

THE COUNTY COLLEGE OF MORRIS' AWARD-WINNING STUDENT NEWSPAPER

YOUNGTOWN EDITION

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CCM breaks stigma of community college

BY JENNA PALAZZI
Contributor

The stigma surrounding community college is apparent in many high school senior classrooms. The excited screams fill the hallways as a classmate announces they were accepted into their dream college. Every chance they get, teachers ask their students where they will head next, hoping to hear it is a top university.

As May 1, which is National College Decision Day, rolls around, senioritis is in full swing, and students cannot wait for their next adventure. However, few talk about not getting into their dream school or if they cannot afford it. Most students feel as though there is nowhere else to turn, since community college is often looked down upon.

Missing the glorified college experience seems to be the end of the world. Society sells college to young adults as the best



PHOTO BY STACY NETHERY

four years of their lives, including independence, frat parties, and a degree. American pop culture has transformed a place where students get an education into a big

party that excludes community college students and leaves them with FOMO.

Many may argue that community college does not guaran-

tee the same education as four-year schools. However, that is not an accurate assumption. "Well, actually, it had the classes I needed to transfer to other colleges

for engineering," said Zachary Senyk, an engineering science major, about his decision to at-

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Professor Peter Clavin speaks about Amiri Baraka for the Legacy Project

BY PROFESSOR
KENNETH SHOULER
Adviser for the Youngtown Edition

Dr. Peter Clavin spoke about the poet Amiri Baraka (1934-2014) as part of The Legacy Project's Commemoration Committee event commemorating Black History Month. An instructor of English at CCM, Professor Clavin's scholarly interests are notably broad. He owns B.A.s in History and Political Science, an MA in English, and a PhD in American Studies. He graduated from the University of Buffalo-SUNY in June 2019. His dissertation explored the politics and pedagogy of Amiri Baraka's lifelong activism. He is currently working on turning his dissertation into a book. He teaches American Studies, English, and History

throughout New Jersey.

Moderator Dr. Kenneth Shouler interviewed him for the Youngtown Edition.

1. How did your appreciation of Baraka begin?

My appreciation of Baraka began when I was in graduate school at the University of Montana, pursuing my Master's Degree in English Literature. Initially, I was first introduced to Baraka's work as a poet by one of my friends in my M.A. degree class cohort. Soon thereafter, I was writing my Master's thesis project on conceptions of jazz and hip hop in the twentieth century African American novel. Baraka's writing on jazz in the 1950s and 1960s served as the starting point for much of my research. I soon found out that

in order to be able to explain the cultural significance of jazz in the twentieth century, I would need to rely on both Baraka's musical and cultural criticism. In telling my thesis about how jazz and hip hop were cultural symbols of defiance, strength, and rebirth that novelists drew on in their writing to retell these stories of Black resistance and survival, Baraka's insight proved essential. So, when it came time for me to apply to PhD programs and choose a prospective dissertation topic, Baraka became a logical candidate.

2. Why did he change his name from Leroi Jones to Amiri Baraka?

He changed his name to Amiri Baraka ("blessed prince" in Arabic) because at this time

many African Americans were renaming themselves in an Afrocentric fashion. For Baraka, like the many others, this renaming signaled a new identity centered around a new, positive sense of blackness. He was inspired by Malcolm X (born Malcolm Little) in this regard, who was a practicing Muslim. Yet, for Baraka, while he adopted a Muslim name, he never became a practicing member of Islam.

3. What about his work and / or traits of character made him an attractive figure?

As an interdisciplinary scholar with degrees in History and Political Science, English Literature, and American Studies, I found Baraka attractive as an object of study because his poetics and politics were inter-

disciplinary. As someone who loves literature and poetry, I was also attracted to his lifelong work and dedication to the craft of poetry. As someone who loves music, I found Baraka's musicality to be unique and profound. As someone who loves hip hop music, I very much enjoyed studying Baraka's poetry of the 1960s. His performative style was very much a forerunner to the rap style that became so popular in the 1970s. Moreover, as someone who both loves to study and teach American literature, history, and cultural politics from a transnational perspective, I find the contours of the Black freedom struggle in the U.S. fascinating, its popular historical representation obscured, and the story of Baraka's life of political

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and cultural work is emblematic in this particular context.

