



IN THIS ISSUE

- 1 From the Department Chair
- 2 Rude Mechanicals Perform Student-Written Plays
- 3 Sans Merci, Vol. 46
- 4 Brenda Feltner Retires After Long Career at Shepherd University
- 5 Faculty Highlights
- 6 Shepherd Students Succeed: Sigma Tau Delta and Beyond
- 10 Student Voices
- 11 About Our Student Writers and Editors
- 11 Department Reimagines Spanish Major and Minor
- 11 Introducing Brightspace

Department of English and Modern Languages

Dr. Betty Ellzey

Chair
304-876-5208
bellzey@shepherd.edu
Knutti Hall 210
102 East High Street
Shepherdstown, WV 25443

Connect with Us



Shepherd University's Dept. of English & Modern Languages

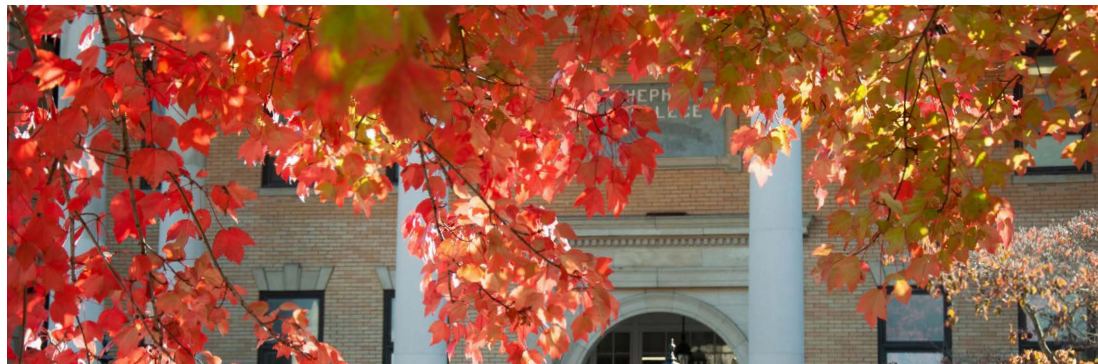


@shepherd_engl_ml

www.shepherd.edu/eml

Donate for Scholarships

www.shepherd.edu/eml/eml-giving



From the Department Chair

Welcome to the fifth issue of The Final Draft, the newsletter for the Department of English and Modern Languages. It was such a joy to see the classrooms and hallway of the second floor of Knutti full of students again. After a year and a half of quiet, the sound of voices in class discussions and casual conversations in the stairwells and hall was like exhilarating music. And even though we could not see each other's smiles through the masks we must still wear indoors, the enthusiasm and relief to be back was quite evident. Again, I am so proud of what our department's faculty, staff, and students have accomplished. Three students presented papers at Hood College's Discovering the Humanities conference in September. Sigma Tau Delta sponsored Poetry Under the Stars while it was still warm in the evening and Scary Stories for Halloween. The Rude Mechanicals performed Shakespeare's Hamlet, with a cast and crew of 25, to live audiences eight times in November. Sans Merci put out a call for fiction, poetry, and visual art submissions. The Modern Language faculty produced a revisioning of the Spanish major and minor, which will be ready for enrollment in Fall 2022. And we welcomed our new administrative assistant, Ms. Valerie Wright. This is a testament to our continuing commitment to our mission statement: We educate students to write well, think critically, and examine the world through the lenses of literature and languages.

If you would like more information about our department, be sure to visit our website (www.shepherd.edu/eml) and our Facebook page (Shepherd University's Dept. of English and Modern Languages.) And graduates: we would



Cecelia Mason

Dr. Betty Ellzey

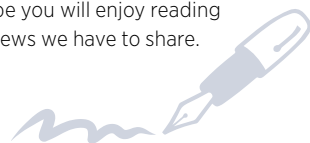
Chair of the Department of English and Modern Languages

love to hear from you! Please let us know what you are up to. You might find yourself featured in an upcoming installment of our "Alumni Spotlight."

Whether you are a current student, a future student, an alum, or simply a supporter of our department, we hope you will enjoy reading about the exciting news we have to share.

Sincerely,

Dr. Betty Ellzey





Rude Mechanicals Perform Student-Written Plays

The Rude Mechanicals Medieval and Renaissance Players were back this semester, and after bringing to life classics like “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” and “Much Ado About Nothing,” the theatre troupe tackled one of William Shakespeare’s most iconic plays: *Hamlet*. When asked about the challenges of adapting Shakespeare’s dark and extensive story, director and producer Dr. Betty Ellzey reveals this was perhaps their hardest adaption of a play to date. At a whopping 4,042 lines and 29,551 words (and a usual four-hour runtime), *Hamlet* is Shakespeare’s longest play. The script had to be considerably cut down during the early process of pre-production. The director talked about how the Rudes had wanted to do *Hamlet* for a while but hadn’t found an appropriate way to cut it down and adapt it to an audience until last summer when Dr. Ellzey taught a course called “*Hamlet in Context*.” In this course, the students helped analyze the crucial parts of the story that needed to stay in the final cut. Dr. Ellzey stated that their version of *Hamlet* focuses on relationships. She later explained, “I cut all the political stuff out—and it’s all just about relationships, so *Hamlet*’s relationship with his mother, with his father, with his uncle, with Horatio, with Ophelia.”

