

The Stage is Set for New Fine Arts

TESS MULLIGAN
Staff Reporter



After years of anticipation, the construction for the Fine Arts Building has finally begun. Tim Cook, the band director, was more than happy to answer some questions regarding the construction process and hopes for the final product.

Thanks to the generous donations from faculty, staff, students, alumni, parents, and others, CCHS has finally been able to begin constructing the Fine Arts Building. The project will cost around \$23 million and with approval from the

bishop, which was received in the fall of last year, groundbreaking is scheduled to begin later this year.

While the money necessary to begin building the center has been raised, donations are always accepted and appreciated. Mr. Cook said that “these donations will help us build out all program spaces exactly the way we want them.”

Fortunately, the construction will not take too long. Covid-19 has not harmed the schedule for the building, as they started the “pre-construction work” this past summer. The process will take roughly 18 months. The hope is that the building will be able to open its doors at the beginning of the 2022 school

year.

The center will be a “state-of-the-art facility,” Mr. Cook said. The building will be around 46,000 square feet and will include an array of rooms. Within the Fine Arts Center, you will find a space for everyone including, “classroom spaces, practice rooms, art rooms, a digital media room, a dance room, band and choral rooms, [and] a state-of-the art theatre along with reception areas.”

The Fine Arts Center will connect to the main building through a bridge linking the Gym floor to the second story, allowing for quick, easy, and safe access.

The most notable structure of the Fine Arts Building will be the auditorium. The auditorium will seat 603 people. According to Mr. Cook, “the architectural team, design team, and administration have done a wonderful job,” and their

Photo Credit: Enter Source

work has addressed any concerns the school or families might have.

The band will finally have a place where they can practice with favorable acoustics. The band room in the Fine Arts Center will be large enough to house the entire band and allow them to practice together—something they cannot do now. The band center will also have room for storage of instruments and uniforms.

Years of petitioning have paid off. The fine arts programs that CCHS is proud of will finally have a place that it can be proud of.

Colleges Opt for Optional Testing

KARA BIVENS
Staff Reporter

Prospective college students may find that they no longer have to spend hours preparing for the SAT or ACT to complete their college résumé. Over 200 universities, including those of the Ivy League, have decided that the coronavirus pandemic makes SAT and ACT testing too risky and have dropped standardized testing requirements for the Class of 2021.

Standardized tests are supposed to predict students’ future academic success in college, but testing has been a controversial issue for years because of inequalities in high school education and resources. If students didn’t have enough materials to adequately prepare for the tests (or even to take them at all), their college applications could appear weaker than those who were able to have specific test tutoring or practice with the PSAT before junior or senior year.

Though some schools plan to reinstate the tests when the pandemic ends, removing the standardized tests was for some a permanent choice meant to even the playing field for students of different economic backgrounds. Additionally, removing the tests gives more

weight to measures some say are a more accurate representation of future success, such as a student’s cumulative high school GPA.

However, the SAT and ACT have not been completely removed. Most colleges have become “test-optional,” meaning if students can get to a testing location and feel safe enough to sit through the test, they can still send their scores with their college applications. Most juniors and seniors who have the opportunity to take the SAT or ACT are doing so in case it will help their chances of getting into a more

prestigious university.

Senior Luke Boyle says that although he thinks colleges made the right choice moving to test-optional because of coronavirus barriers, he still chose to take the tests, stating that “if I were to not submit test scores, I felt that I would be taking advantage of the policy when my testing hadn’t been affected and I wanted to see what score I got to see if it would enhance my applications.” Luke also believes that there has to be evidence that students will fit in academically on college campuses, and test scores are one of

the best ways to measure that.

The move to test-optional could drastically change admissions numbers compared to previous graduating classes. Ms. Murlless in the Counseling Department said that while in the past “a lower test score even with solid grades could have been an automatic no at some schools,” now that the tests have been removed “we could see an increase in the number of applications at colleges as students will feel they can apply to more ‘reach’ schools if they do not have to submit a test score.” Ms. Murlless advises students to take the tests if they are able, because “it could certainly benefit a student in the process if they score well” and possibly make their application more favorable.

Though it is uncertain whether colleges will adopt test-optional policies permanently, the Class of 2021 can appreciate the freedom to choose their own level of comfort with the standardized testing process. They could possibly improve their chances of being accepted at their preferred universities.

