

The



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Fenton Returns to In-Person Learning, Staff Enforces All COVID-19 Procedures

By Jenny Aguilar

After a full school year where most stayed remote, Fenton High School began the 2021-2022 school year in person for all students and staff. Along with the readjusting back to a normal school schedule, students, teachers, and staff members have also needed to grow accustomed to the new health and safety rules designed to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Groups such as the CDC, the Illinois State Board of Education, Illinois Department of Public Health, and the DuPage County of Public Health have continued to update their recommended guidelines for classrooms during the pandemic.

Dr. Sam Bentsen, the principal at Fenton, explains how Fenton's safety committee helps decide how the rules are implemented at Fenton, saying, "We have a safety committee that has various staff members on it and we review the areas that we have some flexibility in and that helps form our COVID protocols."

As with most indoor public spaces in the country, Fenton's layered mitigation efforts included social distancing, masks being worn at all times, quarantining for at least two week if exposed to the virus, and vaccination.

Junior Ariana Hurtado shares her appreciation for how teachers and staff are following these new mitigation efforts, saying, "I really appreciate that teachers enforce proper mask-wearing, especially the teachers who take the time to put out hand sanitizer and cleaning supplies in case students want something extra to feel even safer."

In order to ensure students properly follow these new rules, Fenton has created a list of procedures for when students do not comply with the protocols.

Mr. Pedro Castro, one of the deans at Fenton, points out that "The intent is not to be straight disciplinary because students have not been in the building for almost two years, so we very consciously, very deliberately went into the school year knowing

that we were going to have to show some compassion and show some empathy."

When a student is not properly wearing their mask a teacher or staff member gives them a reminder that gets logged into PowerSchool where the dean's office keeps track of how many total warnings a student receives each day. As a second warning, a Fenton administrator meets with the student to try and understand why the student is not properly wearing their mask. If the student continues to refuse to wear his or her mask, they then meet with either Castro or Mr. Jason Madl, another of Fenton's deans, where the student's parents are contacted and the urgency of the situation is communicated.

As Castro says, "It's about the student's safety. That's always been the priority."

During lunch periods, students are obligated to have at least one empty seat between each other. This has posed a challenge as lunch is usually the one time during the day where students are allowed to socialize with their friends.

Castro says, "It's more important in the cafeteria than other places because that's where people take their masks off while eating, so now that protection there is gone."

Hurtado explains this struggle for students, saying, "I think the most challenging part of the new safety rules has been the social distancing during lunch. I understand the need for the tape on certain chairs, but it can get a little aggravating when you're trying to fit all your friends at a table, but half the chairs have tape on them. However, as school goes on, my friends and I are getting a little more used to social distancing while eating."

Students also need to remember to put their masks back on once they are done eating.

As Madl says, "Fifteen minutes is the time that was pointed out as to what will actually put you at risk...Lunch periods are obviously longer than that, so if students are

taking masks off for a little bit and we are getting to that fifteen minute time period that's it gets a little bit riskier."

When a student or staff member does test positive for COVID-19, that individual is quarantined for the minimum of two weeks with no symptoms. That information is also reported to the DuPage County Health Department where both they and Fenton monitor the situation.

Bentsen reports that "We've had very few actual positive cases when you think about the amount of students and staff that we have here."

While the pandemic has caused procedures to change from moment to moment, Fenton plans is to stick with in person learning, but as Bentsen states, "We always plan for different situations but, right now, this is what we're committed to."

On August 26, 2021, Governor Pritzker instituted a vaccine mandate for educational employees, healthcare workers, and college students. Those who fall under these categories that refuse to get vaccinated by September 19, 2021 will be required to receive weekly COVID-19 testing. As for students, the FDA did fully approve the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine

although no official requirement has been announced.

Bentsen commends the effort that students and staff have put in following all these new changes, saying, "I think the students have been great. The staff has been great as far as following the protocols and we are committed to continuing to implement those protocols day after day."

As the community continues to adjust to this "new normal," Madl wishes students would realize "we really are all in this together. It's hard to teach all day with a mask on. It's hard for the teachers and the adults just as it is for the students with these new rules... It's really hard on all of us, [but] our number one goal will always be that everyone in our building is safe."

Despite these new rules and protocols, students and staff can agree that in most ways, being in person is much better than remote learning.

As Hurtado says, "I'm so excited to be back with in-person learning! It's nice to talk to my friends during lunch again, and it's much easier to collaborate with students when you're not behind a screen."



Diego Lopez, Vinnie Kehoe work on essays in the courtyard for Ms. Jackson's class.

Marching Band Returns; Marchers Share Friday Night Lights Experience

By Sarah Guerrero

After almost two years of empty performance calendars and vacant uniforms, Fenton's very own marching band is back, and they are greater than ever.

Over the past couple of months, the marching band has worked on a handful of songs, like Fenton classics "Seven Nation Army" and the school fight song, to their 2021 halftime show, which includes songs from the 2017 film, *The Greatest Showman*. The show is composed of "The Greatest Show," (which debuted at the band's first gig on September 3rd, Fenton's first home football game), as well as "This is Me" and "Never Enough/ From Now On."

