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From the Department Chair

Welcome to the sixth issue of "The Final Draft," the newsletter for the Department of English and Modern Languages. After more than two years, our Department and University are cautiously inching their way back toward normal. It was so exciting to be able to attend events in person for the first time since 2019: 13 English Capstone presentations; the McMurrin Convocation, which included seven outstanding students from our Department; the English and Modern Language Awards Ceremony; the Sigma Tau Delta initiation ceremony for five new members; the "Sans Merci" release party, and more. The Rude Mechanicals performed "Romeo and Juliet" without masks, a big relief to all of the sword fighters. English students joined History and Gender and Women's Studies students on a field trip to the Shakespeare Theatre in Washington, D.C. Sigma Tau Delta hosted a Valentine's Day poetry reading and won yet another (!) national award. One of our graduating seniors published her first novel, and one of our distinguished adjuncts won Shepherd's award for Outstanding Adjunct. Again, I am so proud of what our Department's faculty, staff, and students have accomplished. We wish all of our graduating seniors the best in whatever journey they are embarking on and look forward to seeing our returning students in the fall. Have a great summer, everyone!

If you would like more information about our Department, be sure to visit our website and our Facebook page, [Shepherd University's Dept. of English & Modern Languages](#). And graduates: we would love to hear from you! Please let us know what you are



PHOTO: Cecelia Mason

Dr. Betty Ellzey

Chair of the Department of English and Modern Languages

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

For the third time, the Rude Mechanicals were invited to the New College Conference on Medieval and Renaissance Studies in Sarasota, Florida, which was held the weekend of March 4-6. The troupe performed “Joseph’s Wedding,” a 16th-century Spanish play that focuses on the story of an Egyptian man who marries a Jewish woman.

The play is classified as an auto-sacramental, a genre in which the context of the divine is analyzed, particularly within a Christian theological perspective. According to the Rudes’ director and Chair of English and Modern Languages Dr. Betty Ellzey, the play is really about “religious tolerance.” She explains, “the whole message of the play is that interreligious relationships are okay. An angel even comes down and says [to the wife] that the marriage is her destiny and that it is approved by God.” However, when examined through the lens of medieval scholarship, viewers find its charged content comical as they encounter the play’s humor and follow its dramatic arc.



Like the humorous jester she is, Olyvia Thompson, a secondary education major, played the Fool; Julie Bowen played the Wife, Cenec; Dakota DiMarino, an environmental science major, played the Husband, Joseph; L Leavitt Harvey, a graduating English major, played the Angel; William Prudnick, a chemistry major, played the King; Sadé Herring, a sociology major, played Zenobia; Victoria Fairchild, a photography and computer imagery major, played the Courier; Chloe Johnson, an English alumnus, played the Drummer; TK Lindsay played Butifar.

“The conference went very well; most of the people who watched our play were very attentive and receptive toward it. They enjoyed the performance, and we were very highly

complimented by those who attended the conference,” says Prudnick.

Of course, the troupe was invited back to perform again for the fourth time at the next conference in 2024. ■

by Shelby Daugherty

TOP LEFT: Back row: Julie Bowden, L Leavitt Harvey, Dr. Betty Ellzey, William Prudnick, and Chloe Johnson. Front row: Victoria Fairchild, Dakota DiMarino, Olyvia Thompson, and Sadé Herring.

TOP RIGHT: L Leavitt Harvey (an angel) prophetically hovers over the bride (Julie Bowen).



Rude Mechanicals stage *Romeo and Juliet*

This semester, the Rude Mechanicals Medieval and Renaissance Players performed “Romeo and Juliet” under the direction of the Chair of English and Modern Languages Dr. Betty Ellzey. By casting two female players in the title roles, the Rudes’ take on the play redirects the narrative from Romeo’s and Juliet’s feuding families and highlights, instead, the way people in same-sex relationships can become outcasts.

Senior English Education major Olyvia Thompson auditioned for the role of Romeo, a part traditionally presented as a male character. According to Dr. Ellzey, Thompson’s embodiment of the character was immaculate, so she was awarded the role, her third as a member of the Rudes. Romeo’s female counterpart was played in alternating performances by Rachel Carroll and Rebecca Hempleman—both first-year students at Shepherd.

