



Seeing school through students' eyes

by Michelle Lenz
sophomore reporter

Principal Larry Tucker wants to see Marist adapt to the future of education and continue to evolve as a leader in Catholic education.

In his annual press conference with the journalism 1 class, held on Jan. 14 and 15, Tucker spoke about his experience shadowing students and the results of the new exam schedule that took place last semester.

Tucker focused mainly on the administration's goal to revise the current education model to fit with the changing world.

As a starting point, Tucker thought it would be a good idea to experience a typical school day through the eyes of a student. He wanted to see what students see every day, so he shadowed a sophomore honors student and a junior academic student last semester.

This semester he plans to shadow a freshman and senior.

"School should not look the same way it did 40 years ago when I was a freshman," Tucker said. "There's an old joke that if Rip Van Winkle woke up from his 100 year nap today, the only places that would be the same are schools."

After two days of shadowing, Tucker learned a great deal.

"I knew that our teachers and students shared a good rapport, but I didn't know that the rapport exists to the great level that it does here at Marist," Tucker said. "I was very impressed by this."

He also pointed to the movement and collaboration he saw in many classrooms, especially in Spanish and math.

"Student movement and collaboration is an important piece in education as we move toward becoming more of a 21st Century school," Tucker said. "Movement stimulates the brain, so it becomes more important that teachers get students out of their desks."

Tucker also shared some concerns raised by his experience shadowing students.

For example, he observed that some students can go an entire school day without saying a word in their classes. He wants students to be more engaged and curious about their classes and school work.

"There's an old saying that the person doing the talking is the person doing the learning," Tucker said. "I think students need to do more speaking about the subject matter in classes so that they can become more engaged in it."

Another area in which Tucker would like to see improvement is with the use of the iPads to enhance the learning experience. He feels that currently teachers and students have just "scratched the surface" and that we can do much more than we are doing now.

"We can use the iPads to do research and actually reach out to experts in the fields they are studying in order to do more authentic work," Tucker said. "We want students to be producers and problem-solvers."

Tucker would like to see technology expand to move students away from the traditional culture of memorizing material to prepare for objective type quizzes and tests.

"Learning is different, the world is different and we should be bringing the world to students," he said.



photo by Marie Weber

Mr. Tucker discusses his goals for improving education for students during his annual press conference with the journalism 1 class on Jan. 14 and 15.

Tucker also shared the results of last semester's revised exam schedule and Feedback Friday, the last day of exam week where students were invited to give feedback about the exams to their teachers.

He said that there was a 79% attendance rate on the Friday of exam week, compared to 94% on a normal school day.

Viewing it as a success, Tucker said that Feedback Friday will be discussed

with the faculty in the coming weeks to determine how to improve the experience next semester.

Tucker believes that as Marist continues to make 21st Century changes, students will be better prepared for college, life and the leadership roles he wants students to assume.

"There are great things waiting out there for you," Tucker said. "But you'll never find them if you don't leave your comfort zone."



photo by Taylor Allison

Skaltzky named player of the year

Senior quarterback Brendan Skaltzky, shown above working as a peer leader with freshmen in their college prep reading class, has been named the high school football player of the year by the *Daily Southtown*.

Skaltzky scored a total of 47 touchdowns this season, passing for a total of 3,805 yards and rushing for 1,084 yards.

"His stats show that he was the number one guy in the state in pretty much every category," head coach Pat Dunne said. "We knew when Brendan had the ball in his hands that he was going to make the right choice every time."

Skaltzky was also named to the 2015 Illinois High School Coaches' Association Academic All-State team based on his high grade point average. Teammates Brent Holder and John Carmody were also named to the All-State team.

While he has not yet decided on a college, Skaltzky is considering Dayton, Valparaiso, Northern Illinois and Miami of Ohio.

Sophomore turns four this month

by Taylor Allison
senior reporter

Sophomore Brian Cooke is really looking forward to his birthday this year.

Cooke has not had a birthday since the year 2012.

According to the *Huffington Post*, Cooke is one of about four million people worldwide born on Feb. 29, more commonly known as "Leap Day."

These individuals get an official birthday only once every four years during leap year. In off years, most celebrate their birthday on Feb. 28 or March 1.

"My family and friends make a bigger deal about my birthday on leap year," Cooke said. "They also like to make jokes about my leap year age."

Cooke is the only member of the current Marist community with a Feb. 29 birthday.

"When Brian was born, all the nurses came in to congratulate us on having a leap year baby," Brian's mom, Mrs. Nuala Cooke, said. "We got cards and one nurse even mailed him an outfit for being special."



Brian Cooke

According to science columnist Larry Scheckel, Leap Day is added to the calendar every four years because the earth does not revolve around the sun in an even number of days.

Adding a day every four years keeps the modern Gregorian calendar in alignment with the Earth's actual revolutions around the sun. If we did not add the day to the calendar every fourth year, we would lose six hours per year.

Because it takes the earth 365 days, five hours, 48 minutes and 46 seconds to go around the sun, adding Leap Day compensates for the loss of time.