For the cast and crew members, stage manager Victoria Fairchild stated that they looked for both students on campus and community members who wanted to participate, which lead to the casting of a returning Rude Mechanicals actor, Adam Wilson, in the leading role

of *Hamlet*. Adam has been performing for the Rude Mechanicals since 2015 and was excited to perform in front of live audiences after a hiatus caused by the pandemic. Talking about his experience playing a heavy character like *Hamlet*, Wilson reveals that it was “a lot—it’s very fun and exciting because I’ve wanted this role for a very long time but also, it’s the most work I’ve had to put to a production in my life.” The biggest challenge of this production for Wilson was the recovery after the performance considering, “*Hamlet*’s a very dark character and he goes to some very dark places.” The crew also found a challenge when performing with the mask mandate—with the play’s demanding physicality being restricted by the masks the actors had to wear. Mikayla Hamrick, who played the ghost of *Hamlet*’s father, reveals that even with the challenges, it was an impressive experience analyzing Shakespeare’s characters and relationships in a new way. She said, “With Shakespeare and other plays and creative spaces, there’s a lot of interpretation based on how you want the character to be perceived by the audience.”

All of the cast agrees that the experience has brought them closer than ever. Dannah Lohr, who played Ophelia, stated, “It was fun to make [Ophelia] my own—and it was fun working with everyone. A lot of this has been ensemble work and figuring out the characters’ relationships and that’s what has brought our individual characters to life.” After eight successful performances, the Rude Mechanicals hope to keep

doing plays in the future after the pandemic. During the Spring 2022 semester, the crew will be back to perform “*Romeo & Juliet*” in front of live audiences, and hopefully find escapism in their experience. For more information on the Rude Mechanicals and to see what’s next for the group, visit www.shepherd.edu/eml/rude-mechanicals. ■

by Frank Santiago-Cabrera

TOP LEFT: Horatio (Olyvia Thompson) and Hamlet (Adam Wilson) share an intimate moment together.

TOP MIDDLE: A scene from *Hamlet* featuring Mikayla Hamrick (left) and Olyvia Thompson (right) as The Ghost and Horatio, respectively.

TOP RIGHT: Hamlet (Wilson) and Ophelia (Dannah Lohr), in a scene from Act 2.





Sans Merci, Vol. 46

Sans Merci, Shepherd's literary and art magazine, has circulated on campus and in the surrounding community for many years, and this year, will be producing Volume 46. The magazine provides an opportunity for writers and artists to be published in a collection edited, designed, and produced by students.

Every fall semester, students are encouraged to submit literary works of nonfiction, fiction, poetry, or drama and/or photographs, drawing, and art. Literary pieces can be submitted for consideration at sans.merci.mag@gmail.com and art pieces at sansmerciart@gmail.com. There is a maximum number of five submissions per art or literary category and the emails should include the student's name, email address, academic year, and a short biographical introduction. All students are encouraged to submit their art and writing!

After submissions are closed, the literary and art teams are charged with the task of reviewing all submitted material over winter break. Pieces are voted upon for their inclusion in the magazine, and when the contents are decided, authors, artists, and editors work side-by-side to prepare each piece for publication. Thereafter, Sans Merci is prepared for the launch and release of Volume 46 in the spring.

This volume's literary team includes faculty advisor, Dr. James Pate; senior editor, Isabella Sager; prose editors, Abigail McClung and Mary Barker; and poetry editors, Sarah Seibert and

Carter Warhurst. The art editorial roles belong to Emma Corley, Scout Purdy, Kaeleigh White, senior editor Charlotte Puttock, and faculty advisor Ally Christmas, with Ian Sager as graphic designer.

Dr. Pate expresses his hopes and anticipation for the upcoming edition: "I'm very excited about this year's issue. The editors are hard at work bringing everything together for the 2021-2022 edition. Also, this year the editors are planning an in-person release party for the spring—the first since the pandemic. And that is very exciting too."

Isabella Sager offers an insight into the experiences of a student editor, "Working with Sans Merci is such a wonderful experience that I would encourage every student to take part in. Whether you are an editor, graphic designer, or purely submitting your work, there is a wonderful sense of community as we showcase the collective artistry of Shepherd students. This is my second year editing...and my first as senior editor, and both positions have been immensely rewarding experiences. Getting the new Sans Merci volume published is a lot of work each year, but seeing all of the artists, writers, and poets of Shepherd united and showcased makes it all worth the effort."



Abi McClung, published in previous volumes writes, "Seeing your work published is one of the most rewarding things that can happen to a budding author or artist. It gives you a taste of what many of us hope to see in our future. For many, it's the beginning of a dream come true. It also provides students with invaluable experience and insight into what it's like to be published and work with an editor. It's a wonderful connection to make and I would encourage anyone to be a part of it."

Readers can stay up-to-date with Sans Merci by following [@sansmercimag](https://www.instagram.com/sansmercimag) on Instagram. ■

by Mary Barker

Brenda Feltner Retires After Long Career at Shepherd University

Upon her admission to the Secretarial Science Program in 1973, Brenda Feltner was under the impression that she would only remain affiliated with Shepherd University for a short period of time. But directly after completing her degree, Feltner interviewed with the department head, Dr. Vera Malton, for the secretarial position for the Division of Languages and Literature. She explains, "I was so excited that she wanted to interview me for her secretarial position that had come open in her division. During my interview with her she asked if I knew how to change the typewriter ribbon on the IBM Selectric typewriter that was in her secretary's office. I, of course, said 'Sure, I can do that.' She handed me the new ribbon, she received a phone call, and I proceeded to change the ribbon after discovering the IBM Selectric's manual in the desk drawer. I had never changed one of those ribbons before, but I can certainly follow directions!" Feltner's determination to learn through challenges allowed her to be hired as the department's secretary and, despite her plan to stay on campus for only a few years, Shepherd became her home away from home until her retirement in May 2021.