“Dr. Ellzey was heavily inspired by the character named Anybodys in the new ‘West Side Story’ movie and wanted Romeo to be androgynous and queer-coded either way,” says Thompson. Ellzey wondered if the cast was willing to “gender-bend” the entire play and give a voice to queer females while doing so. Though the answer was obvious, Dr. Ellzey decided to do what she always does—consult her players, who enthusiastically said “yes.”

“It really came down to how I wanted to portray Romeo, and, as a queer woman myself, I wanted to focus on the portrayal of a woman with masculine traits falling in love because I think that’s something we don’t see enough [representation of] in media,” Thompson said.

In heteronormative depictions of the play, the pair is marginalized because their love defies

continued on page 3



RIGHT

Top: Ash Wilson, Rachel Carroll, Olyvia Thompson, and Adam Wilson

Bottom: Mark Von Zalk, Ash Wilson, L Leavitt Harvey, Rachel Carroll, Olyvia Thompson, Alice Emmons, Adam Wilson, and Julie Bowen

Sans Merci, Vol. 46

"Sans Merci," Shepherd University's magazine of literature and visual art, publishes a new volume every spring semester. On April 4, with the unveiling of Volume 46, Shepherd celebrated the first in-person release party since spring 2019. The event, which was open to the public, celebrated the achievements and hard work of everyone involved in the publication. Artwork featured in the magazine was on display. After the art, prose, and poetry prize winners were announced, winners and selected students read aloud from their literary submissions.

Dr. James Pate, associate professor of English, and Ally Christmas, assistant professor of art, serve as faculty advisors for the magazine, with Isabella Sager as the senior literary editor, and Charlotte Puttock as the senior art editor. Prose editors were Abi McClung and Mary Barker; poetry editors were Sarah Seibert and Carter Warhurst. Art editors included Emma Corley, Scout Purdy, and Kaeleigh White, with Ian Sager as the graphic designer.

Sager, who graduated in May, has had a wonderful experience working with fellow editors and faculty advisors. "Being senior editor has been one of the greatest opportunities in my four years at Shepherd. Holding the physical copy of Volume 46 in my hands is a moment I will never forget," she shared. "I am so sad to be moving on from the 'Sans Merci' team, but I'm excited to see where I (and 'Sans Merci') will go from here."

McClung was thrilled by the in-person event, explaining that it was "so special to everyone involved. Since the pandemic, we have been unable to hold a celebration for the artists, writers, and editors involved with 'Sans Merci.'" Finally, we were able to honor the incredible work in this year's magazine. Being published and editing others' works is always rewarding, but this was truly something special." McClung added, "This is one of the best issues 'Sans Merci' has ever released."

Seibert also found the entire experience rewarding. She noted, "My experience as a poetry editor for 'Sans Merci' has been awesome. We had a great group of editors this year, and I really enjoyed working with Isabella and Carter, the other poetry editors. I had no idea my peers were such talented poets. The release party was so perfect. The vibes were immaculate; it was elegant while laidback, and we had such a good turnout."

Isabella Hawkinberry, an English major/art minor whose poems appear in the volume, loved seeing these two parts of her academic coursework combine. "Being in one place with all of those awesome English and art people was definitely something I'll remember vividly from my college days," she explained. Despite feeling some nerves, she also enjoyed reading her work aloud at the event and added, "All the awesome people made me feel calm and supported." She concluded, "Having my work published—especially two poems that have a lot of personal, emotional meaning—feels really special."

Like Hawkinberry, graduating senior Celine Wilson was also nervous about reading but found the experience quite rewarding: "Just being able to share what I wrote with others and being a part of the reading were amazing. Honestly, it was a great way to end my time at Shepherd." ■

by Maddi Sites



continued from page 2

the boundaries set in place by a generational grudge between two rival families. In this production, the feud between the Montagues and Capulets is downplayed as the oppression the pair faces also stems from their queer relationship. This adaptation highlights how the pair find a safe space with each other. Like many queer couples, they are forced to create an existence separate from the rest of the characters in order

to validate their loving devotion. Nevertheless, societal oppression leads to the suicide of the teens. "The Rudes' version of 'Romeo and Juliet' highlights how strained [queer] relationships can be and how easily their deaths could have been avoided with the support of their respective families," said Thompson.