Cast announced for acting guild's *The Music Man*

by Faith Laughran
senior reporter

Seniors Ben Barry and Kelly Collins will star in this year's spring musical, *The Music Man*, presented by the Marist Theatre Guild. Performances are scheduled for March 17, 18 and 19 at the Baer Theater at the Morgan Park Arts Center, 2153 W. 111th Street, Chicago.

Showtimes are at 7:30 p.m., with an additional 1:30 p.m. matinee on March 19.

Co-directed by Mrs. Erin Kelly and Mrs. Erin Vail, the Theatre Guild's production features a cast of 55, supported by a crew of about 20.

The show features a con man who goes by the name of Professor Henry Hill (Barry). Hill devises a plan to sell musical instruments and uniforms for a boys' marching band in the small community of River City, Iowa.

Hill plans to take the money and run, but love gets in the way when he meets and falls for town librarian, Marian Paroo (Collins).

Barry and Collins have worked together many times over the past four years, both on the stage and on the RedHawk Speech and Acting team.

"I'm really going to miss working with Kelly and my other close friends," Barry said.

Junior Bridget Ryan and senior Josie Gilligan will alternate in the role of Mrs. Paroo, while the role of Marcellus will be played by junior Jack Golden and sophomore Quinn Donnelly.

The Mayor and his wife will be played by sophomore Philip Duda and junior Becca Valek.

According to Mrs. Kelly, most productions of "The Music Man" will hire an actual barber shop quartet to play in the musical. For the Theatre Guild production, sophomore Morgan Johnson, senior Aiden Martinez, James Randolph and freshman Jimmy Lynch will serve as the quartet.

"We hope that everyone will come out to support this talented cast and experience the innocence and joy of small town Americana," Kelly said.



photo by Marie Weber

Members of the cast of "The Music Man" rehearse in the RedHawk Theatre on Monday. The musical opens at the Morgan Park Arts Center on March 17 and runs through March 19.

Chess team heads for state again

by Solomon Davis
senior reporter

The RedHawk chess team will compete in the IHSA state chess tournament next Friday and Saturday at the Peoria Civic Center.

The team competes annually at state, but must accomplish three wins to advance to the final match for the championship.

"We have gone to state the last four years, and brought home a medalist the last three," head coach Bob Morowczynski said.

Last Saturday, the RedHawks faced St. Rita, Leo and Br. Rice in the IHSA playoffs, coming away with a win against Leo.

Sophomore Joe Barry remains hopeful. "We've had a good season so far, in spite of last weekend's losses, and we have a strong team," Barry said.

Morowczynski credits the team for coming together remarkably well.

"This team is a scrappy bunch," he said. "They play tough matches and there are members who reach above their level in some matches to get the win and help the team," he said.

"I also feel there is a great sense of camaraderie among this bunch that I don't know if I have seen before."

Last year's second place state medalist, senior Mike Kucich, credits Morowczynski with keeping the team grounded.

"Coach M. makes sure each one of us keeps a level head," Kucich said. "Last year at state I made the worst move in the world, which cost me the win, but he brought me out of it and helped me get motivated."

Senior team captain Aiden Martinez believes the team has made great improvements this year.

"We put in a lot of practice this year and it really shows in our matches," Martinez said. "I'm really proud of the team this year."



photo by Marie Weber

Sophomore Joe Barry moves his bishop during a practice match against senior Mike Kucich, who took second place at state last year. The RedHawk chess team will compete in the IHSA state finals next weekend in Peoria.

Academic team ready for regionals

by Kara Keating
senior reporter

The RedHawk academic team continues its 2015-2016 season with a 7-2 record and looks forward to competing in the IHSA regionals on Monday, March 7.

A win, second, third or fourth place finish at regionals will allow the team to advance to sectionals on March 12. The team's goal is to advance all the way to state and to take the 2016 title.

Head coach Mr. Jeff Nicholson is satisfied that the team's regular season performance will help them succeed in March.

"We had a large team overall and they did well because they use each meet as a warm up for regionals," Nicholson said.

Nicholson credits senior Max Stinites with leading the team to success this year, calling him an "outstanding" captain who provides great leadership and support for his teammates.

Stinites has high hopes for the rest of the season.

"We are a very balanced team in terms of overall knowledge, but we are a little slow on the buzzer," Stinites said. "We can fix that through more practice and just working through some questions."

Senior teammate Mike Laird agrees, crediting Nicholson with preparing the team well for regionals.

"We have players who are strong in multiple areas, not just experts in one field," Laird said. "That gives us an advantage over other teams we face."

In competition, five from each team try to answer questions posed by the moderator. Questions come from each of the academic disciplines, sports and even random trivia.

Each player has a buzzer and must ring in first to answer the question correctly.

If the member answers the question correctly, the team has the chance to earn additional points by answering all four parts of a bonus question correctly.