Describing herself in those early days, Feltner notes, "I was young, naive, and very shy. It took me numerous years to get over that." Eventually, the campus, its faculty, and its students became a second family that provided comfort through the wake of her personal struggles. She adds, "In 1981, several tragedies occurred in my personal life and my faculty were always there for me. I might not have made it through those extremely tough times if it had not been for my Shepherd family." Shepherd was more than just a campus; more than a congregation of learning and yearning minds. It was not just a place of education and occupation, but a hearth of love and support—a community that would embrace Feltner throughout her career. She notes, "The students and faculty gave me a purpose in life, and I truly enjoyed helping and serving them throughout my career at Shepherd. They also helped me grow as a person and gave me the confidence to further my education at Shepherd while working there full time." Not only did she act as a buoyant force that kept the English and Modern Languages Department afloat—along with, eventually,

the communications and history departments—but she balanced that work with unyielding dedication between earning a bachelor's degree in business administration and raising her family. She proudly explains, "It was a slow process by only taking two classes a semester, but I finally graduated from Shepherd again in 1994."

For all that Shepherd gave to her, Brenda gave even more back. With the completion of her new degree, she remained faithful to the campus and community of Shepherd University. Her kindness, loyalty, and dedication to the department's faculty and students served to advance the program and inspire all within it to achieve the highest standards of their own expectations. Dr. Timothy Nixon, who has been at Shepherd since 2006, sings Brenda's praises: "More than anything else, Brenda Feltner was a miracle worker. If it came to helping students or faculty, she never said no...whenever I appealed to Brenda for anything, she would say, 'Let me see what I can do.' No seven words have ever been as reassuring as that statement coming from Brenda...and beyond that, she was immensely generous with her time and her talent." Dr. Heidi Hanrahan, who met Brenda in 2007, agrees, saying, "To put it simply, we couldn't have functioned without her...every day she embodied what is best about Shepherd: she worked hard, she cared so much, and she gave so much back."

Over the years, Brenda has faced many challenges, some that even felt stranger than fiction. She lists a few: "A former employee tried to kiss me when we were in a classroom together; a former faculty member tried to get me fired; and a mentally unstable person off the street [was] held up in my office until campus police came—that was probably the [most scared] I've ever been. Trying to work during the COVID-19 pandemic certainly challenged all of us." Over the years, Feltner's job became more complicated with the introduction of new



Brenda Feltner

technologies and departmental duties. Despite the disruptions she felt as her career advanced, Feltner was always able to pull through for her fellow employees. The relationship between a person and their work environment defines their career in a way that far outweighs their day-to-day tasks. It is the people within the department that make the job worth doing. Brenda adds, "I always felt very appreciated and respected by my faculty and the students, and that meant the world to me. The send-off into retirement that my faculty and colleagues did for me really showed me how much I meant to them. I dearly miss them." That last sentiment is mutual, as Hanrahan explains, "We will miss her and wish her a happy, well-earned retirement." Nixon adds, "There'll never be another Brenda Feltner. I am beyond privileged to have worked with her and called her my friend for fifteen years."

Feltner's retirement from Shepherd has presented her with new opportunities. Like always, she perseveres and is able to make the best out of her situation. She notes, "Life in retirement has been great! My husband and I are enjoying our children and grandchildren and would really enjoy traveling more if COVID-19 would just go away."

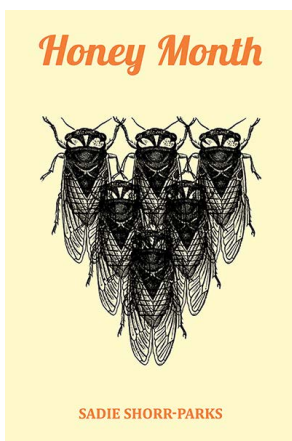
Thank you, Brenda Feltner, for all of your support in making the Department of English and Modern Languages what it is today. ■

by Mary Barker and Shelby Daugherty

Faculty Achievements



In June, **Dr. Heidi M. Hanrahan**, professor of English, joined with Dr. Ben Bankhurst (Department of History) and Dr. Jeff Groff (Department of Environmental and Physical Sciences) to deliver a talk at the annual Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges (COPLAC) meeting, held virtually. Their presentation, "Campus Agriculture and Interdisciplinary Collaboration after COVID-19," discussed plans for interdisciplinary learning at Tabler Farm, Shepherd's agricultural campus. On October 12, Dr. Hanrahan delivered the Scarborough Society Lecture, "150 Years of Middlemarch, 150 Years of Shepherd University." Part of the University's celebration of our sesquicentennial, the event also marked the publication of George Eliot's masterpiece and the donation of a collection of Eliot books to the Library. In November, Hanrahan presented her paper, "'The setting does its work': Architecture and Ecology in the Dream House," at the Society for the Study of American Women Writers (SSAWW) Conference in Baltimore. Finally, also in November, Dr. Hanrahan presented a paper entitled "'I sometimes feel as if we're ghosts': Searching for Queer Spaces in Call the Midwife" at the Mid-Atlantic Popular and American Culture Association, held virtually.



Dr. Timothy K. Nixon, professor in the Department of English and Modern Languages, presented an essay entitled "Employing Freud to Understand the Dichotomous Deployment of Food in Morrison's 'The Bluest Eye'" at the Mid-Atlantic Popular and American Culture Association (MAPACA) conference in November of this year. The 2021 MAPACA conference was, for safety reasons, held virtually again this year. Dr. Nixon's essay grew out of his discussions of "The Bluest Eye" with his students in last spring's ENGL426 course, the seminar on Toni Morrison.



