



Faculty commemorates first year anniversary of fired faculty members

BY DANIELLE PECCI
Editor-in-Chief

April 16 marked the anniversary of when six faculty members from County College of Morris—all part of the faculty union—were fired in 2021. Faculty gathered outside of DeMare Hall April 14 to commemorate the fired faculty members. They placed signs around campus that said, “Fired But Not Forgotten.”

One of the faculty members who attended the gathering was Dee McAree, an associate professor of English in the English and Philosophy Department and secretary of the Faculty Association (FACCM). She said that security took down the signs they placed on the lawns around campus just 10 minutes after they were put there.

“I asked them why they took them down, and they said it was a violation of the college’s policy,” McAree said. “I asked what policy? And they said I have to talk to Vivyen Ray in HR.”

She said that their contract does give faculty the right to post signs on certain bulletin boards, but because CCM is a public college paid for with public dollars, “we should be able to put out some signage on the lawn,”

McAree said. The signs come one year after “six non-tenured professors were told their contracts would not be renewed for the 2021-2022 school year,” according to a 2021 Daily Record article. The article further stated that union members wanted the college administration to be held accountable “for what they call ‘retaliatory union-busting tactics.’”

The name used to describe these fired faculty members is the ‘CCM 7.’ One faculty member was fired December 2020, while the other six were fired April 2021.

Denise Bell, from the office of the president, declined to comment for this story on behalf of President Iacono. Vivyen Ray, vice president of human resources and labor relations, also declined to comment.

FACCM has been calling for President Iacono to resign. Iacono has been the president of CCM since 2016, following President Edward Yaw, whose presidential run lasted from 1986-2016.

Faculty members like McAree have noticed a difference in the college’s atmosphere since Yaw left. She remembers that while not everything was perfect under Yaw’s leadership, “There was a respect for faculty being in charge of academic directions

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CCM, Rutgers students plant native trees at Hutcheson Memorial Forest

BY RAIZZI STEIN
Staff Writer

SOMERSET, N.J. – On April 2, students from County College of Morris and Rutgers University, New Brunswick, gathered at Hutcheson Memorial Forest to plant white and red oak saplings to help in a research project aimed at restoring the forest by closing canopy gaps.

Volunteers, such as environmental and forestry club members, various science majors and faculty members from both colleges, got their hands dirty and a good workout from carrying heavy saplings, digging holes, and planting 90 young trees in the span of five hours.

The Hutcheson Memorial Forest website details that the 500-acre natural reserve was declared a National Natural Landmark in 1976 and is one of the oldest uncut oak forests in the eastern United States. In a



PHOTO COURTESY OF JOSEPH PAULIN

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Students watch a live demonstration of how to plant native tree saplings.

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Students give opinions on new mask protocol

BY NICHOLAS DECHESER
Contributor

The County College of Morris Administration made an announcement March 1, stating that the CCM campus will be a mask-optional environment in all indoor or outdoor spaces. This new protocol went into effect March 7, and the students of CCM have mixed feelings about it.

Some students feel that lifting the mask mandate is a step toward returning to life before COVID. “Now being able to go back to some sense of normalcy feels like we’re finally moving past this whole two-year period that really put a downer on, like, the whole of America,” said Jesse Patel, an engineering student at CCM.

CCM lifted the mask mandate the same day as most other New Jersey schools. Patel added that the timing of the mask mandate lift coincides with many other states as well, and he said because of that, it’s not only CCM that’s moving forward but also the entire country.

Patel spoke about his experience of going to class the first day without the masks. “It’s like people are able to be more real around each other now,” he said.

Not every student feels the same way. There are some students who prefer wearing masks. Luca Ruskauff is one of them. “I still would like to prefer wearing masks just for my safety and also just on the off chance that I accidentally infect someone,” Ruskauff said.

Some students wanted CCM to keep the mask mandate in effect until the end of the semester,



Students Kirsten Ebbinghouser and Jonathan Heiszer work concurrently - mask or no mask - during a studio lighting class in the photography department.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ERIN LUBY

if not longer. Luca said that he wished CCM had the mandatory mask mandate, and he didn’t see the mask as an issue.

Ashley Larson is a student at CCM who liked when the mask mandate lift was put into effect but also has some concerns about vac-

inations and possible upticks in COVID cases, and people respecting each other’s choices.

Larson expressed how she feels about the mandate. “I like it because, you know, we can see each other’s faces, but I just hope everyone who’s not wearing a

mask is vaccinated,” she said. “I will say that if there’s another uptick or people start getting infected more, I hope that they put it back in effect.” Larson added she thinks people should be able to choose whether to wear a mask or not, but they should also be smart about the

choices they make.

She concluded by saying that she thinks people should be more sympathetic toward others and show respect if someone wants another person to wear a mask because people don’t know what they might be dealing with at home.

OPINION: An ethical case for animals

BY ROY BERKOWITZ
Opinion Editor

Among the rise of social justice movements in the United States, such as feminism, anti-racism, and the push for LG-BTQ+ rights, there remains one

major blind spot—the acknowledgement of animal rights.

It’s no secret that the bodies and secretions of nonhuman animals accompany all of us throughout our daily lives, but mainstream society has tried its best to block out the dark, expan-

sive reality of animal exploitation from our minds.

We drape their skin across our car seats, wear their hides as stylish coats, and slice their skulls open for scientific experimentation. Our most flagrant offense, however, is sitting on our plates right in front of us. As humans, our lunch breaks, dinner dates, holidays, and midnight snacks, all center around one common thread—animal products.

We are fueling one of the most atrocious crimes in human history, and it’s time to address it.

According to the journal article “Why Eating Animals Is Not Good for Us,” 56 billion animals, excluding countless numbers of sea life, are murdered each year for our consumption. That means for every second you read this newspaper, 3,000 animals lose their lives.

Unfortunately, farmed animals are not only slaughtered—they are tortured. Life in factory farms is grim. Pigs, who possess the intelligence of the average toddler, have their tails and teeth severed from their bodies. Forcefully impregnated to produce milk, mother cows witness their young, helpless calves being torn away from them. In the egg industry, male chicks are rendered useless and are im-

mediately ground up upon birth. Other standard practices involve dehorning, debeaking, castrating, and even gassing—all without any anesthetic.

