

Real or Hype?

The Opioid Crisis

NIGUS GETAHUN
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

The opioid crisis has been an almost constant in the headlines over the past several years. With President Trump declaring the crisis as a public health emergency in 2017, it's hard to pass it as a trivial issue. However, given how much amplification the government puts on anything related to drugs, it is impossible to not think that some of the elements associated with this crisis are hyped? So, is it real or hype?

We can trace the opioid crisis back to the 90s, when pharmaceutical companies were convincing the medical community of the benefits of their opioid pain relievers. Convinced that they were not addictive, health care providers started prescribing these substances at a greater rate; eventually leading to a huge misuse of these substances, and causing the death of 47,000 Americans in 2017 alone according to *Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality*.

The withdrawal effects of heroin, which are detrimental to one's health, are at the heart of what's making it difficult to fight this problem. When users are taken of their opioid prescription drugs, they transition to obtaining these drugs illegally or turn to other drugs such as heroin and illegally manufactured fentanyl. According to the *Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration*, "An estimated 4 to 6 percent who misuse prescription opioids transition to heroin and about 80 percent of people who use heroin first misused prescription opioids."

The numbers for the overdose deaths have been going up ever since. President Trump's administration has given many federal resources to tackle this issue, with a recent \$1.8 billion dollars for funding from the Department of Health and Human Services to help states fight the crisis. According to a White House press release from October 2017, "The number of first-time heroin users ages 12 and older fell by more than 50 percent in July 2017." It's fair to say the Trump administration has been making progress, but the epidemic is still prevalent on a greater scale and continues to go up at a faster rate in 2019.

The huge amount of funding, recent court cases that have required pharmaceutical companies such as Purdue to pay massive penalties, and the spotlight of these issues in American news headlines beg the question: are they hype? No. These are all necessary to make a dent in this issue. We've seen this before with the crack epidemic of the 80s, which consequently killed and imprisoned many men and women, and caused the destruction of black families. In order to avoid the same fate, it's important that we take cautious steps and do everything we can to stop the destructive effects of this epidemic. So, my conclusion: the opioid crisis is REAL.

Final
Conclusion:
Real

A Fresh Start

Ms. Gardiner Takes Over in the Media Center

CAITLYN NEILS
CENTER EDITOR

After saying goodbye to school Media Center Specialist Dr. Dorr this past school year, Paint Branch welcomed the friendly Ms. Eileen Gardner with open arms to take over.

A lover of reading and information makes Ms. Gardner perfect for the job of Media Specialist. Already she's brought a wave of change to the space. Walking through the Media Center, one can see the shelves rearranged, books moved, and high chairs placed.

Coming from Drew Elementary, Ms. Gardner transitions to high school with big dreams. The dreams include creating a well-used space that revolves around students and their needs, providing a resource to all who walk through the center's doors. "This is your space," Ms. Gardner says. "I want to work as many students and staff as possible to make the media center the most-used and most-useful space at Paint Branch."

The biggest and most exciting of all of the changes she brings might be the makerspace. Traditionally, a makerspace is a place for the creative and problem-solvers to come together, working on hands-on projects and their creative pursuits, but the Paint Branch Makerspace is open to all.

Ms. Gardner wants the room to "provide a moment of mindfulness when things get stressful," which any student can find when enjoying the room's board games, Legos,

and coloring pages. The hottest activity thus far has been Perler beads- small and colorful beads that are arranged on a grid and ironed to create impressive images ranging from flowers to superheroes.

Another focus has been to add more student-centered items, including a seating area which was added for kids to come in and chill among the books. High tables and tall chairs were moved from the Panther Cafe to the Media Center, replacing where the reference books used to reside.

Most of these reference books are gone now as updating the book collection is part of Ms. Gardner's agenda.