The RedHawk JV team, comprised of sophomores and juniors and coached by Mr. Sean Maxwell, currently has a conference record of 8-1 this season.



photo by Solomon Davis

(L to R) Senior Quinn Jagodzinski, junior Ellie Marino, senior Ian Gagnon, senior Adrian Clark and senior Vanessa Villasenor practice for the academic teams' match against the Fenwick Friars on Jan. 26. The RedHawks lost the match 1-2. The RedHawks came away with a win against Leo last weekend in its last regular competition before regionals on March 7.

Marist hosts Special Olympics basketball day

by Miranda Insley
senior reporter

For many people, this past Jan. 16 was just an ordinary day.

But to the athletes who participated in the Special Olympics program at the Oak Lawn Park District, Jan. 16 was the day they looked forward to all year long.

This year, Marist partnered with the park district to host the 7th annual Special Olympics Basketball Day.

“The park district was looking for a bigger venue this year,” said assistant athletic director Mr. John O’Connell, “so we were happy to take the event over from Mother McAuley this year.”

Marist also competed with rival high schools Brother Rice and Mother McAuley to achieve the greatest attendance at the event.

Marist came in second place behind All Saints Lutheran. St. Germaine School came in third.

The RedHawk varsity basketball and poms teams were among those showing their support.

Opening ceremonies began in the Red and White Gym at 1 p.m., with the ceremonial torch passing from McAuley to Marist and the singing of the National Anthem by the Marist choir.

A total of four games were played, three by the adult “Eagle” teams and one by the student “Junior Jordans” team.

The RedHawk poms team performed along with the Oak Lawn recreational pep squad during halftime.

Senior poms member Erica Hess said, “We were all excited to be out there and cheer the athletes on. It was a very humbling experience to see them all so happy. It made me want to help out at more Special Olympic events.”

Senior Tricia Cody knows just how important events like this are for the athletes who participate in them. Her 12-year-old sister Emma competed as the only girl on the Junior Jordan team.

“Since she began playing basketball, Emma’s confidence has grown and she has become much more outgoing,” Cody said. “Each practice gives her something new to look forward to.”



photo by Taylor Allison

RedHawk poms team members Cara Stevens, Michelle Condon and Anya Sanders pose with participants in the seventh annual Special Olympics basketball games, hosted by Marist on Jan. 6.



photo by Laurie Hrad

RedHawk speech and acting team members competed in their final regular meet at Eisenhower last Saturday, with senior Ben Barry taking 4th place in dramatic interpretation and sophomore Ashley Kikos taking third in impromptu speaking. The team competes in the IHSA regionals tomorrow at Oak Lawn.

Speakers headed for regionals

by Caroline Roeper
senior reporter

The Marist Speech and Acting team heads to Oak Lawn Community High School tomorrow to compete in the IHSA regional speech tournament.

From regionals, the top four contestants in each category will advance to sectionals on Feb. 13. The top three contestants from sectionals advance to state.

This year’s regional team includes seniors Ben Barry, Kelly Collins, Ian Bond, junior Jack Golden, and sophomores Morgan Johnson, Ashley Kikos, Cate Hynes and Liam Kelly.

Collins, who has advanced to sectionals but not to state the past three years, was second in the nation at Catholic League Nationals in 2014.

“I am really proud of our team this year and think we have a good chance to advance people this year,” Collins said.

The team opened 2016 at the Thornwood Invitational on Jan. 9, where Collins won first place in original oratory and fourth in informative speaking. Other medalists included Kikos (first place-impromptu speaking) Barry (second-original comedy), Kelly (third-extemporaneous speaking, and Golden (fourth-dramatic interpretation).

The RedHawks won the Catholic League meet at Antioch on Jan. 16. Golden placed third in dramatic interpretation, Hynes and Johnson won duo interpretation, and Johnson took second in extemporaneous speaking.

At the Bolingbrook Invitational on Jan. 23, Kikos took first place in impromptu speaking.

Collins placed 3rd in both informative speaking and original oratory.

“[Co-head coach] Laurie Hrad and I have been impressed with the growth and dedication of the team and we feel confident as we head into the state series,” said head coach Samantha Paoletti.

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Feedback, curiosity contribute to success

Last semester, the administration made significant changes to the final exam schedule, including the addition of “Feedback Friday.”

The idea of Feedback Friday is for teachers to give students timely feedback on their exams, and for students to give teachers feedback on the whole semester.

Although many students did not see the value of the day, Principal Larry Tucker spoke about its advantages in his annual press conference with journalism 1 students on Jan. 14.

Effective and timely feedback is important because it can improve students’ confidence, self-awareness and enthusiasm for learning.

When students receive timely and meaningful feedback from teachers, they know exactly what needs to be changed so that they can do better. When students do better, they naturally become more enthusiastic about learning.

When students give feedback, it helps them to feel like they are part of the process of education, that education is not something that is being done to them.

Universities including Harvard and Cambridge, have found that timely feedback can aid high school students’ transition to higher education. Effective feedback helps students to develop their performance to a higher level and improve upon their skills and knowledge.

Timeliness is important so that the topics will be fresh in the students’ minds when the feedback is given.

