

# CHOIR CONCERTS

## covid switches this year's choir to virtual

writer emma clute

designer carissa long

The music program has to operate much differently this school year compared to others. Due to COVID-19, the band is performing mainly outside while the choir and orchestra are creating virtual concerts.

The choir concert will be made from clips of each student singing alone that are then compiled together into one video.

"Students have been submitting audio files and then I take all those audio drives for a song and put each part in one track," choir director Cheryl Brooks said. "Then once that's done, I take all of the videos, and I line them all up to one audio track."

The orchestra is also having a virtual concert, but they're doing things a little differently than the choir.

"We'll have the students go on stage during their class period, play their music, and we'll record them playing there," orchestra director Lori Cornett said. "We'll probably put it up as an unlisted YouTube video and give the link to the parents as well as the students so they can watch and critique each other."

These virtual concerts are ensuring that student musicians still get to perform, but they



are also making the process of learning the music and preparing for the concert more challenging.

"It's like a flipped classroom," Brooks said. "You have to learn your part well enough so that when you sing it, it's accurate. In a virtual choir, you can't correct on the spot. It's done, you've already submitted the track."

These concerts are also putting less demand on the students.

"I think the biggest thing that's different is the element of pressure is gone," Cornett said. "It's hard to take the performance quite as seriously because there's not the pressure of: this is the only time we can play through this."

While this technology is ensuring that students can still perform, it's unlikely it will be used again once COVID safety precautions are less extreme.

"I can't wait until I can have everyone on stage again and I can conduct," Brooks said. "It's the joy of making that musical sound with a group of people performing and expressing themselves together."

Photo above: Choir Director Cheryl Brooks teaches class during a hybrid day. Instead of having concerts, the choirs are taping their music individually and then compiling the pieces into one recording. Photo below: Students participate in choir in the new set-up. Photos by Emma Clute



## FROM PHYSICAL TO DIGITAL the courier transitions to only-online

writer Teresa Christian  
designer Teresa Christian

After 11 years of the Courier printing monthly, the tradition ends for the 20-21 school year due to Covid-19 restrictions. The Courier will now be transitioning to online-only.

For the students in Courier, stress levels have amped up as the district took on a hybrid schedule. With the Courier now being online, members are quickly learning how to adapt to the new style of publishing along with communication. "I feel like this year is a little more stressful because of having the hybrid schedule. It makes communication, a big part of the class, a lot harder," Co-editor-in-chief and senior Camryn Flores said.

Before Covid, the printing process would usually consist of a fast-paced schedule in order to get their stories to their printing company, Magnum.

"It's easier to not print...because the deadlines had to be quicker when printing a hard copy

magazine...however, it's not ideal to only publish online. Students could potentially lose readers," journalism teacher Kari Phillips said.

Once a month, Courier members would be stationed across the school selling the printed copies of the news magazine to their fellow classmates. The marketing strategy always guaranteed that students weren't oblivious to the magazine giving it more publicity throughout the school.

Now being online-only, Flores gave some potential pitfalls. "I worry that if students aren't aware of it, the magazine could become less of a big deal to the school and make it harder for students to be interested in reading it or joining the Courier staff in future years," she said.

New staff members are experiencing a different type of class than they imagined themselves signing up for. Plus, students are still given opportunities to create in ways they can't get



in other courses. "The course now gives students a lot more designing opportunities, especially to the newer members, because there's fewer designing chances in the journalism courses," Phillips said.

Most high school students are accustomed to most things being catered to them online. If given the green light to print again, amidst the current school year, the course will transition that way and Courier staff will be more than prepared to start handing out the hard copy of the Couriers again.

## VIRTUAL COLLEGE TOURS positives, negatives exist with new format

writer Ethan Hunter  
designer Teresa Christian

One of the most important parts of the college search process is visiting campuses and taking tours. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, though, universities have closed their campuses, offering virtual tours instead.

Some students believe these virtual tours aren't as informative, or help cement their college choices as they would hope, while others see no difference at all.

Senior Pranav Krishnan started his search early and was able to tour schools in person before universities shut down in March. Pranav said others aren't getting the same valuable experience that he did a year ago.

"(In person) tours give you a chance to interact with the students and gain an insight into their lives. A true representation of how your experience at that college may be," Krishnan said.

Senior Kylie Hanson also had a chance to tour her top colleges both in person and virtually but praised the accessibility of the new virtual setup, saying it erases a large barrier.

"While both in person and virtual visits had a lot of information about the school, the virtual visits were more concise so it was nice to see everything I needed to see in one short sitting," she said.

That accessibility really helps students that may not have the resources or time to go to a college and take a tour. In contrast, Krishnan explained that for him, in person visits provided a look into the true feel of a university and how one would fit in as a prospective student.



"Visiting MIT and Yale, on campus, gave me a very good feel of what the vibe of the campus was and interacting with students allowed me to see what type of individual thrived there," Krishnan said.