Interestingly enough, the general population is not unaware of the immorality of animal genocide—in fact, our actions indicate we are painfully uncomfortable with the reality of our choices. We euphemize the consumption of animal flesh by cloaking it under the ambiguous smokescreen of the word “meat.” We don’t eat ‘chickens’—we eat ‘chicken.’ Simply eliminating this letter also erases the individuality of the animal, transforming our perception of them from a living being into a frivolous commodity.

This application of language is an admission of guilt. We blur and smudge our words until we put enough distance between us and our consciences so we can sleep at night. So, the next time you plan to eat a cheddar omelet with bacon for breakfast, ask yourself if a plate of fermented cow’s milk, fried hen ovulation, and sliced pig flesh sounds just as delicious.

While many feel guilty for eating animal products, we as a society still cringe at the philosophy of veganism. Critics dismiss veganism because vegans

push their belief system on other people. While this is true, this logic can apply to any ideology. We subject others to our beliefs when we advocate for human liberation. If you believe in activism for any other movement, then why is veganism any different? Likewise, the cultural justification for animal killing is another fallacy. Plenty of cultures encourage hunting and fishing, but plenty of cultures also promote cannibalism and slavery. As you can see, societal norms have never served as an arbiter of morality—that’s why culture must adapt to fit our ever-expanding definition of ethics.

Look—animal agriculture is not an isolated evil. It does not exist in a vacuum; rather, it serves as the epitome of the ramifications of prejudice. Its toxins are not self-contained; instead, its corrosive venom poisons society’s circulatory system. As Edgar Kupfer-Koberwitz, a Holocaust survivor, wrote, “I believe as long as man tortures and kills animals, he will torture and kill humans as well—and wars will be waged—for killing must be practiced and learned on a small scale.” So, ask yourself—does my fleeting sensory pleasure justify the abject agony of sentient beings?

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All students are welcome to contribute articles to The Youngtown Edition either in person or via e-mail. However, students cannot receive a byline if they belong to the organization on which they are reporting. The deadline for articles is the Monday prior to a production.

Students discuss their favorite films

BY LAURA SAN ROMAN
Entertainment Editor

Movies are a form of escapism, a way to get lost in a completely different world. Movies have important messages and themes that resonate with audiences everywhere. County College of Morris students discussed their favorite movies, their favorite scenes from these films, and what themes inspired them in their real lives.

Emily Adawi, a communication major, says her favorite movies are *Little Women*, the 2019 adaptation, and *Pride and Prejudice*. “My favorite scene from *Pride and Prejudice* is when they finally come true with their feelings, and my favorite scene from *Little Women* is when Laurie confesses his love for Amy,” she said. “I kind of associate them with female empowerment. In both the movies, both the main characters are female, and they choose their own path. They don’t go the traditional route, so that kind of resonates with me. That’s what

I’m trying to do with my life. It kind of set a revolution in their own time.”

Little Women, the 2019 adaptation, stars Saoirse Ronan, Timothee Chalamet, Florence Pugh, Emma Watson, Eliza Scanlen, and Laura Dern. The movie tells the story of the four March sisters, girls who hope to live their lives the way they would like to. The movie is based on the book by Louisa May Alcott. Praised by critics, it also made \$218.9 million at the box office.

Pride and Prejudice, released in 2005, is based on the original book written by Jane Austen. The film stars Keira Knightley and Matthew Macfadyen as Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy, who finds himself falling in love with her even though she is of a lower class than him. The film describes the love story between Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy as the two navigate their emotions. It was nominated for four Oscars and made \$121.6 million at the box office.

“My favorite movie is *The*

Greatest Showman,” said Andrea Minchala, an exercise science major. Her favorite scene was when the protagonist, P.T. Barnum, has no money and is struggling, but his wife is constantly supportive of him. “It’s all about sticking to your dreams and believing in what you can do,” she said. “I love the music, and I love that the movie is about being supported by your family, no matter our circumstances.”

The Greatest Showman was released in 2017 and starred Hugh Jackman, Zac Efron, Michelle Williams, and Zendaya. The film guides the audience through the life of P.T. Barnum, a famous entertainer during the 1800s who created the Barnum & Bailey Circus. Many critics panned the movie for not showing the full story of Barnum, but the film was praised for its music and visuals. It garnered \$434.9 million at the box office.

Erica Perkalis, a liberal arts major, says their favorite movies are *The Lego Movie* and *The Lego Movie 2: The Second Part*.

“My favorite scene is when they meet the queen in the second movie, and they sing about how ‘totally not evil’ she is. I just think it’s silly and fun,” they said. “I really love the movies because I think the animation is totally incredible. The characters are funny, cute, and relatable, and they’re very wholesome.”

Perkalis said the themes of the films truly resonated with them. “The themes in both movies like embracing who you are and your creativity, not everything has to be perfect, and the emphasis on family were very strong and meaningful to me growing up,” they said. “They may be a bit on the nose and childish in how they present them, but I feel like they’re strong messages, nonetheless.”

The Lego Movie and *The Lego Movie 2: The Second Part* are animated family comedy films that star Will Arnett, Chris Pratt, Elizabeth Banks, and Will Ferrell in voice roles. The first film was released in 2014 and the second was released in 2019.

There are also two other movies in the franchise, *The Lego Batman Movie* and *The Lego Ninjago Movie*, which were both released in 2017. Both films were critically acclaimed, and the National Board of Review even selected the first film as one of the top films of 2014.

Movies are incredibly powerful and have a huge amount of influence on people. The themes and messages within movies can deeply move people by provoking emotions and thoughts, and even perhaps by opening their eyes to something they’ve never seen before.

Movies were especially important during the pandemic and, even though theaters were closed, movies on streaming services thrived. Many people rewatched their “comfort movies” and rediscovered a new love for them.

“The pandemic was really rough to deal with, as we all know, so watching [*The Lego Movie 2: The Second Part*] was a huge comfort to me during that time,” said Perkalis.

CCM Fashion Club never goes out of style

BY JENNA PALAZZI
Contributor

From New York City to Paris to Milan, fashion is a universal language understood by many people. Fashion brings people across the globe together to celebrate a common interest within diverse cultures. To some people, clothes are simply a way to cover up their bodies; however, to others, it is a major outlet to express their creativity. The County College of Morris Fashion Club is no exception to the fashion frenzy that has transformed the creative world.