As Mr. Tucker pointed out, 79% of the student body was present for Feedback Friday. Perhaps the other 21% of us viewed Feedback Friday as an optional day or an opportunity to start Christmas break early.

As the administration and faculty continue to discuss plans for second semester exams, students should realize how important feedback is and suggest ideas to their teachers. As students invest themselves more in the process, hopefully our attendance rate will be better next semester.

In his press conference, Tucker also emphasized the importance of student curiosity in the classroom.

We are born curious.

As kids, we would ask questions about everything around us. But as we grow up, we tend to put our hands down and pick our pencils up. The questions stop coming.

Curiosity is a key component in keeping students engaged in their work and excited about learning. *The Harvard Business Review* reports that higher curiosity levels can help people to better adapt to change, produce original ideas and develop analytical skills.

Curiosity helps people generate simple solutions for complex problems, and students need all of these tools to face the changing world we live in today.

Students need more opportunities for engagement and application. We are so focused on memorizing answers for tests that we forget to be curious and ask questions.

We need to encourage each other to learn not just what we need to know, but what we want to know.

We need to start raising our hands again.

St. Valentine’s Day not just for couples

Filled with sweet gestures and romantic outings with a beloved or soul mate, Valentine’s Day seems to be a holiday exclusively for couples.

Where does that leave the single people while all that “love is in the air?”

Valentine’s Day is all about love, but it does not have to be about love toward a significant other. It can also be an occasion to celebrate the genuine love of family and friends.

“Making the holiday about love between friends, family and everyone else a person cares about, rather than a celebration of coupling up, provides a way to celebrate without all the angst,” said writer Tia Ghose in an article for *Live Science* magazine.

Another way to make singles feel included on Valentine’s Day is to send them a simple text message about how much they mean to us, that their acts of friendship are noticed and appreciated.

Everyone deserves to feel loved, and the slightest gesture can make someone’s day.

Like Halloween and Christmas, Valentine’s Day is becoming even more commercialized, with a big focus on materialistic exchanges of gifts between significant others.

“One of the best signs of a relationship is having an attitude of thankfulness and gratitude toward one’s partner,” said Jeffrey Hall, a researcher at Kansas State University.

And while most people think about hearts, cards and love, many have overlooked the meaning behind those symbols or the day itself.

According to an article on History.com, Valentine’s Day may come from an ancient Roman fertility festival called Lupercalia, celebrated from Feb. 13-15. During the festival, a man would pick the name of a woman from a jar and

the couple would be romantically paired for the year.

Feb. 14 is also the date, according to legend, on which Roman Emperor Claudius II ordered the execution of St. Valentine.

Valentine was arrested for helping fellow Christians escape from Roman prisons. While in jail himself, Valentine wrote cards to the woman he loved, signing them “from your Valentine.”

An article on Catholic.org explains an alternative legend that Valentine was a priest put to death for secretly marrying young couples. Emperor Claudius II had banned marriage because he felt single men made better soldiers than men with wives and families.

With over 150 million cards exchanged each year, Valentine’s Day is a time to celebrate loved ones and the sacrifices we make for each other, like St. Valentine, in the name of love.

What are YOU doing on Election Day 2016?

Next fall, on Tuesday, Nov. 8, everyone 18 years of age and older should head to the polls to vote in the 2016 presidential election.

By now, we have all heard the candidates’ names, including Hillary Clinton, Donald Trump, Jeb Bush and Bernie Sanders. We hear these names in the news, from teachers talking about them in class, or even at the dinner table with our families.

This upcoming election has been the most talked about news item for the past year. Election coverage can even be so widespread and frequent that it is annoying from time to time.

But elections, especially presidential elections, are very important and it is never too early to start thinking or talking about the candidates.

Each of us who is of legal voting age needs to decide on a candidate and then get out and vote for that candidate.

In the Jan. 4 *Huffington Post*, Grace Masback, a senior from Portland, Oregon, writes “This election that will determine the next four, if not eight, years of our country’s direction, the period of time during which we will become adults. Not paying attention would be shortsighted, to say the least.”

Masback goes on to say that even students who are not of legal voting age should pay attention and form opinions because sooner or later, everyone is affected by the outcome.

To prepare for Election Day, students should start paying attention to the news or watch the debates between candidates. This will give students the opportunity to participate in educated and informed conversations about the candidates and the issues.

We need to realize that each vote is significant because it helps to shape the future of our country. Our history will be

determined largely by the people elected to lead us. Just like choosing a college or a career, choosing a candidate to support is an important decision that will affect your life.

Any campaign gives voters the opportunity to form their own opinions about issues. Some of us base our ideas on what our parents believe, while others dare to disagree with our families in matters of politics. It is important for each one of us to form our own opinion because better knowledge of the world and the people in it will make us better citizens.

It is also important that students vote because one day this generation will produce the future leaders of the world. Whoever is elected in 2016 is going to affect the lives of every one of us between now and then.

We should be very curious about who that person is going to be.

Oscar nominations ignite controversy

by Sheila O’Keeffe
junior columnist

On Jan. 14, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences announced this year’s nominees for the Oscars. For the second year in a row, all 20 nominees in the acting categories are white. This has led many to criticize the Academy and the film industry as whole.