In a conversation with band teacher and director Mr. Garret George, he commented on the message he hopes the pieces radiate this season, stating, "I love this year's show because of how positive and familiar it is. The music just boosts positive energy within the band, which is something we aim to share with our audience at every show. We believe that's what we all need right now: positivity and good music."

The season kicked off on July 26th with the return of the annual Marching Bison Band week long camp. During these 5 instructional days, the band worked hard to learn a great amount of marching fundamentals and techniques, as

well as their music. Despite the harsh sun, the marchers made consistent efforts to improve as individuals and as a group each day from aspects like box drills and parade blocks to artistic interpretation and playing techniques.

This year, the marchers have found themselves in unfortunate situations with unpredictable weather conditions quite often.

George commented on the band's ability to persevere through adversities, saying that "The weather has been an obstacle. We've had to handle either crazy storms or crazy heat. Consistent weather is key to making sure the band has time to practice, but we've done a great job of remaining flexible and taking complete advantage of our time together to work on music specifics and make sure individual needs are met."

Fenton's first home football game of the season against the Larkin Royals was also the band's first performance.

George describes feeling "emotional, yet honored to return to entertaining the Fenton community."

He also states that he was "proud to see guests supporting so many different aspects of our school, like the football team, cheer and dance forces, as well as the band."

Junior Tera Pabico, a returning member, applauds the marchers for

their dedicated team work. Pabico pondered on what it felt like to finally be back in the stadium, saying, "I believe that Mr. George, along with our student leaders, have done a great job of instilling trust within the band. On Friday night, as we stood just outside of the stadium, I could just feel the intense energy that ran through us all. We were so nervous, but we trusted one another. We knew that no matter what happened out there, every single one of us was going to give it their all. And that's what got us through the night. I really missed that game night feeling. Yes, our band has become smaller in number, but our energy was evident on Friday, and it was more ecstatic than ever. We had

so much fun not only entertaining the guests, but celebrating that we were back, and we had worked hard to get here."

Sophomore Alexa Calderon contributed to what seemed to be a mutual feeling of pride, honor, and love within the group, affirming that "at the end of the day, we're a family. We survived a pandemic, and we all made a constant effort to show up and do what we love: make beautiful music. We've supported one another, and worked hard as individuals to not only create wonderful art together, but for those who have waited 2 years to hear us. We're a family, and it finally feels like home."



Photo by Michelle Agyemang

What is Restorative Justice? Madl Details Alternate Discipline Philosophy

By Michelle Agyemang

Exclusionary discipline has been used in schools for decades. According to the American Psychological Association, "exclusionary discipline encompasses any type of school disciplinary action that removes or excludes a student from his or her usual educational setting."

The two most used forms of exclusionary discipline are suspensions and expulsions. Punishments like these have been found to worsen academic performance, lower levels of school engagement, greater chances of students leaving school before graduating. It also is linked to an increase in school-related violence and antisocial behaviors and increases the likelihood of students having future involvement with the criminal justice system.

An alternative to traditional exclusionary discipline systems is a form of discipline called restorative justice. At its core, restorative justice in schools strives to resolve conflicts through cooperation and mediation instead of punishment. Ever since 2016, Fenton started implementing restorative justice practices in the way it disciplines its students.

Fenton dean of students, Mr. Jason Madl, describes the restorative practices at Fenton, saying, "Our school restorative practices are a way for students to 'own their conflict.' So basically, if they have made a mistake or poor choice, it's an opportunity for them to own that, to take responsibility for and to try to repair the harm. Rather than just always giving consequences and punishing students, we're giving them a chance to hopefully actively learn from their mistakes and grow from them."

If a student were to harm another student, there would be a restorative conference with an adult in the dean's office where a student or students would go through a list of questions such as, What happened? What were you thinking at the time? Who has been affected?

The goal for the restorative conferences is to ensure that all parties of a conflict have an opportunity to share their opinions in a safe and controlled environment. The school doesn't force students to form an apology; however, it does hope that students can walk away from an issue free of any burdens or emotions that would set them back in educational and social lives. "If an apology comes up. That is what just happens naturally. That's not something

that we do, but a lot of times it does come out and we don't force people to do that. So it's just to help people come to peace with the conflict that happened, resolve it, and then just go on with their days because we don't want them dragging that around like an anchor," says Madl.

Senior Lili Bermudez comments on this by saying, "[Restorative justice] sounds so much better...All the times I've gotten in trouble I would've much rather talked it out instead of getting detentions right away without being heard. Sometimes the teachers get you in trouble for something, but you see it in a different way. It would be nice to see both sides of the story instead of just getting written up and getting detention right away."

Restorative justice allows students to let go of conflict and hopefully move on to greater things. The immediate relief that comes with a simple dialogue between students and a staff member can make a world of difference on its own. However, restorative justice has been found to have a multitude of other beneficial long-term effects on students and the school as a whole. Across the country, students have been found to have increased ownership of their mistakes and learn how to deal with their conflicts in a less destructive way. And, with less punitive discipline measures put into place, the chances of students falling into the school-to-prison pipeline greatly decrease.