The Fashion Club was recently reinstated in February after a hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the campus closure. Since campus has

reopened, students have traded in their sweatpants for jeans, and some may be looking for a way to get more involved in their school.

The Fashion Club is always looking for new members and invites them to shop or donate at their vintage store, Tuesdays from 12:30-1:45 p.m. in DeMare Hall 207. “Right now, we’re accepting spring and summer clothes for our store so that we can start selling more for what the season is,” said Athena Mencl, a fashion design major and member of the club. “Prior, we had accepted a lot of winter stuff.”

Fashion lovers often find it difficult to find trendy clothes while also not breaking the bank or overindulging in fast fashion. Purchasing pre-loved

clothes encourages sustainable fashion and allows students to save money. This also gives students the opportunity to find unique pieces and enhance their wardrobe.

The Fashion Club offers a wide variety of t-shirts, shorts, dresses, shoes and more for students to purchase and express themselves. Students can pay for the clothes, with prices ranging from \$0.50 to \$5.00, using cash, Venmo, or Zelle.

Instead of throwing out old clothes that will most likely end up in a landfill, the Fashion Club offers students a way to extend their unused clothes’ lives. If CCM students would like to donate their clothes, the Fashion Club asks for them to be washed beforehand.

The vintage sale is not the

only event the Fashion Club has to offer. “At the end of the semester, we have a fashion show, and all of the donations [from the vintage store] go towards buying food, decorations, stage set up, etc,” said Kyra Vanderhoovel, a fashion design major and president of the club. “As of now, the show is scheduled for Wednesday, May 4.”

Fashion design students use this show as a way to display the clothes they have created throughout the semester or to style their models in trendy clothes, giving the audience inspiration for their own outfits. Participating in the fashion show allows design students to release their creativity and share it with their peers.

The Fashion Club is not

exclusively for design majors. “Fashion is definitely something I enjoy,” member Zach Bogardus said. “I don’t know much about it, but I’m hoping to learn more.” Bogardus has yet to declare a major but hopes that learning more about design can help with their dressing.

The Fashion Club not only allows members to use their imagination, but to learn from one another and celebrate unique styles. Fashion affects a person’s identity and goes further than clothing. Fashion directly influences one’s lifestyle and allows a person to be their true self. Ultimately, the Fashion Club wants students to get involved and enjoy themselves. “Clothes are fun and everyone kind of needs them, so why not join,” Vanderhoovel said.

TREES

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healthy forest ecosystem, an old tree dies and falls to the ground, which creates a space between the trees called a canopy gap. This is a natural occurrence and allows sunlight to penetrate through, allowing smaller plants and saplings to grow.

While the forest has not endured the human-made disturbances of cutting or plowing, it has experienced issues of degradation caused by an overpopulation of white-tailed deer that eat saplings and non-native invasive plant species such as multi-flora rose, Japanese stilt grass and wineberry that overtake the space for where new trees would grow.

Professor Samantha Gi-

gliotti, an assistant professor of biology at CCM and a Ph.D. student at Rutgers, has always had a passion for forest ecology. To obtain her doctorate, she has chosen to help restore the heavily degraded national landmark by planting new tree saplings and then studying their growth over the next five years.

“If we don’t regenerate these canopy gaps, there’s just going to be more and more which will cause the forest to transition into a shrub or grass environment,” Gigliotti said. “We’re hoping to find what is going to be the best civil cultural strategy for effectively and rapidly closing canopy gaps in northeastern forests in both suburban and urban landscapes.”

Gigliotti started her research in the summer of 2021. She and her team of volunteer

students spent months removing invasive species of plants from the plots of land under the canopy gaps to make room for multiple species of trees to plant, including red oaks, white oaks, poplars, chestnuts, and willows.

Advising Gigliotti in her research is Dr. Myla Aranson, an assistant professor in the department of ecology, evolution and natural resources at Rutgers University and the director of the Hutcheson Memorial Forest. Her role includes overseeing land conservation, land management and research that is conducted in the forest.

“We’re going to study how fast they grow, how fast the invasive species come back, the growth of the trees and how well they survive,” Aranson said. She knows that this will be a long-term study because the

typical age of the current trees there ranges from 250 to 300 years old. “Hopefully, it will enhance and add to the recovery of the forest itself because right now all the big trees are dying because of how old they are.”

Rutgers Cooperative Extension and the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station conducted a study with a sample group of 27 New Jersey farmers and found that the financial costs of deer damage in 2019 came out to \$1.3 million. To help with the deer population issue, the conservation specialists at Hutcheson Memorial Forest have taken special measures, such as building a deer fence that covers 65 acres of the perimeter and partnering with local bowhunters.

These efforts have proved beneficial, as the population

has shrunk from 150 deer per square mile to 70. Along with healing the forest, the program has also helped the Somerset County community with over 2,000 pounds of venison donated to local food banks since 2015.

“The extensive research that’s been done out here and the field station is going great,” said Joseph Paulin, the conservation manager at Hutcheson Memorial Forest. He’s aware there’s still years’ worth of work to solve the problem of forest degradation, but he remains optimistic, especially when he sees younger generations of conservationists getting involved. “It’s good to see folks out here helping with the volunteer opportunities because otherwise, we wouldn’t be able to do this type of thing.”

Doctor Strange in The Multiverse of Madness to be Released May 6

BY LAURA SAN ROMAN
Entertainment Editor

The multiverse has opened, and the possibilities are endless. The sequel to the 2016 *Doctor Strange* film is scheduled for release May 6. The film will play off the events of *Spider-Man: No Way Home*, when Doctor Strange casts a spell that causes the multiverse to open, revealing two other Spider-Men and villains from other universes. *Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness* will show Doctor Strange and his allies fighting a threat from the multiverse that may be a bigger danger than they thought.

The film will star Benedict Cumberbatch, Elizabeth Olsen, Chiwetel Ejiofor, Benedict Wong, Xochitl Gomez, and Rachel McAdams. It is directed by Sam Raimi, director of the original trilogy of Spider-Man movies and director of horror movies such as *Evil Dead*. This has led some fans to believe that there will be elements of horror in the movie.

