



A Mass to Remember

by: Anna Wendel '21

Delayed. Postponed. Canceled. We have become all too familiar with these words recently as the whole world stopped due to the Coronavirus. However, Villa Joseph Marie High School always brings its own descriptor to this world-on-pause: Celebration.

Villa began the 2020 school year with a traditional Commissioning Mass, celebrated by the Archbishop of Philadelphia, His Excellency Nelson Perez. Traditionally, the Mass would have included the entire student body and faculty in the same space, joined by the Sisters of St. Casimir. Because of social distancing regulations, the school could not conduct the ceremony in this customary manner; it would take a VILLAge to prepare for the event that would set the tone for the coming year.

Mrs. McCarthy, Director of Mission and Ministry, played an integral role in preparing this historical Mass. Planning began in June amidst continued Covid concerns with the paperwork from the Archdiocese of Philadelphia's Office of Divine Worship poured in, asking questions and providing the details for the necessary altar serving training. Once these forms had been completed, there were many tasks to accomplish within a short amount of time, and that would need to

be completed with new safety regulations in mind. Mrs. McCarthy stated, "The planning and set up for this Mass was certainly a team effort!" She worked tirelessly with many other staff members, including Mrs. Carr, Mrs. Franzzo, Mrs. Gorman, and Mrs. Hurlbert, to prepare for the arrival of the Archbishop while ensuring safety protocols were in place.

Grace Kelly '21, Student Council President, assisted in facilitating of the first Mass of the year. As a part of the students who served on the altar, she welcomed the Archbishop, thanking him for opening the school year in such an unforgettable way. "My goal for student council is just to bring some good energy and school spirit, despite any outside circumstances." Even with staggered seating and masks, Mrs. McCarthy said that the atmosphere was "joy-filled.[and] the spirit of Villa still was present." She testified to the gratitude that she felt having made it to this day, celebrating this Mass even though it had been postponed. She summarized it beautifully: "What is most important [is being] together, before the presence of Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament...nothing can separate us from God or from each other."

Students may have been physically separated, but nothing can break the spiritual bond that they have with one another. Grace Kelly '21 had a similar experience, stating that "there was also a certain energy and excitement for this Mass because we were joined by the Archbishop" and described her first encounter with His Excellency as "surreal." His presence in the school exemplified the kindness and optimism that was needed in a time of such uncertainty. She is optimistic that he will return to celebrate more masses with the school.

Mrs. Carr views their work with gratitude: "I look at so many hands coming together to make an event possible...I was proud of our campus ministry department, our music department, our tech crew, our staff, everyone working together to have this beautiful and holy moment as a school." Despite all the obstacles that they have faced in recent months, Villa's staff was able to celebrate an event that brought opportunity and hope into the lives of the Villa community. Mrs. McCarthy expressed the joy it was to be able to bring this event to light in her statement: "I think Mass always brings us closer to God and one another. What more can we ask for!?"

Freshies 1st Day!

by: Juliana Tulio '22

On Monday, Aug. 31, the class of 2024 entered the school PAC for their first official day of school orientation. The first day started with a prayer and some ice breaker games, followed by administration introductions and a presentation of all the school clubs. Afterward, a few upperclassmen shared their "First-Year Funnies" with the girls and helped them feel more at ease in their new home.

Although the girls were very busy their first day, learning the Alma Mater, going on scavenger hunts, and touring the school, that didn't stop Mr. Dennis from being able to hold an improv session! He brought out the creativity in the girls by having them create and perform skits and jingles, which also allowed them to become more comfortable around their fellow Villa sisters.

The second day of orientation allowed the girls the opportunity to learn their way around the campus by following their class rotations before heading home to prepare for their final day. The third day was a retreat day for the girls, and they answered reflection questions and participated in the Villa tradition of writing letters to their future selves. Junior retreat leader Madeline Usonis '22 expressed her enthusiasm for being a part of orientation by stating, "I've wanted to help lead freshman orientation and retreat ever since the first day of my own." She also added that "...being able to sit with the girls... and help set a good precedent for the rest of

their time at Villa was an opportunity [she] was really grateful for."

Before the first day of orientation, the school held a welcome parade for the freshmen and their parents as they entered the PAC for their socially distanced prayer service. Part of what made this such an unforgettable experience was the number of teacher volunteers who showed their school spirit and love for the girls by welcoming them with signs and well-wishes. Assistant Admissions Director Ms. Gorman stated that her "heart swelled" with the overwhelming amount of support the faculty and administration showed towards the school community's newest members by sacrificing their Sunday evening to welcome the class of '24 properly. When asked about her experience during orientation and retreat, freshman Abby McGrody '24 explained that "It was really nice and a good way to get to know people!" We hope all the freshmen enjoyed their time getting to know the school and each other. We would also like to give a special "thank you" to the faculty, staff and junior retreat leaders that made this year's retreat a success, despite the adjustments social distancing procedures may have caused.

Lastly, on behalf of the entire Villa community, I would like to welcome the class of 2024! We know you'll shine as bright the rest of the year as you did on your first few days here!

Welcome to the Family, Class of 2024!



Fore the Girls!

by: Juliana Tulio '22

Villa's 21st Annual "Fore! The Girls" golf outing took place at Jericho National Country Club on Monday, Sept. 28. The day was filled with lots of fun, friends and food, with all the sponsorship proceeds going towards Villa academics, sports, clubs and organizations! The day started with registration and lunch at 11 a.m., leading up to the first match of the day at

noon. Luckily, the weather made for a delightful day on the green!

In addition to the matches, there was also a silent auction and raffle held outdoors due to COVID-19 restrictions. This year's raffle was a huge success, as it was for two luxury suite tickets to the first available Philadelphia Eagles game at Lincoln Financial Field (a prize valued at \$300).