This interpretation, like many directed by Dr. Ellzey, reminded the campus community of

Shakespeare's continued relevance. Next semester, the troupe will likely do the same as they perform 'A Winter's Tale.' Auditions will take place in August.

"The Rude Mechanicals is open for all to join, no matter your experience or predispositions; we find a place for everybody," said Dr. Ellzey. ■

by Shelby Daugherty

'Sans Merci' Award Winners

Isabella Sager, literary editor for "Sans Merci," shared with us the remarks she read as she announced each of this year's creative writing winners. You can find her words below. We think they give a good sense of what makes each of these pieces so special. Remember, printed copies of "Sans Merci, Volume 46," are now available in Knutti Hall as well as in the art buildings. Or, if you can't get to campus, contact Dr. Heidi Hanrahan about getting your own copy.

POETRY AWARDS

Runner-Up: With an illustrative and sensual language, combined with a beautiful allegory connecting love, worship, and spirituality, this poem captivated our editors. The expressive language and provocative use of voice creates a poem that entrances readers and bears inspiration from some of our greatest poets, such as Audre Lorde and e. e. cummings. In light of our observations, the Runner-Up for Best Poetry goes to Izzy Hawkinberry for her poem "baptiz- in myself in the way you move."

Winner: In combining rich and euphonious imagery with a disciplined poetic form, this poet created a harmonious piece that left our editors



Olyvia Thompson

in awe. The dedication to the haiku structure is praiseworthy. The precision with language creates a poetic tone that is both thrashing and bucolic—a poem you could expect to find in the manuscripts of Sylvia Plath or Emily Dickinson yet resides here on our campus. For these reasons, the winner for Best Poetry goes to Maddi Sites for her poem "Haiku in Fragments."

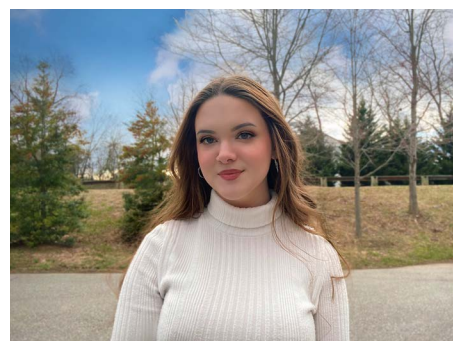
PROSE AWARDS

Runner-Up: This short story is a beautiful examination of motherhood, domesticity, and self-actualization. With its fascinating and borderline sardonic speaker, our editors were immediately pulled into this story's picturesque atmosphere. Offering a vignette into this brief but consequential moment in the life of a woman, mother, and wife, our editors attest this piece is remarkably poignant. To that end, the Runner-Up for Best Prose goes to Julie Shehan's short story "Keepers."

Winner: Gothic, imaginative, and excitedly haunting, this excerpt from a longer work bewitched our editors. The imagery throughout



Izzy Hawkinberry



Maddi Sites

this piece drips with a sharpness and vivacity that builds an immediacy within its readers. Possessing a narrator who grabs readers' attention, the story's events become dazzling, alluring, and delightfully unsettling. For these very reasons, we are excited to announce Olyvia Thompson's piece "Excerpt from 'Paint That Tastes of Poppies'" as Winner for Best Prose. ■

by Mary Barker and Shelby Daugherty



McMurrans Scholars

We are so proud of our seven new McMurrans Scholars! They have earned Shepherd's highest academic honor. From left to right: Mary Barker, Vivienne Wells, Lily Kessler, Sarah Seibert, Isabella Sager, Maddi Sites, and Isabella Hawkinberry.

Welcoming Valerie Wright

After saying goodbye to Brenda Feltner, who retired in May 2021, the Department has welcomed a new administrative assistant, Valerie Wright (pictured right). As the administrative assistant, Wright handles much of the purchasing and budgeting for the Departments of English and Modern Languages, History, and Communication. She also provides administrative support to the students and faculty within these departments.

After graduating college, Wright worked as a fourth-grade elementary school teacher for six years but put her career on hold in order to focus on raising her two children. When she decided that she would go back into the workplace, she knew she wanted to continue in the field of education. She returned as an administrative assistant to the principal in a middle school, where she worked for 11 years before moving to this area. Although she did enjoy working with younger children and their parents, Wright has enjoyed the change in atmosphere in her new position. "This is different. Here, it's quieter," she noted.