"Honey Month," the debut poetry collection by **Sadie Shorr-Parks**, adjunct faculty in English and Director of the Society for Creative Writing, will be published by "Main Street Rag" in early 2022. Poetry from this collection has also been featured in "Appalachian Heritage," "Aquifer: The Florida Review," "Blueline," "Cimmaron Review," "Painted Bride Quarterly," "Sierra Nevada Review," and "Southwest Review," among others.



Dr. Christy Wenger, associate professor of English and interim co-dean of the Ruth Scarborough Library and Center for Teaching and Learning, is director of the "Bridges to Degrees" project that has been awarded a \$96,891 grant. The funding will outfit Jefferson and Martinsburg High Schools with the technology needed to engage in distance learning courses and will equip the university campus with the hardware necessary to deliver them. The University hopes to provide distance learning through synchronous, live-streamed, dual enrollment courses to more than 400 eligible high school students per calendar year.



Yildiz Nuredinoski, lecturer of English, was awarded two grants from West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission to adopt Open Educational Resources materials in her ENGL 101 and 102 courses. She is using the grants to create videos and pay for students to use software including Kami and Construct 3.

Shepherd Students Succeed: Sigma Tau Delta and Beyond

Poetry Under the Stars

To celebrate the Fall Solstice, Sigma Tau Delta hosted their first event of the year, Poetry Under the Stars, on September 21. Tranquilly surrounded by flickering candles, 20 university and high school students gathered with community members in the Town Run Garden under the night sky. The relaxing atmosphere encouraged attendees to share their favorite poetry, either their own verses or those written by others. Sigma Tau Delta President Sarah Seibert shared her original poem, "Ghosts," and West Virginia Writers regional representative Tom Donlon read from his collection, "Peregrine." Several non-English majors participated and expressed interest in joining Sigma Tau Delta for future events. ■

by Shelby Daugherty

FROM TOP, CLOCKWISE:

Some members of Sigma Tau Delta (from left: Sarah Seibert, Isabella Sager, Vivienne Wells, Shelby Daugherty, Mary Barker, and Madison Sites)

Tom Donlon reciting poetry.

The Sigma Tau Delta banner hangs at the Poetry Under the Stars event.



Seibert Interns with CACI

Internships provide valuable experiences for university students. Interns have the opportunity to apply the knowledge and skills that they have acquired from college courses to real workplace experiences. These internships allow soon-to-be graduates to explore potential career options.

Sarah Seibert (*pictured right*), a current English major, interned for Computers and Information Technology Company (CACI) International Inc. from May to August 2021, in Chantilly, Virginia. Her manager during her time in this paid position was Meghan Rogers, a Shepherd English graduate, who reached out to her former professors for good candidates. Rogers explained that companies like hers want the skills that English and Modern Languages students bring to the workplace. In an email Rogers sent to department faculty, she put it simply: "We need people who can write. We'll teach them the rest."

Seibert worked as a technical writer under Rogers, devising documents for the company. The government sends the company requirements for a contract, and the company finds contrac-

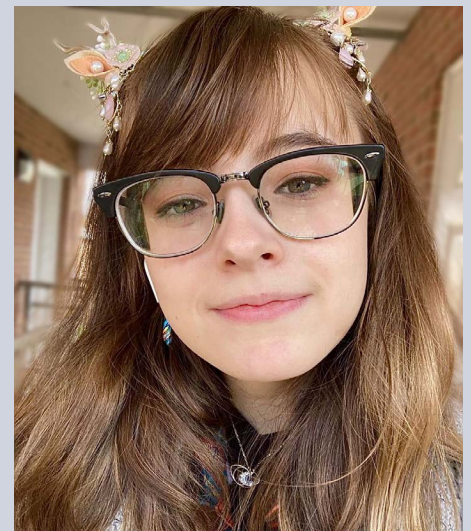
tors who are able to fulfill those requirements.

"The government would send CACI requirements for a contract, and my job was to write about how our specific contractor would meet all of those requirements," Seibert explained.

One of the documents that Seibert helped write awarded the company a multi-million-dollar contract. "For this specific contract, it required a team of contractors, all with top-secret security compartmented information clearances," Seibert explained, "which means they get paid a lot of money."

Seibert is proud of this accomplishment during her time with the company. "The response that we wrote was so good that the government hired the entire team, meaning CACI will make millions of dollars from them. Because when the government hires a contractor from CACI, our company takes a cut of that contractor's salary, which is one of the main ways we make money," she added.

She believes that the academic writing she has done for Shepherd University's English courses,



particularly her critical essays and experience with peer-editing, prepared her for the work she did.

Seibert feels that she will go into a similar job after she graduates in May. "I felt like my work there mattered," Seibert concluded. ■

by Maddi Sites

Sigma Tau Delta Collaborates with Shepherd Farm

Last year, Dr. Hanrahan began to work with Dr. Jeff Groff, professor in Department of Environmental and Physical Sciences (DEPS), on ideas to increase collaboration between our departments, particularly at Shepherd Farm (also known as Tabler Farm). They began with a focus on interaction between student groups. On October 9, Dr. Hanrahan and two members of Sigma Tau Delta, Shelby Daugherty and Sarah Seibert, joined the Shepherd Farm community to plant native, food-bearing trees that will one day be part of a larger sustainable forest. This planting initiative is part of a cooperative arrangement with Cacapon Institute after Shepherd Farm received a grant to start the native food forest. Following the tree-planting event, farm director Madison Hale invited Dr. Hanrahan and members of Sigma Tau Delta to help host Shepherd Farm's open house on October 30. On this day, Hanrahan, Daugherty, and Seibert helped manage the event; setting up displays, managing the pumpkin painting station, and informing guests about the complimentary refreshments. In the future, Sigma Tau Delta plans to collaborate more with the farm and even utilize the setting to host their own events. ■

by Shelby Daugherty



TOP LEFT: Dr. Hanrahan, Sarah Seibert, and Shelby Daugherty with one of the trees they planted.