As in previous years, members of Villa's golf team also attended the golf outing and participated in games and competitions alongside the golfers. When asked about her experience helping with this year's golf outing, Villa golf co-captain, Amanda Cornwall '22 said, "Our team was glad to attend this year's golf outing to thank all the participants for their generous donations to the school. The outing was also a great way for us to practice our skills while having fun!" According to Amanda, once the golfers reached the 12th hole, they were able to enter into a contest where they played against members of Villa's

golf team. If the golfer decided to play, he/she would pay \$10 and hit the ball. If his/her shot was closer than the Villa golfer's shot, that person would be entered into the previously mentioned raffle. After the 18 holes were complete, the event was concluded with a light dinner and open bar for the golfers.

We want to thank the parent volunteers for their phenomenal job in planning this year's event! According to Mrs. McDonald, the eleven-member committee of current and alumnae parents began planning this year's golf outing in February. Their dedication paid off, as this year's outing raised over \$18,000 for our school, an impressive feat considering there was a limit of 104 golfers permitted on the course! Additionally, Principal Mrs. Carr says the event "would not have been a success without them [the parent volunteers]!" Hopefully, next year's golf outing won't have a cap so that even more people can have the chance to participate!



Mr. Dlugosz's Debut

by: Elizabeth Mimm '21



Mr. Dlugosz, a new member of the Transcend program, is an excellent addition to Villa and its community. Mr. Dlugosz primarily works with seniors, but he also teaches one junior.

After graduating from Temple University in 2014 with his undergraduate degree in History and Secondary Education, Mr. Dlugosz continued his academic career to earn his graduate degree at Saint Joseph's University. Mr. Dlugosz stated, "Growing up, I always enjoyed going to school." He is now "working with our seniors

to hone upper-level study skills and support advocacy skills in preparation for the transition to college," according to Transcend Program Coordinator, Mrs. Neeld.

Mr. Dlugosz believes that some of his great teachers inspired him to be a positive influence to students of his own and be influenced by the satisfaction that he finds from seeing his students succeed. At Villa, Mr. Dlugosz has enjoyed getting to know the students he works with, for they all possess the dedication and a drive to succeed. He is fascinated by the incredible balance that Villa students have, with the ability to focus and flourish in every area of their life, from school to work and beyond. I

In addition to students, Mr. Dlugosz has enjoyed meeting the new staff members. He finds that Villa students are incredibly fortunate

to have such supportive teachers, "Villa gives off a 'family-type atmosphere' that you can not find just anywhere." Villa and its community share a developed and strong bond, full of support, love, and kindness.

In Mr. Dlugosz's free time, he enjoys relaxing with his wife. Mr. Dlugosz recently bought a new home, so he has gotten to spend a lot of time working on things around the house. He says that although overwhelming and almost 'endless,' he continues to take the tasks one step at a time, as not to get ahead of himself and worry about if things got to be too much.'

Mr. Dlugosz is a talented and kind man dedicated to his job and helping the student body with their academic studies. In addition to being thoughtful and intelligent, Mr. Dlugosz is competitive, which is an excellent ability to help students and keep them engaged. Children tend to learn more fluently and effectively when engaged and interested in the lesson, which Mr. Dlugosz never fails to do. According to Megan Iannacone '21, "Before I started this school year, I was nervous about having a new Academic Strategies teacher, but after my first day, I had no worries. Mr. Dlugosz showed that he truly cares about his new students, and I know that he wants to help us do the best that we can this academic year!"

Everyone in Villa's community is excited to see what Mr. Dlugosz can continue to offer the school. As Mrs. Neeld stated, "He has transitioned easily to our Villa community with his easy-going personality, and he looks forward to getting more involved with all things Villa." We are thrilled to welcome Mr. Dlugosz to our Villa community and cannot wait to continue to see what he has to offer to our school!

Ms. Merlino's Return

by: Elli Einset '23



Villa Joseph Marie's new math teacher, Ms. Merlino, is "happy to be a part of the Villa community." Although you may recognize her as Mrs. McKeown's long-term substitute, Ms. Merlino is now a full-time math teacher at Villa, teaching Honors Algebra 2, Pre-Calculus/Trigonometry, and Algebra 1.

Ms. Merlino is part of the DeSales University class of 2019 but did not know she wanted to be a math teacher. "I was really close with my Pre-Calc teacher, Ms. Hart; she inspired me to be a mathematics major in college. I did not

know right away I wanted to be a teacher". When asked why she chose to teach math since it is not usually a favorite subject among students, she replied with, "...to change that attitude, to make the subject fun for

students, and to help them better understand [the] why of mathematics rather than repetitive steps to solve a problem".

So far, Ms. Merlino's favorite things about teaching at Villa are her students and co-workers! "Everyone is so welcoming, genuine, and caring." While being a long-term substitute, she was able to keep positivity in her classroom, even when her classroom was over a screen. "She remained positive and upbeat during what were uncertain times for all of us and helped to keep the learning community alive for her students," according to Mr. Wisniewski, Math Department Chairperson. When meeting her in the interview, Mr. Wisniewski was "struck by her passion for teaching. She came into the interview incredibly organized. I could tell that she would be a dynamic and engaging educator..."

In Ms. Merlino's free time, catch her shopping at TJ Maxx, rooting for the Eagles, or doing TikTok dances. She's up for a dance-off anytime.

Ms. Young's New Beginning

by: Carina Yancer '22



Ms. Young, a first-year Villa American Civilizations teacher, began her journey in the Villa family on Sept. 3, 2020. Ms. Young is teaching American Civilizations at the academic and accelerated levels.

She attended Villanova University, where she majored in History and graduated in 2009. Ms. Young went on to graduate school at La Salle University to receive her Master's Degree in Education.

Ms. Young shared her inspiration to become a teacher with us. She says that her teachers at

her private school, Little Flower Catholic High School, had a significant impact on how she experienced high school and wanted to do the same for other students. Julia Noone, a junior in Ms. Young's Ameri-

can Civilization class, can agree that Ms. Young is doing just that for her students. "Ms. Young makes me happy, and she makes me want to learn more about history."