4. How does he live on in his son?

I think if you study Ras Baraka you will see many of the same cultural and political elements contained in the life of his father. Ras went to Howard University and became active in student government, as well as in the poetry and hip hop scene. Since his return to Newark following school, his civic engagement is a testament to the importance of local politics and the lessons his dad taught him. Where Amiri Baraka failed as a mainstream political figure in Newark, his son has seemingly learned from his father's pitfalls and has polished his own legacy by running the city of Newark these past eight years in a reputable manner. While I would stop short of characterizing Newark as underdoing a renaissance, I would argue that Mayor Baraka has overseen the healthiest municipal conditions since the lowest days of the Newark Rebellion of 1967. Lastly, I think if you look at the policies and programs that Mayor Baraka has implemented, many of them are true to his father's fighting spirit for nothing less than political and economic justice for African-descended people living in this country. From independent community oversight of the Newark Police Department, updating infrastructure to meet the needs of residents, and enacting initiatives to employ vulnerable teenagers during the summer months to making homeownership more affordable to help citizens become first-time homeowners, Mayor Baraka's programs are committed to uplifting all of Newark's citizens, but certainly those of African American descent. Lastly, Mayor Baraka's resuscitation and implementation of his father's failed affordable housing project, Kawaida



Dramatist, Novelist and Poet, Amiri Baraka.

Towers, seems to me a clear redemption of the civic virtue that his father operated under during the 1970s when he fell out of political favor following the Towers project failure to materialize.

5. I liked your answer about the anti-semitism displayed by Baraka in the poem he wrote after September 11, 2001—that we don't judge a person's entire life or body of work by one moment.

Did that comment lead people to dismiss Baraka as a voice of reason, or does his legacy remain intact?

His poem "Somebody Blew Up America," and the ensuing controversy that resulted in the State of New Jersey abolishing the position of Poet Laureate, certainly led people to dismiss Baraka as a voice of reason, but I would argue that his loudest critics were ones who had dismissed him from the national scene back in the 1970s. As is often the case when it comes to Baraka, I think you will find a schism between those who support his body of work and the politics he embodied (from the progressive literary community as well as many members of the Black working and middle-class communities) and those who reject him entirely (political conservatives and more moderate liberals). For many of his African American supporters, they find Baraka's defiant poetry and politics were points of cultural pride and dignity. For all of his supporters who see him as a voice of reason, his questioning of oppression and historical instances of genocide that he posed in "Somebody Blew Up America" (linking the U.S. to the Congo to Nazi Germany) remains an open interrogation of both the United States and western capitalism's cultural and political values.

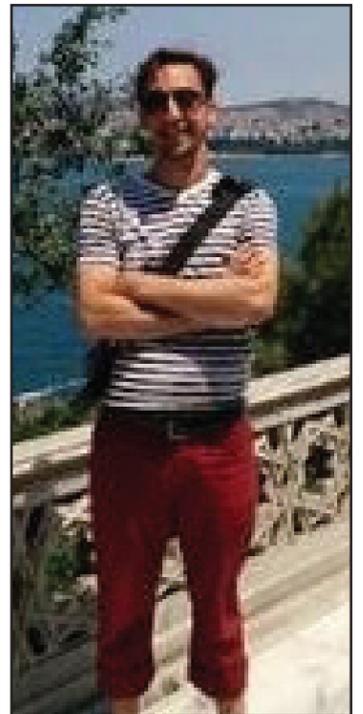
6. Among his many achieve-

ments, which do you regard as the greatest?

I consider his greatest achievements to have been his development of multiple all-black cultural and political institutions that sought to mobilize African Americans at a point in American history where controlling the narrative of race had become contentious. Baraka's Black Arts Theatre and Spirit House specifically opened the door for a new generation of African Americans who wanted to speak, dress, dance, live, and create art in an unapologetic fashion that fostered pride in their African heritage in order to live more successful, complete, authentic lives.

7. Though he died in 2014, in what ways does he "live on" in Newark and throughout the country and world?

Baraka lives on in Newark through his family and its political influence via his son, Ras. He lives on in the poetry of poetry slams and hip hop rapping that arose during the 1980s and 1990s. Baraka's cultural work with the Black Arts Movement and Spirit House lives on in the proliferation of black art that dominates the cultural landscape in the U.S. since the 1980s. The rise of films like Black Panther is a testament to Baraka's concern with Black representation and the need for African Americans



Dr. Peter Clavin, English & Philosophy Dept.

to see themselves portrayed in popular culture as three-dimensional (complex, flawed, and beautiful) people. In the cultural reversal from one dimensional racist stereotypes of blackface minstrelsy that pervaded Baraka's youth and young adulthood to the sophisticated and successful black artists, producers, and actors of today, from Beyoncé to Ryan Coogler to Viola Davis, the success of so many African Americans in the cultural realm is a tribute and a testament to the Black Arts Movement that Baraka helped inspire.

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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.

Why CCM students love their school

BY SARA RIOS
Contributor

If one is a student and looking for a school that is inexpensive and nationally respected, County College of Morris may be the right school. CCM was ranked #1 Community College in New Jersey by Salary Potential in 2021. Not only does the school have the ranking to back up its reputation, but it also has many students who swear by the school and its education.

There are many other reasons students choose CCM. Andrea Morales, 20, business major at CCM, said she chose this school because of its convenience. "It's near my house, and I could have some flexibility with my hard schedule," Morales said. Community college for many, especially those who work full-time jobs, gives them the opportunity to make money while continuing their education.