Whether virtual visits are beneficial or not, it's still unknown whether they will remain a pandemic accommodation, or they're here to stay.

## FESTIVE FALL ACTIVITIES

### keeping the fall spirit in a pandemic

writer sam amonette

designer sam amonette

Due to COVID 19, limits on activities and public places have been enforced. Some events for the fall have been cancelled or seriously altered to keep everyone safe. For example, football has created a limited crowd capacity for safety.

But does that mean people should stay inside all season long? No, because there's still so many safe, fun things to do this fall.

Sadly, COVID makes it harder to enjoy all the festivities. It's sad to think that this year has been ruined by a pandemic, but I'm still glad I can still do some fun things with friends and family, while staying safe and keeping others safe.", senior Erin Kelly said.

Some cliché activities that are the safest to do when people think of fall can still be done. For example, people can still enjoy Halloween preparations such as decorating the house or treats (although in some places Trick or Treating may be cancelled). Instead of Trick or Treating, better activities that are still safe are watching Halloween-themed movies, carving pumpkins, baking treats and making crafts.

Social distancing and masks make it safer to still be out in public for fall themed events

or just things to do. At local parks, people can still take walks and hikes through the woods without being in close proximity to others.

During the walks and hikes in the woods, visitors can also take some pictures with the fall scenery. People can get dressed up in fall clothing, look up some poses and picture ideas on Pinterest and go with your friends and family.

One of the best parts of fall is the changing color of the leaves. Another thing to do while on a walk or hike is leaf picking or watching. People can also create crafts with the leaves they create like coloring and tracing them or creating leaf piles to jump in.

Depending on the owner, pumpkin patches and apple orchards are still open while using precautions like masks and social distancing.

"Having orchards open really makes me happy because it makes the fall experience," Kelly said. Kelly went to an apple orchard this September with a group of friends.

One of the apple orchards open is Apple Hill Orchard, in Mansfield, Ohio. "We are using precautions to stay open for our customers this season. We urge customers to wear masks and social distance as much as possible,"

The apple orchards and pumpkin patches are also some great places to get some pictures with the trees and pumpkins for a fall photo shoot.

Unfortunately, the annual Circleville pumpkin show has been cancelled this year due to the pandemic. To substitute that experience, getting pumpkins from a local grocery store and carving them is always another activity or making fried fair food like they make at the show.

Other pumpkin patches that are open are Freemans farm in Galena, which also offers hay rides and a petting zoo and Hidden Creek farms in Sunbury, and Leeds farm in Ostrander which has a trampoline, bikes and ziplines and other things which are offering fun fall activities for people of all ages and are family friendly.

These farms listed in the infographic offer petting zoos and are fun to explore and walk around and even a photoshoot with friends according to columbusonthecheap.com and experiencecolumbus.com

There is no zero-risk activity though if out in public, but the most important thing to do is keep people safe by social distancing and wearing masks and keep the cases numbers from rising while still enjoying the fall season with friends and family with all the activities that are still available.

## pumpkin patches and orchard's that are still open

Apple Hill orchard	Mansfield, Ohio	419-884-1500
Lynd's Fruit Farm	Pataskala, Ohio	740-927-8559
The Orchard & Company	Plain City, Ohio	614-873-0510
Hidden Creek Farms	Sunbury, Ohio	740-815-9371

## SPECIAL NEEDS TRIPS changes to the intervention program

writer keegan richards

designer carissa long

The high school has a large, incredibly diverse student population. This includes students with special needs, who have adjusted schedules in a different way than the rest of the building. In the past, they have gone on several field trips throughout the year. But with COVID-19, this year might be much different for them. In years past, the special education group has gone to many different locations across the area near the school. It was a core part of the year for the students.

"We would go to parks, to the grocery store, restaurants, we went to the fair," Intervention Specialist Lynne Merkowitz said.

Taking the students on these field trips served multiple purposes. It helped keep them engaged in what they were doing, as well as helping apply the skills that they were learning to the real world and help them be a part of the community.

Merkowitz said the trips were "to learn to be

more independent and apply themselves."

However, Merkowitz and her team prioritized safety over the skills gained by leaving campus.

"We've been going on walks outside because the weather has been nice. And we're going to bring back the coffee cart,"

Intervention Aide

Jane Kufrin said.

"No, we aren't doing any field trips this year," Merkowitz said.

Still, they wanted to keep something similar to their previous years. So, they devised a new way to go on field trips, without leaving the building.

"We are doing virtual field trips this year," Merkowitz said. "We Skype called the library this

week."

Like many of their colleagues, the special needs teachers have used technology to help their students adapt this year. And their students have loved it.

"The kids really enjoyed the online field trips. They were almost more engaged than they had been in previous years with real field trips," Merkowitz said.

But even with the help of technology, not being able to take the students on actual field trips has negatively affected the program.

"It's rough. It's hard to get out. Our kids don't go to multiple classes, and we're with each other all the time," Intervention Aide Jane Kufrin said.