Upon moving to the area, Wright worked at Washington County Public Schools in a temporary position right before applying to Shepherd. "It's a different time in my life. I have raised my kids, and they're grown now. So, it's my time to just do something less active and strenuous than that environment with the younger kids."

Before moving to West Virginia, she resided in Vermont, where she lived her whole life. The transition from Vermont to West Virginia has been huge, according to Wright: "It's much different because of all the snow in Vermont, so it's really nice to already be out in the garden and see all the flowers. That has been exciting."

Wright's experience has been great thus far. She noted that the faculty members, chairs, and deans—all of the individuals with whom she has worked and interacted—have been very welcoming and kind. "I went to a college [Castleton State College] that was very similar in size to Shepherd, so it's nice to be back in a similar kind of atmosphere. It's been such a great place to settle into," she explained.



Valerie Wright

In her future here, Wright looks forward to becoming more involved. "For the past six months or so, it's been more learning the job and all of the processes involved in the day-to-day stuff, but it would be nice to start going out and becoming more active in the Shepherd community overall," she added. ■

By Maddi Sites



Sweet treats and other classroom fare

Our classes encourage students to see learning as more than just sitting in seats absorbing what someone else says. These pictures from Spanish and English classes show how students are encouraged to use all their senses—including taste!—to learn. In a class about Puerto Rico, students in Dr. Nieves' Spanish 102 course learned some basic merengue and salsa steps while enjoying (alcohol-free) piña colodas. Later in the semester, a lesson about Spain included learning flamenco dancing while enjoying

churros and hot chocolate. For Dr. Hanrahan's seminar on Edgar Allan Poe, Clara Monson, an English education major and the Department's most prominent creative baker, provided two themed cakes for the writer's birthday on January 19. Red velvet, of course! ■





Shep Arts Fest

On Saturday, April 23, at Sam Michaels Park, the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences hosted Shep Arts Fest, an afternoon event where attendees were able to revel in the diverse talents offered by the University. The Department of English and Modern Languages played a major role, providing live performances and hosting a poetry workshop led by members of Sigma Tau Delta. Throughout the day, the Amp at Sam Michaels Park hosted an array of performances including scenes from the Rude Mechanicals' "Hamlet" and "Romeo and Juliet," excerpts from "Motown" by the University's School of Music and the Theater Program, a presentation of Charpentier's "Te Deum" and Durufle's "Requiem" by the Masterworks Chorale, as well as poetry readings from this year's volume of "Sans Merci." Beyond the main stage, other campus groups hosted interactive workshops and activities across the park. Besides Sigma Tau Delta's workshop, Music hosted a drum circle, and faculty from Art and Theater offered hands-on activities. Representatives from the Office of Admissions were also on hand, along with the most special guest: J.C. the Ram.

Participants in the Sigma Tau Delta workshop could take any number of approaches. They could choose a sheet with a poetic prompt on it. They could opt for a blank sheet of paper in an attempt to start from scratch. Or they could work together with others. Shelby Daugherty, Sigma Tau Delta member, put together a dynamic display board, where participants could attach their work. One fun example came from a group of faculty and students working together, each writing a line before passing the paper to another person. The final untitled poem featured contributions from Dr. Amy DeWitt, Emily Gross, Shelby Daugherty, Dr. Heidi Hanrahan, Sarah Seibert, and Mark Cuthrell. It reads:

Screams of Terror Break

Through the Fog

As she sees the mist down the path.

A Bumble Bee pollinates the Bog—

The Bee does not see the monster's wrath.

Mushrooms sit contently in the carpet of leaves and she speaks to me.

Bee, oh Bee, become me.

The bee says "Reeeeee."

Not bad for a collaboration by "real" poets and "non-poets" on a Saturday afternoon!