TOP RIGHT: Shepherd Farm Open House; From left: Mark Cuthrell, Paul Karth, Sarah Seibert, Shelby Daugherty, and Heidi Hanrahan.

BOTTOM: Participants at the farm's tree planting.

Students Present at Hood's "Discovering the Humanities" Conference

Three Shepherd University students presented their work for Hood College's fifth annual "Discovering the Humanities" conference. Tanner Boeckmann, Isabella Sager, and Lee DiFante presented papers written for Spring 2021 seminars taught by Dr. Tim Nixon. Although it was originally scheduled to be held in person, the conference took place virtually on September 18, due to the rising COVID cases in Frederick, Maryland.

Tanner Boeckmann, a secondary education major, presented "Gender Bias in Criticisms of Toni Morrison's Works" in which he discussed male writers' criticisms of Toni Morrison's portrayal of men in her novels. "I highly emphasize negative reviews by male reviewers because the men are the ones who are demonstrating an implicit gen-

der bias," he explained. Boeckmann was pleased that a keynote speaker also mentioned Toni Morrison, specifically her belief in the importance of the humanities.

Boeckmann said that his first time presenting at a conference was a wonderful opportunity, despite the conference being held online: "[I]t was amazing to be able to share my work beyond just a professor."

English major Isabella Sager shared her presentation, "Odysseus as the Anti-War Figure: Disguise, Manipulation, and PTSD in Homer's Odyssey," focused on disrupting the image of the glorified war hero. "In studying the complex character of Odysseus and the writing style of

Homer, I explore how Odysseus is more than just a fearsome warrior and should be embraced for his imperfect and complex human qualities," Sager said.

In this COVID age, this was Sager's third virtual conference. She noted that this event was smaller than usual, but the presentations were interesting and diverse. She commented, "As an English major, it is wonderful to participate in a setting in which so many people are passionate about what they study."

Lee DiFante, a secondary education major, presented their paper titled "Queer Representation and the Zeitgeist," a study of Homer's Iliad and Ovid's Metamorphoses through a queer lens. They considered, also, the lens of these works' respective times and cultures in order to determine if either work could be considered a transgressive queer work.

Like Boeckmann and Sager, DiFante enjoyed being able to present even though the conference was held virtually. A first-time presenter like Boeckmann, DiFante added, "Overall, the experience was super stressful but really rewarding and satisfying. I'm definitely interested in speaking at a conference again if I'm granted the opportunity." ■

by Maddi Sites



Tanner Boeckmann



Isabella Sager



Lee DiFante

“Scary Stories” in Knutti Hall

Sigma Tau Delta took celebrating October 31, seriously this year, hosting a “Spooktacular” Halloween event. Though it was originally supposed to be an outdoor event, complete with a campfire, rain forced us to move into two classrooms in Knutti. With the help of some magical students and Dr. Nixon, Room 202 morphed into a creepy den with tea candles flickering in the windows, a scary skull on the wall, mysterious music playing on the speakers, and a campfire on the projector. Across the hall, Shelby Daugherty rearranged Room 204 into a cave fit for divination.

About twenty souls showed up for this event, including many non-English majors, and even two children, one dressed as the mind-wrenching character of Slenderman. The majority of participants arrived in costume. Sarah Seibert, the host, dressed as a celestial deer and kicked off the event by talking about a handful of the unexplained happenings in her house—a presence of an invisible entity, noises that came from nowhere, and sleep paralysis. Another event-goer read Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Telltale Heart.” English majors Abi McClung and Frank Santiago-Cabrera rose to the podium to shock the partygoers with two-sentence horror stories. Another guest told his story of a spider spirit

in his dorm that bit him whenever it wasn’t fed bugs. Twice, guests told a scary story one line at a time. Even the child dressed as Slenderman shared some horrifying stories.

Abi McClung shared with the group that when they were a baby, their family was using a Ouija board, and it spelled out “baby cold.” When they checked on Abi, they had kicked off their blanket! Once it was adjusted, the Ouija board said “OK Now” ooOOOoOoOO scary!

Dr. Nixon shared a very unsettling story of his aunt who would be visited by a dead relative. In life, this relative always had huge guffaws of laughter—and never giggled. One night, Dr. Nixon’s aunt was visited by the relative, but something seemed off. The spirit talked nonsense, and at the end they giggled, causing the aunt much fear and doubts about who she was interacting with.

Sigma Tau Delta member Lee DiFante told a hilarious story of being chased down by an opossum when they were locked out of their house in the middle of the night. The fear gave them the adrenaline they needed to jump a tall fence and get inside their house!