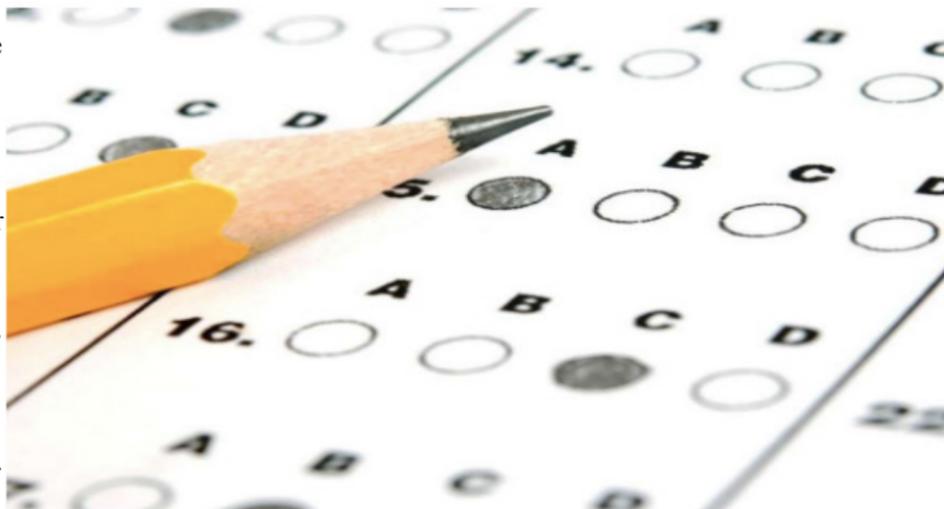


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Speech and Debate Succeeds Online

BETHANY HARDAWAY
Staff Reporter

Our Cougar Speech and Debate Team will continue competing against other teams virtually. They have already conducted one national tournament sponsored by Duke University and another competition in South Carolina. This Friday, October 2nd, 2020 a national tournament sponsored by Yale will take place in which students could earn bids to the "Tournament of Champions."

Students can choose which category to participate in, each varying by content, preparation time, and number of participants. The speech portion of these tournaments requires that students individually perform a published work or present their own writings.

The speech portion has three categories: interpretive events, platform events, and limited time events. Interpretive events are recitations of a published work that measure a student's ability to convey an emotion and showcase their public speaking skills.

In the Riverside Carolina Kickoff, Charlotte Catholic senior Jacob Eugene placed fifth in the humorous interpretation category where he performed "Graduation for Dummies." To practice his performances Jacob reenacts the character's voices and does timed rehearsals. Jacob says speech and debate "brings out his creative side" as well as gives him a way to meet many new people.

Platform events are speeches written by students and develop logical presentations around certain topics. They are around ten minutes in length and divided into two

categories, informative speech and original oratory. A student's goal when giving an informative speech is to educate their audience from a memorized speech using research to support their claim. Original oratories are different from informative speeches in that they use emotional appeals in addition to evidence to give a persuasive performance.

Limited preparation events like the impromptu and extemporaneous events allow students to show how quickly they can prepare and deliver a speech on various topics. Impromptu speakers get seven minutes of prep time to put together a coherent speech on an abstract idea. Extemporaneous competitors have 30 minutes to create a seven

minute presentation on one of the three current events selected at the tournament.

There's a mix of debate styles. These include Lincoln Douglas, Public Forum, and Congressional debates. In Lincoln Douglas debates students argue for certain positions individually and attempt to refute their competition with evidence. Congressional debates imitate the American legislative system and representatives give speeches as well as argue over proposed bills.

Senior Matthew Ruff participates in public forum debates, which is a two-on-two competition that debates policy issues such as foreign relations. Matthew said his preparations include "hours of research on the topic



Photo Credit: Carmen Kohn

and mock debates with fellow students." Matthew is a captain, so his duties include assisting other students with their events.

Mrs. Kohn is the coach of our Cougar Speech and Debate team, which currently has 60 members. Speeches are written, mock debates are performed, and feedback from judges is analyzed in each practice.

Unfortunately Covid-19 has caused the tournaments to go virtual, although students at Charlotte Catholic are allowed to host live practices. All that were interviewed said they have made many connections through speech and debate and they miss the social aspect of the club. Coach Kohn elaborated that going virtual has made it "difficult to troubleshoot technical issues" but she works with the varsity captains to make sure students are ready to compete.

