which is why the correlation between COVID-19 and malnutrition was immediately brought to the attention of Daff, her colleagues, and other researchers alike. To further support Daff's thesis, a recent piece of literature was published by the American Society for Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition (ASPEN), which specifically

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outlined certain guidelines for dieticians on how best to treat a patient with a COVID-19 nutritional status.^[2] In addition to this article highlighting the severity of this virus's threat to a patient's nutritional status, it also inspired Daff's own research project, further adding to the growing literature surrounding the subject. Due to the novelty of this disease, new literature surrounding the subject is being published almost daily, with those emphasizing a nutritional aspect almost unanimously agreeing on the importance nutritional optimization plays in the healing process.

Although this study began with Daff's time spent as a YSU graduate student, her time as a clinical dietician at Mercy Health Youngstown hospital for the past three years has also only furthered her interest in and growing knowledge of the connection between nutrition and COVID-19. Working on four different units within the hospital – the progressive step-down unit, the neuro-spinal unit, the orthopedic trauma unit, and inpatient acute rehabilitation unit – Daff has been able to accumulate a repertoire of hands-on experience with her patients that enables her to quantify the ability to show how the information presented within her thesis can help promote better outcomes for her rehab patients, especially those recovering from COVID-19. Although Daff has not yet been able to specifically implement her nutritional program on the acute rehab unit due to COVID-19 restrictions put in place, she hopes to integrate her research more fully once it is safe to do so. Not only does this add to the overall benefit of her study, it also benefits the real-life patients who suffer from the consequences of this disease; building the body to a healthy state, and hope to a higher standard. ■

^[1] Daff, Kaitlyn. Personal Interview. 22 September 2020.

^[2] Martindale, R., Patel, J.J., Taylor, B., Arabi, Y.M., Warren, M. and McClave, S.A. (2020), Nutrition Therapy in Critically Ill Patients With Coronavirus Disease 2019. *Journal of Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition*, 44: 1174-1184. doi:10.1002/jpen.1930

Caring to Counsel

JAKE PROTIVNAK

What is 'mental health?' According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the term 'mental health' includes our "emotional, psychological, and social well-being," and signifies our ability to "handle stress, relate to others, and make healthy choices."^[1] But what exactly constitutes our well-being? For some, this might simply be taking a much-needed vacation, or a day or two off from work to de-compress and relax. For others, something deeper and more long-term might become



Jake Protivnak

a required addition to their daily or weekly routines. The necessity for this type of consistency has only grown over the past year as individuals continue to seek various outlets that can help navigate the often unpredictable and emotional turmoil of this pandemic.

Jake Protivnak, a professor, and counseling program director for the department of Psychological Sciences and Counseling at Youngstown State University's Beeghly College of Liberal Arts, Social Sciences, and Education, has become intimately aware of this influx in humanity's mindfulness toward the benefits of counseling services. Additionally, Protivnak has recently garnered the recognition of the Ohio Counseling Association for his commitment toward addressing the growing demands of his profession over the past fifteen years.

As the recipient of the Ohio Counseling Association Research Award (one among many other awards Protivnak has received throughout his career), which recognizes Protivnak's consistent scholarly contributions to the counseling profession, Protivnak has addressed research that has often been under-examined within the field, bringing new perspectives and insight to the growing number of benefits counseling can offer. In addition, Protivnak has authored over twenty journal publications, over thirty book chapters and articles, and delivered over a hundred regional, state, and national conference presentations. Furthermore, Protivnak has served on the editorial board for two counseling journals over the past ten years, contributed as a committee member on several doctoral dissertations, and maintained his Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor, Licensed School Counselor, and Nationally Certified Counselor credentials. Not only does this attest to his scholarly productivity and professional development, it also demonstrates his continued commitment to the betterment of counseling services more generally.

Although these contributions help advance the national discussion surrounding counseling practices today, Protivnak's

services are accessible on a more local level as a resource for both students and community members alike. Working for YSU's nationally CACREP-accredited counseling program, Protivnak has had the opportunity to fully immerse himself in an educational and enriching environment that has allowed him to develop training, expand community-university collaboration, and even acquire a grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services which provided individual \$10,000 stipends for seventeen counseling program graduate students here at YSU, all of whom have since graduated and are now serving the community as counselors. Protivnak's efforts to facilitate growth within the counseling program here at YSU continues to attract more and more students to a profession that is predicted to increase by 25% over the next ten years according to the Occupational Outlook Handbook.^[2] What's more, students who choose to enter into YSU's various programs for counseling, either through graduate or undergraduate study, have nearly a 100% employment rate upon graduation.

This statistic not only points to students' growing interest in the field of counseling, but also the community's, and by extension society's, increased interest in and appreciation of the benefits that counseling services can offer. Over the past several years, K-12 schools and college campuses have experienced a steady increase in the need for counseling services, and the pandemic has only accelerated those needs. Protivnak addresses this issue in a recent article he published in the *Journal of School Counseling*, focusing on the unprecedented grief that elementary school students are experiencing as a result of relationship loss that the pandemic has caused. Beyond the pandemic, many individuals find healing in counseling for other reasons such as depression, anxiety, substance abuse, or other mental disorders or life issues causing distress.

^[3] Protivnak's own experiences with these circumstances pushed him toward his degree, seeking to better understand himself and his family through the tools he learned both in his educational and professional careers. For students looking to embark within the various fields of counseling, YSU's program offers a wide variety of program tracks including addiction counseling, clinical mental health counseling, college counseling & student affairs, and school counseling.

The growing appreciation that society has invested in the benefits of counseling programs throughout the last ten years has promoted a positive turn for counseling programs nationwide. However, there are still those who often feel stigma or shame surrounding the idea of incorporating counseling into their lives. To counteract this belief, Protivnak has implemented resources within our own community to try and help ensure that individuals feel more comfortable communicating with others about the benefits of counseling. One such resource is Protivnak's position as a founding board member of *State of Mind: Hudson*, which is an advocacy organization of individuals from different professions working together to increase

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Protivnak continued

mental health awareness and reduce the stigma for those who wish to seek treatment for mental health issues. This organization brings in experts each year to share their knowledge and research during National Mental Illness Awareness Week (first full week of October), through free mental health education workshops in Hudson, Ohio that address a number of mental health topics. It is a collaborative relationship between those who wish to dedicate their lives to the betterment of society, and those whose lives can be improved by the benefits of those practices.

Referencing the CDC's definition once again, counseling practices deal with mental health, providing individuals with the tools needed to change the way we think, feel and behave. These changes don't alter the essence of our beings, but rather work toward improving our mental and emotional functioning, which ultimately leads to a better, happier, and more satisfied version of ourselves. What's truly unique about counseling practices is that it can vary from simply wishing to talk to someone about the daily anxieties we face, to being the driving force behind saving someone's life; in which case, the national suicide prevention lifeline (1-800-273-8255) is an invaluable resource. Regardless of our own personal hardships, we as humans are complex, emotional, social creatures who sometimes need to engage with our support systems for help whether that be in the form

of a friend, a family member, or the larger social network of our communities. Although life's unexpectedness will always be a challenge to our daily lives, we can be sure that counselors like Jake Protivnak, whose passion for helping others permeates beyond his inner circle by putting down roots into the rings of community engagement, is committed to nurturing our mindfulness through the caring of counseling. ■

^[1] "Learn About Mental Health - Mental Health - CDC." *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 26 Jan. 2018, www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/learn/index.htm.

^[2] "Substance Abuse, Behavioral Disorder, and Mental Health Counselors : Occupational Outlook Handbook." *U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics*, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1 Sept. 2020, www.bls.gov/OOH/community-and-social-service/substance-abuse-behavioral-disorder-and-mental-health-counselors.htm.

^[3] Protivnak, Jake. Personal Interview. 1 March 2021.



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