Some of Hollywood’s most famous actors started using last year’s hash tag, #OscarsSoWhite, on Twitter and Instagram again to protest the exclusion of people of color.

In addition, some are planning to boycott the awards ceremony this year, an idea started on Twitter by Jada Pinkett Smith.

“At the Oscars, people of color are always welcome to give out awards or entertain, but we are rarely recognized for our artistic accomplishments,” Smith Tweeted on Jan. 16. “Should people of color refrain from participating all together?”

Other stars have called for this year’s host, Chris Rock, to step down. Rock



has acknowledged the controversy as well, Tweeting that the Oscars is becoming the Black Entertainment Awards for white people. While he will not step down, Rock plans to address the controversy on Oscar night.

“Expect #OscarsSoWhite jokes,” he told *US Weekly*.

Whoopi Goldberg, who won the award for best supporting actress in 1990 and has hosted the show four times, is calling for people of color to boycott the movies that exclude them.

“That’s the boycott you want,” Goldberg said on her TV show *The View*.

In response, Academy President Cheryl Boone Issac promises change.

“We will conduct a review of our membership recruitment efforts to bring about a much-needed diversity in our 2016 class and beyond,” Issac said in *US Weekly*.

Issac hopes these changes will double the number of people of color and women by 2020.

“The Academy is not going to wait for the industry to catch up,” said Issac. “New measures regarding governance and voting will have an immediate impact.”

According to Academy’s website, Oscar.org, a global campaign will be launched to recruit a more diversified membership. The Academy will also add new members to its board to immediately add diversity.

Shortly after Issac announced the changes, Pinkett-Smith tweeted her opinion.

“I would like express my gratitude to the Academy for such a quick response to the issue at hand and I look forward to the future.”

Where have all the cookies gone?

by Caroline Roeper
senior columnist

At last month’s entrance exam, Marist attracted more students than our area Catholic competitor schools.

This is completely shocking given the fact that someone has replaced our famous chocolate chip cookies this year.

Each of us remembers the feeling and the routine last year.

We woke up in the morning. We searched the bottom of mom’s purse for four quarters. Or we asked our peers if they can spare a buck.

And why did we seek this dollar each day?

So we could buy a cookie from the cafeteria at lunch.

Warm, soft chocolate chip cookies, cookies that melted in your mouth. Cookies that gave a unique aroma to the lunchroom.

Cookies that not even our grandmothers could compete with.

Or the best part-the sweet cafeteria ladies who would help you to find the softest cookie.

Moms used to come in at Christmas time just to buy a special batch for their beloved children, alumni craving these RedHawk delicacies since graduation.

Others would send them to their kids away at college in sweet care packages.

This year, the cookies are still chocolate chip and they still cost \$1.

But they are not the same.

They are not as big and they are not as delicious.

What happened?

Could it have been the Class of 2015 who took our cookies with them?

Was it the concerned parents of incoming freshmen with health issues?

Or is Principal Larry Tucker hiding all of them in the easy-bake oven he keeps in his office?

Whatever. The classic Marist cookies are gone and lunches at Marist may never be the same.

It’s sad that the freshmen never got to sample them, unless they were wise enough to shadow here last year.

Wherever our cookies went, they are truly missed.

“Being the only student from my grammar school to attend this high school, I found comfort in the Marist cookie,” said senior Solomon Davis. “Now that they are gone, you won’t find me in the cafeteria often.”

The RedHawks need to go on a mission.

There are 64 school days left until graduation. We have that much time to bring the old cookies back. We need to find out where they are.

Observing the mouths of each faculty member for chocolate residue can lead to clues.

Has anyone checked the faculty lounge for a secret treasure chest?

Or maybe we need to send a delegation over to the Kettering brothers’ house to see if they are lucky enough to have a secret stash of the old recipe.

In the meantime, we’ll just have to suffer with the current cookies, cookies that bring heartaches in addition to possible toothaches.



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review

Making a Murderer another great binge watch

by Kara Keating
senior columnist

The new Netflix series *Making a Murderer* has created a whole new controversy surrounding a Wisconsin man named Steve Avery.

Avery was convicted of rape and served nearly 18 years in jail before DNA evidence revealed his innocence. He was released in 2003.

Only two years later, Avery was arrested again and put on trial for the murder of a photographer named Teresa Halbach. He was convicted in 2007.

The program reveals conflicting evidence that has caused many people to wonder if Avery is really innocent.

At the heart of the uproar is the fact that the Manitowoc County police, who went after Avery for the 1985 rape, got

so involved with the 2005 murder case when it fell under the jurisdiction of the Calumet County police.

It is clear that the Manitowoc police did not like Avery and some of the evidence against him just does not add up. Manitowoc’s involvement leads many to believe that Avery was targeted unfairly.



Another controversy surrounds the involvement of Avery’s 16-year-old nephew, who was also charged with Halbach’s murder.

