

# “Election Reflections”: A Campus-Wide Discussion

BY DANIEL GREENE  
Staff Writer

The Office of Inclusive Excellence hosted an event titled “Election Reflections: A Community Debrief” on Wednesday, Nov. 13 at 12:30 p.m. in the Chapel of the Holy Spirit. Students, faculty and staff were able to share their concerns and hopes resulting from former-president Donald Trump’s victory over Vice President Kamala Harris.

“The Office of Inclusive Excellence aims to create spaces that foster conversations centered around empathy, open-mindedness and respect. We want the students, staff and faculty at Sacred Heart University to feel comfortable sharing their personal reflections—whether they are feeling hopeful, frustrated, uncertain or anything in between,” said Dr. Freda Grant, Director of Institutional Equity Compliance.

“We thought it was really important, going into this fall, to make sure there was a space planned well in advance of anything that could happen in terms of who or how the election went and to make sure that as a community we were able to talk about it,” said Dr. Charlie Gillespie, Director of the Pioneer Journey.

Initially, the faculty and staff at the event were more willing to share their thoughts about the election results than the students in attendance. As the event continued, more student attendees felt comfortable enough to share what was on their minds.

“I wanted to have a conversation with individuals curious about the aftermath of the election because I knew that I was not the only one feeling the way I do,” said freshman Holly Cushing.

There were about 30 people in the chapel for the event, and even though there were both Trump and Harris supporters in attendance, more Harris supporters were outspoken about their hopes and fears.

“I think that the crowd that was in the room were the people who happened to be free at 12:30 p.m., wanted to come and do this, and thought that their assumptions about the room would match the room they are walking into,” said Gillespie. “I think there are a lot of people on various sides of all these questions that opted out for a false assumption of what the room was going to be like.”

As a result of Trump’s victory, many individuals in the Sacred Heart community and across the country have been vocal about their fears, concerns and mistrust of those around them. People from both parties have taken to social media to share their reactions to the election.

“One of my primary concerns post-election was whether or not our socio-political division could heighten tensions within our communities. Regardless of where people stand politically and the latter outcome, this year’s election led to widespread frustration, mistrust and anger,” said Grant.

“Without the proper supportive resources, these feelings have the potential to fracture relationships between friends, family members and neighbors. One way to combat this is by creating spaces that ensure individuals feel heard. The Election Reflections provides the necessary space for that particular type of civil discourse.”

The Catholic Intellectual Tradition (CIT) classes are



Jack Cavicchi, Assistant Web Manager and Staff Writer

The Chapel of the Holy Spirit, the location of the “Election Reflections: A Community Debrief” hosted by the Office for Inclusive Excellence.

required for all students to take before they graduate, and they utilize conversations and civil discourse to operate. This was the first time the university hosted events that outwardly encouraged civil discourse outside of the classroom.

“These events bring the courageous civil discourse and intentional reflection that we do in CIT and have that be what SHU does best,” said Gillespie.

According to Grant, the Office of Inclusive Excellence is hoping to hold more events like Election Reflections after receiving positive feedback from the university community.

“I definitely feel like this event was beneficial and there should be more discussions like this in the future,” said Cushing. “If there were more, you could certainly count on me being there.”

## “Whiskey: The Musical”

BY CAMRYN MCCUTCHEON  
Staff Writer

Associate Professor, Dr. Sara Ross, has taught in Dingle, Ireland multiple times and was captivated by the talent of the locals. Inspired by this, she wrote “Whiskey: The Musical,” her debut short film.

“The area is spectacularly beautiful, and there is so much talent packed into this small town, including filmmakers, actors, musicians and dancers. So I was inspired to write something that would reflect that community,” said Ross.

“Whiskey: The Musical” is about a woman who enters a whiskey-making contest, and travels to Dingle to compete.

“I started working on the script and other aspects of development in early 2023, and Prof. Todd Barnes joined me as the producer,” said Ross.

As a professor at Sacred Heart, she focuses on women in film, as well as film aesthetics and storytelling.

Also serving as Sacred Heart University’s (SHU) Film and Television Master’s Program (FTMA) Co-

Director, Ross wanted to give students a new opportunity.

“We wanted to give our students an opportunity to be part of a film production on a professional level,” said Ross. The crew filmed overseas in various locations around Dingle, working in collaboration with students at Kerry College.

It added a degree of difficulty, but it was very fun. The fact that we were able to work with Kerry College students added so much to the experience,” said Ross. “I think one of the things that is very valuable for students is to have some intercultural experience and learn how to work with people from different backgrounds. The faculty and students from Kerry College were amazing to work with.”

The crew worked with American, Irish and Ukrainian citizens over the course of five days of filming.

Sacred Heart alumna Steph Patella played supporting role Lacey, whom she described as a “fun loving character, but also very driven.”

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## Raising Roofs and Raising Awareness

BY MAIA SANTORA  
Staff Writer

Habitat for Humanity is a non-profit organization that builds houses for families who cannot afford one on their own. Habitat for Humanity’s campus chapter at Sacred Heart University provides experiences for students who are service-oriented and enjoy being involved.

Habitat for Humanity shares SHU’s commitment to giving back to its community and preserving the dignity of every human being.

According to their mission statement, “Seeking to put God’s love into action, Habitat for Humanity brings people together to build homes, communities, and hope.”

SHU’s Habitat goes on eight workdays per school year, with an additional trip during spring break.

Senior Keara Mulrooney, President of SHU’s Habitat, attended a workday where volunteers laid down the topsoil and seeds for the grass that will become the backyard of a home.

“The CEO of Habitat spoke there, the mayor spoke, and some of the family’s loved ones spoke, as well as other Habitat workers

and board members. We got to walk around the house and it was so beautiful, a nice full circle moment,” said Mulrooney.

Mulrooney has attended three spring break trips with Habitat so far and said that they have been a staple of her college experience.

“I wish more people would understand how fulfilling these trips are. I met almost every single person I am friends with here, and I have become the person I am today because I went on that spring break trip my freshman year,” said Mulrooney.

Habitat has multiple fundraisers throughout the year at local restaurants including Panera and Chipotle. They have an upcoming fundraiser on Dec. 4 called “Jail Bail,” where students and faculty can donate to Habitat by purchasing a warrant to get others ‘arrested.’