A majority of the books that haven't been checked out in years (some as far back as the 80s!) are being donated to other schools, while the remaining books will continue to call Paint Branch home. Ms. Gardner mentions that this purge keeps the school's library up to date, while also giving her the flexibility to add to the book collection, which she happily has done by adding more recently published novels and developing a bigger graphic novel section.

Ms. Gardner states that these changes are to "make the media center all about students." Everything revolves around those who take advantage of the space, but teachers are openly welcomed too. "I hope teachers will see the value in partnering with the media center to curate resources, assist with teaching students the research process,



photo by: Caitlyn Neils

Ms. Gardner sees the Media Center as a place where students should feel welcome and encouraged to come for a variety of reasons.

and working with us to come up with awesome learning experiences and projects with their students," she says.

The Media Center of today is definitely a change from the past few years. Ms. Gardner has been making bold strides, and

Ms. Gardner thanks her support team for helping her with the transition, highlighting Media Assistants Ms. Burns and Ms. Dodd, ITSS Mr. Scott, and Media Services Technician Mr. Burgos. Impressed with the students' work ethic and dedication, and she feels as if she's found her own cozy home among these shelves.

"I feel like I am finally where I am supposed to be," Ms. Gardner expresses happily, "Paint Branch students make me proud. I am thrilled to be here. Being a media specialist is the best job ever."

Environmental Crisis:

Montgomery County's Youth Rise to Responsibility

SONCHEREE MCCAMPBELL

FEATURES EDITOR

On September 20th, thousands of protests were held internationally in support of environmental justice, protection of indigenous land and biodiversity, sustainable agriculture, and the ratification of the Green New Deal, a congressional plan to take on climate change.

According to *The Washington Post*, millions were involved in the protest, where students walked out or skipped school entirely to participate. According to *Global Climate Strike*, it simultaneously occurred across the globe in 185 countries with 7.6 million people involved, making the event the "biggest climate mobilization in history."

Awareness about climate change and its impact on not only our current society but, perhaps

more importantly, the future, is at an all-time high as it's been plastered all over the news and social media for the past few years, especially over the past few months. Tweets about the Amazon fires have been retweeted, Instagram posts of water pollution have been reshared, and even Tumblr blogs concerning deforestation have been re-blogged. Such publicity regarding the environment's poor state has enlightened people and emboldened them to seek change and take action by initiating climate change protests around the world.

At a recent local protest, James Hubert Blake High School student leader Ella Jacobs commented on the importance of youth participating in environmentally-oriented protests. Jacobs exclaimed that the world's condition is a crisis,

stating that "if [the world] continues with business as usual, it will be a death sentence" and that "if we don't drastically reduce our carbon emissions to prevent warming [of the Earth] over 2 degrees Celsius, then we will be unable to reverse a climate and ecological catastrophe."

Jacobs is not the only youth activist that voices this belief, her comments are similar to those of well-known Swedish youth activist Greta Thunberg, who has also stressed the urgency of raising our voices about climate change. In fact, in her speech "How Dare You" at the Climate Change Summit 2019, Thunberg accused older generations of being the cause of environmental calamities, emphasizing that big corporations and other institutions in power are "failing us" and forcing the youth to step up and make the necessary changes.

Montgomery County is

fairly close to Washington, DC, making those who are passionate about climate change feel some responsibility to be politically loud. Not every student can travel from New York to be part of DC protests, but students that live within forty minutes from the US Capitol can. We are in a time where gridlock is prevalent in the government and the governments' actions falsely mirror the youth desires. To many, this means that it is necessary to make our voices heard.

Even though students in Montgomery County are well aware of their political activism's importance and want to be part of upcoming protests, what holds some back from participating is the fear of an unexcused absence. In Montgomery County, having an unexcused absence is definitely a stressor for students, especially

when missed work cannot be made up. Imagine taking part in a protest, only to come back to school with an unfixable zero for an assignment. Student Member of the Board Nate Tinbrite acknowledges this setback, lobbying in favor of excused absences for protest participations. He hopes to "continue the efforts brought up by our last SMOB for changes to Policy KEA (to allow 3 excused absences for civic and political engagement)." His vision is to "allow students to be politically engaged - if they choose to do so."

