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Kaitlyn Cochenour, YSU student and story interviewee, practices COVID protocols in the Cove of YSU's Kilcawley Student Center.

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HEALTH CARE, COLLEGE AND COVID-19

By yomag (<https://theyomag.com/index.php/author/yomag/>) / May 9, 2021

by Elizabeth Coss



Managing a job and college is more than most people can handle, but working and keeping up with college has drastically changed since COVID-19 started. Most students continue to do both despite the pandemic, balancing course work and tasks from a regular shift at a local store or business. The goal of keeping a job to pay off tuition and bills, and the goal of walk out of college with a degree in their desired field is the dream of students across America, but for one student, Kaitlyn Cochenour, learning to balance her schoolwork and job is more complicated than most. Cochenour, a business administration student, and part of the marketing department at Youngstown State University, works as a heart monitor technician at UPMC Jameson, in New Castle, Pa. While there, Kaitlyn watches heart monitors and studies rhythms on screens and makes sure patients are in stable condition. The risks going into the job were various, considering she applied and secured the job working in the hospital during the current COVID-19 pandemic.

She took the job, because she saw it as, “a new opportunity and a good chance to do something that meant more.” However, due to COVID-19, there was some anxiety going into the position regarding infection rates and working in a hospital during a pandemic. Pennsylvania has been noted as one of the hardest hit states during the pandemic, and not only does Kaitlyn live there, she now works there in a hospital. “I was nervous about the hospital in itself. My duty doesn’t have much patient contact, so I wasn’t as nervous as some other people would be, but there was the chance that I’m still in the hospital where COVID is very prevalent,” Cochenour states regarding when she first started working at UPMC Jameson.

However, most of Cochenour’s family was supportive of her decision about going into the job. “My mom wasn’t super excited about it just because of COVID and everything that it brought with it.”

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Carol Cochenour, her mother, was more nervous about Kaitlyn's occupation. "I was still pretty nervous," she said, "Kaitlyn's pretty strong-willed, and she took it anyways."

Kaitlyn stated that despite her anxieties going in, she has felt safe, commenting that, "as far as PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) goes and just regulations and everything, it's been very much made to protect us and the patients while they are there."

Kaitlyn's experiences with patients have differed greatly. She says she has "seen all kinds of different patients recover from things that they absolutely shouldn't have recovered from, and that's been the coolest thing to see, because before I had worked in the healthcare industry, I didn't realize how much your body does to protect itself, and I think it's cool just seeing everyday people's bodies protecting them." She finds it interesting to be able to see something new daily, but to watch people heal and recover was one of things she enjoyed most about working in the hospital environment because she had never really been in these kinds of scenarios until now.

College in general has been hard for most students to keep up with during COVID-19. Students across the country have started feeling the pressures of work and school. For Kaitlyn, finding a rhythm to her classes and work is something she has been striving for recently. Being a full-time student along with working at Jameson, Kaitlyn adds that the job and work balance is something she appreciates and that she is still able to manage both respectively.

"It offers a very, very good work-school balance, so I'm able to still do my studies while I'm working," she said.

She describes the overall impact of her job on this semester as positive and says it is going well, adding that between work and class she is able to keep up with both and feel good about the work she is putting out.

"Just because of the duties that I have, it gives me a lot of time to do my schoolwork while I'm there, so the fact that classes are mainly online makes it a lot easier cause most of my schoolwork is done while I am there," Kaitlyn said.

Her mother also states that Kaitlyn was doing well regarding school adding that, "Her grades portrayed that she's doing a good job," in addition to managing her occupation and college, her mother notes Kaitlyn "also has her own house and she is doing an internship, so her plate is full."

However, Kaitlyn acknowledges that managing all these things right now is somewhat difficult. She says, "It is mentally taxing, it's 12-hour shifts, so I'm there all the time, and managing that with school has been a hard balance, but I'm figuring it out." When discussing her future, she added that the healthcare field is too big for what she wants to do, and would like to focus on something smaller and more local with her business degree. However, she does enjoy the rush of work flow she experiences from the hospital.

Going forward, the biggest thing she is looking forward to through her job at the hospital is, "Getting better at what I do and developing more and learning more everyday as I go." She notes that through this job she is learning about promptness and accountability.

"Just learning that it's very much just about being there on time, being present, doing my best work every day, I think that'll help carry on into the future," Kaitlyn said.

Kaitlyn believes this job is going to be one of the most influential jobs she will work at in her life, and she looks forward to seeing how working in the healthcare industry shapes her views and work ethic. She credits the fast-paced nature for training her for a hectic schedule she believes it will help her deal with clients in the marketing field.

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Since Kaitlyn took up the position back in October, