Volume 34 Issue 1 January 2020



# VJM Journal



## PACking the House by: Katie McLaughlin '20

In any great musical or play, there is a cast and a plotline. But consider this, what about the people behind the scenes who actually brought the performance venue to life? On Friday, September 6th, Villa history was changed forever. The entire student body, staff, and even the Sisters of St. Casimir attended the opening Mass for this school year.

This year was different and more special because it was also the grand opening of Villa's new Performing Arts Center. You may be wondering, how much did this actually cost? Where did the money come from? Why is it that it took so long to build?

This reporter had the absolute pleasure of interviewing Mrs. McDonald, Villa's Director of Institutional Advancement. Her job is to work to improve Villa in any way she can and ensure that we have a sufficient learning environment. One of the main focuses of her work, for the past few years was to work alongside the sisters to build the Performing Arts Center for Villa.

"The school actually did a feasibility study years ago, which basically looks at the people in a certain area and says, 'Can we do this?' So Villa brought in a company, and they interviewed a lot of people. "

She further explained that the company came back with the report and said that raising the money to build would be difficult. The Board of Directors and the Sisters of St. Casimir were determined. "When Mr. Kardish came on board, the Sisters talked to him and said, 'The girls deserve this. Our girls have to have this. We want to make this happen. We'll give you the first million dollars to get you started."

This was what jump started the construction process for this building. The Sisters have been trying to make this happen for over two decades. Mr. Kardish saw the determination and excitement from the Sisters, so he did what he could to help them as soon as possible.

"The Sisters were so interested in the arts. Overall they're interested in finding and developing those talents of the students... This has been in process for over twenty years."

The PAC is such an improvement from the gymnasium in ways that many people might not know. It holds exactly 607 people, the stage is three times larger than the one in the gym, and you can hear everything as well in the back row as you could if you were seated in the front. That is because of the wooden sound panels on the sides and on the ceiling of the audience space. The PAC can be used for many other events besides Performing Arts; assemblies, graduation practice, forensics, and so much more!

There have been many uses for this fabulous space already, including this year's Ring Day mass, and visits from guest speakers. Aditionally, Villa put on an original show "The Best of Broadway: A Musical Cabaret." It has been described as a collection of popular Broadway favorites, as well as music from previous Villa productions. Filled with captivating choreography and magical melodies, Villa Drama participants graced the stage in the Performing Arts Center, welcoming the audience to the brand new space.

Coming soon to the Performing Arts Center is Villa's Spring production of "Legally Blonde!" Follow Elle on her journey to Harvard University, where she finds a second chance to rediscover love. Auditions and casting are over and we could not be more excited to begin this process.

# SWORD Cuts Ribbon

by: Olivia Glunz '20

On Jan. 8th, the ribbon was cut on the Student Workshop for Organization, Revision, and Drafting (SWORD). If you are in need of advice or support for any stage in the writing process, come in on any Wednesday during your lunch period. This is a fabulous opportunity to develop your writing skills or consult with a fellow student. Peer readers from the National English Honor Society are available to hear your ideas, stimulate the brainstorming process, or help with the finishing touches for any assignment: papers, lab reports, videos, etc. Mrs. Wisniewski, who helped train the peer readers, says that they "are extremely excited to be mentors for their fellow classmates." Their goal is "to make writing a journey rather than a destination" for all members of the community.

SWORD is the brainchild of Ms. Chirico, who utilized, and later worked in, Villanova's writing center as an undergrad. She strives to create a similar culture at Villa "where writing is dynamic" and collaborative. Jems will become comfortable seeking and giving advice in here so they can take advantage of such opportunities in college. In SWORD's future: expanding availability and hosting workshops and other events. Ms. Chirico reminds students that "the pen is mightier with the SWORD."

# Planting the Seed

by: Nadia O'Hara'20

The power of "yet," a concept that is often forgotten in everyday life, was recently presented to Villa Joseph Marie High School. December 12th, just a week before everyone left for winter break, was a very stressful time. There were tests to take, projects to finish, and work to catch up on. Thankfully, the faculty, staff, and student body were gifted with the concept of Growth Mindset, created by Carol Dwek.

Miss Kendy, our teacher for the morning, came in to talk to us about the power that 'yet' truly holds. She taught us that, through data, students can see that their brains learn more easily and more productively when it is in a positive state. With this mindset, we are always working towards meeting a potential, and therefore, we are always progressing.

Ms. May, the AP Psychology teacher, wants us to always keep in mind that, "failure is a part of learning and that mindset is everything." Continue to work on yourself and you can always succeed, and remember the wise words of Carol Dwek, "Becoming is better than being."

Need more help? Don't worry, this was not a one and done session. There will be future visits and activities to reinforce personal growth. Stay tuned!



# Poll: Who Would be on Your Celebrity Mt. Rushmore?

ST BURG



Freshmen: Megan McKendry and Ashleigh Britsch

Harry Styles

Jennifer Aniston

Arianna Grande

Justin Bieber



## Sophomore: Erin McFadden

Raini Rodriguez

Shawn Mendes

Charli D'Amelio (tik tok star)

Hayley Williams



Junior: Miss Chirico's 8th Period

Mother Teresa

Michelle Obama

Celine Dion

Jennifer Lopez

Why: "They are all Oueens!"



## Senior: Jess Stott

Cameron Boyce

**Bruno** Mars

Harry Styles

Selena Gomez

Why: "They seem like mentors to me."



Faculty: Mr. Dennis

Viola Davis

Ellen

Tom Hanks

Hugh Jackman

# News-in-Brief: Highlights from Fall 2019















## **Commissioning Mass**

1. Teachers receive a blessing from the Sisters of St. Casimir. The Sisters passed on their wishes for all in attendance and filled their hearts and souls with kind words.

## **Commissioning Mass**

2. President Tom Kardish shares his thoughts on the PAC's completion and commissioning.

## Fall Spirit Day

3. Juniors on the Blue Team struggling in the sock Tug-o-War. The Blue Team fell short this year, but the Junior class vows victory next year.

## Halloween Parade

4. Homeroom 208 was off to see the Wizard at the Emerald City of Victory at this year's Halloween Parade.

### Feast

5. Students receiving food and comfort at the Thanksgiving Feast from their teachers.

## Feast

6. A cornucopia of laughs and sisterhood could be found at every table at Feast.

## After Feast

7. Students line the halls for another year's post meal games. Nothing like a bit of "friendly" competition to aid digestion.

### After Feast

8. Emily Borell was a cart-riding gladiator in the relay games that closed out the day.

## Cabaret

9. Rose Vizza, Katie Campbell , Katie Bruni, Meghan Campolongo and Alex Banford were living a Hard Knock Life at this year's Broadway Cabaret.

## Mr. Bennett by: Tara Czekner '20



The energy in Mr. Bennett's room is loud, exciting, and engaging. In both his American Law/ Women's Studies and Government courses, there is an emphasis on "go[ing] beyond the textbook and tak[ing] learning to the next step."

Mr. Bennett's last teaching position at Archbishop Wood, and he earned his B.A. in History and Education from Arcadia University. He has enjoyed his time here at Villa thus far praising that "Students are focused on content, and the teachers could not be more friendly and collaborative."

Students that don't take Government or Law may recognize Mr. Bennett from CSC, of which he is a co-moderator. A deeply religious man, Mr. Bennett confides that he values the "faith and service" involved in CSC. His long-term goal while at Villa, through CSC and his classes, is to "empower" his students and "make better citizens and better people". He also plans to attend meetings of Supreme Court Club and Mock Trial.

Students rave about his classes. Sophie Goldberg '20, says, "[Mr. Bennett] brings a lot of spirit to the class... A lot of people who aren't usually into government or law get involved." Helen Chimbos, a student in both Government and Law, chimes in, "He's a great addition to Villa." Girls also love his incorporation of debate into classes. "He makes sure to hear and respect everyone's opinions when we debate," Madeline Marriott '20, reflects.

Mr. Bennett says that, so far, Villa feels like "home." Let's continue to make him feel welcome,.

# Mrs. McGonigle (nee Kenny)

by: Allison DeFriece '22



Ever wonder what really happens during a chemical reaction? Look no further! New teacher Mrs. McGonigle is here to help. This Villanova graduate, avid hiker, and New York native is thrilled to be teaching at Villa!

She got her humble start in Chemistry by stumbling upon a few extra chem courses in college. She ended up taking a liking to the subject and finds pleasure in getting hands-on with experiments. Getting students to understand something they didn't before is her favorite part about teaching. She loves encouraging people to enjoy science and considers herself a chemical expert! Upon arriving to Villa, she found the whole community extremely sweet and supportive.

One thing she especially appreciates is that each student says "thank you!" before leaving class. Mrs. McGonigle loves the color blue, snacking on pizza, watching the medical dramedy "Scrubs," and her 2 dogs. As a dedicated runner, she appreciates a healthy hike and prides herself on her successful completion of a marathon. On her bucket list is to endeavor a triathlon... but she might need some time for this. After all, she's been busy! Recently married, she and her husband tied the knot at their alma mater, Villanova, in December. Welcome to Villa, Mrs. McGonigle!

Oh, and she has a favorite periodic table element: neon! Ask her about it some time.

# Mrs. Martin

by: Cait Carolan '20



Villa is so thrilled to welcome its latest addition to the Theology Department: Mrs. Martin! This year, she is teaching Church History to the Sophomore class. Read on to learn all about our newest teacher's background, education, and interests.

Having younger siblings, Mrs. Martin has felt like a teacher in some regard for most of her life. "I just felt that I had a natural ability to be able to explain concepts in a clear, explicit, and concrete way," she said. In that way, pursuing education was an easy enough choice. Going into her first year of college, she felt a strong call to pursue Theology. Mrs. Martin described her family as faith-centered, but explained that as a young person, she often took her faith for granted and failed to see it as the gift that she now recognizes it as. It wasn't until an impactful youth pilgrimage to Australia and her overcoming of other personal struggles that Mrs. Martin realized she was truly meant to share her passion for the faith with others. She was able to combine her two loves, teaching and religion, to educate and guide students "in need of spiritual formation and a relationship with Christ." She added, "Inspiring students to actively live their faith and develop a deeper relationship with God is a humbling call."

As for her life outside of school, Mrs. Martin loves to spend time with her family, traveling, and experiencing new places, people, and food. She also shared that she used to work as a manager at Boston Market in high school and college "happily serving chicken to the public." Mrs. Martin just delivered her third baby, a boy, in December! Welcome to Villa!





Mr. Mayer, Villa's newest addition to the Math Department, quickly integrated himself into the Villa community through teaching, co-moderating CSC, and volunteering at the White Out Dance. The mathematician felt suited to be a teacher because he enjoyed working with children and tutored during his high school years, but he did not always know that he wanted to choose math. While attending Villanova University, Mr. Mayer developed a fondness for mathematics and decided to major in the field after being undeclared.

Coming to Villa as an experienced teacher, Mr. Mayer has also worked in Bensalem and Villanova University, where he taught Calculus I, II, and III to Freshmen. Growing up in the area and going to Neshaminy High School, Mr. Mayer had always

heard positive things about Villa and was eager to work here when he learned about a job opening.

Villa students attest that Mr. Mayer fulfills his purpose of making a difference by helping people learn and understand. Juli Bloesch '20 says that Mr. Mayer "is very helpful and makes himself available to his students. He is understanding and fits in well with the Villa community," and Gabby Lyons '21 raves that "Mr. Mayer greets us with a smile each day in the hallways and as we walk into class. He makes Pre-Calc fun, enjoyable, and understandable in a practical way. I always look forward to his class!" When he is not teaching, Mr. Mayer enjoys a good book and video game and likes film-making. He is happy to be at Villa and is excited to work with everyone. Villa gladly welcomes Mr. Mayer.

# Mr. Mykytiuch by: Olivia Glunz '20





Mr. Mykytiuch was an aspiring physicist at West Chester when his professor suggested that he explore education. Mr. M began by observing science teachers... and was dissatisfied by what he saw. They weren't "inspiring students" to pursue science. His disappointment inspired him to dedicate his life to teaching and motivating his students. He changed his major to Education with a concentration in Physics and hasn't looked back.