“As a campus chapter we try to raise as much money as we can every single year, and that money goes back to Habitat for Humanity of Coastal Fairfield County [CFC] and that goes to new families that are trying to get new homes in the community. Every hand helps build that home,” said Mulrooney.

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# News

## Connecticut Wildfires Cause Concern on Campus

BY JACK CAVICCHI  
Staff Writer

On Oct. 31, students and faculty of Sacred Heart University received an email that both Fairfield and Bridgeport had issued a ban on all outdoor fires. This ban was introduced to align with the State of Emergency declared by the state of Connecticut, as well as the Red Flag Warnings issued by the National Weather Service.

"I made sure I got a message out to Sacred Heart University staff and students, especially those that live off campus, to make sure people are aware of the environmental changes we are experiencing currently. It is a fact that fires can start easily right now, and I wanted to make sure that everyone was aware that the state has a fire ban in place," said Patrick Sasser, Fire Safety Coordinator at SHU.

A Red Flag Warning from the National Weather Service indicates a high risk of wildfire due to a combination of warm temperatures, very low humidities and strong winds.

The low humidity comes as a result of the lack of rain that Connecticut has seen over the past two months.

As of Monday, Nov. 11, the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) was monitoring 82 fires statewide, 12 of which were "either new or popped up in the last few days," according to the CT Mirror.

Senior Cooper Burdette has an off-campus house in Bridgeport, where he lives during the school year, but his hometown is Southington, Conn.

"I usually grill outside a few times during the week, but since it has been so dry, I have resorted to cooking inside. There have been plenty of fires in Berlin [Conn.], which is very close to home, so I have been precautious, as I have seen my community affected," Burdette said.

Berlin is about 40 miles from SHU. It was the location of the Hawthorne fire, one of the largest in the state at over 125 acres, according to NBC Connecticut.

"People enjoy sitting outside and lighting a fire on their patio around this time of year. It is important that people realize that they should stay away from doing this as we experience this time of high risk for fires breaking out," said Sasser. "Public safety is also keeping an eye out for anyone who may be smoking to ensure cigarette butts aren't getting thrown where they shouldn't be. We are just trying to avoid any type of issue on campus."

Connecticut residents are being urged to be attentive and diligent to activities



AP News

Firefighters working to put out wildfires across the Northeast.

in their daily lives.

"It is important that people do not park their cars on top of leaf piles because your exhaust systems, your engine and your catalytic converters underneath the cars get hot and could ignite the leaf piles. People also need to reduce water consumption by taking shorter showers, turning faucets off while brushing teeth and doing dishes," Sasser said.

Sasser also noted how the lack of rain contributes to lower water levels in the reservoir and a lesser supply of water around the state.

"With the lack of rain, I believe it's important for us to contribute to our environment. We should pay attention when cooking and making outdoor fires that could contribute to these wildfires," said sophomore Alex Arrubla.

According to CT Public, as the drought continues, the wildfire season carries into the winter.

"There's a saying that all fires eventually go out, but if they don't subside naturally, I think the state of Connecticut is prepared for that to a certain extent. In more rural areas, especially, departments tend to train more on that type of firefighting," Sasser said.

## Helping Friends & Helping Ourselves: A Heart to Heart

BY KAYLEE SHINDEL  
Staff Writer

On Nov. 13, in the Loris Forum at the Martire Center for the Liberal Arts, Sacred Heart University held an event titled "Helping Friends & Helping Ourselves: A Heart to Heart" to discuss resources and tactics to improve and maintain the emotional well-being of college students.

The event was hosted by Dr. Jessica Samuolis, who works in the department of psychology, Karen Flanagan, Peer Education Coordinator of the Counseling Center, and the Student Wellness Education and Empowerment Team (S.W.E.E.T.) peer educators.

It was designed to foster a conversation about navigating the hardships of college life and supporting others on their mental health journey. The event showcased available resources that promote positive mental health and offer assistance on campus through S.W.E.E.T.

"Project Connect is an opportunity to interact with others and make connections, as this is crucial to mental health on a college campus. There are therapy dog events that allow one to take a mental health break that is needed everyday," said sophomore Lendina Ahmetaj, a S.W.E.E.T. peer educator. "Additionally, the Green Bandana Project is a volunteer driven movement for the prevention of suicide by increasing awareness of mental health resources."

The SHU Wellness Center offers support and resources through the Counseling Center, Collegiate Recovery Program, Center for Family Justice Advocates, prevention education and early intervention that offers confidential meetings with mental health professionals.

"If you are struggling with an issue or challenge, a counselor in the Counseling Center is unable to talk with parents, staff or peers. We offer individual counseling, group counseling, athletic counseling and medication evaluations. We also have a Center for Family Justice to advocate for

victims and survivors of domestic and sexual violence in the wellness center," said Jeffrey LaBella, Collegiate Recovery Program Director of Counseling, during the event.

The program offers assistance for those in recovery for alcohol or drug use.

"We offer supportive housing for students who are recovering from alcohol or drug use that also want the collegiate experience. We have Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous meetings on campus and in residential areas. There are also one-on-one consultations that can help one get connected with resources on campus or in the community," said LaBella.

Support is also offered through meditation and physical activities on campus.

"Campus-wide meditations with Venerable Shim Bo take place in the Wellness Center. The Move to Heal program appeals to those who love to exercise, located in Bergoglio Hall. This is a workout and support group," said LaBella.

In another part of the event, speakers addressed the role of students in supporting the mental health of their peers. Students have access to one another due to sharing a collegiate lifestyle. The event taught students how to recognize when a peer is struggling.

"Some signs to look out for when recognizing that something is wrong with a peer can consist of changes in mood or personality, decreased productivity, absences from



Instagram, @shu\_sweetpeered

A banner to promote an event held by s.w.e.e.t. peer educators discussing mental health and emotional well being at the Martire Forum.

class, fatigue or loss of interest in normal activities," said Karen Flanagan, Director of Prevention Education and Early Intervention in the SHU Wellness Center.

The event discussed ways for a student to conduct a conversation after recognizing that someone is struggling.