Like Morales, Alyssa Scafa, 19, also chose CCM because of its location. "County College of Morris is very close to home, and I figured I could finish my associ-



PHOTO BY STACY NETHERY

Gee Kobylarz (left), graduated from CCM in 2021 with a degree in Graphic Design, and is continuing to attend the school to take photography classes; and Erin Luby is in her third semester at CCM studying photography technology.

ates degree there and then transfer to a school of my choice," Scafa said.

Even though it may not be the case for all students, what many

students at CCM have in common is that the school's location is close to home. Another shared interest about the school among students is that many four-year

universities have a high transfer acceptance rate, compared to applying as a first-year student.

Although there are community colleges throughout the state, such as Bergen Community College and Sussex Community College, CCM is ranked in the top two by Niche. There are many students who attend CCM from out of county and choose to pay the extra tuition in order to receive an education from the college. Cameron Marns, 21, a business major at CCM, is an example of a student from out of county. "I choose CCM because even though I'm out of county, CCM's programs are far better than my own county," Marns said.

He related how great his experience has been at CCM because of the professors and business courses offered both in person and online. "I recommend to all my friends at CCM to take any class with Professor Qvotrup. She is so knowledgeable in business, and I loved every class I took with her," Marns said.

While location and education play a huge part in students who

decide to attend CCM, the overriding factor for most students is the inexpensive aspect of the school. "I chose CCM because I knew I was going to save money if I went there," Scafa said. Along with her, Marns and Morales both mentioned how cost effective CCM is.

Since 2020, saving money became more important for many parents and students. "Covid made me want to save money, especially after seeing so many other students pay tuition in full but have to attend classes from their computer," Morales said. Luckily for CCM students, online classes weren't a new concept for the school, since for years, many classes had an online option to fit better in students' busy schedules.

Whether one is looking for a school because of a convenient location, a good education, or because of cost effectiveness, CCM may be the school people choose. Morales said, "CCM is the best decision I made, and I know years down the line I will be thanking myself for . . . choosing this school."

Deciding a major: Not always a linear path

BY CAMERON MARNs
Contributor

Upon applying to college, a person must decide what they intend to study. Choosing a major is not simple. The student must be certain that they have the passion to pursue both an academic and professional career in that field of study.

"I had communications and psychology in mind before business," said Sara Rios, 19. Rios further explained that it had always fascinated her learning how and why people act certain ways. Though other fields of study

crossed her mind, Rios decided on majoring in business administration. "I ultimately want to have a career that I can financially excel in, and I don't think [by studying psychology] I could do that quickly," she said. Rios also explained that since her parents and brother have careers in business, she had an idea of what that discipline entails. Despite having other areas of study in mind, Rios always had a general idea she wanted to pursue in management. However, others' path to their calling were not so straightforward.

"I actually wanted to go to

school to learn music production," said Brian Wartman, a 24-year-old business major. Originally a traveling DJ while in the Navy, Wartman came to realize that the somewhat nomadic lifestyle music production required was not something he wanted to do in the long-term. "If I had started [college] when I was 18 . . . I might have switched majors a lot," he said. Wartman also said that during his time off while he was in the service, he became fascinated with the stock market, playing a role in his eventual choice of business.

Though the two had differ-

ent paths on finding their calling, both Rios and Wartman have always been business majors for their college careers. On the other hand, not all students start off their academic journey studying the major that is right for them.

"My first major was radiography" said Dylan Wojdyla, 21. Although he admits for a time that he enjoyed studying radiography, Wojdyla's time as a caterer for Perona Farms in Andover, New Jersey, realized he had a passion in the foodservice industry. "I realized that I had more of an interest doing what I was doing now with my job," he said. Now he's

majoring in hospitality management, a field that works well with his personality.

Wojdyla's decision to switch a major is not too uncommon for college students, as between 50% to 75% of college students switch majors in their academic career according to a study conducted by Ohio State University. The decision to pursue a career that a student will genuinely enjoy is not as clear-cut as it might seem. Some may already have a picture of what career to pursue after high school, while others might need to experience the world to find what piques their interest.

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REVIEW: 'West Side Story' features 'heart-rending, vivacious' performance, 'spectacular' choreography

BY LAURA
SAN ROMAN
Entertainment Editor

The first *West Side Story* film, released Oct. 18, 1961, was nominated for 11 Academy Awards, and won ten, including Best Picture, Best Director, Best Cinematography, and Best Screenplay. Everyone knows the hit song "America," with its singular Sharks and the girls' choreography, played out on a Manhattan rooftop and sung, principally, by Rita Moreno and George Chakiris, who won the awards for Best Supporting Actress and Supporting Actor. Current audiences might regard the new *West Side Story*, released Dec. 10, 2021, as being just as wonderful as the original, with incredible singing and performances. Directed by the iconic Steven Spielberg, the film drew critical acclaim. The film received seven nominations at the 94th Academy Awards and won three awards at the 79th Golden Globe Awards.