After teaching at St. Basil, Upper Moreland, and St. Joe's Prep, Mr. M joined the Villa family as the new Physics teacher. His experience at Villa has been fantastic thus far. "I have great students," he says. Mr. M is also a familiar face on the soccer field.

As the JV Soccer Coach, he says his goal is to help girls "prepare themselves to play varsity." Mr. M was especially excited for this year's playoffs.

Aside from soccer, Mr. M enjoys tinkering and hiking in his free time. An avid traveler, he loves traversing the country. He's hoping to return to the West Coast this upcoming year. Mr. M also has aspirations for his teaching career. "I hope I'm empowering my students," he says. He looks forward to meeting with his current students in the future once they've graduated. He's especially excited to see girls pursue STEM careers. Enthusiastic on the field and in the classroom, Mr. M is a fantastic addition to the Villa community.

# Mr. Sheenan

by: Ella DaPrato '20



Mr. Sheenan is very passionate about chemistry. One of the many things he loves about the subject is that it is all around us, in everyone's lives- from cars, to food, to the air we breathe. Most of these things are all made of chemicals and rely on chemists to produce them and make them work. This year in chemistry, the students in his classes will be doing lots of experiments with lighting burners and chemicals, witnessing together all sorts of color changes and reactions.

Before Villa, Mr. Sheenan worked in Upper Dublin High School and the Pennsbury School District, but once the opportunity to work at Villa came up, he took it, because he felt ready for change. He is excited to be working at an education center with such a great reputation, a kind staff, and smaller classes! Some other fun things about him include that he's a lifelong skier. He has skied the Swiss Alps. In addition, he was at Superbowl LII, when the Eagles beat the Patriots. He greatly cherishes having seen it in person. Both his wife and daughter are teachers as well. It appears valuing education is a trait they share as a family. The student body is so excited to welcome Mr. Sheenan into our Villa family!

### A Jem Returns

Joining the staff for the next few months is Grace Scarpello '12. She will be filling the Theology II position while Mrs. Martin is on maternity leave. Ms. Scarpello recieved a Bachelors in Theology/Religious Studies from The University of Scranton. "It feels great to be back! It's exciting to see how much Villa has grown and expanded. One of the Jesuit sayings I have always held close to me is 'finding God in all things.' I'm hoping to bring that to the classroom as well."

# **Sports Highlights**



## A Bittersweet End in Hershey

by: Grace Brennan '20

Another stellar year, another trip to States. There is much to celebrate when it comes to Villa's Soccer Team this year.

The team had a spectacular season. This year marks the Villa Soccer Team's 29th League Championship win. With the guidance of Coach Rich Finnefrock and Assistant Coach Caroline Gray, the Soccer Team excelled. As the competition increased, the girls did not crack under pressure. They rose above and played to the best of their abilities. The Villa Team has won Districts for the last 8 years and their determination pulled them through for their 9th year.

Captain Jackie Levins stated, "Despite the outcome at Hershey, I am so proud of everyone on the team both on and off the field. We started out really rough, but turned it around, and couldn't have asked for a better way to end the season." She worked to improve the team alongside Captains Jillian Hunter and Julia Beck. The Soccer Team formed an unbreakable bond. With their talent and drive, the girls have proven themselves to be one of the best teams in the state and worthy of our praise and admiration.

# Track is on Its Mark

## by: Skylar Masselle'21

This year's Cross Country Team really did an outstanding job. In addition to winning multiple league meets, Lily Dineen and Meredith Glunz both made it to States. "Although it's been hard only having eleven girls on the team, and the fact that we lost a good amount of Seniors last year, I think we've all done a good job of pulling our weight to help the team grow." says Gianna Fiduccia. With this, the team has made a lot of improvements. Although the team lost many students last year, a strong Freshman presence proves that the Jems remain a force to be reckoned with. For example, Meredith Glunz '23, won the AACA and the Distict One titles.

Overall, it was a great year for the Cross Country Team and we are excited to see what the future brings.