"To start a conversation on a college campus full of distractions, one must be present and check in with friends. A personal matter should be conducted in a private setting. Asking questions shows compassion for their situation," said Flanagan.

"After this, encourage action with ideas for their recovery such as calling a resource, showing them a website, walking with them to the location and letting them determine which action will be most helpful. Lastly, be aware that the conversation might not go as planned and being there is enough."

The event provided students with an awareness of their own resources and newfound ways to help peers.

"I learned about so many resources on campus to maintain my mental well being and things I can share with my friends who are struggling," said sophomore Mia Berasti.

**UPCOMING  
EVENTS ON  
CAMPUS**

**FRIDAY 11/22:  
SET'S  
FRIENDSGIVING  
LINDA'S FIREPLACE  
AT 4:00 P.M.**

**FRIDAY 11/22:  
MEN'S ICE HOCKEY  
VS. RIT  
MARTIRE FAMILY ARENA  
AT 7:00 P.M.**

**SATURDAY 11/23:  
FROST&FEVER: SHU  
DANCE COMPANY  
EDGERTON THEATRE  
AT 7:00 P.M.**

# Features

## Raising Roofs and Raising Awareness

BY MAIA SANTORA  
Staff Writer

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Senior Sydney Leppones, Vice President of Habitat at SHU, joined her freshman year and encourages students to take the opportunity to give back.

“I know that personally before college I didn’t do much service, but Habitat gives a very accessible way for students to help their greater community,” said Leppones. “It’s given me a broader scope of how different people in this country work and function, it’s made me more aware. It gave me the opportunity to meet people who are like minded and share the same values and passion for service that I have.”

Greg Madrid, Faculty Advisor and Director of Residential Life has been involved with Habitat since his time in college.

“For the SHU community it allows our students to provide an impact on the hard working members of CFC and allows us to become active members in the community we call home,” said Madrid.

This school year, the club is going on three spring break trips. Destinations include Pittsboro, N.C., New Bern, N.C. and Taos, N.M. Applications to go on these trips are

open now with rolling application status.

Residence Hall Director Thomas Dess was an advisor on last year’s spring break trip to Pittsboro.

“It was a great opportunity to see SHU students take what they’ve learned on campus and go out into the world to give back to others. I learned that even if you don’t have any prior experience in building you can do real work that makes an impact on people’s lives,” said Dess.

Habitat for Humanity’s campus chapter at Sacred Heart University meets every other Wednesday at 9 p.m. in the Schine Auditorium and is open to all students.

For more information or to apply for the spring break trip, visit @shuhabitat on Instagram. Students can also contact President Keara Mulrooney through email at mulrooneyk@mail.sacredheart.edu or use their Google Form to apply for the upcoming spring break trip.



Instagram, @shuhabitat

SHU’s Habitat for Humanity chapter building houses on their spring break trip to Pittsboro, NC.

## GSA Hosts Pride Week on Campus

BY MADELINE MANGIONE  
Staff Writer

Sacred Heart University hosted a Pride Week from Nov. 10 through Nov. 15 with the Gender Sexuality Alliance (GSA) holding multiple events in celebration. Ranging from brunches and creative activities to discussions on LGBTQ+ rights around the world, Pride Week highlighted the university’s commitment to inclusive excellence.

Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer Maurice Nelson said Pride Week is a testament to Sacred Heart University’s dedication to creating a community where everyone feels valued, respected, and included.

“Celebrating Pride Week allows us to acknowledge and honor the LGBTQ+ members of our community and underscore the importance of diversity in all forms,” said Nelson.

This year, Pride Week featured a range of events designed not only to entertain, but to educate and build a supportive community. GSA began the week with a Sunday brunch in Linda’s, setting a welcoming tone for students, faculty, and allies.

Junior Lexi Louros, President of GSA, said these events are not only about celebration, but also about fostering an understanding and allyship within the SHU community.

“We held several events throughout the week: Pride Brunch, Guess That Song, Make-A-Pin, The People’s Joker, LGBTQ+ Rights Around the World, LGBTQ+ Sex Ed, Speed Friending, Queeraoke, and Queer Mixer. My personal favorites were Pride Brunch and LGBTQ+ Sex Ed,” said Louros.

Associate Director of LGBTQ+ Affairs, Kyle Humphreys, said the events give students an opportunity to create friendships and allow students to feel represented.

“Normally, we only run events Monday to Friday, but GSA thought it would be fun to kick off the week with something special. These gatherings allow students to connect more informally, creating bonds that often carry forward into GSA’s other events and bi-weekly meetings. The goal of such events is to create a campus where everyone has a place to feel seen and valued,” said Humphreys.

Each day offered unique ways to engage, from lighthearted activities to impactful workshops on LGBTQ+ rights around the world. This lineup doubled last year’s events, reflecting the growing enthusiasm and importance of Pride Week on campus.

Sophomore Elle Lombardo, GSA’s Social Media Chair said the events and meetings held by GSA foster a welcoming and relaxing environment for students.

“I really love these events specifically because they give us a chance to get to know our members and just chill out,” said Lombardo.

Educational events like “LGBTQ+ Rights Around the World” serve to expand students’ understanding of global challenges faced by LGBTQ+ individuals. This session, along with other events like LGBTQ+ sex education and speed friending, encouraged open, judgment-free discussions, creating spaces where students could freely explore issues related to identity.

“There’s a lot we still need to do to fight for rights here, but understanding the situation in other countries gives us a chance to look beyond our borders,” said Humphreys.

An essential element of Pride Week at Sacred Heart is its inclusivity, and how everyone can have a place in these spaces. Anybody, regardless of their identity or affiliation with the LGBTQ+ community, was encouraged to attend.

“The only thing we really want is for people to have respect for others’ identities, even if they don’t fully understand them. It’s okay to make mistakes as long as you are willing to learn from them,” said Humphreys.

The Sexuality and Gender Equity (SAGE) Center also welcomes students’ feedback and ideas, continually evolving its offerings to ensure they meet the needs of Sacred Heart’s diverse community.

Students interested in getting involved with GSA can follow their social media, @shu\_gsa on TikTok and Instagram and the SAGE Center’s account, @sageatshu. Additionally, you can join the mailing list by emailing Louros at lourosa@mail.sacredheart.edu. Students are encouraged to attend the biweekly meetings on Tuesdays at 8:00 pm in the Multicultural Center.