Most charming, perhaps, is the poem written by a little girl who attended. On blue paper with black pen, she combined nature imagery with her inner thoughts:

roses are red, volits [violets] are

Blue I think summer is coming

and flowers are in Bloom

and even when The Wind

Blows cold I will still remder [remember]

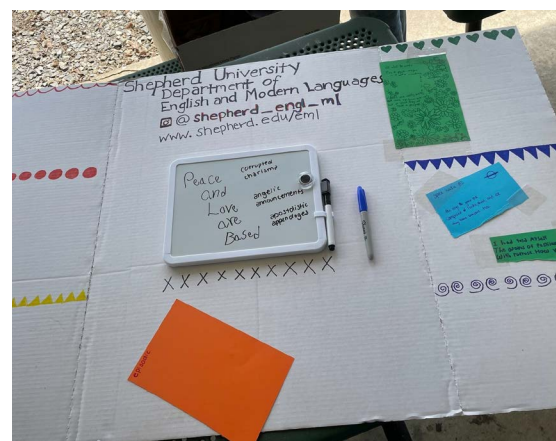
You.

...

When asked what the poem was about, the young poet simply mentioned something about missing her best friend.

For the participants, especially the graduating seniors, Shep Arts Fest was a way to take a breath of fresh air; enjoy art, music, and theater; and bond with friends before finals week. It was also a way to show the larger community the wealth of artistic and creative opportunities Shepherd offers. ■

By Shelby Daugherty



The poetry board beginning to take shape.



Frank Santiago Cabrera, Megan Bicking, Isabella Sager, and Dylan Parry working on their poems.



Frank Santiago Cabrera bonds with J.C.

TOP LEFT: Isabella Sager, Julie Shehan, Shelby Daugherty, Sarah Seibert, Melanie Fino, Alex Flamand, Frank Santiago Cabrera, and Olyvia Thompson prepare to read selection from "Sans Merci" on the main stage.

TOP RIGHT: Thinking about poetry...

Spring 2022 English capstone class

Just like in previous years, the Spring 2022 English capstone class helped students complete culminating projects, compile professional and academic portfolios, and polish the materials and skills they will need to succeed in the job market or graduate school.

Dr. Timothy Nixon, the course instructor, led the class through this ambitious undertaking. Among other innovations this semester, he invited English alumni to attend class sessions via Zoom, sharing their insight, experiences, and advice. In the first session, Danielle Carder (2016), Matt Myers (2013), and Nicholas Matzurreff (2013) talked about their experiences studying in graduate programs in English; College Student Development and Administration; Education; and Law. In the second session, Emily Spangler (2016), Meghan Rogers (2018), Emily Womeldorff (2017), and David Bennett (2017) talked about their work in libraries, technical writing, community and political organizing, and consulting.

In April, 13 students presented their capstone projects to the campus community. Their titles are listed below:

- Mary Barker: “‘As if the Devil Was in Her’: Fanny Fern Redefining the Nineteenth-Century Woman Writer”
- Megan Bicking: “Submarine Dreams”
- Shelby Daugherty: “She’ll Be All Three”
- L. Harvey: “The Dream Team”
- Izzy Hawkinberry: “embody: verb”
- Emily Keefer: “The Journey”
- Dannah Lohr: “The Horror of Eleanor Vance as an Unreliable Narrator”
- Abi McClung: “On Leaving Home, or The Answer”

- Isabella Sager: “Emily Dickinson’s Paradoxical Variants: The Tension of Choice and the Other”
- Sarah Seibert: “Half”
- Maddi Sites: “Fractured Glass”
- Vivienne Wells: “The Chaste Are Chased in Ovid’s ‘Metamorphoses’”
- Celine Wilson: “Human/Nature” ■

TOP RIGHT: The first alumni session, featuring Danielle Carder, Matt Myers, and Nicholas Matzurreff.

MIDDLE RIGHT: The second alumni session, featuring Emily Spangler, Meghan Rogers, Emily Womeldorff, and David Bennett.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Top row: Dannah Lohr, L Harvey, Izzy Hawkinberry, Mary Barker, Abi McClung, Vivienne Wells, Isabella Sager, Maddi Sites, and Dr. Tim Nixon, the course instructor. Front row: Megan Bicking, Shelby Daugherty, Sarah Seibert, Emily Keefer, and Celine Wilson.