The current edition stars Rachel Zegler as Maria in her film debut, Ansel Elgort as Tony, Ariana DeBose as Anita, David Alvarez as Bernardo, the leader of the Sharks, Mike Faist as Raiff, the leader of the Jets, and Rita Moreno as Valentina. Though the film takes place in 1950s New York, scenes were also shot in Flatlands, Brooklyn and Paterson, New Jersey, where the two rival gangs are consistently at each other's throats while Tony, a member of the Jets, and Maria, the sister of the leader of the Sharks, fall in love much to each gang's disapproval. This disapproval festers into hatred.

The score, written and composed by Leonard Bernstein, is the same as the 1961 original, yet the new voices of Rachel Zegler, Ansel Elgort, and the rest of the cast bring refreshing change to the songs. Zegler's voice soars. In her debut role, Zegler shows she is a force to be reckoned with as her performance as Maria. Known for his roles in *The Fault in Our Stars* and *Baby Driver*, Elgort showed off a baritone voice and performed admirably as Tony. Their on-screen chemistry is brilliant. You root for them to be together, despite their circumstances.

The choreography is spectacular throughout. The beginning scene is filled with such spirited dancing and singing. Songs like "America" and "Cool" make for scenes of uncanny energy and are unfailingly fun to watch.



Zegler's performance as Maria is at once heart-rending and vivacious. She brings so much emotion to her role and you can truly feel the way she is feeling throughout the film.

DeBose brought fresh vitality to the role of Anita, and Alvarez repurposed the role of Bernardo. Faist also shines as Riff, adding a new sarcasm to the leader of the Jets.

The tragic ending, adapted from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, will tug at your heartstrings. Even if you know the ending of the peerless original, this ending still bursts with emo-

tion. *West Side Story* will also stream on Disney Plus March 2. However high the bar is raised by the original, Spielberg's version is definitely worth watching.

COURTESY OF TWITTER

STIGMA

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tend County College of Morris. Senyk also mentioned that CCM has numerous articulation agreements with four-year universities. These agreements allow students to earn their associate degree and then move on to another college to earn their bachelor's degree, with all their credits transferring. CCM has over 20 articulation agreements, encouraging students to seamlessly transfer without worry.

One of the common reasons

for attending a community college is to save money. "CCM isn't as expensive as other colleges," said Bri Palucci, a child and family studies major. "It was much more affordable." According to the Education Data Initiative, the average cost of tuition in New Jersey is currently \$14,360. That is a significant difference compared to CCM's average tuition cost of \$5,388, that could drastically change a student's financial situation.

As student debt continues to grow and the idea of student loan forgiveness seems to have been put on the back burner, en-

rolling in an affordable college is an enormous concern for college students. CCM also offers free funding to students in need. State grants, external scholarships, and federal financial aid are opportunities for students to save more money. Palucci found several scholarships on CCM's website and could easily apply.

Staying at home for college also provides the stability that moving away cannot. Family, friends, and one's favorite restaurant do not need to be hundreds of miles away. "It was a lot closer to home than other schools," said Kenny Zahir, a radiography ma-

ior. "And it has a good reputation as a community college."

Commuting to college helps students save money, which is a common denominator in students' reasoning for choosing CCM. Staying close to home for college allows students to spend more time with their support systems, such as family, and maintaining their jobs. Zahir was aware that CCM was included in the top 1.8% of community colleges in the United States by Academic Influence and has the highest graduate salaries according to Payscale.

People often ridicule or look

down upon students who attend community college because they are not aware of the benefits. Senyk, Palucci, and Zahir are helping erase the harmful stigma around community college by focusing on the benefits. High schools must be more open to the idea of community college and advertise the advantages that can be seen after a brief walk through any community college campus. Ultimately, a diploma after two years at a community college then a transfer to a four-year institution looks the same as a diploma after four years at the same college.

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Fears of the future and negative outcomes; the messages and psychology behind Shel Silverstein's poem WHATIF

BY DANIELLE PECCI
Editor-in-Chief

"Whatif I get beat up? / Whatif there's poison in my cup? / Whatif I get sick and die? / Whatif I flunk the test? / Whatif green hair grows on my chest? / Whatif nobody likes me?" These are the words of Shel Silverstein from his poetry book, *A Light in the Attic*, published in 1981. Silverstein is a talented writer of poetry for children, but adults also enjoy his work. According to the Central Rappahannock Regional Library, "he was also a cartoonist, composer, lyricist, and folk-singer." There have been attempts in the 1980s and 1990s to ban *A Light in the Attic*. The National Coalition Against Censorship states, a school in Wisconsin forbade "the book over concerns that it glorified Satan, suicide and cannibalism, and also encouraged children to be disobedient. And a school library in Indiana faced a challenge based on a concern that the book included 'anti-parent material.' Silverstein's book also faced challenges at Fruitland Park Elementary School in Florida after parents were shocked to learn that Abigail in 'Little Abigail and the Beautiful Pony' dies in the end." However, for most people who grew up reading Silverstein's poetry, it remains at once nostalgic and playful; insightful and engaging. While Silverstein's poetry is often light-hearted, as an adult who can further understand the significance of the messages within his poetry, the deeper meanings can be evaluated and understood to a greater extent.