## Field Hockey: Sticking Together

by: Maddie Marriott '20 Editor-in-Chief

Villa's Field Hockey Team made us proud once again this season. Leading the team as this year's captains were Emma Garrison '20, Marissa Mangione '20, Charlotte Stubbs '20, and Kylie Aquaro '21. Emma Garrison described the team's season as a successful one with some "great wins and some tough losses." According to Emma, the highlights of their season have been their wins against Archbishop Wood and St. Basil's, both mustwin games in which all the girls played amazingly. The team has many Seniors who will be greatly missed after graduation. Jillian Stott, Marissa Mangione, Jessica Aniloff, Gianna LaMena, Emma Garrison, Charlotte Stubbs, Jordan Benner, and managers Shannon Menarde and Jessica Stott, have all been a part of the organization since their Freshman year. "This team has become my family. We've all grown together and have seen what it really means to be a team, and I love that I've gotten to be a part of that," said Gianna LaMena. These girls are an important part of the team, but they are confident that the team will be in good hands next year as they have many talented Juniors, Sophomores, and Freshmen that will carry the team for years to come.

# Queens of the Court

by: Ines Dominique '21

This year, Villa Tennis was a small yet proud varsity team consisting of Captains Sarah Cahill, Katie Boesch, Ines Dominique, supported by Alyssa Chiminski, Emily Montemuro, Morgan Decker, and Molly McAtee, along with the JV team who worked hard to develop their skills. Varsity doubles teams included Alyssa and Emily, Morgan and Molly. Alex Venth, team manager, kept everyone in order despite her injury!

The team was middle ranked among the league but we all played with passion and determination. Coached by Jessica Sims, a crossfit enthusiast, the team enjoyed workouts all season. If you are looking to join a sport that blends determination and fun, join the Tennis team next year.

# Row, Row, Row Your Boat

by: Allyson Gallagher '21

The Villa Joseph Marie Rowing Team, started only three short years ago, has made a name for itself in the rowing community. Crew, as it is commonly referred to, has become competitive within the City of Philadelphia and even nationally. Not only has the team accumulated several medals from regattas, including a gold at City Championships, but it was also the first women's team established in Bucks County. Coaching the team is John Musial with the help of the freshman coach, Tyler Judge. The captains of the team are Mireille Dina and Liz Iwasyk.

Over the past year, the Rowing Team has had great additions to the program including three new eights, one of which is named after Mother Maria. The girls dedicate their time during the fall season, winter workouts, and spring season. The team is full of spirit and a great place for any girl who is looking to try a new sport.



# Serving up a Great Season

by: Alexis Wetzler '21

This year, Villa's Volleyball Team came to an astonishing finish of 13-9, their best record in school history. The head coach, Douglas Campbell, along with assistant coach, Danni McKelvey, helped the girls reach their goals by making it to District playoffs for the second season in a row, being the fifth seed.

Hunter Odias (Middle) stood out this year because of her dominating hits against the other teams and her ability to block the ball continuously. She received the League All-Star award for her performance in the 2019 season and has more to come in the future. The girls fell to Mount Saint Joseph in a hard fought first game of the playoffs, ending Villa's season. Still, these girls are motivated for next year's season to come and to make playoffs again for the third time.



# Golf Fore-ges Ahead!

by: Alexandra Venth '21

Fall 2019 was a very eventful season for the Golf Team! They welcomed a new coach, Connor Sharp, as well as eleven new golfers across all grades. Junior Bridgid Schultz, who co-captained this season alongside Senior Elizabeth Rafferty says, "It was a fantastic season with an amazing group of girls!" Throughout the season, each girl, whether it was her first year or her fourth year, became a much better golfer and made many new and lasting bonds. Bridgid and Elizabeth were chosen to represent the team at the PIAA District One Qualifiers at Raven's Claw Golf Club. Elizabeth moved on to the AAA Golf Championships. The Jems headed to the league championships, which closed out their season.

The team wishes a bittersweet farewell to Angela Nolan, Elizabeth Rafferty, and Caitlin Webster, this year's superb senior golfers. Though their loss will be felt by the whole team, the Jems are already looking forward to getting back on the course next year.



# Come Sail Away

by: Sarah Taylor '22

The Villa Sailing Team, with five incredible Jems, had a fantastic first year! The Sailing Jems practiced on Mondays and Wednesdays on the Delaware River. Practices normally ran for two and a half hours! The girls sail in a two-person boat called a 420. The team goal is to "provide a new and fun team for Villa so that some young girls can learn something different. It can help build lots of skills and knowledge."