Speech and debate team members say that the club has helped them to become better researchers as well as improved their public speaking skills. Senior DJ Antonilli added that the skills he learned help him to "express opinions better in conversation."

The benefits of the club go further than winning your competition. Speech and debate enhances a student's ability to speak publicly and test their leadership skills. Our team is growing rapidly and welcomes all students who are interested in social issues, politics, and making new friends.

Covid Causes Commotion for Halloween

PJ O'CONNELL
Staff Reporter

After being stuck indoors for almost eight months, what is the first thing you would want to do? Would you want to go hang out with friends or celebrate a holiday with family? With Halloween right around the corner but COVID-19 restrictions still extremely harsh in some states, both kids and parents are wondering... will there be a Halloween in

2020?

On September 23rd, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention came out with a statement on their website officially discouraging trick-or-treating in 2020. The health protection agency said, "many traditional Halloween activities can be high-risk for spreading viruses." Authorities discourage revelers from going trick-or-treating or attending indoor costume parties, haunted houses, hay mazes, tractor rides, fall festivals, and public pumpkin carvings.

However, they still encourage you to enjoy the season and take part in some "low-risk" activities such as carving or decorating pumpkins with your family, decorating for the season, hunting for Halloween treats in your home, or having a Halloween movie night with your family.

Party City, a national costume store, has promoted the website

Halloween2020.org. The website was created by the Halloween & Costume Association to teach trick-or-treaters and their parents how to stay safe. According to the website, "with the convergence of a full moon, a blue moon, daylight saving time and Saturday celebrations, plus the unprecedented events of this year, Halloween 2020 will truly be one to remember." They want to make sure everyone stays safe, while also keeping the fun in Halloween. "Much has changed, but our love for the fun, fright, and delight of Halloween is strong as ever. So let's unleash our Halloween inspiration [and] celebrate the season in safe, fun, unexpected ways."

Halloween2020.org also includes a chart of all confirmed coronavirus cases throughout each state and the exact number of daily cases in that given day. Second, the website also lists a number of activities

which they label as a "Green Zone," "Yellow Zone," "Orange Zone," and "Red Zone" depending on how dangerous the activity. Third, they list "Social Distancing Guidelines Best Practices," which include things that trick-or-treaters, homeowners, and parents can practice to keep everyone safe. Finally, the website has a "safe House Pledge" that it encourages all kids and parents to sign. This pledge encourages kids to follow the best practices in keeping everyone safe, such as not trading candy, wearing a face covering, washing hands often, and even setting down tape in driveways to make sure kids remain six feet apart.

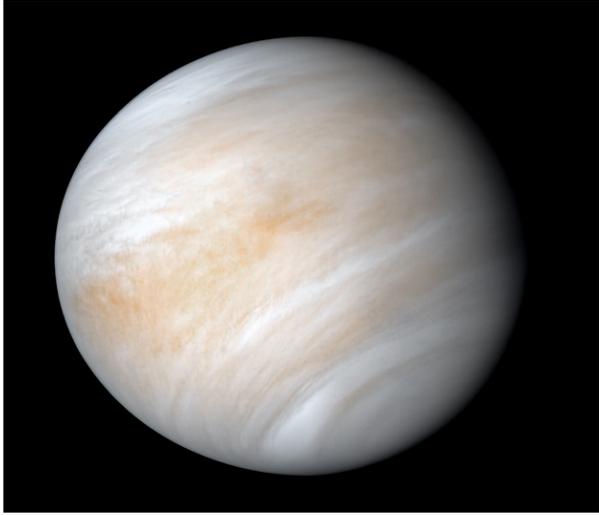
With all of this uncertainty during the holiday season, Halloween 2020 is sure to be one for the books, however we may celebrate it.



Photo Credit: Google Images

Venus Vexes Astronomers

ABIGAIL HAHN
Staff Reporter



Science fiction has played an essential role in shaping popular culture over the last few decades. The genre has evolved from its lowly birth in the works of Jules Verne and H. G. Wells into multi-million dollar entertainment franchises. While science fiction has many conventions, one aspect that occurs in many stories is the existence of extraterrestrial beings.