Silverstein's poem "WHATIF" centers on him lying in bed at night trying to sleep, when a sudden flood of 'what ifs' conquer his mind. Those who have trouble sleeping, may have experienced an event/situation in their life that causes worry or have a heavy weight of thoughts or fears plaguing their minds may begin to 'what if' at bedtime. During the day, we are usually too busy to ruminate or pay much mind to our worries about the future. Our daily activities are often distractions to our troubles. Once we lay down in bed; however, 'what ifs' can creep into our thoughts; worries about the future and past. Situations we wish we could change or go back. Uncertainty of the future; what if I mess up again? The unknown can cause anxiety. The future, unlike the past, involves a lack of control because we don't know what will occur. We can only hope that everything will work out. But why is it easier to focus on the negative? These negative situations or fears that take us away from enjoying the present moment, or even getting a restful night's sleep.

According to a journal article published by the American Psychological Association called *Not All Emotions Are Created Equal: The Negativity Bias in Social-Emotional Development* states, "There is ample empirical evidence for an asymmetry in the way that adults use positive versus negative information to make sense of their world; specifically, across an array of psychological situations and

tasks, adults display a negativity bias, or the propensity to attend to, learn from, and use negative information far more than positive information." Adults tend to focus more time thinking about negative than positive stimuli, "and form more complex cognitive representations of negative than of positive stimuli." Have you ever heard someone say that the people who told them they couldn't do something were the ones who drove them to accomplish their goals? Have you noticed how negative news garners more reactions from people? We are perhaps hard-wired with an attraction to negativity. A *Verywell Mind* article, *What is the Negativity Bias?* by Kendra Cherry says, as humans, we tend to: "remember traumatic experiences more than positive ones, recall insults better than praise, react more strongly to negative stimuli, think about negative things more frequently than positive ones, and respond more strongly to negative events than to equally positive ones."

Let's say, on the same day, someone in the morning compliments your well-groomed chestnut-colored hair. Later, someone makes a hurtful joke about the clothes you're wearing. A lot of times, even though you had received a compliment, the hurtful joke carries more weight and may sit in your mind uninvited, causing stress and worry. While laying in bed at night, the insensitive words of the person come back with full force. It can cause you to question yourself, how you look, if other people think that, or if you will ever wear that outfit again. Let's say you think that nobody likes you. People are social creatures; we largely depend on socializing to fulfill our needs. Without experiencing different perspectives and opinions or bouncing thoughts off anyone else, we can feel lonely and withdrawn. 'What ifs' are valid because we are often worrying about what could happen if we don't receive what we need or want. Let's say you are asking yourself 'what if?' over a test. The good in you wants to do well and pass it, but the uncertainty of what will be on the test might become overwhelming. What if I blank once the test is in front of me? What if I fail and flunk the class? What if?

These 'what ifs;' however, are imaginative thinking gone wild. Why don't we 'what if' ourselves positively? What if I get an A on the test? What if my family and friends love me? What if I wear what I want because it makes me feel good? Our past experiences may have something to do with our worries. Perhaps we have failed before. Perhaps a loved one has ignored us in the past. Perhaps you'd rather avoid someone insulting your way of dressing by changing the clothes you wear. But at what cost? Our precious sense of self. This imaginative thinking is all in our mind. Awareness is important; to ask yourself, 'is this information true and based in reality? Or are my automatic thoughts firing off again with my subconscious fears? Even if our deepest worries aren't in the forefront of our minds, when lying