New members inducted into Sigma Tau Delta

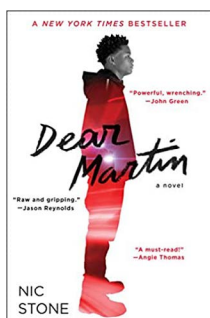
On April 21, our chapter of Sigma Tau Delta, the international English honor society, was pleased to induct five new members. Congratulations to these students! ■

From left to right: Dr. Heidi Hanrahan (chapter advisor), Mark Cuthrell, Logan King, Clara Monson, Olivia Stevens, Carter Warhurst, and Dr. Tim Nixon (chapter advisor)

Sigma Tau Delta wins award

In recognition of its Book Club initiative, Shepherd's chapter of Sigma Tau Delta, the international English honor society, has been awarded a \$100 Regents' Common Reader Award from the parent organization for organizing and hosting a local event or activity around the national organization's 2022 Common Reading book "Dear Martin" by Nic Stone.

Shepherd's chapter purchased four copies of "Dear Martin," in which a current-day Black student writes letters to Martin Luther King, Jr., as he wrestles with injustice, inequality, and growing up. Students and faculty in the Department of English



and Modern Languages volunteered to read the book. The copies passed from one person to the next. After reading the book, volunteers wrote short letters sharing their reflections on the novel, a tribute to the book's epistolary structure.

The Book Club gathered in April for a discussion of the book and the letters that each reader penned in an effort to engage in meaningful reading, writing, dialogue, and community building. The conversation was moving and inspiring, as participants discussed just what the book means and how its ideas can help change society.

In her letter notifying Shepherd's chapter of the award, Felicia Steele, representing the national organization, noted, "As usual, Shepherd is providing a model for other Sigma Tau Delta chapters around the region and country." ■



Back row: Celine Wilson, Kim Cano, Dr. Timothy Nixon, Dr. Heidi Hanrahan, Mark Cuthrell. Middle row: Mary Barker, Sarah Seibert, Isabella Sager, Frank Santiago Cabrera. Front row: Shelby Daugherty, Vivienne Wells, Megan Bicking.



Students, faculty, staff, and community members listen to the discussion.



Dr. Stephen Spencer reads his poem while Sadie Shorr-Parks listens.

In Conversation: Dr. Stephen Spencer and Sadie Shorr-Parks

On March 30 in the Robert C. Byrd Center for Congressional History and Education auditorium, English and Modern Languages hosted "In Conversation: Dr. Stephen Spencer and Sadie Shorr-Parks." The public was invited to this free event with poetry and conversation with Shepherd's newly named provost, Dr. Stephen

Spencer, and Society for Creative Writing Director/Adjunct Instructor of English Sadie Shorr-Parks. Spencer shared and discussed his poem "Desiderata in Autumn," published in "The Big Windows Review" in April 2022. Shorr-Parks' collection, "Honey Month," was released in March 2022. After sharing their own

poems, Shorr-Parks and Spencer answered the audience's questions about writing. Attendees and participants agreed that the event was a great way to welcome Dr. Spencer to campus and celebrate poetry. ■

2021-2022 Department awards

On April 24, we recognized the winners of our Department awards.

Outstanding Overall English Major: Isabella Sager

Outstanding English Major, Creative Writing Concentration: Sarah Seibert

Outstanding English Major, Literature Concentration: Vivienne Wells

Outstanding English Major, English Education Concentration: Lily Kessler

Outstanding English Major, English Education/MAT: Isabella Hawkinberry



From left to right: James Frye, Morgan Sites, Isabella Sager, Laura Castro-Vargas, Izzy Hawkinberry, Lily Kessler, Vivienne Wells, Sarah Seibert, Mary Barker, and Kallia Thompson

Outstanding English Minor: James Frye

Outstanding Spanish Major: Laura Castro-Vargas

Outstanding Spanish Minor: Morgan Sites

Outstanding Modern Languages Minor: Isabella Sager

Catherine C. Fix Essay Award, First Place: Kallia Thompson, "Stressed Out"

Catherine C. Fix Essay Award, Second Place: Jordan Johnson, "2021 Portfolio"

Catherine C. Fix Essay Award, Third Place: Ciara Scafide, "Lack of Diversity in Greek Life at Shepherd University" ■

Emily Keefer releases debut novel

English student Emily Keefer released her debut novel, "The Stars on Vita Felice Court," on February 23, 2022. Her book follows the story of a young girl named Val who yearns to escape her small West Virginia town. "Obviously it's fiction, but, you know, I don't really think there's any such thing as fiction. Everything comes from a point. And there was a point in my life where I was struggling mentally, wasn't really sure what I was doing, and definitely felt trapped in a small town, similar to the main character," Keefer shared. She knew people in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and felt that it provided the answer she was looking for at that time in her life.