## Dance Program Helps Raise Money for Pediatric Cancer

BY ANGELINA VARAGS  
Staff Writer

On Sunday, Nov. 10, Sacred Heart University’s Dance Company, Dance Ensemble, Inception Dance Crew, and Claddagh Dance Team participated in the Connecticut Dance Conservatory’s (CDC) second annual “Day of Dance” performance, a benefit showcase in support of families fighting pediatric cancer.

The performance was held at The Klein Memorial Auditorium in Bridgeport and featured performances from local dance studios across the state.

It started last year, when co-owner of the CDC, Karen Nerkowski, was diagnosed with stage 4 ovarian cancer. In an effort to help their friend, the conservatory decided to put on a performance to raise money for her treatment.



Contributed by Samantha Cunniff, '25

SHU dancers posing for a photo at the second annual “Day of Dance” Benefit Showcase in support of families fighting pediatric cancer.

“I reached out to my good friend, Daniel Vieira, the owner of LivFree, and asked him for advice, and he said, ‘do what you do best— put on a show.’ So, I did,” said Dina Castelluccio, Co-Owner of CDC.

Thanks to the showcase, CDC was able to raise enough funds to support Nerkowski’s recovery. A year later, Nerkowski is now cancer free.

After the event’s success, CDC decided they wanted to continue dancing for a good cause. This year, CDC partnered with LivFree, a nonprofit organization that provides support to families battling pediatric cancer, and hosted their second annual Day of Dance.

The showcase featured a diverse range of dances from various age groups including contemporary, hip-hop, jazz, and even Irish dance. SHU’s Claddagh Dancers performed their fan-favorite piece, “Grackle,” where the dancers perform on tap boards and showcase their unique rhythms and style of dancing.

“It’s a really fun dance that gives the audience something they’ve never seen before,” said Claddagh Dance Captain Sam Cunniff. “It was an honor to be there.”

SHU’s participation in the Day of Dance Benefit Showcase highlights the university’s commitment to engaging and giving back to its community. For many of the SHU performers, participating in this event was about supporting a meaningful cause.

“I loved participating in this event because not only was it my home studio, but especially since Karen was diagnosed, it’s been very near and dear to my heart that we were able to give back,” said CDC alumna and SHU Dance Company member Emma DeLise.

This year, 13 different studios, along with dance professionals, performed. Between ticket sales, raffle baskets, auctions, and food trucks, the CDC was able to raise over \$15,000 for families with pediatric cancer.

“The Day of Dance showcase has been a really broad way to raise money and the silver lining in Karen’s diagnosis— to bring people together in a bigger sense and non-competitive dance and share our love for dance,” said Castelluccio.

As the Day of Dance continues to grow, the CDC hopes that it will continue to be a powerful example of how the arts can unite a community.

# CampusLife

## SHUdent Thanksgiving Traditions

BY KAYLA HERRERA  
Staff Writer

As the second semester comes to a close, many students are finalizing their plans for Thanksgiving break. For some, the trip home involves booking flights, coordinating with relatives, or taking a short car ride.

“When I was younger, I went to my grandparents’ house a lot to celebrate,” said Isabel Bandon. “I always got to see many relatives and enjoy all the laughter. That has become one of my favorite parts of Thanksgiving. I enjoy being able to see distant relatives and be with family. I also get to eat delicious food, that is another favorite part of the holiday for me.”

Bandon uses Thanksgiving as a day to feel appreciative. “Thanksgiving to me means that I get to celebrate a time where I get to see my relatives and enjoy the memories that we create.”

This year’s Thanksgiving will look slightly different for her and her family. “This year it’s just me and my parents who are celebrating together. All my other relatives were doing something, so we decided that it was just going to be the three of us. I also hope to plan a little Friendsgiving with my roommates before we head off for Thanksgiving break,” said Bandon.

Old traditions are cherished while new ones are formed to fit different family styles. “Having a blended family now, I make multiple stops on Thanksgiving Day,” said sophomore Sofia Mazzella. “Typically, half the day with my dad and the other half with my mom.”

Mazzella uses the holiday as an opportunity to stop and appreciate the blessings in her life, and to take part in traditions, like having Thanksgiving dinner with her family. “We have everything but the kitchen sink on Thanksgiving, all the traditional foods,” said Mazzella.

Senior Jocelyn Vasey enjoys a Florida vacation as part of her family’s Thanksgiving tradition. “We fly out to Florida every year to celebrate with my dad’s side of the family, I definitely look forward to it and the Florida weather is always nice.”

Vasey and her parents make the most out of the trip to visit family for the holiday. “It’s nice because we usually get there a day before Thanksgiving, check into where we’re staying, and then head to my grandparents’ house.”

Thanksgiving Day is a laid-back, pajamas-all-day kind of holiday for some families, but for Vasey’s family, getting dressed up before the annual supper is part of the fun.

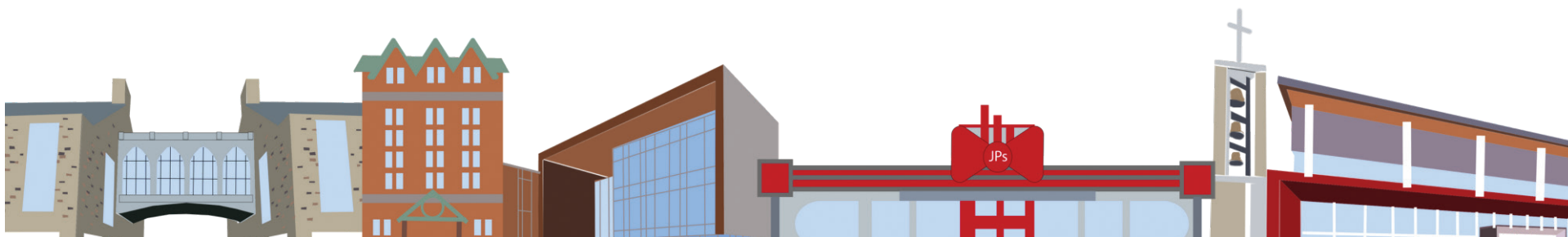
With around thirty people in attendance each year, Vasey’s grandparents choose to have the meal catered. “It’s definitely more of a formal type of thing,” said Vasey. “It’s cool because when we first get there it’s pretty chill. Everyone swims, watches TV, and just hangs out, then we all get dressed up for dinner.”