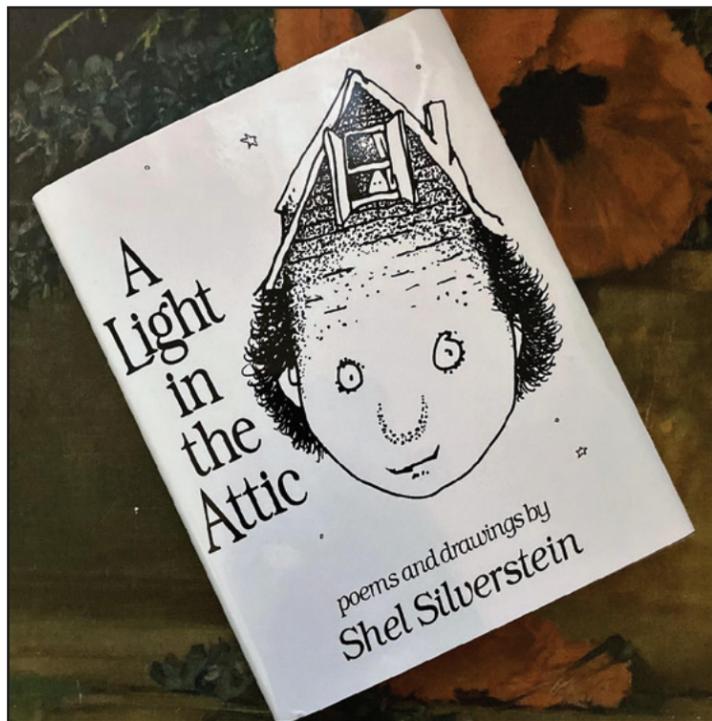


PHOTO BY DANIELLE PECCI

in bed at night, it's usually quiet, we are alone with our thoughts in darkness, the perfect time for the brain to surface our sometimes-uncontrollable thoughts and fears that lie dormant during the day. These thoughts can also arise in the daytime, but at night, it can feel like a sudden tidal wave. All those distractions: work, school, social media, television, social activities, hobbies; are no longer there for us to hide behind, where now we must face the thoughts in our mind during a still night.

Worry, fears, and painful thoughts will surface in life. They may even help drive us to do better. They can be a source of motivation to improve ourselves. It is even natural to question if something bad may happen. We are humans who often weigh the pros and cons of a situation, although the cons can feel scarier because we want things to go well. No one wants to fall ill or not be accepted in social situations. But embracing these thoughts, observing them as if they are not entirely attached to you, and having a conversation in your head about them may help depersonalize the intensity. For example, you could say to yourself in your head or aloud, 'I see right now that you are worried about your friend not liking you. I know it's important for you to have a good relationship with them because they mean a lot to you, and you're afraid of being rejected or abandoned. It's not always easy for you to make new friends and that may be why you feel so attached to this relationship. Is there any concrete evidence that your friend is going to stop being your friend? Are your fears and questioning only surfacing because you feel dependent on them for comfort and social interaction? If there is evidence, would it benefit you more to have a conversation with them to express your concerns instead of creating false scenarios? If they are your friend, they should be open to hearing you out.' Labeling thoughts and breaking them down to understand the underlying meaning behind them can help.

Worrying about the unknown future, as I've stated previously, takes you away from the present moment. Whether this worry oc-

curs late at night when trying to sleep or during the day when trying to function in everyday life; our brains are powerful, and while reflecting on past events or planning for future ones is normal and even necessary, if the 'what ifs' become troubling, maybe ask, 'what if I have the strength to get through this?' We usually do. 'What ifs' will arrive. They will not cease to exist. But the awareness you harness and the way you address and react to the 'what ifs' will determine if you will let them control you and your actions, or if you can place this often negative energy into being a friend to yourself by recognizing the thoughts that are not who you are, and the thoughts that hold some merit, but will not discourage you from pursuing your hopes and dreams, all while allowing yourself to be human. Meaning, we are often harder on ourselves than others, and just like you'd comfort a friend during their time of worry, you deserve the same love from yourself.

'What ifs' sometimes have solutions. The tough part; however, is understanding the work required on the individual's part to ease the stress rising from the 'what ifs' you have control over. Silverstein writes, "Whatif I never learn to dance?" Here, he is worrying over something that is within his control. It's easier to tell someone to be proactive regarding their wants and takes much more effort to pursue it than just saying it, and maybe the person feels they can't do something or won't be good enough; therefore, shying or hiding away from what they desire. But if someone wants to learn to dance, it doesn't always need to be about being the best at the craft. Sometimes, we can just do something out of pure enjoyment instead of competition or mastery.

Some 'what ifs' are completely out of our control. He writes, "Whatif my parents get divorced?" Unfortunately, events that are detrimental to the well-being of a person may occur, where we have no say in the matter. They have every right to worry, every right to be distraught, and it's even crucial to express these feelings to someone you trust. However, if the 'what if' is out of our hands, is not happening yet or is just a fear inside the

persons mind, try to see what you can influence within the situation, but also use coping mechanisms to calm the anticipation anxiety of such an event. According to a *Psych Central* article called *Coping With What You Can't Control* by Margarita Tartakovsky, which was medically reviewed by *Psych Central's* Scientific Advisory Board; there are some ways of coping that may help someone deal with situations they can't control: Feel exactly what you are feeling without judgment because sometimes avoiding the feelings will cause even more distress in the future. Try not to fixate on the reasons why something is happening because "it stops you from moving forward and finding what you can control in that moment," and try to remind yourself that these feelings won't be permanent and may lessen in intensity in time. "When you can't control a situation, you feel overwhelmed, powerless, helpless and hopeless. It's demoralizing to think there's nothing you can do. Or maybe we know there are many things we can do, but we don't have the energy. When this happens, when you feel this way, move slowly. Honor yourself. Take one small, tiny step. Take a breath. Text a loved one. Write a few words about what you need. Take your time. In other words, be kind and gentle with yourself."