Fictionally, the story follows Val's journey, but Keefer shares that it was inspired by events in her own life and aims to impact others: "It really is what I like to call a story of self-love—learning to love yourself, those around you, and the craziness that life can be."

As a child, Keefer wanted to become a little bit of everything when she grew up—pop star, marine biologist, etc.—but the desire to become a writer didn't land with her until she became obsessed with the book "Friday Night Lights." In 2017, she flew to Odessa, Texas, to write about it for her first opinion piece, which was published in Odessa's paper and "The Journal" in Martinsburg, West Virginia. This experience ignited her love for writing, so she

continued revising it for a final in a first-year writing course.

Since then, she has worked as a columnist and reporter at "The Journal" and began writing her novel, which started in Dr. Messenger's Creative Writing: Fiction class. This novel took four years for Keefer to write due to balancing school and her job on top of it. But through periods of heavy writing and more challenging periods of light writing, Keefer persisted and finished the story that began here in the Department of English and Modern Languages.

The novel is published by Koehler Books Publishing through the company's Emerging Authors Program, designed primarily for debut writers. From the cover design to editing, the publishing process has been stress-free and collaborative for Keefer. The Emerging Authors Program has covered the hassles that a self-publishing deal would leave authors do by themselves. She noted, "It's been super helpful, collaborative, and, ultimately, it's been a great experience."

Right now, Keefer's book can be found in print at Fuzzy Dog Books & Music in Charles Town, West Virginia. It can also be purchased online on Amazon.com and BarnesandNoble.com. She is working on getting it into more local bookstores.

"The title comes from one of the scenes in the



book with the two main characters. One of them is focusing on the stars, and one of them is not. And that really plays into the characters' motivations," Keefer shared about the inspiration for the title. She continued, "Vita felice actually means happy life in Italian, and that comes through in the story, which you'll come to find out as you read."

"The Stars on Vita Felice Court" was ranked as a top New Release in Teen and Young Adult Fiction on Amazon—an accomplishment of which Keefer is quite proud. She hopes to continue to inspire a journey of discovery and self-love in others through her novel. ■

By Maddi Sites

Faculty Achievements



Dr. Heidi M. Hanrahan, professor of English, has been named a contributing editor to “Studies in American Humor,” the leading journal in the field. Her review of Jenny Sundén and Susanna Paasonen’s “Who’s Laughing Now?: Feminist Tactics in Social Media” was published in the most recent issue of the journal. Dr. Hanrahan has also been named the first Assistant Dean of Interdisciplinary and Integrative Studies, overseeing Appalachian Studies, Gender and Women’s Studies, the Intensive English Language Program, and the Honors Program. She has also been tasked with creating and supporting new interdisciplinary programs at Shepherd.



Dr. Timothy K. Nixon, professor in the Department of English and Modern Languages, was asked by the editor of “The North Carolina Literary Review” (NCLR) to write a review of David Sedaris’s book “The Best of Me” (2020). Sedaris’s “The Best of Me” is a sort of “greatest hits” collection of his previously published works. Dr. Nixon provided the NCLR with a review essay entitled “A Study of the Human Animal,” and it will appear in the upcoming fall edition of the journal.



It’s been an impressively productive stretch for **Dr. James Pate**, associate professor of English. His poetry collection “Mineral Planet” is forthcoming from Schism Press. In January, a story that Dr. Pate wrote in collaboration with Johannes Goransson, “Dead Vermillion Skies,” was published by Expat Press. In February, he had several poems published in “Heavy Feather Review”: “[Angels of salt frozen along the shoreline],” “[The parade roamed through, toward the darker shadows],” and “[In the garden].” Finally, his story “Beak, Feather, and Eye” will be published this summer in “Dark Lane Anthology, Vol. 12.”