Madl shares, "The misnomer a lot of times is that students are getting away with something or they're being let off lightly or easily. And one of the quotes that I read that really makes sense to me is, 'punishment is passive, while restorative is active', meaning a student's going to get a lot more out of an experience when they are active and engaged, rather than just sitting someplace, and feeling guilty or bad about what they did. I just want to make sure that the students and the adults know that's what we're trying to achieve. We're not trying to water things down so students can just get away with, whatever their behaviors are."

The purpose of restorative justice is to see students succeed in their lives, despite the mistakes they have made. Restorative justice is something that has the potential to foster a sense of understanding among students and staff. This understanding is what can create a positive, lasting change within the walls of Fenton.

Seniors Muhamed Rojba and Evelyn Perez Get Named USC Bovard Scholars

By Chrystyna Prokulevich

Despite the very tough and difficult year that 2021 has brought us, students such as Evelyn Perez and Muhamed Rojba, have worked persistently and have been awarded as USC Bovard Scholars.

The USC Bovard Scholar program is one that provides high-achieving junior students financial assistance to gain access and get accepted in top universities and colleges all around the nation.

The USC Bovard website says, "Through expert admissions and financial aid assistance, comprehensive test preparation and personalized career exploration experiences, we aim to transform lives and build a new, diverse generation of dynamic leaders."

Students are given many opportunities to assess and be guided in their career paths and where they want to go in life. Not only that, but they are also being given chances to meet with exceptional business and companies and be a part of different programs.

Evelyn Perez says, "In order to apply, I submitted an application that consisted of demographic information, short answer questions, transcripts, recommendation letters, etc. To cut it simply, it was like a college application."

Perez and Rojba were put in a pool of over ten thousand applicants. Being students that have worked very hard over their four years of high school, and being very involved, this

was a last minute decision.

Perez insightfully mentions, "The whole process was a spur of the moment application, because I didn't think I had the chance, we both applied the last day."

And the burning question that I asked was, how she felt after she got in, "I felt very excited, and was in a state of disbelief and at the same time I was disappointed because I wasn't able to fly out to California."

With them being accepted, they were introduced and invited to apply to so many programs and meet with many people!"

Perez explains, "Through

the program you get to develop interests and communicate with companies and other educators and college students who went through the same process that [I] will be going through very soon. As someone interested in engineering, I was able to communicate with Boeing (Aerospace company). And, I think Muhamed was able to talk to doctors, and went to a virtual hospital! It was a really good experience, I got to talk to people who just entered the company, and they spoke about their experiences in college, and proved to me that hard work and dedication can really get you places!"

But although so much positivity has come out of this, this also raised the question and idea of how hard competition and stress must have felt on both the students when applying and being in the programs.

"Although I did experience imposter syndrome, because of all the incredible students and the things they have done in their lives. But all the students got assigned two coaches and they made me feel valuable and gave so many great pieces of advice, and read over personal statements, and presented more opportunities for college, fly-in opportunities, etc," Perez said.

Feeling like you do not fit in, is always one of the most hardest parts of the process, and one that many students including Evelyn Perez and Muhamed Rojba have gone through, but with perseverance and good mentoring and incredible teachers and counselors such as our very own Mrs. Rachel Georgakis, they were able to succeed and earn so much!

For future students, Perez says, "Yes, I recommend this program immensely because of the opportunities and experiences you gain from this program, whether remote or in person."

Students like Perez and Rojba are exceptional examples of how a little hard work and just believing in yourself can lead to success and great prosperity!

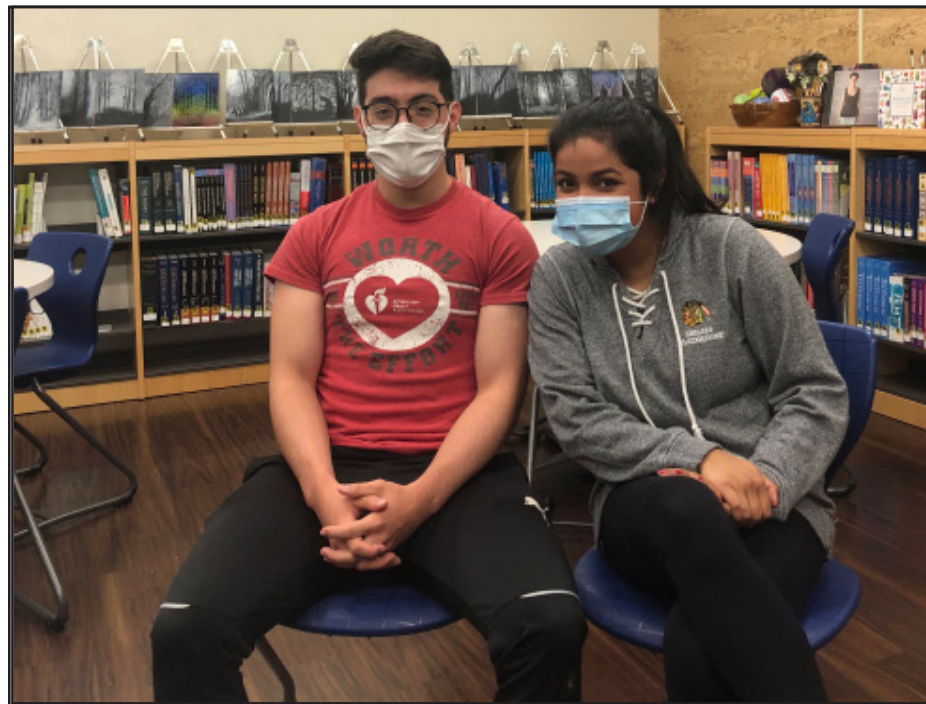


Photo courtesy of Evelyn Perez

Micor Recives International Recognition for Flute

By Abigail Niehoff

Fenton's own Anna Micor has been recognized internationally for her flute playing and performance. Micor has played the flute throughout her Fenton career and furthered her skills by entering competitions.