While holiday traditions differ from person to person, many SHU students cherish this time off from school to enjoy the Thanksgiving season at home.



Tracy Deer-Mirek, Sacred Heart University

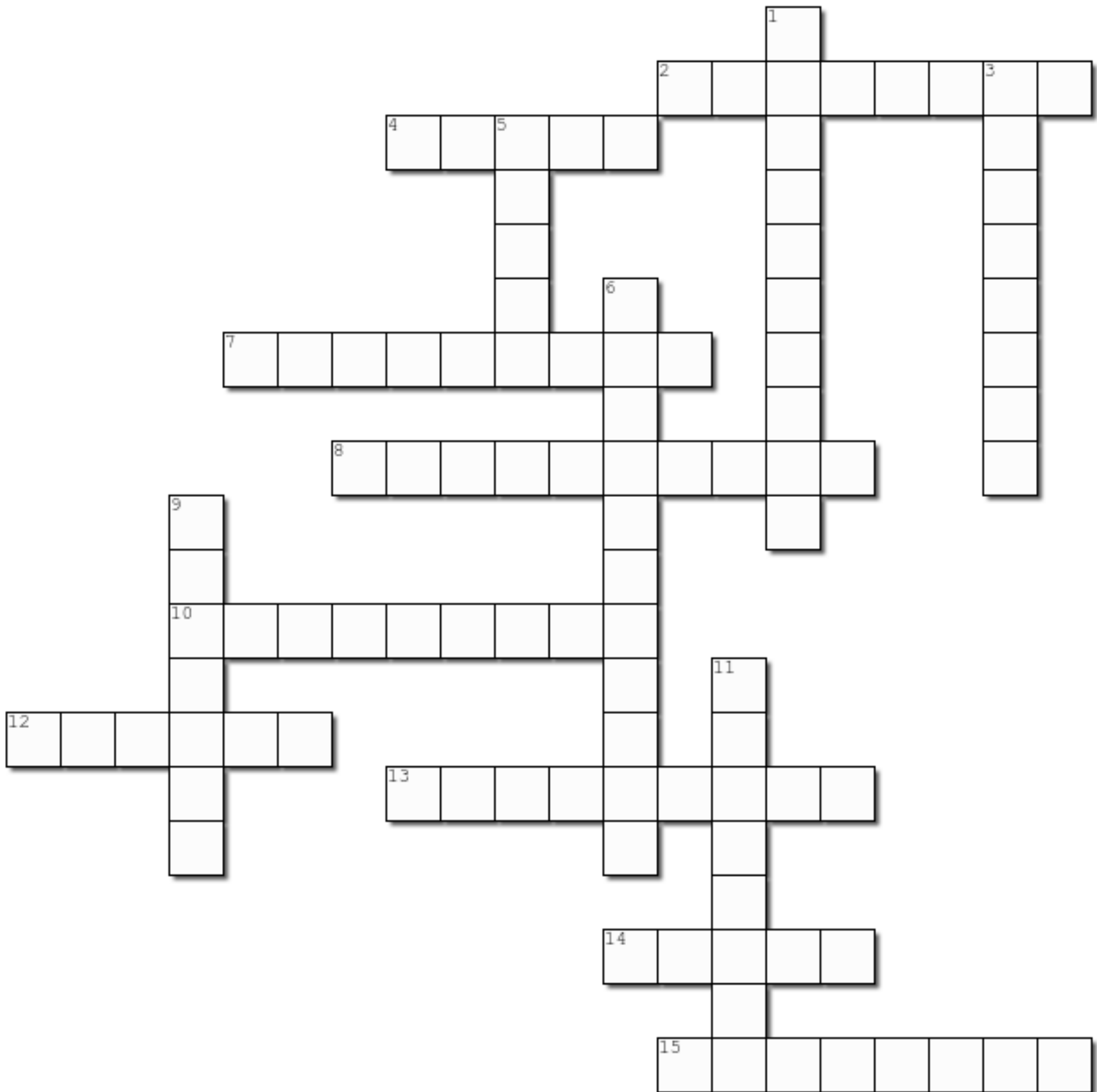
The annual turkey drive is a holiday tradition for Sacred Heart University students. Last year, the SHU community raised nearly \$15,000 to purchase 500 turkeys and meals for Bridgeport families.



Interested in contributing to Campus Life? Contact us at [spectrum@sacredheart.edu](mailto:spectrum@sacredheart.edu)

# CampusLife

## Thanksgiving Crossword



### Across:

- 2. Popular Thanksgiving side-dish
- 4. The \_\_\_\_ Thanksgiving Day parade takes place every year in New York City
- 7. This green bean dish often features crispy onions on top
- 8. A colorful decoration and wicker product made from harvest items
- 10. The English ship that transported Pilgrims to North America in 1620
- 12. The iconic bird that is a symbol for Thanksgiving
- 13. Native American tribe associated with the first Thanksgiving
- 14. Often served on top of turkey and mashed potatoes
- 15. New England's first colony, settled by the Pilgrims

### Down:

- 1. Traditional Thanksgiving dessert, served with whipped cream or custard.
- 3. The month Thanksgiving is celebrated in the United States
- 5. Popular beverage made from fermented apples
- 6. Day after Thanksgiving, known for shopping
- 9. Bright orange winter squash associated with autumn
- 10. Sport played on Thanksgiving Day in the USA



- Answer Key:**
- 9. Pumpkin
  - 1. PumpkinPie
  - 2. Stuffing
  - 3. November
  - 4. Macys
  - 5. Cider
  - 6. BlackFriday
  - 7. Casserole
  - 8. Cornucopia
  - 9. Pumpkin
  - 10. Mayflower
  - 11. Football
  - 12. Turkey
  - 13. Wampanoag
  - 14. Gravy
  - 15. Plymouth

# Arts & Entertainment

## “Whiskey: The Musical”

BY CAMRYN MCCUTCHEON  
Staff Writer

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“I was first drawn to Lacey when I read the script. I was able to take past roles; I played Sharpay in ‘High School Musical’ in high school, and a character called Emily in another short film, and just blended those character experiences together to create Lacey,” said Patella.