Sadie Shorr-Parks, adjunct instructor in English and director of the Society for Creative Writing, has had a very successful semester. “Honey Month,” her collection of poetry, was published by Main Street Rag. She also shared excerpts of her book at a well-attended and well-received session at the Association for Writers and Writing Programs conference in Philadelphia in March. Additionally, she is this year’s recipient of Shepherd’s Adjunct Faculty Award in Instruction. ■

Roses for Valentine’s Day

On Valentine’s Day, Sigma Tau Delta, the international English honor society, teamed up with Planned Parenthood’s campus outreach club, Students for Reproductive Rights, to campaign for safe relations on this holiday celebrating love.

Sigma Tau Delta has long joked about the acronym for its organization—STD—and it was with this good-natured sense of humor that we collaborated with Student for Reproductive Rights (SFRR). Many members of STD are also affiliated with SFRR, so collaborating with them for an event entitled “Safely Spreading the Love with STD and SFRR” just made sense. Together, the groups dispersed 50 poems tied to roses in Knutti Hall and at the Rams Den. SFRR members presented information about sexually transmitted diseases and distributed contraceptives to interested students. The event was successful, with all of the roses handed out by late morning. ■

TOP RIGHT: Sigma Tau Delta chapter President Sarah Seibert; Shelby Daugherty, member of STD and SFRR; and Celine Wilson, president of SFRR.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Poems tied to roses on a table on the second floor of Knutti Hall.



Student Voices



Morgan Sites

Business major, Spanish minor

Favorite Word: desafortunadamente (unfortunately)

"Unfortunately, I don't have a great reason for choosing this word (hah). Once I learned it, I couldn't stop because it was too much fun to say. Other fun-to-say words in Spanish are llovizna (drizzle), terciopelo (velvet), and purpurina (glitter). However, they're not as common to use in conversation. As a broke and stressed college student, desafortunadamente finds its way into my vocabulary way more often."



TaRaessha Henderson

Chemistry/biology major, Spanish minor

Favorite Word: abstract

"I think abstract is my favorite word because it can be something concrete, but it's also something that can be freely interpreted."



Izzy Hawkinberry

English: creative writing major; art minor

"Gratitude. This word is not only visually and audibly pleasing to me, but gratitude is a concept that I try to keep at the forefront of my life at all times."



Sarah Seibert

English: creative writing major; communications and psychology minor

"My favorite word lately is based. It always gets a reaction out of people. If you're sick and tired of saying cool, or you're worried that cool doesn't capture the gravity of whatever you're talking about, based can do that for you. It's so controversial. If you say based around some people, they'll be like 'Oh my gosh, stop saying based so much Sarah, you're wearing it out.' It just adds some pizzazz to everyday conversation. Also, pizzazz is also a really based word, too."

Mary Barker

English: literature major; marketing minor

"My favorite word is plethora. I use it in almost every essay I write! I love this word because it's a versatile synonym that I can use when referencing several texts, and I just find it fun to say!"



Vivienne Wells

English: literature major

"Effervescent."



L Leavitt Harvey

English: creative writing major

Favorite word: indubitably (just a fancy way of saying 'indeed' or 'without a doubt').



About Our Student Writers and Editors

The content of this newsletter comes almost entirely from two Shepherd English majors who have completed the work as part of a practicum course they took with Dr. Heidi Hanrahan. Both students also worked on the Fall 2021 newsletter. Below, you can read a little bit about each of them.



Shelby Daugherty

From Buckhannon, West Virginia, I allow my life to revolve around my passion for improving the state of humanity, my writings, and the beauty found in nature. This semester was my last one as an undergraduate; I will be receiving my degree in English: Creative Writing. Following graduation, I will remain on campus as I continue to gain experience as a leader through the college student development and administration master's program.



Maddi Sites

As a senior English major and education minor, I have appreciated the encouraging learning environment facilitated by this department's professors. It has been a pleasure to have helped Dr. Hanrahan with the newsletter for the last two semesters. This project has provided me with journalistic skills and has allowed me to cultivate my writing in a way that I hope to carry into my future endeavors. After I graduate, I plan to pursue a career in editing. I am definitely sad to be leaving, but I'm hopeful and excited for the future. The Department of English and Modern Languages has provided me with so many great opportunities and experiences, and I am forever grateful for that.