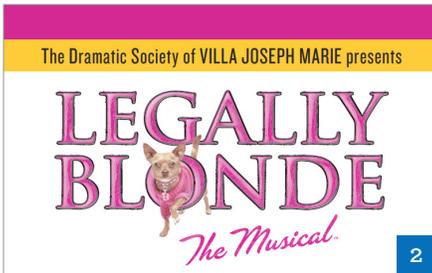
Ms. Young's favorite things to do outside of teaching include playing with her dogs and watching tv or movies with her husband. A few of her favorite shows are "The Office," "Brooklyn 99," and "New Girl." The students and staff will be able to relate to her in that aspect.

Ms. Young has even stepped up this year to bring back "No Place for Hate," a club at Villa. Ms. May says that Ms. Young "is looking forward to getting involved with the many service opportunities available to the Villa community." Ms. Young explains that her favorite thing about Villa so far is the students, "--I immediately feel the strong school spirit and the joy shared by the faculty, staff, admin, and students." There is no doubt that Ms. Young will fit right in with our Villa family.

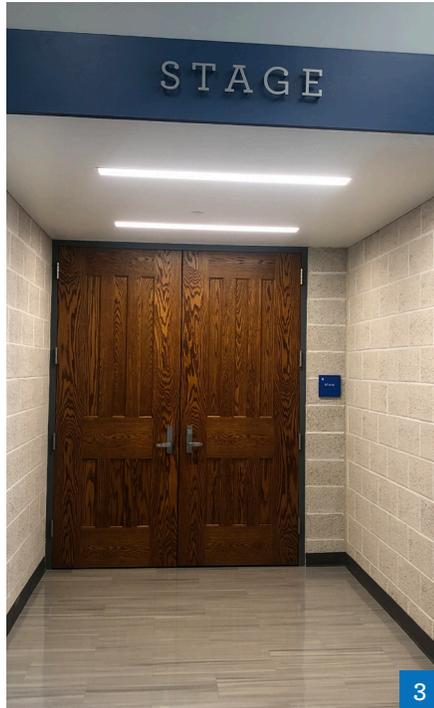
TALENTED JEMS



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1. Villa's talented musicians practicing diligently in the PAC.
2. Villa's Fall production of "Legally Blonde" was a sell out the first night!
3. The side door in the PAC welcomes all performers to the stage.
4. Sister Margaret Petcavage is now immortalized within these walls.
5. Former Science Department Chair, Ms. Politowski, is a member of Villa's Wall of Fame.

Second Chance Spotlight

by: Haley Johnson '21

The fall play of 2020 was an exciting time for Villa Joseph Marie's production of "Legally Blonde: the Musical." The events of COVID-19 allowed us to be creative in our version of "Legally Blonde." Due to the pandemic, we had to limit the set design and the number of props; we also had to order special masks for the crew where their faces could be seen while also protecting the other members of the production. Though it was difficult getting adjusted to the logistics of producing a play during a global pandemic, I have to say the play went on without a hitch. Thanks to the dedication of the cast and the crew, we were able to have our opening night production be a sold-out show. We kept the

same traditions of "Kiss the Cast" and senior tributes, and we had the pleasure of welcoming the freshmen and new boys to the Villa Drama family. I am so grateful that we could continue with our "Legally Blonde" production, as I am a senior, and "Legally Blonde" was my last fall play, having it still be performed with a beautiful cast and crew meant a lot to me. In the new year, 2021, we are more excited than ever to put on the major Broadway show of "Mamma Mia." This will be my last play as a Villa student, and I can't wait to make this production the best version of "Mamma Mia" that the world has ever seen.

Hanging in the Wall of Fame

by: Elli Einset '23

Although it has been a unique year for us all, Villa's traditions have warmly continued. One of these traditions is the Wall of Fame. The Wall of Fame was established in 2014 by the Alumnae Office. The wall was established to recognize individuals who have made an impact on Villa and in the community. This year, just like always, the Wall of Fame Selection Committee chose two new members who made an enormous impact; Sister Margaret Petcavage and Marie Politowski.

Sister Margaret Petcavage is one of this year's inductees. She is a former member of Villa's Board of Directors and former Assistant General Superior and Councilor for the Sisters of St. Casimir. She has also dedicated her time as Vice Postulator for Mother Maria Kaupas's cause for Sainthood. "Sr. Margaret's love for Villa is amplified by the fact that she has firsthand knowledge of our school, as she was a Villa student herself," said Mrs. Walinskas, Villa's Alumnae Relations Manager. Sister Margaret Petcavage's dedication and commitment to Villa is a leading factor for her place on the Wall of Fame.

This year's other inductee is Marie Politowski, a science teacher from 1990-2012 who also served as Science Department Chair. Through her efforts, Villa's science department expanded and thrived, thanks to events such as the Sciathlon, where Marie Politowski was

a crucial part in bringing it to Villa, and she also regularly returns to campus to act as a judge for Villa's annual Science Fair. It is also fitting that Ms. Politowski is being inducted into the Hall of Fame this year as we are on the verge of the new STEAM hallway expansion. According to Mrs. Walinskas, "The STEAM hallway expansion wouldn't be possible if she hadn't led the way in establishing a love for the sciences at Villa." Thanks to Marie's Politowski's love and dedication to science, our science department grew always more, always better, and always with love.

Sister Margaret Petcavage and Marie Politowski both were inducted on September 12, 2020 to recognize their commitment to Villa, their faith, and the community. They both made impacts as educators and went beyond just teaching in the classroom. Sister Margaret Petcavage dedicated her time as a former member to Villa's Board of Directors and former Assistant General Superior and Councilor for the Sisters of St. Casimir. Marie Politowski helped expand the Science Department as both teacher and chair member by inspiring students to think and work like scientists. "We are honored to have both of these women as members of Villa's Wall of Fame as well as the Villa family," said Mrs. Walinskas.

COVID Carols

by: Grace Iannacone '22

As Zoëy Deschanel says in the classic Christmas movie “Elf,” “The best way to spread Christmas cheer is singing loud for all to hear,” and our school Chorale and Liturgical choir are a concrete example of that. Since September, our choir members have been filling the PAC every Monday with the cheerful melodies of the most wonderful time of the year: Christmas!