Still, they're trying their best to keep students active and help them learn social skills.

"We've been going on walks outside because the weather has been nice. And we're going to bring back the coffee cart," Kufrin said.

## SIX MONTHS LATER the virus' affect on students' mental health

writer emma clute

designer carissa long

Waking up late every day, not being able to talk to friends, having nothing to do: that was the routine for many during the six-month break from school because of COVID-19. This unprecedented time off had some indirect effects on the mental health of students.

Not being able to meet in person severely



1 in 5 students say their mental health has significantly worsened

cut off the majority of social interaction over the break.

"I think that the pandemic has definitely impacted students, especially those who are very social or need that social interaction around them," school psychologist Cari Lotko said. "I think that was taken out of their life and it limited what they could do and they felt like they had no control over that."

Students seem to feel the same way: the disruption in daily routines and lack of social interaction has had unexpected effects.

"I do think the pandemic has had some negative effects on mental health," junior Madelyn Braun said. "With the loss of routine, I think a lot of us fell into really unhealthy habits, not to mention the effects of the lack of social interaction."

Because of the six-month break, going back to school has been harder than previous years.

However, the hybrid schedule has made it a smoother transition than it could have been.

"I think it's a lot easier to go back to hybrid than it would be going full time," Braun said. "Going back five days a week after a six-month break would have been extremely overwhelming and exhausting."

But while COVID-19 has had negative effects on mental health, it's not the sole cause. Many things can negatively affect mental health, and knowing how to combat that is essential.

One important thing is "reaching out for help if you need it," Lotko said. "When you're in this environment, it's a lot easier to do that than when you're out on your own. And if you do it here, then maybe once you get out on your own it won't be so hard."

## HYBRID SCHEDULE The new way students are living

by Ethan Hunter

design by Eric Kiekeben

This school year has presented many challenges for everyone getting used to new ways of doing things, but the hybrid schedule has been the biggest change for students and teachers alike.

When the hybrid model was announced on July 29th, and the official schedule was released on August 5th, families and students were both thrown through a loop, beginning a whole new chapter of education. This presented problems early on for parents of younger students that would be home half of the time, instead of at school.

Parents who worked during the day scrambled to find sitters and in some cases, students to watch elementary schoolers, especially with

safety concerns and limited spots of day cares.

As a senior, the impact of the hybrid schedule has been heavily felt throughout all aspects of life and school.

Although we only spend half of all school days in class, the workload has remained the same as any other year, which has led to an abundance of stress.

There's not as much time to ask questions in class with all in-person teaching being fit into half the time. Some teachers upload videos to make up for the loss of time, which further disconnects students from the classroom.

Specifically, seniors are juggling applying to college along with school work, adding more stress

as well. With only half of the time to conference with teachers and counselors on the search process, it has all felt very rushed.

Contrarily, the schedule has added a good aspect of the college application process, with time away from school allowing seniors to work on aspects outside of classes, like college applications.

The hybrid schedule has created an altered existence for students, becoming the new normal within the education system, and with cases on the rise in central Ohio, it looks to be here to stay for months to come.

## CAFETERIA SEATING How it has changed with COVID-19

by Keegan Richards

design by Eric Kiekeben

The school in a normal year is completely packed full, and the lunch room usually shows the crowd. When kids are eating, nearly every table is full, and kids wander around the entire lunch room, talking with their friends. However, this year is different.

The school has taken many precautions to prevent the spread of Covid-19 during our lunch periods, and the district was successful in its attempt to keep us safe.

It starts in maintaining what they have attempted throughout the entire school with social distancing. Students are no longer allowed to sit in seats directly next to each other. The kitchen is distanced, and there is a limit on how many

students are allowed in to prevent clumping.

They should continue with the policy that requires students to put a mask on when buying lunch or leaving their seats at all. It helps prevent the spread whenever possible, even though kids have to take their mask off to eat.

The last way I've seen them successfully stop the spread of Covid-19 is with the dividers at every table. They have, in my opinion, been fantastic in helping keep distance and work as a mask when students can't wear one.

The only problem I've seen this year is the students. Despite the school's best efforts, many students wear masks incorrectly or not at all, and disregard social distancing rules. Students need to

better follow the school guidelines.



Cafeteria seating following COVID-19 safety guidelines. There are plastic dividers on the tables, tape on every other seat, and QR codes on every table to keep track of where students sit daily. Kids are distanced as much as possible.

## HALLWAY TALK

new things happening in the school

writer sam amonette  
designer sam amonette

### STUDENTS FAVORITE THINGS ABOUT FALL

“The weather and the trees”- Ryan Kelly,  
Freshman

‘ I love the fall atmosphere and the trees”- Victor Daley,  
Junior

“The weather and the sounds in the air”- Sophia Bobay,  
Sophomore

“My favorite things is taking fall pictures with friends and the candles”- Ashley Graham, Senior

### NEW TEACHERS