Cumberbatch will reprise his role as Doctor Stephen Strange and Olsen will reprise her role of Wanda Maximoff. Ejiofor and Wong will reprise their roles as Karl Mordo and Wong respectively, and Gomez makes her Marvel Cinematic Universe debut as America Chavez. McAdams will also reprise her role as Doctor Strange's love interest, Christine Palmer.

After the events of *Spider-Man: No Way Home*, the multiverse has opened, and this has

led to disastrous consequences. Doctor Strange now must fight adversaries he has never fought before. Knowing little about the multiverse, Strange goes to find Wanda, hoping she can help him. Wong and Strange also enlist the help of America Chavez, a teenager who has dimension-hopping powers.

There will be alternate versions of the characters, such as "Defender Strange" and "Sinister Strange," Doctor Strange's from other universes. There will also be alternate versions of Wanda, with a zombie version of her that was first shown in the Disney Plus series *What If...?*

Fans have speculated about the characters that may show up in the film since it involves the multiverse. Fans have wondered if Tobey Maguire's Spider-Man will show up since it is a Sam Raimi film. In addition, fans have pondered if the X-Men or the Fantastic Four will have roles in the movie, as Professor X's voice was heard in a trailer and his actor confirmed he will be in the movie. There are also various theories that Wanda may turn evil, as she did in *WandaVision* as her children Billy and Tommy were shown in a recently released trailer for the movie.

No matter what characters appear or what happens in the movie, it will surely be a chaotic experience. As the MCU steps into the multiverse, anything can happen.

Tickets are now available to purchase for the movie at websites like AMC, Fandango, and Cinemark.



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CCM esports being led to all-new peaks

BY TYLER KARPMAN
Sports Editor

Effectively coaching a team takes a certain type of person. It requires someone who is constantly willing to learn and grow to help the team do the same. It necessitates countless hours spent planning and preparing your team for the best possible chance at victory. It takes someone with the leadership to build a team from nothing into an ever-growing group of friends and teammates. Such people are not common, but County College of Morris's esports team seems to have hit the jackpot.

Professor Eric Guadara has been the coach of CCM's esports team since it formed in December 2019. However, because of delays brought about thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic, the team did not officially begin operations until 2021. Despite the delay, the team has still managed to take form and grow, doubling its members from five to 10 over its first year, with hopes of growing further in the upcoming fall semester.

According to Guadara, a lot of that growth is thanks to the support from CCM's athletics department. "[CCM's athletic director Jack Sullivan] treats us like every other team, which is really important to making this work," he says. Thanks to that support, the esports team has been allowed to gain the legitimacy of the other teams at CCM, which should only serve to further grow the team.

As for the team itself, those who are a part of it are enjoying it thoroughly. Logan Ver-



PHOTO BY STACY NETHERY

CCM's esports team coach Eric Guadara (left), Elijah Uribe, Sanjay Daptardar, assistant coach Joey Nobile, and Brandon Dicang (front) at practice April 13.

rinder, an information science major, and a member of the team describes it as "fun and welcoming," as most of the members have similar hobbies and interests, making it easier for teammates to make friends with one another. Because of this, Verrinder urges others who have an interest to give the team a try, as it would not only grow the team, but introduce them to people they otherwise would not have met.

Regardless of the team's growth, however, it still faces hurdles as it moves forward. One of the main issues is the lineup of games the team plays, or rather, the lack of one. Currently, the team

only truly competes in League of Legends, or LoL, a multiplayer online battle arena game. Due to the game using teams of five players, the entire team cannot play. Chad Comras, a computer science major, and another member of the team, describes the team's structure as "a rotation that basically comes down to availability more than anything else," and laments the fact that the team cannot form a proper secondary LoL team.

The lack of game diversity is an unfortunate reminder that the team is still in need of growth. As Guadara puts it, "[he] can't be the head coach for Overwatch, League of Legends, Rocket

League, Smash Bros, CS:GO, etc. That would be like the basketball coach also coaching golf, swimming, and baseball."

Guadara hopes that in the future, the team will have multiple assistant coaches, as well as expanded facilities, to make branching out to other games more feasible.

Despite these issues, the current members of the esports team still feel proud and happy for how far the team has come thus far. According to them, much of that can be attributed to Guadara's hard work in growing the team as its leader.

"Guadara has done a great

job for the morale and organization for our team!" Comras proclaimed. "He's doing a great job co-casting on the CCM esports Twitch channel, and what he lacks in game knowledge he makes up for in willingness to learn about said game." Verrinder shares this opinion, describing Guadara as "willing to learn and help the team see from a different perspective."

Given that CCM will be receiving a fresh batch of freshmen in the fall to join teams and clubs alike, the esports team is sure to grow even bigger in the coming year. And when it does, it will continue to have a gem of a head coach leading the way.

How a CCM student and former athlete is building his life beyond basketball

BY SAJID QURAESHI
Contributor

LIVINGSTON, N.J. - Although the outside weather only peaked at around five degrees above freezing, a single figure could be seen running from rim to rim across the Livingston High School's basketball court. If the frigid weather impacted him at all, his movements gave no indication. Methodically, he would chase down each rebound, proceeding to dribble to his next spot and pull up, making almost every attempt. Someone passing by could easily mistake him for a player, being a well filled out 6'3" individual with clear talent on the court. After a few minutes, he stopped and walked off the court, steam billowing from the top of his head. Although he had been shooting around for nearly 45 minutes, he showed not even the slightest sign of fatigue.

David James, also known as DJ, had played some sort of sport for most of his life, whether it was soccer and football in his youth, or baseball and basketball during high school. This had been a constant until 2019, when he had intended on continuing to play both basket-

ball and baseball in college. Everything changed when his 2020 season was canceled, as COVID-19 ran rampant, and DJ's life as he knew it came to an immediate halt.

The previous year had already brought DJ hardship when his father died unexpectedly. This loss paid a heavy toll on DJ, which only increased when his season was canceled. DJ has one younger sister, Sophia, and recalling their situation going into 2020 she noted, "My brother was [always] competitive, but it seemed like losing both our father and the ability to play the game he loved so much really set him back."

He now had two significant holes in his life, without knowing the extent of damage that COVID was about to unleash upon the world. "At the time, I really was worried about him," Sophia continued. "I know he used [sports] as his outlet to let loose his emotions. Without being able to play, they [would just] bottle up."