Micor says, "At first, I entered a lot of local and state competitions. I decided to challenge myself and enter even larger ones. I kept entering local competitions, but also eventually branched out into the national level."

At the direction of her music teachers, judges, and other support, she received critiques and pointers to improve her performance and overall skills.

When the Enkor International Competition caught her eye, "It was a little bit intimidating- the first time I came across the website I noticed that so many people from all over the world were participating in this prestigious competition, some from Taiwan, South Korea, Australia, and so many other countries! I'm so glad I went for it though."

This turned out to be a



Photo courtesy of Anna Micor

major success- she had placed third internationally in flute performance.

Micor comments on her expanded musical perspective, saying, "I believe that music can be used to communicate stories and share emotions which is so powerful, it's why I love it so much."

Micor would like to especially thank her supporters throughout the journey: band teacher Mr. Garrett George, choir teacher Mrs. Seredy Williams, Mrs. Mary Christine Stingley, her parents, and Fenton's amazing community.



by Ethan Diaz

New Staff Photo Op: Share Your Education, a Fun Fact

by Julissa Velazquez



Amanda Sallmann (science)
“I went to St. Norbert College for my B.S. in Geology, University of Wisconsin - Green Bay for my M.S. in Environmental Science and Policy, and Northeastern Illinois University for my M.A. in Teaching. Fun fact about me: I’ve seen every Marvel movie at least 3 times. Even the new Black Widow movie.”



Carol Uhl-Alba (computer science/math)
“I received my undergraduate degree in Mathematics from North Park University. I received both masters degrees (Math/Computer Science, and Administration) from Concordia University. Fun fact: My mother taught in District 2 (Bensenville Elementary system)



Maia Whalen (social work)
“I received my Bachelor’s degree from Lake Forest College, and my Master’s from Loyola University. Fun fact: I broke the same arm twice in the 4th grade.”



Luis Garcia (business)
“My name is Luis Garcia, I attended Robert Morris University and Trinity Christian College. Fun fact: I was 16 years old when I started college and 19 when I graduated.”



Scott McNulty (art/writing lab)
“I attended Harper College for my Associates, Northern Illinois University for my B.S.Ed in Visual Art Education, and National-Louis for my Masters in Curriculum and Instruction. Two unrelated facts about me: I try to use humor to get to know people better (sometimes unsuccessfully). In my free time I walk my rescue dogs and build and maintain vintage racing motorcycles with my two young sons.”



Michael Privett (english/writing lab)
“ I went to Illinois Wesleyan University for college. I’m an English teacher. My fun fact could be that I’ve sold over 5,000 trading cards.”



Matthew Fierer (applied technology)
“I graduated from Roosevelt University with a degree in Actuarial Science. I used to play piano accompaniment for members of the Lyric Opera.”



Mitchell Russell (special education)
“I attended Illinois State and National Louis University. Fun fact...I like to collect coins!”



Vaida Volodka (math lab)
“I came from Lithuania and earned a degree in Master’s mathematics - Education at Vilnius University. I have two jobs. I am working at Fenton in Learning Math Lab and part time at Governors State University.”



Jennifer Rodriguez (social work)
“I went to COD, Elmhurst College (now University) and then Dominican University. Fun Fact, I graduated from Fenton almost 20 years ago!”



John Crosley-Corcoran (ESL)
“B.A. Trinity Christian College M.Ed National Louis University. I enjoy playing music in my free time. I play guitar, bass, and I’m currently learning drums. I have toured and played in a number of rock bands over the last 20 years.”

AP Bootcamp Prepares Students for Classroom, Exam Success

By Jerry Gurrola

Advanced Placement, or AP, courses are designed to give a sense of an introductory college level class, with giving the chance to high school students of earning college credit. It is a program created by the College Board, also known as the creators of the Scholastic Aptitude Test. Back in 2019, Fenton High School earned the title of AP District of the Year, due to increasing exam scores and the access given to a variety of students to choose from various AP courses regardless of other statistics like the GPA. As Fenton says, those don't define the capability a student can have with AP. But of course, Fenton had to make a change in their path for that title to be awarded and recognized.

Division leader of the English, Social Studies, and ELL departments as well as a longtime teacher of AP courses, Kate Ward defines what AP is to her: "A rigorous nationwide curriculum that allows students to acquire test skills that will help with career success in college."

Fenton understands the importance of a student challenging themselves with certain skills. Ward remarks, "They feel like they don't belong." A comment and feeling expressed by students that struck the curriculum at Fenton, and one that drove the path into providing students with help with such a challenging program.