Of course, this year, the chorale looked slightly different. Unfortunately, the typical festive night of caroling will not be in front of a live audience; however, there was a streaming performance where to ensure that the Christmas joy of Villa did not go unsung!

I sat down with Chorale member Kate Abdalla '22 and asked her about her time at Chorale and the changes COVID-19 brought to it.

At first, I had asked her how she felt about the return of the Chorale, and she responded, “I felt pretty happy! I was scared we couldn’t have it all because of the virus, and I wasn’t sure how it would all work out with the masks. Mrs. Nelson did a great job of keeping us safe and organized.” It’s essential to recognize that after school activities can be a place of serenity and a place to let your mind forget about the day. I asked Miss Abdalla if she believed Chorale was a place to feel comfortable, and she replied, “Yes, I do believe that. I have always been a

self-conscious person, especially with my singing, but I have always loved to sing. Chorale has enabled me to sing in front of others without fear and with the support of the other girls.”

Let us not forget the fantastic moderator and conductor of Chorale, Mrs. Nelson. She has dedicated so much of her time to put together the online concert, teach each section for each song, and has kept the members safe and organized! Mrs. Nelson has proved one hundred times over how much she loves what she does, and the members of the Chorale want to thank her from the bottom of their hearts for all she has done. She has kept them as safe as possible and even has quieted some of their worries!

With Christmas right around the corner, I asked Kate if the songs taught have given her any spark of hope for the uncertain future. She gracefully replied, “Yes, and I had noticed how hopeful they made me feel. Even though it was strange to sing Christmas songs in September, they never failed to fill me with that childish hope that comes with the excitement of the Christmas season.”

I hope this serves as a reminder to all those in our Villa community that we aren’t alone in these trying times, and Christmas music is the way to give us all that small sense of particular hope back.

Dancing Through Life

by: Grace Iannacone '22

After the year we have all been having, I think it’s safe to say that a way to escape is worth it, even for an hour. That’s what the girls of our Dance Club have decided to take advantage of. Here at Villa, every other Wednesday, a group of very talented girls led by Ashley May '22 and Brooke May '22 get together to let go of the world for one hour and dance away.

I spoke with the Dance Club moderator, Miss Chirico, about her time watching over our dancers every other week. “Villa has had Dance Club for a few years now, but this is only my second year being involved. I remember watching the Dance Club perform in the Talent Show their first year and tearing up at how beautifully they danced. I am happy to be working with them now!”

As we all know, the past year has been stressful and, at times, out of control, and sometimes a bit of movement is a huge relief! “I know for me, gentle stretching and movement are a huge source of stress relief! I hope that getting a chance to move in new ways is a mood boost for the girls in Dance Club! I also think that learning short choreographed combinations requires focus (the fun kind!), which can take your mind

off of other things that may be worrying you or causing stress,” Miss Chirico said to me. You heard it from her, folks! Maybe we all should join and let the day fall off our shoulders.

According to Miss Chirico, her favorite dance to have choreographed includes ‘A Little Party Never Killed Nobody’ from “The Great Gatsby” soundtrack, and that at every rehearsal, she is “constantly learning new things from them [her dancers], and I hope they can learn a little bit from me too!”

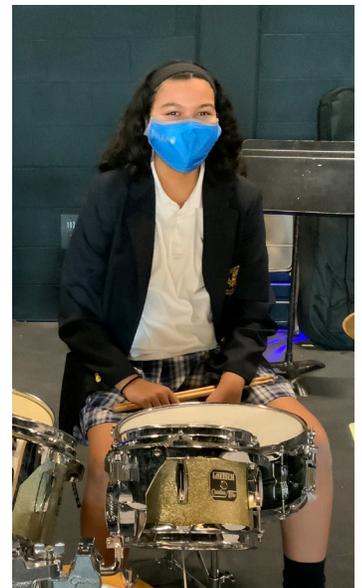
You must know that these dancers put every bit of passion into these dances. When asked if holding Dance Club this year sparked some worry in her, she only replied, fondly that, “I think a sneaky “blessing” (perhaps that’s too strong of a word...) of the pandemic has been that we have had to be intentional and creative in how we do things. I am happy that we can have club meetings safely and excited that we get to keep dancing through these strange circumstances.”

So ladies and gents, dust off your dancing shoes and get ready to hit the dance floor! Just remember to stay adequately distant.

Starting on a Good Note

by: Jessica Angelucci '21

The VJM Band was very excited to start practicing at Villa again this year. However, practices were different because the members had to distance themselves socially. The bands were split into A and B groups, alternating every other week. Sonny Facenda, the band director, is thrilled to see some new faces and is proud of the students’ hard work. Thirteen members are trying out for the All-Catholic Band Festival this year, including six from Concert Band, five from Orchestra, and two from Jazz Band. Stay tuned for updates! Another exciting change this year is that the band is producing a virtual Christmas concert, which will be available for all to see in December. The band is looking forward to a great year, as well as a fantastic spring concert and the Dorney Park competition.



WITHIN THESE WALLS



1. A few seniors take a break from retreat for some much needed snacks.
2. Two Villa sophomores walk into school on the first day!
3. A beautiful tradition stays alive as a junior receives her class ring.
4. Some of the junior leaders coming together for Sophomore Retreat.
5. Villa staff stand socially distanced at the front of the school to welcome the freshmen home.

Grateful to Be Back!

by: Taylor Mueller '21

We are back, everyone! Welcome to the 2020-2021 school year! Even though things look different this year, we can thank the faculty and administration for making it possible for us to come back in person. For many, the first day of school was on September 3, 2020, while for others, it was September 1, 2020. Those who started September 1, 2020 were freshmen or transfer students, and we would like to welcome them, once again, to the Villa Community! They joined us a few days early for Orientation and Freshmen Retreat.