People try to avoid negativity, understandably so, especially if the negativity they are avoiding is toxic to them. But it's also important to acknowledge the various forms of negativity and how they will be a part of life along with positive aspects that still have the power to influence us in impactful ways. Silverstein's poem "WHATIF" brings to light the darkness our minds can sometimes succumb to, and the worries and fears that tangle themselves snug tight within our thoughts while lying down to get some rest. Our intricate brains may not always 'turn off' at night when we want it to because the 'what ifs' sneak in sometimes unexpectedly as our thoughts connect to other thoughts, sometimes tumbling down a spiral staircase. The important thing is, we must try our best to accept that both negative and positive outcomes, with gray areas in between, exist. And stealing our peace of mind in the present moment with incessant worry without action over past or future doesn't change what has happened in the past or create solutions for the future. Sometimes, we need to be ok with not knowing, but do what we can to create our desired outcome with what is in our control, without being held back by uncertainty. And sometimes, we just need to let the 'what ifs' run their course, slightly depersonalizing the experience by understanding we cannot avoid it entirely. They are only thoughts, not always truth. They're valid feelings because they live inside us, but they don't define us and are usually given power and meaning from ourselves. This is an experience and feeling I'm certain we've all gone through; Silverstein writes, "Everything seems swell, and then / The nighttime Whatifs strike again!"



The pool table in Mark Twain's Hartford House.

The unexpected health benefits of playing billiards

**BY PROFESSOR
KENNETH SHOULER**
Adviser for the Youngtown Edition

A self-professed billiards addict who played up to ten hours a day in his later years, Mark Twain once claimed that “the click of billiard balls was the most distinct sound in the world.” Aside from that unexpected aesthetic pleasure, few consider the physical and mental benefits of playing billiards (a term often used interchangeably with “pool”). Playing pool can benefit anyone. To begin, there is significant walking. Walking around a pool table for 30 minutes can burn upwards of 200 calories.

To many people, it's surprising to learn of the physical benefits derived from playing pool. After all, in that old philosophical query about the differences between a game and a sport, we can say that pool lies at the game end of the spectrum, along with chess and board games. By contrast, the activities with greater physicality—including football, rugby, boxing, basketball, and tennis—lie at the sports end of the spectrum. True enough. It shouldn't be suggested that pool puts participants through the physical rigors that sports do. Still, pool involves eye-hand coordination, as you factor in the shot's angle and the rear hand, the one holding the butt end of the cue, supplies the power to hit the ball.

That's just a start. To sight the balls properly, it's recommended that the shooter “get down on the shot,” nearly resting his chin on the butt end of the cue to see the entire length of it—including the tip, cue ball and the object ball in a single line of vision. Because of the repeated bending, pool players get low-impact exercise of their back, hips, and legs. Further, to reach shots, players must stretch out over the green baize,

all the while maintaining balance while cueing the ball at various angles.

Then we can consider cognitive ability. Aside from concentrating on the task at hand—calculating the striking angle needed to make a single shot—players soon gain the confidence to plan to pocket balls consecutively. To accomplish this requires logical planning, so a player might think, ‘If I want to make the seven-ball next, I will try to roll my cue ball to this area nearby.’ This sort of problem solving includes several calculations at once: namely, where to cue the ball (dead center, or high, low, right or left, with spin or “English.”), what angle to hit the object ball, and how hard to hit it. Physics and geometry come into play.

I suspect those are some of the reasons that Twain loved the game. In his later years, he played up to 10 hours a day. In his book *The Boys' Life of Mark Twain*, Albert Bigelow Paine wrote, “With the return to New York, I began a closer period of association with Mark Twain. Up to that time out, relations had been chiefly of a literary nature. Now they became personal as well.”

Paine went on: “It happened this way: Mark Twain had never outgrown his love for the game of billiards, though he had not owned a table since the closing of the Hartford house, fifteen years before. Mrs. Henry Rogers had prosed to present him with a table for Christmas, but when he heard of the plan, boylike, he could not wait, and hinted that if he had the table ‘right now’ he could begin to use it sooner. So, the table came—a handsome



**PROFESSOR
KENNETH
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Mark Twain: “The Poorer you play, the better I shall like it.”

combination affair, suitable for all games—and was set in place. That morning when the dictation ended, he said:”

“Have you any special place to lunch today?”

I replied that I had not.

“Lunch here,” he said, “and we'll try the new billiard-table.”

I acknowledged that I had never played more than a few games of pool, and those very long ago.

“No matter,” he said, “the poorer you play, the better I shall like it.”

“Once in a burst of exasperation he made such an onslaught on the balls that he landed a couple of them on the floor. I gathered them up, and we went on playing as if nothing had hap-

pened, only he was very gentle and sweet, like a summer meadow when the storm had passed.