As the next year unfolded, DJ finished his high school year at home with remote learning and never playing another minute of an organized school sport. Many would question the significance of

that, considering it's the case for thousands of former-student athletes taking the next step from high school to college. For most, the competition becomes too steep, or the sport they were playing wasn't their true passion that would drive them to continue playing. Only in DJ's case, playing was no longer a choice.

Post-graduation, DJ was looking to stay close to home, but still wanted to attend a larger college. Even without playing ball the previous year, he had hopes of revitalizing his playing career on the next level. The difficulty was that DJ had no tape to show off his talents to schools.

The year he had lost was supposed to be his breakout year, as he had finally been named the starting shooting guard on the basketball team. He had started for two years on the baseball team, but basketball was his true passion. Making the starting lineup after years of work meant he would finally be able to showcase his abilities to scouts across the country. And although baseball was not his true passion, his impact as a person to his team was clear to see.

For two years, A.J. Flores

coached DJ's high school baseball team. "[DJ] was always someone who was a voice in the locker room, but he was a special kind of leader," Flores remarked. "He kept everyone involved not only in the games, but throughout the daily practices, constantly pushing himself and others to be their best. That type of person is rare."

Though it seemed like everything was in line for him, DJ said that 2020 was the hardest year of his life, getting through the grief from the death of his father and the realization that his breakout year was stripped from him. Over that year off, DJ could not keep himself up to par with game competition, and he understood the hardships of attempting to walk on. So, he shifted his primary focus to his education. As a student, he never enjoyed school, despite that, he held himself to high standards and he expected his grades to reflect that.

He spent the majority of his first college semester living at the Rutgers-New Brunswick campus, but before the year had reached its halfway mark, he moved out and returned home. The pressure and feelings he had internalized over the past year, much like his sister's

predictions, had broken through, and he was overwhelmed by the broken college experience amidst everything being shut down from the pandemic. DJ took the beginning of the next year off in 2021, skipping a semester to decide on where his next direction in life would lead.

He settled on a "quieter and more compact" experience, as he put it, at County College of Morris, where he is currently in his second semester of school. "Even though I do still wish I could continue playing [basketball] on the collegiate level," DJ sighed, "I've come to terms with moving on from that chapter of my life. I will always love the game, and I'll continue playing pick-up whenever I can."

His face shifted into a smile as he paused. "With everything that's happened in my life over the last few years, I've come to terms with how my impact can be so much more than just in [the sports] I used to play," he said. Simply put, he's happy with where he is now. He's ready for the road ahead, and that positive mentality is one that DJ continues to carry on in his life as he embraces the next stage of his journey.

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at the college,” McAree said. “There was a respect for shared governance.”

Michelle Altieri, an associate professor in the communication department, a FACCM Pride Chair, and member since she began teaching at CCM in 2008, has concerns regarding how the college is being shaped under Iacono’s presidency and the unstable environment that has been created.

“In the past few years, when employees have voiced concerns or asked questions about the direction of the college in public meetings, there have been consequences in the form of being summoned into one-on-one meetings with little warning, being talked to in a way that makes them feel like they shouldn’t speak out, and/or removed from committee positions without justification as to why,” Altieri stated in an email. “Those are just a few examples.”

Altieri stated that during a Board of Trustees meeting held October 2019, many faculty members who spoke to the board began their statements with, “I hope that in me speaking here tonight, there will be no retribution.” Altieri says the message is “extremely telling,” in that faculty members felt they had to voice this statement in the first place.

“The climate of fear at CCM did not begin on April 16, but it escalated immeasurably,” Altieri stated.

One of the faculty members fired, Dr. Robb Lauzon, assistant professor of communication and the communication chair of FACCM, said he was giving his daughter a bath when he received a phone call April 16, 2021. On his phone he saw ‘Dover, New Jersey’ pop up, wondered what it could be, and thought that it was maybe regarding a doctor’s appointment.

“It was Vice President John Marlin,” Lauzon said. “He started reading a legal document to me, and basically it starts with, ‘times are hard in New Jersey . . .’ and then it says, ‘we are not renewing your contract for the 2021-2022 school year,’ and it felt like I got the wind kicked out of me. Like, I just saw my whole family’s existence flash before my eyes.”

His wife had walked by questioning what was happening. Stunned, he stood there, “I’m being fired,” Lauzon said. “And then . . . on the other end of the line, Vice President Marlin goes, ‘could you please let me finish?’”

“Marlin was always a good dude,” Lauzon said. “[He] signs his email with ‘pax,’ which is what is typically reserved for a peaceful man of, like, a Catholic order, right? Pax means peace be with you . . . he signs his emails with this very peaceful thing, and then [he] tells me not to have these human emotions when I’m being fired.”

As of press time, John Marlin, vice president of academic affairs, didn’t respond to the email request for comment.

Lauzon was teaching seven



PHOTO COURTESY OF @SAVECCMFACULTY

Students gather around the table filled with free bagels outside of DeMare Hall to learn about the fired faculty members.

classes, as well as tutoring. His classes were always full of students. He tried making his classes engaging for students, working with them to help with their anxieties, and was told that he was being fired because a drop in enrollment was expected in 2025. He also worked hard during the pandemic when professors had to transition their classes to an online format.

He also had summer classes that were filling up but were canceled by administration. “The rationale was that they were firing me because they were worried about future enrollment,” Lauzon said. “But no, they said I couldn’t teach those classes.”

Firing faculty over the phone, according to McAree, was “never done before at CCM, so right there raises eyebrows,” she said. Adding that the way it was done was concerning. Department chairpersons, “who have knowledge of who’s best at teaching what,” had no clue that it was going to happen, and no consultation occurred.

“So, my chairperson, for instance, was just totally blindsided,” McAree said. Her chairperson received a phone call from Marlin. “He read a script, very likely, that had been checked by the lawyers to the faculty members and to the chairpersons.” She said there was no transparency, and it “came out of nowhere.”

Compared to other colleges throughout the state of New Jersey, faculty at CCM were underpaid when Lauzon first started teaching there. He said that FACCM won a contract renewal for the year 2023, which would upgrade faculty salaries. His salary, if he wasn’t fired, would have increased by almost \$10,000. “That’s what unions do,” Lauzon

said. “They try to make the wages better; they try to make the conditions better . . . but I don’t think that is something the administration wants.”