Despite being an alumna, Patella was still on the email list for casting calls. After being forwarded a casting call by the FTMA, she saw it as a new opportunity.

“I never got the chance to study abroad in my undergrad, so I saw this as an opportunity to do a short film in a completely new place,” said Patella.

Only having known Ross previously as a professor, Patella was excited to work with her in another light, through the screenwriting and directing lens.

“I really admire her a lot. I love how much passion she had for this project, and it was really cool to be a part of her debut,” Patella said.

Patella worked with other members of SHU faculty as well, including Barnes as producer, Ally O’Brian as the production manager and Zeke Hawkins as the assistant director.

Filming overseas, the cast and crew had new experiences and met new colleagues.

“One of my biggest takeaways was working with Kerry College. They got to learn from us and we got to learn from them,” said Patella.

Rain and international travel both added challenges to the filming process. “There were a lot of challenges, but it amazed me how successful we were with just rolling with it when things got complicated and we needed to update our plans,” said Ross.

Now that filming has concluded, the film has entered the post-production phase, where editing takes place.

“We have had students involved in every phase of the process. We had them involved in pre-production and on the shoot, and now they’re helping with post-production as well as with marketing and promotion, so the project involves students from a variety of disciplines at every level,” said Ross.

As the film begins to come together, the image that Ross created in her mind is coming to fruition.

“This was my first time as a director, and it was a thrill. It’s challenging, and fun, and exhilarating, and exhausting all at the same time,” said Ross. “I had a really clear idea of what I wanted to accomplish, but it takes a team to make that happen.”

The FTMA focuses on a collaborative environment for students to create with one another. “Whiskey: The Musical” is an opportunity for graduate students to experience overseas filming and producing.

The short film will be entered into film festivals, but not before allowing the cast and crew to premiere their film for their community.

“We will definitely premiere the film and make sure the SHU community has a chance to see it,” said Ross.



Instagram, @ftmashu  
Behind the scenes of “Whiskey: The Musical” in Dingle, Ireland.

## And the Grammy Goes To...

BY OLIVIA MCNAMARA  
Staff Writer

Making history since 1959, the annual Grammy Awards will be aired on Sunday, Feb. 2, 2025. With nominated artists like Sabrina Carpenter, Beyoncé and Billie Eilish, students and professors have formed their own opinions and perspectives on the 2025 nominations.

The Grammy Awards are a celebration of achievements in the industry and music can be a significant part of people’s lives, whether as a fan or a professional.

“Music is my passion, it’s my livelihood, it’s my way of showing emotion. It impacts everything in my life because it’s my career and it’s my love,” said Music Professor Susan Mazer.

But when it comes to this year’s nominations and categories, Mazer said, “I would like to see Beyoncé win for her ‘Cowboy Carter’ album. I think that it was a really creative and out-of-bounds album.”

Although Mazer has her favorites aside from the popular nominees, she appreciates the less recognized categories like the blues.

“I love the blues, but as much as that is my favorite, I don’t always look at that category in the Grammys, and you don’t really hear about those categories on the television,” Mazer said.

The Grammy Awards provide a way to appreciate a favorite artist or discover new music.

“I like that Sabrina Carpenter and Billie Eilish were nominated; they are both amazing artists, and I think they will definitely win some of their categories,” said junior Sabrina Ingrisano.

“I agree with a lot of the nominations, some of the people I haven’t heard of before,

so I am excited to hear some new music and learn about them,” said senior Erin Edgar.

The Grammy Awards involve performances as well. Mazer said, “I always like to see them live because people don’t always sound the same in a live context as they do in a recording, so you really get to hear their talents when they’re performing live.”

Despite Mazer’s passion for music, she thinks there are ways the Grammys can improve.

“I think the world is a little sexist, so I think the Grammys can be sexist too. Women make up less than 8% of inductions in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame,” she said.

Similarly, Edgar found issues with the award show’s fairness.

“I’m sure there is some bias towards who gets the awards and it is hard to make things 100% fair,” said Edgar.

While the nominations may not always seem fair, Ingrisano said, “I think in some ways they are fair because certain artists definitely deserve it, but in other ways, some artists who weren’t nominated should also be recognized for what they do.”

As the years go on and society changes, people have begun to watch the popular award show in different ways aside from the just television broadcast.

“I don’t really watch it, I get updates from TikTok or Instagram about who won. I think the majority of people have lost interest in live shows on TV because less people have cable and if you don’t have the streaming service that it’s on, most people won’t buy it to watch just one show,” said Ingrisano.

“I mostly watch it on social media through shorter clips or highlights or seeing photos of people’s outfits and awards,” Edgar said.

Despite the critical opinions on the Grammys, Ingrisano finds the award show important for artists.

“I think having artists’ music and performances recognized is the most important part,” Ingrisano said. “They work so hard so it’s nice to see them get recognition for it.”

## \$300,000 Raised for SHU Performing Arts Programs

BY ERIN PELLEGRINI  
Staff Writer & Circulation Manager

“You can always go downtown” sang the audience of the Sacred Heart University (SHU) Community Theatre as they took a trip to downtown Fairfield for a musical performance by “The Midtown Men” as part of the SHU Performing Arts Benefit.

Held on Oct. 26, it was in honor of SHU President John J. Petillo for his contributions and continued support of the Performing Arts Program. This benefit reached out to alumni, friends, family and the community all in celebration of the students and their growing achievements.

In addition, the event helped raise funds for a new endowed scholarship, specifically for performing arts students.

“We raised over \$300,000 for scholarship and specifically for scholarship in the performing arts. So that is pretty transformational,” said Paul Sutera, Senior Vice President of Advancement.

The Midtown Men performed at the SHU Community Theater on Oct. 26 to raise money for an endowed scholarship supporting students in the performing arts.