Police bring the nephew for questioning without his parents or attorney present. Avery’s nephew also has a low IQ and reads at a fourth grade level, causing many to question the validity of his answers.

Many people have binge watched all 10, hour-long episodes, in order to follow the trial and find out what happens next.

There are so many unexpected turning points in the trial, involving questionable evidence and questionable police motives.

Some episodes leave audiences thinking there is some hope for Avery, while others seem to clearly indicate his guilt and that he deserves to be in jail.

For now, it remains for viewers to decide. Netflix has not announced whether or not there will be a second season.

Driven by NASCAR dreams, senior continues racing career

by Solomon Davis
senior reporter

Last year senior Mike Kushnerik was named the 2015 Pure Stock champion at Illiana Motor Speedway in Schererville, Indiana, adding to his victories in heat races and three feature event victories.

How does a 9-year-old boy go from being a spectator to becoming an actual racecar driver on Saturday nights?

Kushnerik found the inspiration from his uncle, Pete Winicki, who took his nephew to his first NASCAR race at Chicagoland Speedway in Joliet.

“While I was more interested in the Matchbox cars that my uncle bought me as presents, that day at the races really made an impact on me,” Kushnerik said.

In Oct. 2012 at the age of thirteen, Kushnerik decided to change seats from being a spectator to creating a racing career of his own.

“To be honest, I started out not knowing what I was doing, completely clueless,” Kushnerik said. “No one in my immediate family had done any sort of oval track racing aside from the occasional race on NASCAR ‘07 for Xbox 360.”

The first task for Kushnerik would be to purchase a car with specifications that matched the requirements of Illiana Motor Speedway.

He decided to race in the ‘Pure Stock’ class, which is the cheapest level and is marketed towards beginners. There are plenty of imported vehicles that fit the bill, ranging from a 1992 Honda Civic to a new Acura RDX.

While he had saved \$400 from birthdays and holidays, the cheapest cars Kushnerik and his dad found had price tags upwards of \$1000.

At that point his father called in a favor from a friend who had ties to used auto auctions.

A few weeks later Kushnerik had his first race car.

“That 2000 Nissan Sentra GXE he was able to locate looked better than a factory fresh Lamborghini when I first laid eyes on it,” Kushnerik said. “Its luxurious, plush upholstery was only coated with a handful of stains. Those stains only made us turn our attention to the car’s sun-faded and rusting silver exterior. But the car only had 10,000 miles on it, so I was happy to fork over my \$400 to take it home.”

Once he got the car home, Kushnerik then spent every spare moment working on it, stopping only for school and sleep.

Relying on fellow mechanics, books, and the Internet, he learned that both basic and complex vehicle maintenance can be done with basic tools and a laptop or iPhone.

“Following the track rules, I had to remove any interior, carpet and trim which could catch fire in the event of a crash,” Kushnerik said. “So, I spent my time meticulously stripping any plastic or cloth from inside the car, leaving the steering wheel, dashboard, and the driver seat intact. I moved onto the exterior; removing head lights, tail lights and glass, except for the windshield.”

Kushnerik’s first race was at Illiana Motor Speedway on April 26, 2013, where he experienced problems with his transmission and did not place.

He did not let the loss stop him. The following week he raced at Grundy County and won his first heat and feature race.

Since then, Kushnerik has raced in 45 events.



photo by William Kushnerik

Senior Mike Kushnerik poses next to his racecar after winning the feature trophy on Sept. 5, 2015 at Season Championship Night hosted by Illiana Motor Speedway in Schererville, Indiana.

Kushnerik did not let his age, the lack of a car or his lack of racing experience deter him from pursuing his NASCAR dreams. He discovered that through determination and faith in himself, he could achieve his goal.

“Even though my family and friends were very supportive of my dream, at the end of the day, the only one who was fueling it was me,” Kushnerik said.

Kushnerik plans to continue racing and wants to move up in class rank in the racing world.

“I hope to get into an engineering development program for a race team,” he said. “I’m interested in working with a NASCAR or other upper-tier racing team, either as a driver or just part of the crew.”

“I will continue to fuel that dream until it becomes a reality,” he said.

Kushnerik’s next race will be at Illiana Motor Speedway on Monday, May 30 for the Midwest Compact Touring Series Stars and Stripes 30.



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Girls’ varsity basketball getting ready for regionals

by Caroline Roeper
senior reporter

The RedHawk varsity girls’ basketball team has only two more home games before competing in the IHSA regionals beginning on Monday, Feb. 15. The team will host Goode STEM Academy on Monday, Feb. 8 and St. Viator on Wednesday, Feb. 10. Both games start at 7 p.m. in the Red and White Gym. The results of Wednesday’s game at Joliet Catholic Academy were unavailable at press time. Going into this week, the RedHawks were 18-8 for the season. A season highlight came on January 25 when the RedHawks soundly defeated archrival Mother McAuley in the Red and White Gym, 63-41. The RedHawks then suffered tough losses to Nazareth (21-77) on Jan. 27, and Benet (50-59) on Jan. 30.