It is more important now than ever for youth to be involved in the resistance of the government. The next climate change protest takes place in Washington DC, Friday, November 29th. As Montgomery County youth, it is on us to initiate change in the government. We must show up!

Getting to Know PB's New School Resource Officer *Officer B Hopes to Bring Out the Best in Everyone*

JORDAN SHORTER
SPORTS EDITOR

When you arrive at Paint Branch for morning drop off, there is no doubt that you have seen the peppy and upbeat police officer who assists with morning traffic.

Whether it is his warm smile as he greets parents as they drop students off or a sharp wave and welcoming posture, new School Resource Officer (SRO) Mr. Brandon McClood—or just Officer B—has clearly embraced his new role at Paint Branch.

Officer B says that he is “happy being here” and that he “loves making everyone feel welcome.”

His secret to being so lively in the morning is that he wants the students to feel loved, cared for, and safe in school. He also loves being able to

work with the administration and the security members here on campus.

Born and raised in St. Augustine, Florida, Officer B. came to the east coast to work on his master's degree in criminal justice at John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York City before landing here in Maryland. He attended the Montgomery County Police Academy and he has been an officer in Maryland for 12 years, working during that entire time in Silver Spring.

This is his first time working as an SRO, but he says that so far he is “loving it.” As for working at Paint Branch and in Burtonsville, Officer B says he really enjoys working in a school environment where learning is an everyday thing. “I really love being around students and want to connect with them,”

he adds.

Officer B worked primarily in Downtown Silver Spring before taking over as SRO. What he really liked about working there was how busy it was. He notes that Downtown Silver Spring definitely had an overall “city feel” that made it an interesting place to work. He adds that working in city areas has always appealed to him. His enjoyment of urban areas is one of the main reasons he loved New York, so his transition here has been good, even though he didn't “know anything about the area at first.”

Students say nothing but good things about Officer B. He waves to us in the mornings with a big smile on his face and he directs traffic very efficiently, while always keeping that cheerful manner.

One aspect that stands out too

many is that he isn't intimidating, or rude, which makes students feel like they can talk to him whenever he is available. Senior Funmi Baruwa says, “I think he's nice and a great addition to the school.”

Fellow senior Varsha Erapogla adds, “He's really cool, has a good vibe, and is really cheerful.”

Officer B has been a great addition to the Paint Branch community, and his genuinely cheerful attitude has impressed many parents, students, and fellow staff.

photo by: Alana Campbell



Officer Brandon McClood says of his new role as an SRO that he “loves making everyone feel welcome.”

“He's really cool, has a good vibe, and is really cheerful.”
- Varsha Erapogla, 12th

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PB Perspectives to Present Four Nights of *Twelfth Night*

LAUREN GANTMAN
STAFF WRITER

On Thursday, September 19, the Paint Branch theater group, Perspectives, kicked off the start of a brand-new show season with auditions for the fall play, Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. But this school year, Perspectives is saying a brief good-bye to long-time show director Ms. Perkins as the English Department's Mr. Bergmann will be taking on the title of director.

Although this will be Mr. Bergmann's first time directing at Paint Branch, he is not a complete stranger to the stage. He has been acting for over thirty years now, including a small role in last year's musical, *Annie*, as a member of FDR's cabinet, and has been directing at community and other local theaters for twenty years. He even ran his own theater production company for a short time. All in all, Perspectives is in good hands, and for the first time ever, Paint Branch will be putting on a Shakespeare comedy for the fall shows in November.

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perspectives presents

William Shakespeare's
TWELFTH
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Paint Branch High School
November 15, 16, 22 and 23

2019
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Paint Branch High School 14121 Old Columbia Pike, Burtonsville, MD 20866