An annual session titled "AP Bootcamp", usually held in early August at Fenton High School, covers topics such as Cornell Method and gives students tips on handling such a course, and tips on studying in general. Fenton makes sure to tailor what areas students must work on and to obtain students with confidence with hopes of them walking out feeling prepared for the following school year with AP, defining this bootcamp.

Senior student-athlete Kyla Branch attended back in 2019 and says, "AP Boot Camp helped show me ways to keep myself on track during the year because you get a good chunk of homework."

So how does this program help to keep students on track?

Well, the Cornell note method cleared airways on the struggles with studying for AP, including the act of staying on track. Cornell: The strategy of dividing columns and turning them into the process of taking, organizing, and reviewing notes. Furthering into Branch's quote on how it helped her stay on track, the Cornell method shortens the span of time you usually spend on studying because of the simple layout it gives you. She is kept on track with AP as she knows how many notes to take, and where she needs to be in terms

of misunderstandings whilst annotating. The mindset Branch took from AP Bootcamp ended up getting her to score a 3 on AP World History, a score considered passing as she may be eligible for college credit. Branch would like to recognize Mr. Payton for his support of her AP capability.

With the many challenges faced in AP, there's always a positive. Sophomore Giselle Garcia, also a member of the volleyball team at Fenton, says, "Going into the camp, I wasn't sure what to expect or what I would learn. However, since then, I have learned the importance of staying organized, not only to stay on top of my work, but to not stress myself out."

Garcia enjoys the independence she has gained from the AP World History course, from the independent class work to the challenge she receives with homework. She's glad to take that AP challenge so she succeeds later on during college. What helps staying on top of the work is the organization. Going back to a method taught, Cornell, it is more so based on strategy to help you sort out your studies. Garcia has learned how important it is to organize your work especially with history as it goes into depth of certain events. She's succeeding and thankful for the session for introducing her to a world where she now knows how to properly jot down notes and one of the best methods of studying.

Motivation is key to a successful year with AP and Fenton clearly does an outstanding job in making sure to incorporate that into the session. Sophomore and student-athlete Amber Hayde also shares her opinion on AP Bootcamp: "I think AP Bootcamp was great, I'm very glad I decided to do it. It made me get a head start on what my first AP class would look like. I can stay motivated to complete my work in the AP world."

From going on a talk with organization and properly writing notes with Cornell, it also taught students that stress is limited if you have certain ways to manage your studies. AP Bootcamp helped students get their works together in a note-taking matter. Students learned various ways of learning from using AP legends (keys), writing proper annotations, and most importantly taken from the program, Cornell notes. "AP Bootcamp is trying to give first time AP students confidence walking into their first AP class." Ward comments.

The AP exams are taken early May and Fenton assists on exam success with sessions like the bootcamp. At the end of the day, what students should take from these sessions are the basic developments of note-taking, and the mindset needed in order to succeed in such a course. Fenton succeeds with making oneself feel prepared going into an obstacle like AP.

New Events Added, Traditions to Continue During Homecoming

By Erica Ayala

Homecoming is an exciting high school tradition that is coming back to Fenton this year. Students and teachers, alike, missed the joy and school spirit that the week brought. Senior Karissa Lara "cannot wait to see all of the hype and excitement during the week leading up to the homecoming dance." Although the event may look different, teachers and administrators are doing their best to bring back this bison tradition. Sophomore Nathaniel Herrera says he's "looking forward to the spirit of homecoming week!"

Students, who loved the spirit week, pep rally, and homecoming dance, are eagerly awaiting the return of the event. Mrs. Bray, Student Council sponsor, said "we're so excited to bring back the spirit of homecoming week that we all missed last year!" One way that this tradition will look slightly different is that there will be no pep rally. In the absence of this event, the school will host a Bison Bonfire on Thursday night. At the bonfire, there will be fun games hosted by Mr. Cassidy and student council members, such as: tug of rope, pie in the face, egg toss, etc. Additionally, the homecoming court will be announced at this event with music and other fun activities.

Next, the homecoming dance will be hosted at White Pines golf course with a limited guest number of 350 people. Student Council president, senior Hailey Miller, says she is "so excited to participate in all of the senior traditions that come during Homecoming week!" Similarly, Karissa Lara ('22) explains that the best part of Homecoming is "getting to go all out and dress up with my friends!" The event will require masks, but dancing is encouraged! Unfortunately, due to covid guidelines the school will not allow outside guests at the dance. Even with some of the limitations on the dance, Mrs. Julia Bray says "We know that the kids in attendance will still have a really good time!" Students, feel free to request songs from the DJ (more information will be provided once we get closer to the event).

Finally, the homecoming football game will include some special activities. On October 8th, the Fenton Bison will be playing West Chicago. Varsity will play at 7:30 and the Junior Varsity will play at 5:00. The theme for the game is White Out; we hope to see you all in the student section that Friday!

2021 Fall Play 12 Angry Jurors Showing October 28 Through 31

By Delila Perez

12 Angry Jurors. One room. One verdict. A life or death sentence. Following the end of a murder trial, 12 strangers must come to a unanimous decision on whether the accused has been proven innocent or guilty.