This year’s varsity roster includes seniors Dajae Black, Gabby Moran, Tehya Fortune, Alexis Jones, Madeline McHugh and Katelyn Rosner, juniors Claire Austin, Caily Landers, Maggie Robertson, Julia and Kate Ruzevich, sophomore Allesa Corcoran and freshmen Karli Miller, Stefanie Schied and Abigail Callahan. The team’s head coach is Mary Pat Connelly, assisted by Renee Chimino and Aileen Gorman. “Our team is much better with rebounding and scoring over last year,” Connelly said. “They have been working on chemistry and it is really helping the team come together.” Connelly also highlighted the importance of the team’s short term goals. “The short-term goals are simple: come to practice every day and leave any type of drama behind,” Connelly said. “The long-term goal is to win a regional title and go deep into the playoffs.”



photo by Patti Arvesen

Katelyn Rosner at the line for the RedHawks in the game against Benet on Jan. 30.



photo by Natalie Kokaska

Girls’ varsity bowling captain senior Kamisha Wallace gets ready to throw the ball at Habetler Bowl on Jan. 27. The girls’ team competes at regionals tomorrow at Oak Forest Bowl at 9 a.m.

Girls bowl at regionals tomorrow

by Faith Laughran
junior reporter

The boys’ bowling season ended last month, while the girls’ compete at regionals tomorrow at Oak Forest Bowl at 9 a.m. The boys’ team, coached by Mike Brennan and Dan Higgins, includes sophomores Jake Alberts and Steve Espinoza, junior Nick Bigott and seniors Jack Snyder, Brad Garla and Tom Finwall. The boys’ finished their season at regionals at Skyway Bowl on Jan. 16, placing 8th out of 14 teams. “We did a lot better than last year,” Bigott said. Bigott went on individually to sectionals at Orland Bowl on Jan. 23, bowling a 183, 200 and 135 in the morning and a 156, 236 and 135 in the afternoon.

The girls’ team, coached by Jeff Nicholson, consists of sophomore Hannah Hart, juniors Abbey Conrad, Natalie Kokaska, Skylar Battistella, Brenna Gabriel and Alex Cipriani, and seniors Ellie Benz and Kamisha Wallace. The girls placed third in conference at Arena Bowl in Oak Lawn on Jan. 30. Wallace was recognized as a member of the All-Conference Team for being among the top scorers. “The season has gone well so far and I am really proud of our team,” Wallace said. “We are working hard and can really pull together in the heat of the moment.” On Tuesday, the girls’ team competed in the Eisenhower Invitational at Burr Oak Bowl, finishing 9th out of 24 teams. “We jumped from the bottom early to the 9th place spot, which shows our drive,” Benz said. “Everyone is ready to show that same drive at regionals.”

Poms season ends at sectionals

by Taylor Allison
senior reporter

The RedHawk poms and jazz competition teams participated in multiple competitions throughout the season to prepare for sectionals. Each team developed and practiced different routines to see which might be ranked higher by competition judges. The team’s season came to an end at sectionals at Andrew High School on Jan. 23, although the team earned 14 more points on their routine than they did at previous competitions. “Our goal was for the girls to leave with no regrets after doing their best, especially for the sake of the seniors,” said head coach Krista Placas. This year’s team included seniors Jeanna Carey, Katie Carollo, Erica Hess, Jasmine McKenzie, Anya Sanders and Cara Stevens, juniors Lizzy Travnik, Lynesse McIntosh, Dana Kelly, Rachel Dorsch and Michelle Condon, sophomores Miriam Lynn, Sara Mesmer,

Lily Ryan, Megan Solana and Amy Tracy, and freshmen Amaya Kroll, Maggie O’Gorman and Cassie O’Brien. The seniors expressed the pride they feel after being a part of the RedHawk poms team. “This season was one I’ll never forget,” Carey said. “We worked extremely hard and even though we didn’t get the outcome we were hoping for, we had fun and have no regrets.” Teammate Anya Sanders agrees. “It has been a successful season with some bumps in the road, but we stayed motivated and that’s all that matters.” At least three seniors, Carey, Stevens and Sanders, hope to continue their poms careers in college and have received offers from the University of St. Francis in Joliet. Coach Placas said that she has never been more proud of the girls since their sectional performance. “I’m very proud of this year’s team and all their hard work and dedication,” Placas said. “They finished strong and put their best foot forward.”



photo by Lindsay Surin

The RedHawks poms team competes at sectionals on Jan. 23 at Andrew High School. The team came in 10th out of 16 schools but earned more points on their routine at sectionals than at previous competitions.

Wrestlers win ESCC, on to regionals

by Miranda Insley
senior reporter

For the seventh consecutive year, the RedHawk varsity wrestlers have won the ESCC championship, scoring a total of 209.50 points last Saturday at Notre Dame.

Seniors Samuel Feldner (195), Kyle Karpinski (152) and junior Diata Drayton (220) also took first place at the championship meet.

At ESCC, the RedHawks faced notable challengers Notre Dame, Marian Catholic, St. Patrick, St. Viator, Marian Central Catholic and Nazareth Academy.