Throughout history, stories about aliens have been just that — stories. But in recent decades, scientific discoveries have led many to speculate that

there may be life on far-off exoplanets outside our solar system. However, a recent discovery on Venus has led some scientists to believe that life could exist not only in our own solar system, but right next door.

For a long time, Venus has been overlooked in the quest for life in our solar system. Instead, astronomers have extensively researched Mars, and have recently begun to investigate moons such as Jupiter's Europa and Saturn's

Enceladus.

Many believe that Venus is completely inhospitable to life. With temperatures that average around 800 degrees Fahrenheit and a carbon dioxide-rich atmosphere that weighs 90 times that of Earth's, it's not hard to understand why many have come to such a conclusion. These harsh conditions make Venus, often referred to as Earth's "sister planet," a difficult place to visit. Its atmosphere "eats" metal, and spacecraft often disintegrate minutes after landing

on the surface, which makes taking images or conducting research nearly impossible.

Even so, a new discovery by Jane Greaves, an astronomer at Cardiff University in Wales, has led some astronomers to believe that Venus may be harboring life. Greaves and her team have discovered a chemical known as phosphine in Venus's thick atmosphere. After analysis of this data, the scientists concluded that only living organisms could have produced this phosphine.

Phosphine is gas made up of the elements phosphorus and hydrogen. On Earth, it can be formed during lightning strikes, but it is also produced by anaerobic microorganisms — organisms that don't need oxygen to function.

Greaves' team concluded that abiotic processes on Venus, such as volcanic eruptions and lightning strikes, would not be sufficient to produce the amount of phosphine that they had detected, and there weren't any other known processes on the planet that could have created the gas. Thus, the scientists were left with two possibilities: either there is some unknown inorganic way that the phosphine is being created, or

anaerobic microorganisms similar to those that produce phosphine on Earth were also doing so on Venus.

While Greaves' team believes the answer is the latter, not all scientists are so convinced. Gerald Joyce, a biologist at the Salk Institute in California, wrote, "despite prior speculation (mostly by the same authors), this can hardly be taken as a biosignature. The detection of phosphine is not robust evidence for life, only for anomalous and unexplained chemistry."

Even so, it is exciting to consider that our sister planet could also harbor life. This life would probably take the form of simple microorganisms — lightyears away from the intelligent aliens depicted in science fiction. But if scientists can prove that there is life on another planet in our small, insignificant solar system in a small, insignificant galaxy, that raises the chances of life elsewhere, in the billions of solar systems in our universe. And this brings us even closer to coming face-to-face with science fiction — suddenly not so fictitious after all.

Photo Credit: Google Images

Student Council Set in Motion

JOSEPH FLYNN
Staff Reporter

The effects of Covid-19 have resulted in a very bizarre school year. In the midst of such strange circumstances, aggravating but necessary policies, and canceled events, the student council has a lot of work to do to make this year a good one. Despite the challenge, the newly elected members, led by Dr. Sigwald, are determined to accomplish this goal.

The executive student council includes president Nick Clementi, first vice president Alex Feltham, second vice president Lawrence Nazarian, and treasurer Maggie Olsen.

Nick, as the head of the executive student council, has said he has the student's best interests in mind and will strive to continue what worked last year and to make necessary changes. "These are different times, so we have to take that into consideration and go only as far as safety will allow. Hopefully we can have a really involved school year and have a lot of engagement," he said.

He indicated he wanted to bring back Chick-fil-A, McDonald's, Dominoes, and whatever else students would like. "Whenever I hear a student complain about it, I always want to fix it. Whenever they say anything that they would like different, I always want to fix it," he said. Alex Feltham could not be reached for an interview.

Lawrence is the second vice president of the executive student council, and his primary job is to make sure all clubs are running smoothly

and stay on track. He said, "We want to try to really crank out things while we're in school, while we can guarantee we'll be here, and really look forward to the spring. Hopefully things lighten up and we can get to do some fun stuff around the school."

Maggie is the executive treasurer and helps organize events and allocates funds to them. "I want to make this year as great as possible even with Covid-19 still going on. I'm looking forward to a great year," she said.

This year's class presidents are Cameron Green, senior class; Robert McKernan, junior class; Andrew O'Brien, sophomore class; and Kate McArdle, freshman class. They all have the job of leading their class through this year and keeping events on track.