Wonder what the verdict will be? Then come and watch the fall play on Thursday, October 28th, through Friday, October 30th at 7:00 pm, as well as a matinee on Saturday, October 31st at 2 pm. The original dates stated in the Fenton planner have been changed to the ones stated above due to scheduling conflicts.

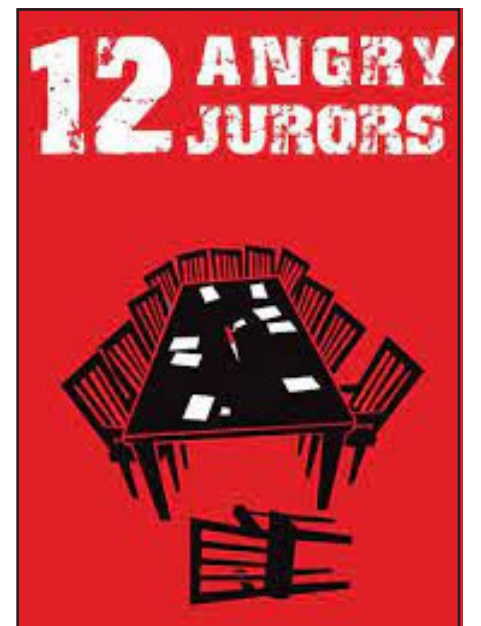
According to English teacher and fall play director, Dr. Mike Mitchell, 12 *Angry Jurors* is "a good play to come back to after the covid break with a lot of great drama and a lot of good roles."

Occupying one of the roles is Senior Evelyn Perez who states, "Theater has such an open and welcoming environment and the experience and people you meet are priceless."

If you missed a chance at this year's fall play and are interested in doing theater, there are more opportunities throughout the year

such as group interpretation, contest drama, and the spring musical.

Do not miss out on the opportunity to experience new things and make memories! For example, although the cast list has already been set, the play is still welcoming stage crew members to join! If you are interested contact Dr. Mitchell or Dr. George Mussman.



Girls Volleyball Team's Season is Strong Despite COVID-19 Setbacks

By Jadyn Golz

Volleyball season is back at Fenton High School. The team began practicing over summer break and just recently had their first few games. I had an interview with their Coach, Ms. Kelly Torres, who states, "One of the things we're looking forward to most this season is just a really talented group of girls. We're looking forward to being back from Covid which was pretty trying last year. We only had a six week season. Now to have a full opportunity with a full group of girls is really exciting for us. We have a lot of talent this year so we're expecting good things."

Torres has high expectations for the team this year. The returning team captain, Hailey Miller has been on varsity since she was a freshman. Torres notes, "She's a great leader, a great teammate, someone who I really put a lot of faith and trust in and carries the team - she's kind of the backbone." Torres would also like to note Abbey Boehm who's been on varsity for 3 years, Sophia Haska, a senior who has "a hammer of an attack," Weronica Krupa who plays middle, and Elizabeth Aguirre who is one of the setters. Torres notes, "[Aguirre's] serving is pretty powerful and scary to be receiving from, so that's good." Torres also praises Gianna Krygier and her excellent serve, senior Emily Diaz who is "someone who is defensively very strong," Joanna Kukielko who is "the most consistent, hardworking, and just an awesome *awesome* girl to have on the team," junior Melina Lira, and sophomore Jordan Brown who started on varsity as a freshman.

Torres remarks, "She's somebody who I think is going to go very far in volleyball if she so chooses. She's one of the most gifted athletes I've coached. She's still young and she's still learning, but she's so strong and so powerful and so athletic. Someone I think could play at a very high level in college. So I'm excited to see what happens with her." Torres also recognizes Lily Du, Gracen Haska, and Geolia Valegurschi who "is just pretty spectacular, especially for her age. Again, somebody who [Torres can] see could easily play in college."

Torres states that "a lot of these girls, if they chose to go that route, could have college scholarships. So that's what [she] looks[s] forward to most. Just guiding these girls to whatever their potential is outside

of Fenton is gonna be. Because [Torres] think[s] a lot of them have the potential to play in college." The team has a motto, "Be the hammer not the nail." Torres elaborates, "You can be one of two things, you can be the hammer or you can be the nail and we always want to make sure we're the ones hammering the other team, we always want to be the strong ones. Be aggressive and play fearlessly."

After listening to Coach Torres fangirl about her team, I asked about the morale on masks and the current pandemic, to which Torres responded, "It's really challenging, I will say. Because as you can tell, just sitting in this office right now it's hot. That gym is easily 100 degrees, all the time, if not more. There's no air conditioning, the windows don't

work, and the fans are on their last legs... So that gets a little challenging because coupled with putting a mask on them, these girls are actually in danger of heat exhaustion and stuff like that. So, we take a lot of precautions and a lot of breaks. If we do some sort of high energy activity, we always do a water break afterwards and then sometimes I send them even in the hallway to get some air conditioning a little bit."

The girls on the team have already faced many challenges with the COVID-19 virus. Torres was out on the first week of school, a crucial training moment for the team, because she was in close contact with a person that had the virus. Torres had the practices videotaped and sent to her to which she then sent feedback back to the team via email.