As the night went on and the crowd began



to thin, a psychic board was brought out, and attendees decided to try to communicate with some of the infamous ghosts in Knutti. Meanwhile, some souls filed in and out to receive divine guidance through tarot from Daugherty and psychology-major Olivia Shelton. After the event, many guests stayed behind to help put the classrooms back into order, and the leftover sweets were gifted to the janitor for his hard work and to say thank you for staying late and helping to clean the room. ■

by Shelby Daugherty

TOP: Attendees and hosts of the Scary Stories Halloween Event. From left: Megan Bicking, Mark Cuthrell, Paul Karth, Leo Rodriguez, Frank Santiago-Cabrera, Sarah Seibert, Abi McClung, Shelby Daugherty, Olivia Shelton, Lily Brannon (Olivia’s child), Celine Wilson, Nate Pearson.

Keefer to Publish Novel

“The thing you are most afraid to write, write that.”
~ Nayyirah Waheed, Salt



Our department is proud to announce that one of our students, Emily Keefer (pictured above), has a novel forthcoming from Koehler Books. An autobiographical story, “The Stars on Vita Felice

Court,” “explores a unique story of self-love, discovery, love of others, and how to simply be in each stage life.” A member of Sigma Tau Delta, the International English Honors Society, and Kappa Delta Pi, the International Honors Society in Education, Keefer is held in high regard by the Shepherd University community. She currently writes full-time for The Journal newspaper as well as featured sections in “Around the Panhandle” magazine and “Country Connections” magazine, and has previously written under the “Kindred Spirits” column for The Journal. In a discussion regarding the upcoming pre-order and release of her book, Keefer states that her book handles the topic of religion and admits that “to bring something so controversial [into fictional literary discussion] makes [her] nervous.” Not only does Keefer discuss the relatable process of self-discovery that she found through her experiences of moving to Arizona and joining a mission, but she allows her own love story to unravel throughout her book.

The following is Keefer’s synopsis of her book: “Val Beckley is facing an ordinary complication that many teenagers meet—yearning to escape a small town in hopes of becoming something

more, later making a life-changing decision that is not so ordinary. Perceiving the outcome as greener on the other side, Val convinces herself that she has found the new start she was looking for—in the desert of suburban Mesa, Arizona with her newly found church organization, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, also widely known as ‘the Mormons.’ Discovering new meanings of home and family, Val takes a journey which leads her to the most unexpected place of all—her own heart.”

Keefer says “it doesn’t feel real yet” that her book has been finalized and will be coming out so soon. For now, she hopes that her story will inspire many and wants to relay that the grass is greener on the other side. She believes that “The Stars on Vita Felice Court” will be a young adult book that many will relate to, and she hopes that many are encouraged to take off on their own endeavors of self-discovery. Keefer’s multifaceted story will be available for preorder in December through Koehler Books and will be released in February 2022. You can follow Emily on her literary journey at www.emilyhkeefer.com. ■

by Shelby Daugherty

Summer Job Helps Hamrick Find her Future

In the summer of 2021, English major Mikayla Hamrick had the opportunity to work for Goldstar Learning Options Inc. in Denver, Colorado. Goldstar Learning Options (GLO) is an organization dedicated to providing disability services and advocating for families with developmental and intellectual differences. GLO offers unique and individualized programs that help individuals by providing the support they need. Mikayla was hired as a camp counselor for GLO's summer program where each counselor is paired with a student. The counselor then works as a mentor and personal caretaker, providing individualized behavioral support services and accompanying the student throughout the summer on fun and engaging activities. The program focuses on community engagement, allowing the participants to explore the town instead of staying in one particular camp spot for the entire summer. This way, the counselors and their students are able to form a close relationship while they go to water parks, movie theaters, museums, bowling alleys, and attend other activities to get the children involved with community members.

Mikayla was paired with a 10-year-old girl with Down syndrome, who she describes as an absolute delight. They got along right away and became close, as Mikayla laughs, "My Spotify Wrapped's number two top artist was Katy Perry because we listened to it every day in the car." She added, "I didn't know a lot of people

[in Denver], so she definitely helped me find a place of belonging there." Mikayla had to work on finding activities that would allow her student to engage with girls her age, and they got to celebrate the student's birthday together in a park. Mikayla states that this was an amazing experience both professionally and personally. The students look up to their mentors, and so she was able to develop the skills of individualized services for her future in education. Additionally, Mikayla got to explore Colorado and the communities there. She said that she would love to go back, and that they offered the position back if she wanted it.

This summer job has helped Mikayla with her future as she revealed that the experience played a big part in her getting a new job post-graduation. She has recently been offered a job position in Newark, New Jersey, which offers free housing and many opportunities near New York City. This offer comes with the help of AmeriCorps, a program that offers individuals the chance to serve organizations in a variety of jobs and volunteer work. Starting in January, Mikayla will be working in classrooms, five to six times a day, leading individualized tutoring sessions for students. The program partners with NYU and will help Mikayla with her tuition and the teaching hours that work towards her master's degree. Mikayla reveals that she is a little intimidated but overall excited about the future. She will miss Shepherd University and she is thankful for the



*Mikayla Hamrick in
Boulder Farmers Market, Colorado.*

many opportunities from her department that allowed her to find her place in the world, "I love working with people—I'm glad I get to keep doing that in a new place."

Mikayla shared that for those interested in GLO or AmeriCorps, they're both still hiring and looking for students! You can check the links, www.americorps.gov for AmeriCorps and www.goldstarlearningoptions.com for GLO. ■

by Frank Santiago-Cabrera

Learning In and Out of the Classroom

Our faculty continue to look for ways to be innovative in and out of the classroom. During the fall 2021 semester, Dr. Tim Nixon's Seminar in World Literature focused on "Indian Literature Then and Now." Not only did the course expose students to literature they might not encounter otherwise, but Dr. Nixon also made sure to integrate cultural experiences into the class, including a celebration of Diwali, the Indian "Festival of Lights." Nixon and his students had dinner at Spice Connexion in Martinsburg. They also celebrated with a cake made by Clara Monson, an English education student, complete with fireworks decorations. (Fireworks are a key part of Diwali celebrations.) ■



*Students in Dr. Nixon's class celebrating
Diwali at Spice Connexion.*



Diwali cake made by Clara Monson

Student Voices

This semester, we asked our students (including some non-majors) what texts they have read in courses we offer that will stay with them long after graduation.