Cameron hopes to make this year special for the seniors. It is possible that there may be no prom or other events because of Covid. In light of this concern, she said, "I definitely want to try to have the dances, which I know will be hard with social distancing, but I want to have a way to make them work. I also want a way to have spirit week; I don't think we can have pep rallies, but something fun and festive for spirit week since we've lost out on a lot from corona."

Robert enjoys being part of the bigger picture in school. He said he wants to keep everyone on track and prepared for whatever comes next. "This year, we don't know what the

future's looking like, but we hope to do what we can as far as making the adjustments we need to for this year to help with everything going on."

Andrew said that the sophomore class needed a voice in the midst of all the chaos of this year, so he said he plans to step up to the plate. "I also want to make sure each of my peers feels valued as a member of Charlotte Catholic and has fun, even with the current Covid-19 pandemic going on. I'd like all students to know I'm always here to help, and they can come to me anytime."

This is Kate's first year as part of a student council, but she said she has plenty of new ideas for the school to bring to the table. "One of my biggest goals for this year is to unite the freshman class the best I can, whether our classmates are virtual or in person. I think it's important that we can count on each other, and be a close-knit community. Also, I want our class to know that I am very open to new ideas anyone has, and that I'm always here to talk. I think it's important to get to know our classmates, and get more comfortable with each other!"

The senior class council also includes Will Dettmer, vice president; Anne Kelly, secre-



Lawrence Nazarian, Maggie Olsen, Alex Feltham, Nick Clementi

tary; and Charlie Woeste, treasurer. The junior council includes Leah Smith, vice president; Helen Wielechowski, secretary; Rebecca Denton, treasurer; and Justin Allen, Harrison Barnett, and Ellie Burnett as representatives.

Among the sophomore council are Catherine Ramich, vice president; Parker Wooton, secretary; Kaitlyn Dobur, treasurer; and Hannah Grzeskiewicz, M.C. O'Brien, and Megan Pons, as class representatives. The freshman council has Caroline Quirk, vice president; Ellie Cannata, secretary; John Tricarico, treasurer; and Summer Basrawala as representative.

Every member of the student council said they intend to make this a successful school year, even if big events can't happen.

Photo Credit: Joseph Flynn

Sports Start Up After Covid Shutdown

ROBERT VERRIER
Staff Reporter

American sports fans remember March 12, 2020 as the day that all American sports screeched to a halt due to the Coronavirus pandemic. However, as the nation learned how to protect themselves and leagues established new rules and schedules, sports made their official return.

Following the abrupt cancellation of NCAA's March Madness tournament the day prior, the first league to cancel was the NBA, when of their games were in progress, and word quickly spread through the arenas where games were being contested. Sports fans may remember the infamous clip of Utah Jazz's Center, Rudy Gobert, declaring his lack of fear in Covid by breathing all over and touching all of the reporter's microphones, and then learning he tested positive the next day.

Baseball and Hockey were soon to follow, and fans began to wonder what this meant for college sports, such as football, where all of the players live relatively close to or on the campus. If one athlete gets infected, it is likely most of the team would.

MLB, NHL, and NBA all have the financial resources to cancel games for months at a time. However, smaller organizations, such as the XFL, were forced to shut their doors for good - for the second time in XFL's brief history.

As time went on, the leagues came to realize the pandemic wasn't going away anytime soon, and began to plan alternatives to their



2020 seasons and playoffs. Adam Silver, commissioner of the NBA, first stepped forward with his plan, the NBA Bubble in partnership with Disney.

"The Bubble" was located in Orlando, Florida's Disneyworld, and only a handful of teams with playoff hopes were invited to live in The Bubble for the remainder of their respective team's season. As time progressed, families were allowed to join the bubble, as well as virtual crowds. Leaving The Bubble resulted in strict fines. The NBA resumed their season at the end of July, nearly five months after the March cancellation, and within weeks, The Bubble was a success, as positive cases for Covid in The Bubble dropped to zero. The NBA season finished in October, crowning LeBron James and the Los Angeles Lakers as Champions.

The NHL established a similar bubble plan,

with two separate bubbles, one in Edmonton and one in Toronto, both in Canada. Each bubble hosted 12 teams that played each other for the remainder of the season to decide playoff bracketing. NHL returned to action on August 1st, and finished their season at the end of September, crowning the Tampa Bay Lightning as Champions.