However, the team was able to overcome that hardship with excellent morale. Torres states, "You know, all in all, they understand that in order to play, we have to wear masks. They know that, just what happened with me, if that happens to one of the girls on the team, we could easily get the program shut down. So, they're willing to do what it takes. They're willing to sacrifice comfort because they love the sport and they want to play. So they've been really awesome about it. But it's still super challenging for them."

The team had a second quarantine in mid-September and is able to begin practicing again as of Thursday, September 16. They still have six weeks of competition ahead of them where Torres expects greatness from this group.



Photo courtesy of Kelly Torres

Female Genocide Continues to Plague Latin America

By Xochitl Quiñones

With the recent semi-legalization of abortion in México, a question has risen to the surface of several Latine women's minds: is this the end to a long-fought battle against femicide in Latin America?

The United Nations defines *femicide* simply- "the killing of women and girls because of their gender."

Despite such a clear-cut definition, the reality is that the effects femicide has on Latine women are not as two dimensional- usually leading to a mixture of feeling guilt, fear, and disappointment. To make matters worse, there has been a disproportionate lack of media coverage on *any* gender-related crimes in Latin America.

But how could someone hold so much abhorrence to go as far as killing women for the sole purpose that they are, simply, women?

Heritage Spanish teacher Candice DeMauro explains it best: "It's rooted in machismo, [it's] rooted in our culture. Growing up, we're told that the woman will serve the man and if [you don't]... you dishonor your family."

For the past year and a half, women of all ages, some as young as only three months, and economic classes could be seen marching down the streets of state capitals, united for one common cause- the end of an unspoken genocide.

According to the Center for Strategic & International Studies, in 2018, the rate of female homicide victims in México was 10 a day. Since then, the number has *doubled*, with México on the leaderboard for the country with the most femicides.

Student Érica Ayala, a well-read senior with a passion for current events in Latin America, revealed the heartbreak she experiences with every

story involving the persecution of women in Central and South America, stating she "can't imagine the fear of living in a country that protects the perpetrator and blames the victim with no shame [and] no backlash."

Unfortunately, this is only a very small blade of grass in the forest of femicide; on top of the unspoken genocide in México, Puerto Rico has also become home to its own number of gender-related crimes, with an infamous boxer killing his pregnant ex girlfriend in early May and then pleading not guilty only a week later. It does not end there--every country in Latin America, no matter how miniscule they may seem in the world's view, has been the home of several gender-related crimes.

The multitude of breaking stories brings forward a more sinister question: if it's so deeply rooted in culture, just how far and deeply do its roots run? More specifically, has the misogyny begun to cause the rotting of all the other fruits our culture has given us? How do you maintain peace within yourself after being exposed to so many reasons to hold hatred in your heart?

DeMauro revealed a captivating secret- she *was* angry. She *did* hold all the "bad" feelings, but she was not ashamed. "After I grew up, I did feel angry and even hatred for everything... I mean, I was given reason after reason to hate my [identity] but eventually I had to step back and collect myself... it was like I was being consumed by it."

Growing up in Latin American society, or even being Latine in the United States, has its own extensive set of issues to address. Both Ayala and DeMauro agree that "being Latine is something [we] are proud of."

But, as Ayala disclosed, "... add being a *woman* and you've basically been assigned a death sentence."

U.S. Military Evacuates Afghanistan As Taliban Seizes Control

By Jenny Aguilar

In August 2021, as the United States continued its military evacuation from Afghanistan, members of the Taliban began seizing control of multiple cities in the country. Eventually, the capital of Afghanistan, Kabul, was overtaken by the Taliban. U.S. citizens and Afghan allies alike rushed to leave the country before the evacuation deadline, August 31, 2021.

The United States had been directly involved in Afghanistan starting 20 years ago when, after the terrorist attack on the Twin Towers, the Taliban refused to surrender Al-Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden.

On October 7, 2001, the United States sent a missile strike to Afghanistan, targeting both the Taliban and Al-Qaeda, marking the beginning of a two-decade journey. Throughout that time, the United States' objective in Afghanistan evolved from retribution for the attack on 9/11 to helping the Afghans fend off the Taliban and establish a democracy.

Throughout this time, an array of presidents and other political leaders claimed that the U.S. would soon withdraw its troops, such as when Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld stated, "We have moved from major combat activity to a period of stability and stabilization and reconstruction and activities" in 2003 and President Obama claimed in 2009 that forces would leave by 2011, according to NPR. However, it became increasingly clear that the withdrawal of U.S. troops would not be soon. Then, on April 14, 2021, President Biden announced that the United States would withdraw its troops by September 11, which was later changed to August 31.

In the following months, the Taliban had begun seizing lands towards the North of Afghanistan, but the U.S. continued evacuations, leaving Bagram Airfield in July 2021, one of the important centers for the war. During that time, U.S. intelligence agencies predicted that

Afghanistan could fall under Taliban rule around six months to a year, but nobody expected the Afghan government to collapse just a month later.

Some blame the quick downfall on the Afghanistan army's inability to efficiently utilize the aid they had received during the past 20 years. According to the BBC, the United States had spent about \$88 billion on Afghan security during the course of their involvement. Most of this money was meant to be used for training and providing supplies for the Afghan army, however, the military's history of corruption may be to blame for the lack of preparation against the Taliban.