Jill Black, history major: The most impactful texts I have encountered would be the poems of Anne Bradstreet [in HNRS 205: Honors Literature]. The way she

shaped early American literature despite facing discrimination and setbacks is beyond incredible. When her work was published, it shook the literature world and gave other women the inspiration they wanted to pursue a place within the world of literature. She used the stereotypes of a woman to her advantage and used them to fuel her passion. Every single one of her poems should be regarded with the utmost respect and I am so thankful I had the chance to learn about her and read her texts. I regularly think about them and would do anything to be able to talk about her.



Jessica Kellison, biology major: I'd say my favorite so far was "A Parchment of Leaves" by Silas House...I liked it because the characters and the scenery were so relatable to life in Appalachia. It accurately represented what Appalachian women are like and how resilient they are. It also brought to light this idea of good and evil coexisting in the world and the importance of forgiveness.

Dona Anderson, Spanish major: If I were to choose a

piece that I feel resonated on a more personal level, it would be a close tie between the short story "La Lengua de las Mariposas" by Manuel Rivas and the film "Roma" by Alfonso Cuarón. Both were in the SPAN 499A classes focusing on literary and film analysis. The intimacy of the storytelling and the weaving of something personal into a larger social context are aspects I wish to be able to incorporate in the way I share information and tell my own stories.



Clara Monson, English education major: I think the most impactful book that I've read so far in the English Department is "Mama Day" by Gloria Naylor! It was the first book that made me cry in years because the ending was just that good. It also introduced me to a different narrative style than what I was used to, it is written in this really cool style with three intertwining narratives told from three different points of view. It also has some magic in there too which I always am into and it's just a really amazing book!



Megan Bicking, English major: I think the most impactful texts I read in all my class-

es so far were "Nectar in a Sieve" by Kamala Markandaya, "Ocean at the End of the Lane" by Neil Gaiman, and "Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe" by Benjamin Alire Sáenz. Throughout my time here at Shepherd, I have read a lot of texts that have something unique to offer, but these books have given me so much to think about and empathize with.



Morgan Sites, Spanish minor: In my time with Dr. Berenschot, my favorite text has to be "El Lobo, El Bosque, y el Hombre Nuevo" by Senel Paz. I enjoyed reading a story between two

men, who were polar opposites, form a strong bond and learn from each other. I also enjoyed the film adaptation (Fresa y Chocolate), as it was the first time I had ever seen that type of dynamic represented on screen.



Celine Wilson, English major: My favorite would have to be "The Bloody Chamber." I grew up reading the Brothers Grimm, and so getting

a feminist spin on these stories was so intriguing. I loved how the essence of these stories remained the same, but Angela Carter managed to enhance them through reworking the agency of the female characters.



Abi McClung: The most influential text I encountered at Shepherd was James Baldwin's "Sonny's Blues." It was a beautiful yet truthful piece about the state of Harlem during the Har-

lem Renaissance and the narrator's relationship with family. After reading it nearly four years ago now, I still think about it. It makes me want to embrace all aspects of life, as the narrator and his brother Sonny must learn to do. ■

About Our Student Writers and Editors

The content of this newsletter comes almost entirely from five Shepherd English majors who have completed the work as part of a practicum course they took with Dr. Heidi Hanrahan. Below, you can read a little bit about each of them.



Mary Barker

I am a junior English major with minors in marketing and Appalachian studies. I'm involved with several groups on campus including Alpha Phi Omega, Order of Omega, and Sigma Tau Delta. I am proud to be a first-time editor with Sans Merci magazine and the next student editor of the "Anthology of Appalachian Writers." I have always had a love for novels and reading, but this semester I have cultivated my love for writing. Both of these aspects will help me to achieve my aspirations for a career in editing and publishing. I'm looking forward to all the opportunities offered by Shepherd and the wonderful faculty across campus. I'm also grateful to have participated in the writing of the English and Modern Languages departmental newsletter! I cannot wait to see what the future holds, though I know that my education and experience within this department has prepared me to seize it and make it my own. ■



Maddi Sites

I am a senior at Shepherd. As an English major with a minor in education, I have appreciated the encouraging learning environment facilitated by the department's professors. It has been a pleasure to have helped work on this semester's newsletter. Working on this project has provided me with better self-management and journalistic skills that I hope to carry into my future endeavors. My time here altogether has been wonderful and full of meaningful experiences. I have presented my work at conferences, was published in Sans Merci, and worked on projects such as this one. I am forever grateful for my professors and peers at this university. After I graduate, I plan to pursue a career in editing. In the future, I hope to further my education and become an English professor so that I can impact students the same way that I have been impacted by my professors here in the Department of English and Modern Languages. ■



Isabella Sager

I am a senior English literature major, minoring in modern languages. This is my second time working for the departmental newsletter—my first time as copy editor. Working on this newsletter has allowed me to further cultivate my skills as a writer and editor, and additionally, grow as a member and student of the Shepherd community. In addition to working for this newsletter, I am also the secretary for Sigma Tau Delta and senior literary editor of Sans Merci. I will forever be grateful to the faculty and students of the Department of English and Modern Languages for providing me with the encouragement and countless opportunities to propel my career in editing and publishing. Most important, however, is the newfound and unconventional home I have found within the walls of Knutti Hall. ■