MLB's Commissioner Rob Manfred was heavily criticized for his lack of a plan to keep all his players in a bubble, with the players returning home and possibly infecting their families on any given day. Due to MLB missing their entire season, which was supposed to open up two weeks after the cancellations, they played an abridged, 60 game schedule, with only the playoffs taking place in a bubble located in San Diego. MLB has played all games with no fans in attendance, filling their stadium seats with cardboard

cutouts. MLB is scheduling their playoff in San Diego.

College Football's schedule was greatly altered, with all non-conference games being cancelled, and all games being played with few fans in attendance, depending on the . Notre Dame, known for being independent of any conference, joined the Atlantic Coastal Conference for one year, cancelling rivalry games such as their annual game against the United States Naval Academy Midshipmen, which was supposed to be held at the end of August in Ireland.

The NFL's schedule was unimpacted by the schedule changes, excluding the pre-season, as the league currently plans on playing their full schedule. Thus far, they have had limited positive cases, with a few exceptions, but have had a mostly successful in their efforts to keep their teams safe. While they've had limited amounts of fans at the games, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis announced that he plans on having a "capacity crowd" at the Super Bowl this February, which will be played in Miami.

The ever-changing environment of the Covid pandemic has led to changes in every aspect of our lives, including sports. However, if we continue to follow guidelines and protocols, our return to a normal, but different society, is inevitable.

Photo Credit: Google Images

TikTok Keeps Ticking

TESS VALKOVSKI
Staff Reporter

In early August 2020, the Trump administration threatened to ban the popular social media app TikTok in the United States. Thanks to a new U.S. tech partner on the video-sharing app approved in September, TikTok is now here to stay.

Introduced in 2016 and formerly known as Musical.ly, the app was bought by the Chinese internet company ByteDance in 2017. ByteDance relaunched and renamed the app to TikTok in 2018.

The app has over 100 million users in the U.S. alone. On the app, users can create and share video content up to one minute in length. These videos include dance trends, art, acting, singing, comedy, and other entertaining activities.

Sophomore Rowan Mahoney said she loves TikTok. "It gives me a quick source of entertainment" because of how short the videos are compared to shows or movies on

Netflix for example.

Despite its popularity, the Trump administration raised concerns over how the Chinese government could violate users' privacy and harvest data. The Chinese could use this information to advance its own political agenda.

This concern proved evident when Apple released iOS 14 and caught TikTok secretly accessing users' clipboards. Clipboard is a feature that allows Apple users to copy and paste any data from text to images between Apple devices.

Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, said TikTok puts American users' "private information in the hands of the Chinese Communist Party." President Trump issued an executive order that if TikTok's U.S. servers were not bought by an American company by September 20, the app would be banned.

Multiple U.S. tech companies

showed interest in buying TikTok's U.S. servers. Microsoft, partnered with Walmart, was a frontrunner. Tech giant company Oracle was quick to follow.

Microsoft and Oracle became the top contenders for TikTok's U.S. servers. Ultimately on September 13 Oracle beat Microsoft and became TikTok's new tech partner.

With U.S. TikTok servers now technologically partnered with Oracle, users' information is out of the hands of a Chinese government controlled company. Users will notice no difference in the appearance or performance of the app. They can still create and share content.

CEO of Oracle, Safra Catz, said that Oracle is "a hundred percent confident in [their] ability to deliver a highly secure environment to TikTok and ensure data privacy to TikTok's American

users." Catz also said that TikTok now has "greatly improved security and guaranteed privacy."

U.S. Tiktok users breathed a collective sigh of relief learning that their information and privacy would be secure. They can now continue creating and sharing on TikTok worry free.



Photo Credit: Google Images

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Greenway to Cleanway: Cougars Clean Up

WILLIAM HICKS

Staff Reporter

One new thing you may notice while taking a stroll on your local greenway, more than the crunch of leaves underfoot denoting the arrival of the fall season, is the rustling of plastic wrappings and cans strewn across the trail.

Ever since the beginning of quarantine in March, non-profit organizations have been struggling to find volunteers. Pantries nationwide have suffered food shortages, trails have tons of trash piling up, and public areas have an increasing amount of graffiti and litter.

While things are not going to fix themselves anytime soon, some organizations are enlisting the much needed help of some brave volunteers. On Saturday, the Catawba River Trail group came together to clean out the several months worth of trash from the Catawba River Trail and to determine if they could maintain safe social distance while doing so..