A lot of planning went into getting the building ready to attend school in person all five days. Many different procedures and practices have had to be implemented into our daily schedules while in the building. These procedures include wearing masks, wiping down cafeteria tables, ordering lunch the night before, spraying the desks and chairs twice a day, and deep cleaning the classrooms during the night. As many of you might have remembered, on the first day, the teachers stated that their rooms might look barer than usual because of how the classrooms are sprayed down.

To get more of a backstory of what had gone into the possibility of being in the school all five days, I interviewed Mrs. Carr, our Principal, and Mr. Kardish, our President. Mr. Kardish stated that a lot of effort permeated the school in the teachers, other administration and staff. Every little thing had to be thought out thoroughly, sometimes that would be made challenging because of how frequently things changed with the health department and the CDC. Mr. Kardish stated, "Something that I realized is that I need to be near people." This idea was from during quarantine, and I assume it is the same for others. Mr. Kardish excellently stated, "I cannot make you feel the way you are feeling." His sentiments made it very apparent that our feelings towards this whole situation were being cared about. Going along with Villa's traditions, it was brought up that the school is going to try its hardest to try and let all of the customary traditions happen. Mr. Kardish stated, "There is always something going on at Villa, whether it be mass or another one of the reasons why people come here." So, hopefully, we will have all of the traditions that make us Villa.

When talking with Mrs. Carr, many factors were brought up that

were mentioned by Mr. Kardish. When asked what it was like to implement the changes required for us to be able to come back fully, Mrs. Carr stated that it was like being given one set of rules, and then them being changed the next day. It was also stated that the changes were constant adjustments on decisions made daily, and being flexible during this time was very much needed when it came to the necessary changes to be implemented. When asked how she personally felt being back, she stated that she was "glad we are back." Mrs. Carr also mentioned that "it adds to a routine and normalcy for the students and staff." Another factor that was brought up was that returning would increase human interaction after being in quarantine for so long. When asked how Villa's many traditions can be brought back, Mrs. Carr stated that "the biggest thing we need to do is look at them individually and adjust them individually." It is believed by many, including Mrs. Carr, that we do not have to lose any of the many traditions we hold as a community as long as we follow the guidelines set by the health department and CDC.

To get a student's perspective, Senior Molly McHugh stated, "I'm excited to be back in school full force because in person learning is easier to comprehend than virtual learning. Personally, I think it is better for me because I learn better while being in person rather than online. I can also comprehend the need for hybrid schedules in some schools." She also stated that she thinks that we are able to be back fully due to our size of the school and student body. She again exclaimed this by saying, "I'm confident in Villa's guidelines and restrictions while being back in school." After being asked what tradition or event she hoped to be continued. Following the guidelines, she wanted to ensure Spring Spirit Day would not be lost. This is because it brings friends together, and it is a bonding experience that we will need after going through the pandemic.

As a school community, we should be very thankful to be back in the school building every day. This is because other schools are either completely virtual or hybrid. Some things may look a little different at this time, but it will all work out in the end. We will get through these rough and challenging times together! Have a great year, everyone!

Ring Day with a Twist

by: Carina Yancer '22

Villa Joseph Marie hosted their Ring Day celebration a little different this year with the Coronavirus's impact. In years past, the whole school attends this special celebration for the juniors, and Mrs. Carr places the rings on the juniors' fingers, etc. Villa had to play it COVID-friendly this year, with social distancing in the PAC and a smaller range of attendees. I would say that the whole school was overwhelmed with joy, just with the fact that Mrs. Carr and the staff made this year's Ring Day celebration possible. Mrs. Carr worked her magic this year by creating a COVID-friendly celebration for the juniors and their families.

This celebration has been a tradition for many years now, and it is something that every Villa student looks forward to from the beginning of their journey. It was crucial to Mrs. Carr to make sure that the day still occurred, but with a few changes. In years past, every student would attend the ceremony and the juniors' parents as well. This year

only the juniors and their parents attended.

An issue that was faced involved the placement of the ring on the student's finger. To make it safe, the juniors' parents placed the ring on their child's finger. To make it more personal, the juniors took their masks off as they walked across the stage to their parents to take a picture. When walking off the stage, the juniors placed their masks back on their faces and returned to their seats.

Another tradition on Ring Day is the luncheon; this year, the event had to be more personalized to take safety precautions. Everybody had prepackaged food from the Fancy Fig with socially distanced seating. Overall, this year's Ring Day ceremony was very different from years past, but it was definitely not a disappointment. The implications of Coronavirus have created issues in many people's lives, but Mrs. Carr and the staff did a great job in creating a special Ring Day ceremony for the class of 2022.

Sophomore Self Love

by: Delaney Geist '23

The Class of 2023 left Villa on Friday, Nov. 6, with a different outlook on themselves and the world around them, meaning that the Sophomore Retreat was a smashing success! With the theme of self-love, sophomores were led in prayer, small group discussions and various activities to help them grow on their self-love journey. The mastermind behind the retreat, Mrs. McCarthy, expressed that "the emphasis of this experience was that self-love is a process and a journey," which is an outlook that can only lead to progress for the sophomore students.

Joining Mrs. McCarthy in planning and executing the retreat were junior leaders filled with enthusiasm and positive energy as they cultivated a marvelous and unforgettable experience for their younger classmates. Leader Emma Doughty '22 wanted to support the girls in the retreat, explaining, "Self-love is so important and something a lot of girls today struggle with, and I wanted to do everything I could to make sure the girls know that they are good enough and they're loved." This sentiment was only mirrored by leader Julia Coelho '22,

who described her eagerness for being a junior leader by stating, "I was excited to have an opportunity to talk about it and help the sophomores connect with the topic as well."

This feat was undoubtedly accomplished during the retreat, for after several hours of planning, Mrs. McCarthy and the junior leaders were able to create an experience backed by the tag line "Sculpted in God's image to love yourself." Mrs. McCarthy shared that the retreat's idea was to speak openly about roadblocks for self-love, such as self-esteem, body image and social media's often negative impact on our ability to love ourselves.