Department Reimagines Spanish Major and Minor

Starting in the Spring Semester of 2022, Shepherd University will offer a revised and improved version of the Spanish major and minor, which promises to better help students live in a complex and diverse world by introducing them to varying perspectives offered by a study of Spanish and Latin American literature, technology, and the Spanish language. The new curriculum expands on the old one, while allowing students to explore more options in elective classes. As Dr. Ellzey explains, "We wanted to make the Spanish major more flexible, so that it would be a good avenue into almost any career—teaching, business, law, medical fields, sociology, criminal justice, psychology, science—by allowing some electives in other departments." The new major is also more flexible as it allows students to take up to two courses in English. Moreover, there are new class options offered that include a variety of media, not just literature.

Dr. Ellzey hopes that the new major and minor will better prepare students for graduate school. She added, "We also wanted to add a course in Spanish-language literature in translation; that can be used in the Spanish major, but also will expose more students not majoring in Spanish to Spanish-language literature." With new opportunities, students who are looking into the Spanish major and minors might be more interested in the opportunities provided by the curriculum. Morgan Sites, a Spanish minor who has been following the old curriculum said, "The new minor is definitely an improvement! I'm sure that the new options will make the major and the minor something entirely different and new for upcoming students. I am grateful for my minor—but I'm glad the curriculum has evolved into something more engaging."

For more information on the new Spanish major and minor, make sure to visit www.shepherd.edu/eml. ■

by Frank Santiago-Cabrera

continued on page 12



Frank Luis Santiago-Cabrera

I am an English major with a concentration in creative writing and a minor in communications and new media. I am originally from Naranjito, Puerto Rico. This department has served as a second home for me, and the students and the professors I've met here have become my family. Shepherd really is a place where I've been able to truly find myself, and I'm glad to be part of the newsletter this semester, where we get to write about the highlights of the department I love. I've always wanted to write since I was little. My mind was overwhelmed with stories I wanted to tell the world. Growing up watching American movies, I developed a passion for screenwriting as well as fiction writing. Now thanks to the English Department, I've been given the tools and skills to bring those stories to life. At Shepherd, I work as a writing and Spanish tutor and as a Student Ambassador. I've written a variety of essays, fiction pieces, and nonfiction prose. An excerpt from my memoir, "Verano Panorámico," was published last semester in Sans Merci. In 2019, I wrote

a two-part play as my capstone project, "Wishing You Were Here," which was selected from among other submitted plays for the Page to Stage contest and was later performed in front of live audiences in April 2021 by the Rude Mechanicals. Back home, I am a screenwriter and producer for the Puerto Rican independent film and television production company 869 Productions which I founded with my best friend, Alan Colon. As an aspiring writer and filmmaker, I have been able to put my major and minor into practice with 869 Productions in my hometown in Puerto Rico. With them, I've written and directed a Spanish short horror film titled "Night Terrors" (2020), as well as co-wrote and produced two short films, "Atrapados Juntos" (2020) and "Blood" (2021). Shepherd has been a great place for me to explore my passions and my identity, and I cannot wait to share it all with the world. After graduation, I plan to continue my writing career and continue 869 Production's future expansion in Puerto Rican cinema. ■



Shelby Daugherty

I am a senior studying creative writing in the Department of English and Modern Languages. This is my first semester back on campus in-person since the plight of the pandemic. The core of my focuses has been centered around Sigma Tau Delta and making story-worthy memories through my social life with other English majors. I aspire to use my degree to its highest potential as I curate my future to fit my creative writing endeavors. ■

Introducing Brightspace

Out with the old, in with the new! In Summer 2021, Shepherd University shifted to a new online course delivery system. With this transition, the Center for Teaching and Learning assembled a team of Brightspace Ambassadors, including English and Modern Languages faculty and students, tasked with exploring the program and sharing helpful tips to new users. The goal is to make the program accessible and understandable for everyone using it.

The group is composed of one director, Dr. Christy Wenger, five dedicated faculty members, and ten student ambassadors, all supporting "successful teaching and learning on campus." With this initiative, the group plans to host a number of panels and Q&A sessions to share ideas, tips, and different perspectives of the program. Students and faculty see different sides of Brightspace. By working together, students can see how their assignments, tests, and grades are entered into the program. On the other hand, with student voices, professors are alerted to what does or does not work for students and are able to find ways in which to best help their students learn and engage with the program. Both faculty and students can see how discussion posts impact one another and share advice for keeping up with homework and assignments. Together we can utilize this new technology in face-to-face, online, and hybrid learning environments.

Dr. Wenger says, "What makes this program special is

that it brings together campus faculty and students to work together to both educate and champion the campus as we transition to Brightspace...successful learning and teaching happens when students and faculty listen and learn from each other; that's what our program is all about. I'm so proud of our student ambassadors for taking on leadership roles through this program. Brightspace Ambassadors is a shining example of what happens when we face change together and use technology to support good people and the good work already happening on campus!"

The Brightspace quick link can be found at the top of Shepherd University's home page. Once logged into the program, students have access to all of their semester classes. Moreover, the mobile application, Brightspace Pulse, accesses the program on the go for any quick checks on assignments and announcements. The notification settings can be established or adjusted with ease, alerting students to upcoming due dates or tests.

The Brightspace Ambassador program is made possible by a generous 2021 President's Club grant. ■

by Mary Barker