The RedHawks have won 34 of the last 36 ESCC Varsity Conference Championships.

Senior Olamide Oladeji believes his teammates came out on top again this year because of teamwork.

“We knew the kind of effort we were going to need to exert to take home this win,” Oladeji said, “and the team did

exactly that. It was a great effort by everybody and it is this kind of effort and performance that makes me proud to wrestle alongside my teammates.”

Conference champ Karpinski believes that the ESCC win and the team’s continued effort will help them in their journey as they progress toward regionals tomorrow at TF South.

“The improvement every wrestler showed is clear and came from pure hard work and determination,” Karpinski said. “This is going to be a great boost that will help us as we head into regionals.”

This year’s varsity team includes three freshmen, Jacob Dado, Mike Leveille and Mike O’Brien. Last year, Dado won state for Homer Jr. High in Homer Glen.

“I’m looking forward to getting out of regionals and sectionals and making it on to state at the high school level,” Dado said. “It’s been a fun season with the seniors. They have taught us a lot of different techniques and helped me to get a lot better.”



photo by Kenneth Dado

Freshman varsity wrestler Jacob Dado goes for the double chicken wing pin against his Notre Dame opponent on Jan. 30. Dado won his match, 9-2. The RedHawks wrestle at regionals tomorrow at TF South.



photo by Patti Arvesen

Principal Larry Tucker and fans join the RedHawk cheerleaders for a photo after the squad took fifth place at sectionals last Saturday at Joliet West. The cheerleaders are competing at the IHSA state final prelims today at Illinois State University.

Cheerleaders head to state today

by Kara Keating
senior reporter

For the third time in the past four years, the RedHawk varsity cheerleading squad have advanced to the IHSA state final prelims, held today at Illinois State University.

The squad qualified for state last Saturday at sectionals, hosted by Joliet West, where the squad placed fifth out of 17 teams.

If the RedHawks finish in the top 10 today, the squad advances to the finals tomorrow.

The RedHawks finished fifth in state in 2014 and second in 2013.

The 24 member squad includes seniors Kara Case, Catie and Josie Delisi, Megan Doah, Krista Ico, Michaela Ryan, and Kaci Spallina.

Juniors include Madyson Armer, Emily Coccaro, Sarah Davidson, Morgan Insley, Caitlyn McKevitt, Maeve Reilly, Meagan Stoffle and Tyra Thompson.

Varsity underclassmen cheerleaders include sophomores Abigail Arvesen, Julianna Dabrowski, Faith Holubik, and Mary McKenna, and freshmen Jhadia Adams, Elizabeth Davidson, Mia DeMonica, Anna Freiling and Cailin Stevens.

The girls practiced every day this week in preparation for state.

“We are cleaning up our routine to raise our score,” Josie Delisi said. “Each practice we give 110% and go in with a positive attitude. We only want what is best to help us advance to Saturday.”

Head coach Amber Weber cites consistency and gradual improvement over the course of the competition season in helping the girls to achieve their rank of 11th overall in the state.

“Our success is the result of a very talented and dedicated group of athletes,” Weber said. “This squad has improved with each competition. At this point, I want them to perform to the best of their ability so they come off the mat knowing they did everything they could.”

Redhawk basketball v. Benet tonight

by Solomon Davis
senior reporter

A six-game winning streak ended as the RedHawk boys’ varsity basketball team lost to the Marian Catholic Spartans on Jan. 29, 43-56.

The team’s overall record this season is 17-4 with huge January victories against Br. Rice (66-45), Nazareth Academy (71-43) and St. Rita (63-47).

Senior guard Kevin Lerma sees his teammates as his brothers, regardless of whether they win or lose.

“I love this team and couldn’t ask for anyone better to play with,” Lerma said. “We have played some tough teams, but we just learn from the losses and the wins.”

The players also credit head coach Gene Nolan’s support as crucial.

“Coach Nolan supports us 100% win or lose,” said senior guard Chamar Hawkins said. “That’s what separates us from other teams in the state.”

Guard Maurice Commander feels that the team has improved a great deal over last year, when he played as the only freshman. He is also the only sophomore on the team this year.

“Our chemistry and willingness to work hard day in and day out is how we continue to improve,” Commander said. “We have a collective understanding that we should never give up.”

As the youngest member of the team, Commander appreciates how the older players have embraced him and helped him to grow as a player.

“They have showed me how to be a leader on and off the court,” he said, “and I use their tips to improve myself.”

The RedHawks face Benet at home tonight in the Red and White gym at 7.

The team travels to Tinley Park on Tuesday, Feb. 9 for a 6 p.m. game before returning home to face Joliet Catholic on Friday, Feb. 12.

Senior night is at home on Tuesday, Feb. 16 when the RedHawks take on Hubbard.



photo by Solomon Davis

Sophomore varsity point guard Maurice Commander dribbles past Nazareth Academy senior Connor O’Neil on Jan. 22, when the RedHawks defeated Nazareth, 71-43. The RedHawks host Benet tonight at 7 p.m. in the Red and White Gym.