Mark F. Conrad, Sacred Heart University

Sutera believes that events like this are the best ways to showcase and support the students. “It’s a special place, and the more we’re able to share those stories and help students to come and earn a degree, I think the better off we’ll be as a university,” said Sutera.

According to their website, “The Midtown Men” are a high-octane musical tour de force, celebrating the ‘60s with seasoned Broadway performers from the Original Broadway cast of “Jersey Boys.” The group includes Tony Award winner Christian Hoff, Michael Longoria, Daniel Reichard and Tony-nominated J. Robert Spencer.

“I had never heard of the Midtown Men Before. I enjoy theatre, and performed in musicals throughout high school, but what really draws me in is dance and movement,” said senior Corinne Bain. Bain is a member of the Dance Ensemble at Sacred Heart and felt the night was a great chance to see the arts and get off campus.

Bain highlighted the event as an opportunity to help share how grateful the students were for the consistent support they have received from the university and the community.

“A favorite moment for many of my friends and I is when Dr. Petillo stops by to congratulate us and wish us luck,” said Bain. “The SHU community really comes out and supports the arts at all our shows.”

Sacred Heart is committed to their continued support for all students with their campaign “Now We Lead.” The donations for this fundraising campaign go towards scholarships for students.

“I’ve been performing my whole life, and I always knew that it was something I’d want to continue on as a hobby. At SHU, there are so many classes that can help me improve my skills and also enjoy new and different opportunities,” said freshman Lilia Cavaliere-Hill.

Cavaliere-Hill is a part of the concert choir and believes that the importance of the event cannot be underestimated.

“This scholarship will benefit the future of the Performing Arts Program in many areas and will give a lot of student’s opportunities,” said Cavaliere-Hill.

# Sports

## SHU Football Finishes Independent Season



Tracy Deer-Mirek, Sacred Heart University

The Sacred Heart football team rally together at Campus Field.

BY PRINCELY SEME  
Staff Writer

The Sacred Heart University football team faced off against Long Island University in their final home game of the 2024 season on Nov. 9, where they were defeated 28-7.

“This is not the way we wanted the season to go, but there were definitely some positives I took out of it,” said senior Maximus Mongelli. “Compared to other seasons, we’ve made strides in some areas, even though we didn’t get the results we were hoping for.”

This loss concluded the last home game of the season, a day where the Pioneers bid farewell to their 26 seniors, celebrating their time and achievements with the program.

“Senior day is very emotional for players and coaches. I am extremely happy for them to finish what they started as college football players, but I am also sad to see them go,” said Head Coach Mark Nofri. “All these seniors have given their all for four years and have grown both on and off the field. I am very proud of them.”

SHU was able to bounce back on Nov. 16 with a season finale victory, defeating Merrimack 31-20, and claiming the Yankee Conference Championship.

“The Yankee Conference was a conference from 1946 to 1996, it was all the northeast teams back then. They are trying to start it back up, and us and Merrimack were two FCS [Football Championship Subdivision] teams playing independent,” said senior Jake Walsh, a member of the football team and the Assistant Photo Editor for the Spectrum. “It gave us something to play for with a opportunity to join that conference if it starts up again.”

SHU finished the season with a 5-6 record, an improvement from last year’s 2-9 record. Reflecting on a rather unsuccessful season, the Pioneers’ focus shifts to improvements moving forward.

“As we look back on this season, it’s clear that improving our consistency and focus on execution in high-pressure situations would make a big difference,” said Mongelli. “We’ve shown we can compete, but we need to finish stronger and make adjustments faster when things aren’t going our way.”

The Pioneers look to the break as an opportunity to polish their game and improve on this season’s performance.

“I think the results of this season will make the team even hungrier in the offseason, pushing everyone to put in the work needed to come out strong when camp starts in August,” said graduate student Jalen Madison. “The experience this year showed us what we’re capable of but also where we can improve.”

This year also marked the Pioneers’ first season as an independent program after leaving the Northeast Conference (NEC), bringing the additional challenge of facing unfamiliar opponents.

“Playing out-of-conference opponents definitely brought us some challenges this year,” said Mongelli. “Whenever you face teams for the first time, there’s always an element of the unknown, and you don’t really know what to expect. But it also gave us valuable experience in adapting to new schemes and styles of play.”

The Pioneers aim to build a more cohesive group in preparation for next season, in hopes of a more successful outcome.

“Heading into next year, I think the main focus needs to be staying close as a team and setting a standard that everyone can hold to and maintain throughout the offseason,” said Madison. “Building strong bonds and keeping that team chemistry intact will help going into next season with the right mindset.”

Despite the overall result of this season, many fans remain hopeful, looking forward to the Pioneers’ potential for next season.

“It has been a tough season for them, I hope they can bounce back and show what they are capable of accomplishing next year,” said sophomore Henry Hirsch.

## Bowling Splits for the Season

BY JOHN HEINZE  
Co-Assistant Sports Editor

The Sacred Heart University (SHU) women’s bowling team improved their record this past weekend to 32-12 as they compete in their first season since going independent. Formerly a member of the Northeast Conference (NEC), the SHU bowling team is facing new challenges this season. With their eyes set on the NCAA Tournament this spring, their path to success has a different look than in years past.

“We had the automatic qualification through the NEC, but we don’t have that anymore, so the only path is an at-large bid, and the last time we did that was the COVID year when not all teams bowled, so getting there is pretty hard,” said Head Coach Becky Kregling.

With only eight spots available for an at-large bid, SHU will need to rank amongst the best in the nation. This makes every tournament they compete in extra important.

“It’s really different because NEC was always one tournament that we look forward to going to because it was our conference and we always had success,” said senior Molly Chiesa. “I think, honestly, we’ve taken that mentality into every weekend so we can move up the rankings, which I feel has made us better overall.”

SHU has fed off the increased pressure in recent weeks. On Nov. 9-10, at the Bowl for the Cure Tournament, they went a perfect 9-0, including two wins over Merrimack, the 14th ranked team in the country.

This past weekend, on Nov. 15-17, SHU went 8-5 and finished in 4th place at the Colonial Lanes Classic. They notched wins against 24th-ranked Oklahoma Christian, 17th-ranked Wichita State, 15th-ranked Newman and took one out of three against 8th-ranked Sam Houston.