The 26 volunteers that showed up

were split into groups of four and scoured the riverside trail, looking for trash. They did not have to look very hard. "It was kind of crazy" remarked former CCHS student Liam Eustis. "By the time we had finished with a small subsection of the trail, I had already gone through about 3 bags of trash."

So, in about the length of a football field, 12 bags worth of trash were filled. While no one knows how many bags were finally filled, in two miles worth of trails, around 100 trash bags were used. Event organizer Lucy Graham was ecstatic, expressing her joy by saying "This event has been more than successful and I am so glad you all could make it. Thank you all for coming." When questioned further about whether or not she thought she could replicate these results, Lucy added, "Even if the virus remains where it is at right now, as long as we maintain the distance we did today and make sure to wear our

masks, an event like this can and will certainly happen again."

Jake Lee, a Junior at CCHS, also attended the event and agreed with Lucy. "When we do this again I'd like to do it in my own park if possible. It is not as bad as it was here, but still." While we are still far from returning to normal, with an abundance of caution and a few brave volunteers, we can jumpstart their recovery.

RIP RBG: GOP Selects ACB

ENTER NAME

Staff Reporter

Ruth Bader Ginsburg, one of the most esteemed Supreme Court Justices of the century and the second female justice to serve on the Court, died September 18th-- yet as soon as the news was announced, the public agonized not with grief over her sudden parting, but agitation over the swift and severe consequences her vacancy would have for the Supreme Court.

President Donald Trump released a shortlist of candidates for Ginsburg's position only days after her death, finally nominating top candidate conservative federal judge Amy Coney Barrett on September 26th. Barrett has a stellar resume, from teaching law at Notre Dame to clerking for Antonin Scalia and serving as a federal judge on the Court of Appeals. Republicans are excited to confirm her and gain a 5-4 majority-- a key for securing decisions that align with the Republican party platform, such as restricting abortion access and discouraging Congress from delegating responsibility to other agencies. Justices Clarence Thomas and Samuel Alito have made clear that once a conservative majority is acquired, they plan to vote along partisan lines, and Justices Neil Gorsuch and Brett Kavanaugh are expected to follow.

Democratic representatives, however, take issue with the fact that President Trump is "rushing" to confirm Barrett to gain a Supreme Court majority before the election when Senate Republicans in 2016 repeatedly blocked President Obama's Supreme Court nominations after the death of Antonin Scalia. Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer decried the Republicans' "hypocrisy" and stated he would be willing to "pack the courts"-- a practice where the President adds extra judges to the Supreme Court-- if the Senate Judiciary Committee does not wait to confirm Barrett until after "the people have a chance to weigh in" during the election. If Barrett is confirmed at time of publication, it will be one of the shortest confirmation periods in US history at 26 days;

the shortest is Justice John Stevens at 19 in 1975, followed by Justice Sandra Day O'Connor at 33 in 1991.

Another wrinkle with Barrett's nomination is her devotion to Catholicism, which Democrats have criticized her for before. When she was nominated as a federal appellate judge in 2017, senator Tammy Duckworth claimed she refused to approve Barrett because "she failed to demonstrate the capability or willingness to serve as an impartial, fair and independent jurist" because of her prioritization of her religious beliefs. Vice President Mike Pence criticized this complaint during the vice presidential debate, saying that "no one deserves to be judged for their religious beliefs over their merits and qualifications." Barrett has demonstrated a strict

adherence to textualism in her decisions-- the legal philosophy that it is the role of a judge to make their decisions to the letter of the law instead of the vague "spirit"-- but she has also had deep personal connections to orthodox faith groups such as the People of Praise and would be loath to ignore their teachings when presented with cases on the 2020-21 docket such as United States vs. Briggs, where their beliefs about the necessary subjugation of women might influence her decision on the limits on prosecution of rape in the U.S. Military.

The shockwaves of Ginsburg's death and Barrett's possible nomination will be felt for years as it becomes clearer that a duty to vote along partisan ideological lines might become a greater part of the expectations Congress and the American people have for potential justices-- a major change from the impartiality previous justices prided themselves on. The future of the Supreme Court's possible decisions is beyond prediction for now, but its contribution to growing polarization in the American political sphere might not be.



Photo Credit: Google Images