After a long day filled with honesty and support, the Class of 2023 is now one step closer in their self-love journey, making the sophomore retreat not only a success for the sophomores but the entire Villa community as well. We continue to strive to uplift and support each other through what can only be described as sisterhood.

Senior Retreat - Have Courage, and Be Kind

by: Elizabeth Mimm '21

Villa's annual Senior Retreat took place on October 21 and 22 this year to unite the seniors as one and allow them to grow as a community one final time. Although different from past years, in that of not relocating to an off campus service site, the retreat was still full of insight and inspiring to all attendees.

The retreat was held primarily in Villa's own Performing Arts Center. Throughout the retreat, the senior class was able to view feelings and emotions from a more mature and genuine standpoint. In addition, the girls were able to grow in their relationships with God and recognize the importance of knowing God is love, and God hears you.

Throughout the retreat, the students focused on a variety of topics, which were introduced and led by various student speeches. Some topics which were focused on during retreat included: hope, forgiveness, and love in action. Throughout the student-led speeches, the senior class was able to recognize their peers for more than what they see every day. Throughout this two day process of sharing and growing to love one another, the seniors were able to learn more about their sisters and form new bonds and friendships.

According to senior Taylor Mueller, '21 the retreat opened her eyes to make more in-depth friendships with others who weren't in her immediate friend group. In addition, the retreat led her to a better understanding of the sisterhood that Villa shares among one another. In addition to learning about one another, the retreat also brought to

light an extremely important fact: You are not alone. According to Katie Frain '21, "I learned that I was not alone, and I found comfort in knowing that my feelings are valid and I can comfortably talk about them amongst my peers." This retreat was able to convey a sense of urgency and the importance of sharing your emotions and loving one another with pride. A thought that helped to base this retreat was "Love with urgency, not with haste."

As much as this retreat was able to teach the seniors about each other, it also sufficiently explained the importance and the beauty of having a faith relationship with Christ. According to Taylor Mueller '21, "This retreat made me realize that there is always room for me to strengthen my faith, such as praying in my own time and trusting that God is listening." Katie Frain '21 stated that people might better themselves through God and prayer. The importance of faith and loving others like God loves us was a vital theme of the retreat.

The Senior Retreat was an insightful experience for all of the senior class. Various students gave advice to the classes which have yet to experience the retreat: do not be apprehensive or go into retreat with a closed mind. Instead, be open-minded and hopeful for what you can take from the retreat, for there is so much that you can learn. Overall, the 2020 Senior Retreat was a successful event, full of knowledge as well as self and religious growth.

Tennis Season a Success

by: Olivia Rueger '23



The Villa tennis team came together and finished an amazing season with a win against Nazareth. The 2020 tennis team had an unconventional season but still managed to finish the season with a record of 4 - 5. The tennis season started much later than usual, and the team got right to work as soon as possible. Between practicing and playing matches every week, the team began to bond together really well. "We were all able to blend well together in practices and matches no matter the skill level," says senior and captain Ines Dominique. From a variety of skill levels, the team began to work together and win matches. They were led by their coach, Jess Sims, who helped them reach their full potential. Overall, Coach Jess was proud to see all the girls improve and show up each day with an amazing attitude. Seniors Morgan Decker, Ines Dominique, Kaitlyn Burke, Alex Venth, and Meredith Gauker were able to celebrate senior night surrounded by their teammates and family at Villas patio. It was a highlight of our season, says Alex Venth, a captain and senior. Alex also encourages anyone looking to try something new to join the tennis team because she has made so many life-long friends through it. Morgan Decker, a captain, and senior, says that "I am so glad that we were given the opportunity to play," and the rest of her team agrees. Although they faced many challenges, the Villa Tennis Season was a success.

Soccer Makes It Back to Hershey

by: Molly McHugh '21



As most people could assume, this year's Villa soccer season was the furthest thing from typical. The one part of the season that remained the same was the annual trip to Hershey Park Stadium for the PIAA 3A Championship. The team's road to Hershey started with the captains' practices that ran twice a week from July to the week of tryouts. At these practices, all players were required to hand in mandatory COVID-19 screening forms to ensure every player and coach's safety. During these practices, PIAA was conducting meetings to determine the fate of the season.

After making it through the captains' practices, the team was informed that they could only play teams in their league, the AACA. The first major event of the season was Senior Night, which was held on the first home game of the season. Senior Night was a huge success, with an 8-0 win over Mount St. Joseph's Academy, and it was an amazing night filled with food, gifts and laughs all around, thanks to the juniors. The team concluded their District's run with a 2-1 win over Gwynedd Mercy Academy in penalty kicks.

The soccer season concluded with the State Championship in Hershey Park Stadium. The restrictions with COVID-19 meant that the team could not do its usual overnight stay in a hotel the night before the game. Restrictions also required masks to be worn during warm-ups. The game ended in a 2-0 loss to Mars Area High School.

Field Hockey Creates Unforgettable Memories

by: Grace Quick '22



The field hockey team was extremely grateful for the opportunity to play during this unpredictable year. The team had an unforgettable season that spanned from the end of September to the beginning of November. Captains Julia Noone '22, Riley Kennedy '21, Ellie McLaughlin '21, and Kylie Aquaro '21 led the team through our twelve game season. Our captains this year were great examples of sportsmanship and leadership, guiding the team through an unfamiliar season. The highlight of the season was our 3-2 win against Saint Basil's Academy, where the team played a competitive game and pulled out a hard-fought victory. Another memorable event of the season was our senior night when the team got to honor the class of 2021 and celebrate their hard work, dedication and accomplishments from the past four years. The team is already drawing up plans and are so excited for next season. Way to go, Jems!

Volleyball - Dig It!

by: Mya Papouschek '22

The Villa volleyball team ended the season with a record of four wins and five losses. This year was filled with so many exciting accomplishments on many different levels, from Gabby Lyons '21 earning her 1,000th dig to players reaching individual goals such as personal hitting, blocking and passing records. As a team, we have excelled in passing and serving. We hope to come in even stronger next year, and we will miss all of our seniors.