About a week after Lauzon was fired, he had just driven his daughter back from school, when his doorbell rang. At the door was a police officer. With his daughter watching in the background, he stepped outside to speak with the officer. “Tony told the police that he suspects that I would slash the tires on his wheelbarrow,” Lauzon said. “Way to kick a guy when he’s down, right? To accuse me of petty vandalism.”

Lauzon found this to be incredibly offensive that someone would think he would run around committing “petty crimes.” He considered the police being sent to his home as bullying. Adding, he did not know what was going on in Iacono’s imagination that caused him to believe he would slash his wheelbarrow tires.

“His tires were flat in the police report that I gathered from Mount Olive police,” Lauzon said. “The police officer’s theory is that the cart was left out all winter, and the tires went flat due to [the] cold . . . he said that the side walls, it looked like there was no slashing in the tires, just the tires were flat.”

Another faculty member who was fired, Mark Schmidt, was a full-time assistant professor in the English department, and said that many of the fired faculty members got a phone call or an in-person visit from the police because of the wheelbarrow situation. “It’s all part of creating this narrative,” Schmidt said. “We’re troublemakers. We’re angry. We’re criminal. It helps to construct that narrative.”

Schmidt felt that Iacono call-

ing the police to investigate them over his wheelbarrow was a way to intimidate them. “You’re basically saying the police around here work for me,” Schmidt said.

Schmidt was not in a specific position in the union; however, he always attended their meetings.

Schmidt’s experience with being fired differed from Lauzon’s. “I didn’t even know that I had been let go,” Schmidt said. “I didn’t even get a phone call from any of them. A phone call, an email, nothing. I found out that I had lost my job from a phone call from our union president, Jim Capozzi.”

No one from the administration had personally reached out to him, but he ended up receiving a letter in the mail saying that he wasn’t being renewed.

Schmidt noted that faculty at CCM had to learn additional skill sets at a rapid pace because of the pandemic and switching classes online. He had never taught an online course during his eight-year run at CCM. Within two weeks, faculty had to work hard and had to be flexible. “Faculty members had just brought the college through the COVID pandemic,” Schmidt said. “Had we not been so dedicated to our students; I don’t know what CCM would look like today.”

Schmidt said that professors get evaluated by students and that they should have a rating of 70% or more at every evaluation. He consistently had ratings of 90% and above. “They fired professors who were some of the most highly rated professors and some of the most dedicated professors,” Schmidt said. “Their explanation was that they needed to adjust the ratios of tenured to untenured faculty in certain de-

partments . . . they’re going to try what they can try . . . and if they get away with it, they’re just going to do it again.”

In a statement sent to the Board of Trustees May 18, 2020, by FACCM Vice President at the time, Ian Colquhoun, he delivered the collective votes of no confidence in Iacono’s leadership by faculty and chairpersons, which Schmidt calls a ‘symbolic gesture’ because it doesn’t mean the college president loses their job over it, only that faculty had lost faith.

McAree said that 91% of faculty members voted to express no confidence in Iacono.

Faculty and chairs had also sent over 60 open letters to Iacono and the college community. Some remained anonymous in their letters because of fear of retaliation, as stated in the statement. “He never answered one of them,” McAree said.

Ian Colquhoun stepped up to lead the union as president after the firing of former president of the union, James Capozzi.

The statement of no confidence also points out that this incident has followed “a disgraceful three-year period of documented intimidation of student journalists, the rescission of a faculty contract ratified after 18 months of negotiations, the withholding of six weeks of faculty pay, frivolous legal threats and police investigations, the threatened non-renewal of a professor on protected maternity leave, and a work environment widely acknowledged by faculty, staff, and students as toxic.”

Student journalists in the past who worked on the Youngtown Edition had experienced bully-

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ing by administration, according to Schmidt. “They were trying to bully student journalists because they didn’t like the things that the student journalists were publishing,” Schmidt said. He gave one example of when student journalists had written about expired fire inspection certificates at CCM. “An atmosphere of fear, an atmosphere of intimidation, not only among faculty but also among students.”

President Iacono had sent faculty members an email April 16, 2021, the day the faculty members were fired, stating the reasons for his decision. “A steady decline in enrollment,” the “unusual circumstances” of COVID-19, and “the residual long-term impact on enrollment” had caused the college to “take a closer look at the mix of tenured to non-tenured faculty,” according to the email. Iacono further stated that they were regretful they had to make this decision and voiced his appreciation for all that faculty had done to support students and each other.

McAree believes that “the president of the college was clearly attempting to bust the union by removing our [union] president . . . James Capozzi,” McAree said. “And by firing him and others, it sent fear through a number of non-tenured faculty. It really kind of threw us into sort of a state of insecurity. But we have managed. I mean, we have coped.”

A couple of theories have been floating around that Lauzon touched upon, including speculation that in order to fire union President Capozzi and “cover it up,” the college had to fire five other faculty union members. “Another theory is that they were firing me and Geoff [Peck], and Jim [Capozzi], and then firing three others to cover it up,” Lauzon said. “The union is contending that they’re trying to break our union.”

FACCM filed an Unfair Labor Practice against CCM because “we believe the administration engaged in illegal union-busting tactics when they fired our faculty members, including the union president and two committee chairpersons,” Altieri stated. “All of the CCM 7 were union members.”

Taking part in a union is considered a protected activity. A New Jersey state statute prohibits retaliation for protected activity, according to McAree. The case was brought under that statute before the Public Employment Relations Commission, which “is the body that deals with employment labor laws in New Jersey,” McAree said. “We firmly believe that the firing of the . . . faculty was against the law in terms of against that statute. That it was retaliatory for their participation for their protective activity.”

Both FACCM and CCM have attorneys for this process. They’re “hoping to have a ruling by the end of the year,” McAree said.

Schmidt calls the situation “a chilling effect,” and stressed

that it’s a criminal act to fire faculty members for being part of a union.

“If you show other union members that being an officer of the union or being an outspoken supporter of the union, you show them what happens,” Schmidt said. “We were being used as an example . . . if you’re doing anything that Iacono sees as inimical to his project, that you are putting yourself in danger. And that tends to make everybody else fall in line because nobody wants to lose their job.”