Social studies teacher and Army veteran Ms. Kelly Mullins comments on the sudden takeover and decision to evacuate, saying, "America definitely put the time, effort, and money into building up Afghanistan. In the end, the Afghanistan people and military needed to take on a role to protect the people from the Taliban."

On August 15, 2021, with the Taliban seizing the capital and declaring victory in the war, U.S. officials began to expedite evacuation processes for fear of not making the deadline. Photographs show thousands of Americans and Afghans crowding around Kabul Airport, the only major international airport not under Taliban rule, in panic. The infamous photo of a C-17 military cargo plane shows over 600 Afghan refugees packed in the plane's cargo hold.

Mr. Peter Carzoli, a math teacher and a veteran Marine, shares his thoughts on the evacuation process: "In general, It seems like there could have been a more rational plan. It seemed to me it was done in haste."

Senior Izabela Weglarz remarks on the situation as a whole, saying, "It's so terrible to think that in this day and age we still have to deal with such injustices, and I honestly feel so sorry that I can't do something

about it. Although in no way is America perfect, I'm truly grateful that not only are we not in a war-torn state but also that, minus abortion laws, women have control over their own lives here."

One of the major concerns with the Taliban has been women's rights.

During a press conference on August 17, Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said that women's rights would still be respected in accordance with their interpretation of sharia law. Nonetheless, women are concerned for their future.

In response to the Taliban's statement, Mullins says, "I do not think the Taliban will protect the progress that has been made for women in the last two decades because historically they've done the opposite. Peaceful protests in support of women's rights are already being met with brutal physical responses by the Taliban in Kabul. Going forward women will face subjugation in all aspects of their lives."

Senior Izabela Weglarz reiterates this sentiment, saying, "I'm honestly afraid and hopeful at the same time, part of me thinks that if and when the Taliban begins to show full power, women will also begin to step up and prove that they will not be taken control over."

Then, on August 26, 2021, only five days away from the evacuation deadline, members of the group ISIS in Khorasan, or ISIS-K, detonated two suicide bombers just outside of Kabul Airport. 13 U.S. service members and 60 Afghans died, with 18 U.S. service members and 140 Afghans wounded.

Mullins expresses the resounding feelings caused by the attack, saying, "I was devastated for those troops who were so close to finishing that operation. And for the country of Afghanistan. It's a terrible thing to have happened. It's exceptionally tragic. No one wants to see that."

That following Friday, the Pentagon revealed that two "high-profile" leaders of ISIS-K were killed

and one was injured in a drone strike in Nangarhar Province.

As for further military involvement, Carzoli warns against doing so, saying, "We spent 20 years on a mission that turned into a nation building mission. We saw how quickly our efforts can be undone. We have to be very careful about further military involvement in Afghanistan... We've got a saying in the military, 'suits and boots.' Members of the military usually accomplish the mission. Unfortunately, the suits, elected officials, often change our mission. It makes it harder to achieve success. And I think as a democracy we have to be very careful about engaging in long term warfare because we have elections every four years. Unfortunately, it puts the military in a situation where they're chasing a mission that is constantly changing. We saw it in Vietnam. Military accomplished what they were asked but the goal kept changing. It's just frustrating as a Marine to be unable to accomplish the mission. We do what we are told."

However, Mullins believes it's inevitable: "Whether we see it on the news or it's happening covertly, we will still have a presence there... It might be that we're still going to know what's going on there."

In the end, the United States was able to evacuate around 123,000 people, including about 6,000 Americans, although thousands of Afghans were still left behind. According to the New York Times, State Department Spokesman Ned Price announced that allies hoped the Taliban would allow nonmilitary flights to continue after the August 31 deadline.

Despite the disappointing outcome with the Taliban regaining control, Mullins reminds us of what the United States was able to accomplish in those 20 years: "Our mission was not in vain. We saved a lot of lives. We made conditions better. American troops had an impact. It wasn't for nothing. We did good work there."

Fenton Offers New Fitness Classes For All Levels

By Abby Hernandez

Do you feel like you don't belong in a club or sport at Fenton? If so, you're in luck!

Mr. Garrett Jerger, special education teacher at Fenton, talks about the new fitness classes starting up. These classes are an intro to CrossFit, nothing too intense. There will be a personal trainer who helps instruct the class to learn the beginning steps of CrossFit.

What exactly is cross fit? CrossFit is a blend of many different exercises and sports. This club meets on Tuesdays and Fridays in the Crackerbox and in the ARC on Wednesdays.

Jerger hopes to use outside space as well.

Jerger believes there is a connection between fitness and academic success and consistently talks about how being in a fitness-related club can reduce stress, help you bond with people, motivate you, and overall help you have a better outlook on life. Not only does he run this club, but he is passionate about it.

Jerger started this club because he wanted to make everyone feel like they could belong. Some people don't have a clique, so this fitness class can be yours. Socialize and engage in some physical activity in fitness classes on Tuesdays and Fridays in the Crackerbox from 7-7:45 and Wednesdays in the ARC from 3:30 - 4:15.

All fitness levels are welcome.