Cross Country - On the Move!

by: Lindsay Sprague '23

At the start of the season, we were a little nervous about what was to come in the future - if we were only practicing or if the season would come to an early end. Since Cross Country is a non-contact sport, we didn't have many restrictions. The restrictions we did have consisted of a late start to the season, fewer meets, and wearing masks while we warmed up.

However, everything that was occurring didn't stop us from achieving our goals. Some things were different, of course. The season mostly included practices and fewer meets. We started practicing in late August, which was different for the team because practice usually starts a little earlier in the summer. Once school started, we practiced every day after school.

The meets were very different. Last year, the team went to more away meets, but we were limited this year because of COVID-19. The meets we did go to were COVID safe, and we would start the meet divided into groups based on the teams. Other than these minor setbacks during the season, it didn't change much. The Cross Country team remained a cohesive unit, and it looks forward to next season!



Tee-Off with VJM Golf

by: Jessica Angelucci '21

Even though this year looked much different from previous years, the VJM golf team still had an amazing season. Bridgid Schultz was the team captain with Amanda Cornwall as her co-captain. The two coaches, Connor Sharp and "Pop-Pop," led the girls to perform very well in both league matches that were played at Northampton Valley Country Club. Bridgid Schultz '21 and Amanda Cornwall '22 qualified to play in the District One Championships and were named AACA League All-Stars at the League Championship at Honeybrook. The team welcomed four new players this year, including two freshmen, Abigail Gillespie '24 and Sarah Warunek '24, and two juniors, Molly Lyons '22 and Emily Montemuro '22. The seniors who played their last season this year and got to celebrate with a fun, socially distanced senior night were Mary Ellen Connelly '21, Emily Aschenbrenner '21, Julie Garrison '21. Hunter Labree '21, Kiera Fleming '21, Grace Matwijec '21, Shelby Brodhead '21, and Bridgid Schultz '21. Even though it was short, all the girls had a fun and rewarding season.



Crew: Under New Circumstances

by: Sarah Taylor '23

The Villa crew team, led by Allyson Gallagher '21 and Ella Koors '22, powered their way through the 2020 fall season, even as it was impacted by COVID-19. To maintain a safe environment during practices, Coach John Musial split the team into two cohorts. Each cohort practiced for half of the days, and the whole came together for one practice a week. The team had their first regatta at Lake Luxembourg in Core Creek Park against Radnor High School. The Varsity Eight won second place, while the Varsity Four snagged second and fourth. The Junior Four got first, second, and fifth place. The Freshmen Eight won third, while the second Eight finished a full 40 seconds before Radnor! Madison Chiolan '22, part of the Varsity Eight and the Varsity Four, described what she likes the most about rowing: "it's like you're in your own little world, and you just forget about everything else and push through exercise and practices. I love spending time with our team, whether it's practicing or racing because we're a little, knit-tight family."



JEMDAS: Planning a New Order of Operations at Villa

by: Alexandra Venth '21

The Math Team has been hard at work this year, adjusting their plans due to the Coronavirus, practicing for competitions, holding distanced meetings in the PAC and planning out how they will adjust to the virtual learning setting. Although Mu Alpha Theta, Villa's math honor society, in which a large portion of the eligible members of the Math Team is involved, is perhaps a lot busier. They have been working to create plans and guidelines for a math help center for those who need assistance in any math course offered by Villa. The new center will be called JEMDAS, based on the order of operations (PEMDAS) and the Villa Jems who will be utilizing this program. JEMDAS will allow students to 'Discover, Apply, Solve' to improve on the understanding of math concepts which they gain in class. This student help center will hopefully be open to students in the winter, but in the meantime, Mu Alpha Theta girls will be preparing to teach students by creating their own presentations on various math paradoxes, complex concepts and famous mathematicians over the virtual period. Moreover, the Mu Alpha Theta girls will also be improving their ability to discover, apply and solve problems so that they can help others to do the same in Villa's brand-new math center, coming soon.



Villa's Judgment Free Improv Club

by: Sarah Taylor '23

Villa Joseph Marie High School is a place to explore different activities - in a judgment-free zone - while meeting new people and having lots of fun. A great example of the Villa mindset is the Improv Club. After being established in the second semester, two years ago, the club typically meets on Tuesdays and Thursdays after school every other week. However, because of COVID-19, this could change in the future. For now, though, the club plans to have its first meeting after the winter virtual learning session. As Mr. Dennis, the club's enthusiastic moderator, explains, "The whole idea of why everyone should join Improv is because it's the celebration of silliness and there's no judgment... Everyone and their ideas are worth success and improving upon. It's an environment that celebrates positivity and support". If you are interested in joining Improv this year, email Mr. Dennis at wdennis@vjmhs.org, or feel free to go and talk to him in person. There are no tryouts to join the club! As Mr. Dennis says, "Everyone's welcome."



Page Turners - Literature Lovers Still Discussing Safely

by: Grace Matwijec '21

Page Turners Society, Villa's book club, is going strong! Despite the challenges that COVID-19 has brought this year, Page Turners Society has found inventive ways to still meet once a month to discuss various poems and short stories. Though rich with deep conversation about topics present in the literature we read, Page Turners Society is also an opportunity for its members to relax in the lounge and enjoy food and fun conversation with their peers. With a growing membership list, Page Turners Society continues to grow and find new ways to challenge its members by expanding thoughts and ideas through the lens of literature.



Robotics - Back in the Lab

by: Olivia Rueger '23



The Villa and Holy Ghost Robotics Club has started building and preparing for competitions! This year, the Villa and Holy Ghost joint robotics team, 242, is still building during these strange times. Holy Ghost Prep has been kind enough to host Villa's robotics team in their lab as they have done in years past. Due to new precautions, the lab is different this year; however, it is not impossible to work around. The club has still been able to meet with their players, and everything has functioned smoothly so far. Mr. Bushek and Mr. Petcaugh are the club's moderators, and they are just happy to have the members back in the lab. The club meets about 1-3 times a week to work on their robots as a team. This year, the teams with Villa girls on them are 242W and 242Z. In previous years, the teams were very successful. Both teams qualified for states last year. "Everyone is working diligently," says captain Annalise Schuck '22, "we can't wait to see what the next months hold!" Overall, all of the club members are just happy to be in the lab and building, even if there are some restrictions.