Lauzon never viewed being part of a union as “misbehaving” for consulting with other faculty regarding working conditions. According to Lauzon, being part of a union is to make sure an employer treats workers with “the respect that they deserve.”

“I’m not trying to be rich,” Lauzon said. “I don’t believe being a member of a union is going to make me wealthy. It’s going to help me make better conditions for myself and others that I work with.” He added that when conditions are better for faculty, the students benefit from this as well.

Schmidt said Iacono doesn’t want the union to be strong because it gives the faculty some power. It provides job security. “He doesn’t want us to make the money that we make,” Schmidt said. “He wants us to work more, do more for free . . . when you’re a professor at a college like CCM, you’re expected to do a lot of work that you’re not paid for.”

Schmidt said one thing that was successful was a policy called “work to rule.” “It basically means that if you’re not being paid for something, you’re not doing it,” Schmidt said. The college was receiving free labor from faculty, so with this policy, faculty did what they were only contractually obligated to do. “They were losing basically a lot of free labor that they were used to getting from us. And of course, that didn’t make them very happy.”

Capozzi had been a great negotiator, according to Schmidt. He got faculty raises and even inspired people at the college. Altieri also attested to Capozzi’s leadership skills. “In 2020, we signed one of the best, if not the best, contracts in the history of FACCM,” Altieri stated. “We had record numbers of members and attendance at various meetings [and] events; and we had plans in the works to continue to foster a union-positive presence on campus and in the Morris County community.”

The union, according to McAree, is “the only autonomous group on campus that challenges.” She said other colleges “have a faculty senate where they have some power.” However, at CCM, there is no faculty senate. There is the college council with different standing committees. “So, there really is no shared governance,” McAree said. “There’s a staff union, but those employees are not tenured, so they are at-will employees, and they can be fired.”

McAree said faculty has seen the college move in a direction that concerns them. There have been decisions made at the

top that faculty didn’t agree with. They have filed grievances and challenged some things, but faculty do not “have enough shared governance of CCM to be able to direct those issues,” McAree said. “Iacono is not a president who appreciates a challenge to his role.”

In a June 2021 article from Inside Higher Ed, executive director of marketing and public relations at CCM, Melissa Albright, said there was nothing unusual about the process and decision that was made. She stressed that the dismissal of the seven faculty members was not related to union activity. She explained that enrollment at CCM fell by about 10% in fall 2020 and by about 14% in the spring. These were used in comparison with fall 2019 and spring 2019.

The article further stated Albright saying, “‘Dr. Iacono definitely has felt the pain of this,’ she said, adding that he didn’t take the decisions lightly. ‘It might not have been the popular response. It may not have been the one we wanted to have made. This is something that was imperative for the institution to keep moving forward.’”

Faculty and even students have gone to Board of Trustees meetings to support and fight for the fired faculty members, wearing red t-shirts in solidarity. However, according to McAree, not much progress has been made during these meetings.

The Board of Trustees “affirmed the president’s decision in firing the . . . faculty members,” McAree said. “So, they did not overturn his decision. That then triggered the lawsuit before PERC.”

She also said that if any consequences were to come from the PERC trial, it would be up to the Board of Trustees to decide what happens “because they are the governing body of the college,” McAree said.

Board of Trustees Esq. chair, Jeffrey M. Advokat, had made a statement that was published in the Inside Higher Ed article. “‘The County College of Morris has flourished and grown as an institution under President Iacono’s leadership and direction,’ he said in a statement. ‘CCM’s Board of Trustees stands behind the decision that we made. We support President Iacono 100 percent and look forward to working with him for many years to come.’”

Lauzon went to about three Board of Trustees meetings, one of them after he was fired, but hasn’t attended a meeting in a while, saying, “I just have counted myself out.” He recounts his “semi-improvisational kind of plea for my job back” as humiliating. “I shouldn’t have to plea for my job back,” Lauzon said. “I would never attend a Board of Trustees meeting again.”

Schmidt feels that the Board of Trustees aren’t receptive. He has attended many meetings both virtually and in person before and after the firings. “They’re not academics,” Schmidt said. “Remember, these are people from the political and the business community. These are not people who really place a high value on

the work that we do.”

Altieri stated that the Board of Trustees “continue to enforce an arbitrary limit on public comments, and they do not respond to any questions [or] concerns that are raised at the meetings from faculty members or supporters.” She further stated that last summer, Iacono’s contract was extended out of sequence for an additional two years to show their “commitment to his vision for the future of CCM.”

She pointed out that the trustees continually approve annual tuition raises, which also occurred during the pandemic.

Documents from the CCM financial aid office regarding tuition costs showed that the total education cost for an in county independent student for 2021-2022 was \$21,970, and for an in county dependent student it would cost \$12,975, while the technical fee was \$25 per course.

According to the 2022-2023 financial aid office document, an in county independent student’s total cost of education was raised to \$22,394, and for an in county dependent student, the cost had risen to \$13,399. The technical fee increased to \$35 per course. The costs for out of county independent and dependent students also increased between these time frames.

CCM Trustees have also approved “\$30,000 in performance bonuses [and] \$30,000 in salary increases so far, since Iacono was hired,” Altieri stated. She doesn’t understand the board’s motives behind these decisions. She added that because the college didn’t claim financial hardship for the reason of the firings, she is guessing that’s why “the board justified awarding Iacono a \$10,000 performance bonus and [a] 5.81% raise in January 2021, just three months before he fired our people.”

According to a Patch article published July 2021 that was written by FACCM Officers, CCM received almost \$13 million in federal stimulus. And at the time, Iacono was “rewarded mid-contract with a 6% pay increase and a \$10,000 performance bonus.” Tuition had also increased by 18% and “administrative vice president positions have swelled 126% with double the number of vice presidents that existed under the former president Edward Yaw.”

According to Schmidt, they are saving money by hiring part-time workers, by firing dedicated professors, and would rather build new buildings, “even if nobody uses them, even if there aren’t enough students,” Schmidt said.

Schmidt added that Iacono is hiring people for managerial positions with \$100,000 a year salaries. He claims that it is not these people who bring the money into CCM, it is the professors who bring money in because they are the ones who teach the students. With the continual bonuses and pay raises Iacono receives, Schmidt says, “the amount of money he has been able to pull out of it for himself is absolutely befuddling.”