“That definitely boosts team morale and gives everybody a little bit of confidence into thinking that we can continue beating teams like that and we can be ranked

right where they are,” said junior Megan Prettyman.

Prettyman has played a pivotal role in SHU’s recent success. At the Bowl for the Cure tournament, she was named tournament MVP.

“It was pretty cool,” said Prettyman. “I don’t really tend to look at things from an individual perspective, I tend to look at it more as the team was doing well. The team went 9-0 and won the tournament both days.”

Midway through the season, the team is positioning themselves well for a shot at the NCAA Tournament in the spring, but their work is not done.

“Yes, we’re tired but at the end of the day, we’re college students. We’re always tired. We just need to get over that factor and just bowl as best as we can because we know we belong there. We know we can rank towards the top,” said Chiesa.

SHU will now have two months off to rest up for the final stretch of the season. On Jan. 17, they will be back in action at the Northeast Classic.

“It’s important that we don’t look too far ahead, and we just stay weekend by weekend and match by match. We really have a great group of girls. Everybody’s hard working, we have a lot of fun together, and I think that we all know that we have more fun together when we’re winning,” said Prettyman. “I think that fuels us into wanting to do well because then it’s more fun.”



Instagram, @sacredheartbowling

The Pioneers pose after going undefeated in the Bowl for a Cure Tournament.

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## • *Navigating the Digital Jungle*

• BY **SARA ANASTASI**

• *Graduate Student - Journalism & Media Production*

• My brother Michael was just 11 years old when he started his own YouTube channel. Like many children growing up with social media at their fingertips, Michael was fascinated by the idea of his content being displayed on a public platform that could potentially reach millions of viewers. Videomaking was his all-consuming passion, and there was nothing else that sparked his interest more than the love to entertain others. Michael worked hard at perfecting this craft. He spent numerous hours a day filming and uploading content, building his channel, and gaining more subscribers. He thrived in this virtual world. A place where he could truly express himself and his creativity. He never foresaw the dangers that lurked behind the screen.

• In July of 2019, Michael's YouTube channel was hacked. His beloved videos were deleted, and his platform was plagued with a seemingly invisible virus. This was no virus; this was a person. But how can you confront a bully whose identity is masked by a mere online username? A faceless virtual attacker—a cyberbully.

• "I felt completely powerless," said Michael. "I didn't know what to do or how to get help. It was a nightmare."

• Cyberbullying is defined as the use of technology to harass, threaten, embarrass, or target another person. This can involve spreading rumors, sending hurtful messages, sharing embarrassing photos, or creating fake profiles to impersonate someone. Its pervasiveness makes it incredibly difficult for victims to escape.

• According to a study from the Cyberbullying Research Center, more than 1 in 4 middle and high school students have been cyberbullied in the past 30 days, and with the rise of social media platforms taking over youth, the issue seems to be increasing at a rapid rate. The study shows that the percentage of students who reported being victims of cyberbullying in their lifetime more than doubled between 2010 and 2021.

• "It's really because you're behind a screen," says Keshawa Fernando, Cybersecurity Project Manager at Sacred Heart University. "Being behind a computer, you feel like you can do whatever you want. You can say whatever you want. You have no repercussions. No one's going to fight back."

• In Michael's case, he was being bullied by a hacker—someone trying to steal his personal information in order to take over his account. The hacker posed as one of his loyal subscribers.

• But Michael is not the only victim. A Deloitte survey revealed that Gen Z individuals are three times more likely to fall victim to online scams compared to Boomers and twice as likely to have their social media accounts compromised. These scams include phishing, identity theft, romance scams, and cyberbullying.

• "A hack, or, what we call compromises, is an unauthorized access to a set of data or set of controls by a threat actor. A threat actor is what we commonly call a hacker," said Fernando. "These folks can be motivated by plenty of things. They could be somebody looking to get your money, get financial data, somebody looking to get your identification so they can pretend to be you, so they can get other identification data."

• The most prevalent form of hacking is phishing, a type of online fraud in which individuals are tricked into handing over credentials. Phishing attacks can take various forms, such as emails, text messages, phone calls, or websites.

• "The hack took a toll on my mental health, and I debated quitting YouTube altogether," said Michael.

• According to a BMC Psychiatry study, adolescents who experience cyberbullying victimization are 2.07 times more likely to have depressive symptoms compared to those who do not. Similarly, adolescents who experienced cyberbullying victimization were 2.5 times more likely to have suicidal ideation than their peers.

• According to Fernando, cybersecurity awareness education is a crucial starting point in teaching young adults how to protect themselves. He advocates for more government legislation regarding the Internet and social media.

• "One of the things I would just love to see, especially for K through 12, is really just having that legal framework that supports these things. It should be a requirement from grade school to high school that you are required to take a cybersecurity course at some point, just so you can learn these things," said Fernando.

• U.S. lawmakers are working to regulate teen social media use, aiming to balance the protection of child mental health with the preservation of digital privacy.

• Florida recently enacted social media legislation, signing House Bill 3. The law mandates that social media platforms terminate accounts for users under 14 while allowing 14 and 15-year-olds to create accounts only with parental consent. Additionally, it requires social media companies to implement a third-party verification system to identify underage users and take necessary actions accordingly.

• Similar laws have been passed in Arkansas, Georgia, and Utah, including one that enables parents to sue social media companies if they show that their child under 18 has been diagnosed with a mental health issue caused by too much use of a social media platform that uses algorithms to curate content.

• Fernando also suggests two-factor authentication, a security method that requires two different forms of identification to access resources.

• "Now, the reason that's super important is because a hacker can do certain attacks to try and guess your password, especially on Facebook and other social media platforms. But even if they get the password, that two-factor authentication is going to stop them because the two-factor sends a six-digit random code every time you try to log into your phone," said Fernando.

• The hacker then does not have access to that six-digit code and, therefore, cannot sign into your account.

• Another example of cyber hygiene is changing your passwords and keeping them in a secure spot. Fernando suggests not writing down your password on sticky notes or your phone's notes. Online password managers, including LastPass and Bitwarden, are available.

• "Do not let cyberbullying go unnoticed," said Michael. "We need to advocate for teens going through this and help them learn how to protect themselves."

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