Art & Photography Club in 2020

by: Sophia de Jesus '24



The Villa Joseph Marie Art and Photography Club focuses not only on the creation of art through classic mediums, such as clay or paint but also through the natural beauty of the world around us using photography. "This club has been around as long as Villa had clubs," said Mrs. Brooks, the teacher moderator of the club. Shannon Rusnak '21, a student here at Villa, also helps to run the club. Now, it wasn't always the Art and Photography Club. It started out as the Art Club, and this year, photography is being integrated as well. Right now, the Fall Photos showcase is in the works, highlighting photos taken by members of the club, which will be compiled and posted on Instagram. The club members are looking forward to the upcoming winter project as well as multiple spring projects to follow. If interested in joining, email Mrs. Brooks at ebrooks@vjmh.org. We can't wait to see what you create!

Club Umbrella Promotes Awareness

by: Allison DeFriece '22



For Ms. May, the quote "You are loved" isn't simply a sign resting on her classroom window. It is the bedrock on which Club Umbrella, an acronym meaning "Understanding Mental Health By Receiving Education, Losing Labels, and Achieving Awareness" is rooted. Ms. May credits her 2017 AP Psychology class for the idea, affirming that the girls wanted to make the lessons that they learned in Psychology accessible to the whole school, in particular, for younger Villa girls ages fourteen to fifteen. Her students chose the umbrella symbol for its dual meaning: An umbrella's protective qualities shield one from rain, and the curvature of an umbrella is a spectrum—similar to mental health itself. Although last year was the first time that Club Umbrella ran, this year, club members only managed to gather once due to COVID-19. Ms. May remains enthusiastic that this year, the first actual year for Club Umbrella, will hopefully make an impact on the Villa community due to heavy student interest. "All of us need something to look forward to that allows us to pause from the monotony of day to day life, and the goal of this club is to spread that message that mental health is just as important as physical health." With over seventy students that signed up, Ms. May's plan is to convert the club's format from in-person sessions to virtual meetings. If anyone is interested in joining Club Umbrella, email Ms. May at mmay@vjmh.org or stop by room 210. And remember: "Take enough time to check in with yourself!"

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 student body, staff, faculty or administration of Villa Joseph Marie High School. Letters and comments should be sent to Miss McKeever.
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Fall Fun on the Field

by: Anna Wendel '21

It is true that some traditions will never fade, and Fall Spirit Day at Villa Joseph Marie is no exception. In the face of a global pandemic, the school is still finding ways to bring joy into the lives of its students and staff. As Mr. Kardish said, the school "has some non-negotiable fun events."

On Sept. 25, 2020, the air seemed to swell with laughter as the festivities began, featuring a pizza lunch generously delivered by the Parent's Guild and music drifting overhead as students enjoyed each other's company. In the spirit of friendly competition, the Blue and Gold rivalry began right from the start. Each grade level presented a song that emanated their love for the school and the comradery that the Villa sisterhood fostered. That being said, one of the most enjoyed antics of the afternoon is the creativity of the students.

The event was filled with the joy of an entire school community gathered to celebrate togetherness after so many months of being apart. There was a powerful energy that radiated through each event, building enthusiasm from one to the next, delivering the message, as Mr. Kardish said, that even COVID-19 couldn't defeat the Villa community. Naturally, there were some modifications to the day which made it possible under social distancing restrictions. Ms. May was instrumental in creating a fun and safe event for all the students.

One of the most prominent changes that needed to be implemented was the replacement of the tug of war with a more regulated alternative, the interclass relay. Though the tug of war is a schoolwide favorite event, the interclass relay race was a huge success, and Ms. May is optimistic that the tug of war will make a reappearance during spring spirit day.

The change in scenery from a packed gymnasium to the soccer field also provided an opportunity that was well-liked by many of the students and staff. "Sometimes, when you're forced to make a change, a really cool improvement can come out of it," said Mr. Kardish. Though it is true that traditions will remain soundly intact in the Villa experience, the 2020 school year provided an opportunity for the celebration to be continued.



Virtual Back to School Night

by: Taylor Mueller '21

Back to School Night was held very differently this school year. The popular event was moved online due to the Coronavirus guidelines to keep everyone safe. To have the event be entirely online, each teacher and faculty member was responsible for recording a short clip to provide details on the courses and expectations.

When asked, "What was it like when trying to decide whether or not to have Back to School Night in person or virtual due to all of the circumstances?" Mrs. Carr, school principal, stated that because of how popular the event had been in the past, it was evident that the school could not have held the event in the building safely due to COVID 19. Despite the change of format, Mrs. Franzzo, Communications and Publications Manager, determined that the website received a total of 259 site views as of October 28, with an average time spent on the page between 52 minutes and 57 seconds.

Additionally, Mrs. Gorman, the school's Media Coordinator, filmed a total of 98 videos. She stated, "For the background of the videos, we used the backdrop in my room, so all were the same. And filming the videos with the teachers was very easy, and all of their statements were very short, sweet, and to the point." Many of the teachers had multiple videos to film, so most kept their videos on the shorter side by only say-

ing what they typically say in front of the classroom for Back to School Night. Many teachers were pleased that Back to School Night would be virtual for the safety of the school community.

Mrs. Carr, who is also a teacher, stated, "It was awkward to talk into a camera instead of talking to people." Adding to that unease was the teachers' disappointment not to have the opportunity to meet new parents. One good thing about the videos was the thoughtful follow up emails that the teachers received from the parents even though they were not in person.

In the end, Back to School Night being virtual resulted in a very positive turn out and was the safest way to relay the teachers' information to the parents while remaining socially distant and safe.

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