Schmidt also said that the college is hiring more adjunct la-

bor and less full-time faculty who have insurance and medical benefits. Adjuncts do not have job security. “They have no medical insurance, no health insurance, no health coverage,” Schmidt said. One of the major changes faculty members are seeing is a growing reliance on part-time, untenured labor.

Lauzon said that immediately after they fired the seven faculty members, they were searching for replacements with part-time adjunct work. Specifically, communication adjuncts. “That’s me, man,” Lauzon said. “An adjunct can’t offer you office time. An adjunct can’t be your mentor.”

He voiced how adjuncts seem to live right out of their cars. “I used to be an adjunct,” Lauzon said. “I worked at five different campuses. Every semester you live in your car, you grade on the road. You’re not giving your students 100%, and that’s wrong.”

He added that an adjunct professor sometimes makes around \$1,800 a class. Lauzon has always been open about his salary. When he was hired, he was receiving \$57,000 a year with benefits, including retirement. “\$1,800 a class means that the professor is making \$18,000 a year versus my \$57,000 a year,” Lauzon said. “Is \$1,800 a class really a commitment to the students?”

Schmidt voiced an example of the difference between pay for full-time professors and part-time professors. “Rather than having us teach and give us \$70,000 a year, they’ll hire three adjuncts that they pay \$6,000 a year,” Schmidt said. “Keeping costs down, keeping insurance costs down, and really just a weak labor force and a disempowered labor force is the aim of the administration because they can give jobs to the lowest bidder. They can give jobs to the person who needs it the most and is willing to work harder for less.”

Capozzi and Schmidt were close to making tenure before they were fired. Schmidt was at four and a half years. Professors receive tenure after teaching five full years, at the start of their sixth year. It made him question his sanity.

“It was an avenue of stability for me having that job and especially the notion of getting tenure . . . and having some sort of job security and economic stability,” Schmidt said. “That rug has just been completely pulled out from under me through no fault of my own for doing the right thing in my eyes.”

McAree said she is tenured, so she is safer from being fired than a non-tenured professor. However, a tenured professor is not 100% protected because if they do something wrong or there is a reduction in force, they could be fired as well. “On a personal note, I’m not worried about losing my job,” McAree said. “I teach people how to have [a] voice. If I’m not willing to have one myself, what am I even doing in education?”

The Inside Higher Ed article also paraphrased Dr. Janet Eber,

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who had worked at CCM as a chair and professor of the English and philosophy department, saying, “The untenured professors also were not the most junior members of the department, who are usually the first let go during faculty reductions.”

Some current faculty members are concerned about their future at CCM. “Last April, the CCM administration showed that they can find and/or provide numbers that ‘justify’ eliminating positions, even if the faculty members are extremely qualified and have stellar records of service and teaching,” Altieri stated.

Both Lauzon and Schmidt commented on the number of administrators and faculty that have either been resigning or retiring under President Iacono in recent years. “I think that’s evidence of his leadership,” Lauzon said. “He’s chasing good people away and enriching himself in the process.”

Schmidt recounted five re-

tirements of faculty over the past two semesters, such as Eber, who had worked at CCM a little bit over 50 years. “She got to the point where she was just too frustrated with it,” Schmidt said. “Like, that should say something to people. That the people who have been at this institution for this long and invested that much of themselves are walking away because it’s just too much.”

According to the Board of Trustees meeting agendas spanning from Nov. 16, 2021, to Feb. 22, 2022, there have been 13 resignations and 10 retirements. So, in those four months from the end of the fall 2021 semester through close to the beginning of the spring 2022 semester, there have been a substantial number of resignations and retirements.

By firing union members, including the union president, McAree calls this move ‘a campaign of exhaustion.’ Meaning that the administration is aware that union officers don’t get paid extra money for keeping it alive. “So, that does put a strain on people who are already doing things of goodwill.”

Schmidt stressed the importance of students being educated on the events happening at CCM. “Truth dies with silence,” Schmidt said. “A place like CCM, one of the things that you notice as a professor . . . [is that] its got a very short memory.”

The effects of being fired are still prevalent in faculty members’ lives. Some faculty members even had to move out of New Jersey. Lauzon and his family moved to Florida. They used to be homeowners in New Jersey, but he had to move to keep insurance active for his family.

“I don’t know how to describe what it was like to have to move and leave everything I loved about New Jersey and put even more miles between me and my parents, put even more miles between me and the home my wife and I worked so hard to purchase for ourselves,” Lauzon said. “Just to live in a rental house to be bullied and pushed around by landlords now and to have nothing that’s our own, and to live in a state that’s foreign to us.”

According to Lauzon, his

landlord wants to raise his rent \$1,200 a year, even though he isn’t getting a raise of \$1,200 a year. “Now I’m basically doing the equivalent of an internship to make ends meet, and it’s good,” Lauzon said. “I’m glad to make ends meet. It’s an exciting position, but it’s like starting [all over] again.”

Being fired has affected Schmidt’s life as well. “Dave Chappelle has this quote that he said one time in one of his stand-up things that said, the closest thing to killing a man is taking his job,” Schmidt said. “When the job that you do is an integral part of your identity and an integral part of who you are and how you see yourself, having that thing taken away through no fault of your own is very destabilizing.”

The full quote from Chappelle’s stand-up titled *Unforgiven* is, “taking a man’s livelihood away from him is akin to killing him.”

Schmidt also said that being fired had taken a toll on his mental health and relationships. “It makes you a little jaded,”

Schmidt said. “But I’m not letting that get to me.”

He was offered an adjunct position at Essex County College, but he needs to take on three more adjunct positions at various places to make “even two thirds of what I was making,” Schmidt said. “With no health insurance, commuting an hour each way. It has really put a damper on things.”

Faculty members are trying to stay vocal. “If people who are teaching the students of tomorrow, the leaders of tomorrow, if we are afraid to voice what we think, that is a very dangerous educational environment,” McAree said. Adding that restoring their faculty is part of what this is about. “It’s also an effort to demonstrate that we have rights, and that as professors we intend to use them. And that protects our students and the quality of their education.”

Schmidt said he is only doing what he teaches his students to do. “If you see something wrong, speak up,” Schmidt said. “Do something. Act on it. Don’t just sit back and turn a blind eye.”



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