Presently he said: “This is a most amusing game. When you play badly, it amuses me, and when I play badly and lose my temper, it certainly must amuse you.”

It was but natural that friendship should grow under such conditions. The disparity of our ages and gifts no longer mattered. The pleasant land of play is a democracy where such things do not count.

We celebrated his seventy-first birthday by playing billiards all day. He invented a new game for the occasion and added a new rule for it with almost every shot. It happened that no other mem-

ber of the family was at home—ill health had banished everyone, even the secretary. Flowers, telegrams, and congratulations came, and a string of callers. He saw no one but a few intimate friends.

We were entirely alone for dinner, and I felt the great honor of being his only guest on such an occasion. He was in his loveliest humor all that day and evening, and at night when we stopped playing, he said:

“I have never had a pleasanter day at this game.”

I answered: “I hope then years from tonight we shall be playing it.”

“Yes,” he said, “still playing the best game on earth.”

Mark Twain died four years later.

Why students choose County College of Morris

ALYSSA SCAFA
Contributor

Though County College of Morris is a small school; that doesn't stop students from attending. Whether they took part in Instant Decision Day, which is a day where students commit to one school instantly, or realized they wanted to apply to the school during the summer, many students who were asked were satisfied with their choice to attend CCM.

"CCM was a good choice for me since I switched majors," said Jessica Wirths, a business major at CCM. "I feel like if I switched majors at another school, it would be such a huge waste of money but here it's not a big deal."

What is true is the fact that CCM's tuition is predominately cheaper than those of four-year schools. For example, the estimated price of in-state tuition for one year at Montclair State

"Some professors at CCM even teach at some other colleges that are really expensive, and they are teaching the same thing."

Evan Rynearson
Business major

is \$13,073. Meanwhile, the estimated price of CCM for one year is \$9,720. Though both estimates are from 2019 to 2020, it's still safe to say that tuition at CCM is cheaper than competing four-year schools. When students attend CCM, they earn the same credits and similar classes for cheaper. Not to mention, the transportation provides for close accessibility.

"I chose CCM mainly because I am paying for my own college," said Evan Rynearson, another business major. "I didn't want to pay \$25K plus a semester on courses that I could take for a

fraction of the price." CCM's affordability draws students closer to the school. Not only can they get the same credits, but for a lower price.

Juliana Soares, a broadcasting arts and technology major, chose CCM for a couple important reasons. "I . . . wanted to save some money so that I didn't have the student debt and CCM is less expensive than a four-year school. With that, many of my friends from high school also planned on attending CCM, which reassured me that I would know some people there."

The fact that CCM is close

to most of the students attending makes it much easier for them to see people that they already know. This not only strengthens current friendships, but it also allows for more connections throughout the student body. "I visited CCM for an open house and liked that the campus wasn't too big as I didn't want to attend a large school," Soares said. "I've known many people who have attended CCM, and they've had nothing but good things to say about their experiences, which encouraged me to attend as well."

Another student also commented, "Some professors at

CCM even teach at some other colleges that are really expensive, and they are teaching the same thing," Rynearson said. "Not worth going into hundreds of thousands in debt for a degree that gives you no guarantee for a job in a very competitive job market."

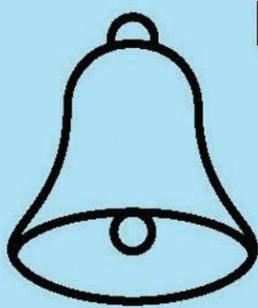
The fact that CCM is a smaller campus also makes it easier for students to connect on a closer level. The experiences in this school could be more memorable than a larger school because CCM can give students closer connections with other people. A best friend isn't guaranteed, but the process toward making new friends could be easier and less nerve-racking since most people at this school are going for the same reason. With these similarities, students can discuss their situations and compare with other students, making the introduction part of the conversation flow more easily.



WHAT'S ON THE AGENDA?

Courtesy of the Student Government Association

Instagram: [sga_ccm](#) / Contact: sga@student.ccm.edu



From Meeting Date: Feb 22

Upcoming Events

- Welcome Bash Tuesday, March 8 at 12:30 p.m.
- Business Society Lupus Walk Sunday, April 10
- Easter egg hunt starts Tuesday, April 12
- Movie Night Under the Stars scheduled sometime in May (with rain date). A poll will be sent out to decide on a movie to play.

Other Noteworthy Mentions

- K-12 mask mandate being lifted Monday, March 7. The Pandemic Response Panel met Tuesday, March 1 to determine if or when CCM will lift masking requirements.
- Achieve the Dream: Initiative to work with administration to help students of color and reactivate the Black Student Union.
- Food vouchers available for students in need at The Office of Student Development & Enrollment Management in the Student Community Center, room 132.
- Game room is open in SCC.