The coach, Angus Robertson, is also the coach for the Main Line, an area around Philadelphia. Dillan Smith '23, the team captain, states that she loves sailing because, "You get to meet kids from other schools along the Main Line, and it is different." If you want to find out more about sailing you can go to the Villa website or talk to one of the girls from the team. Team members include: Olivia Burke '23, Mackenzie Robertson '20, Devin Smith '22, Dillan Smith '23, and Mackenzie Smith '20.



## EDITORIAL NOTE

The VJM Journal is a student publication. It is created by the VJM Journal staff, along with the students of the Media & Journalism class. The opinions present in the paper do not reflect those of the larger student body, staff, faculty or administration of Villa Joseph Marie High School. Letters and comments should be sent to Mr. Pacenski. E-mail: <u>mpacenski@vjmhs.org</u>



STAFF Jessica Angelucci

Isabelle Anzabi Avamarie Backich Grace Brennan Katie Bruni **Emily Bruni** Cait Carolan Aly Chomenko Tara Czekner Ella DaPrato Allison DeFriece **Ines** Dominique Allyson Gallagher Olivia Glunz Molly Mangan Skylar Masselle Jaclyn McDade Erin McFadden Katie McLaughlin Nadia O'Hara Gabriella Perotti Anna Schreiner Sarah Taylor Juliana Tulio Alexandra Venth **Colette Weidle Alexis Wetzler** 

#### **EDITORS**

Maddie Marriott Editor-in-Chief

> Mr. Pacenski Moderator

Mrs. Franzzo & Mrs.Gorman Special Thanks

## **Cleaniness Is a Virtue**

by: Nadia O'Hara '20 & Grace Brennan '20

Hygiene: it is not a matter of preference but of health. Villa Joseph Marie is a college prep school, but are the students preparing for the real world, especially avoiding illness during cold and flu season? Some worry that it has become a common trend to rush through hand washing, a crucial real-world skill in the fight to stay healthy. During the winter months especially, hygiene matters more than ever. It is not about smelling like roses, but it can raise serious health concerns. Villa Joseph Marie students joke about a "Villa plague" that comes once a year. Sickness is not just a matter of weather. It can be a direct result of germs from students who do not take proper care of their hygienic needs. You'd be surprised how many people don't wash their hands properly after using the bathroom. In the long run, it is more important to be germ free than early to class. If you washed your hands, for 60 seconds with warm water and soap, you could help reduce bacteria that is spread throughout your daily interactions.

When building personal hygiene you are building healthy habits and self-esteem. You will be aware of your attempt to ultimately feel better and more presentable. Once in a while you can get away with using

# **Grades: Stay Positive**

by: Aly Chomenko'20 & Avamarie Backich '20

Many fail to realize the toxic effects that negatively talking about grades can have on the mindset of others. Excessively talking about grades can cause others to perceive negativity or self-centeredness. No one knows everyone else's story, but because we care so much about our grades, it can be a sensitive topic to hear about.

We took a poll around the café asking people their opinion on others sharing grades. We asked the question, "How often do you hear people talking about grades at Villa?" A total of six full lunch tables answered daily. This shows that everyone is aware of the issue.

Your thought process now might be: "Complaining about my grades does not affect anyone else but me!" But you have to realize, when venting about your grades to someone else, something might be occurring unconsciously: peer pressure. Peer pressure is defined as the influence of members of one's peer group. Negatively talking hand sanitizer when you don't have soap. However, you are in a community of people that are trying to learn and teach in an environment that is clear of infection.



about your grades to someone can cause them to feel inferior in comparison. Student polling data supports this.

For example, if you go on a rant about "bombing" a test saying how stupid you are for getting an A-, a nearby C student may hear your complaint and question her selfworth. This however can be overcome by remaining positive and utilizing growth mindset techniques. Instead of complaining about what you "got," ask how hard you really worked to earn that grade. Next, ask yourself what can I do to have better result next time?

Think before you speak, and stay posi-

## tive.

Next Month's Issue

In next month's issue look out for stories on:

- Spirit Week Highlights
- Swimming
- Indoor Track
- Basketball
- Legally Blonde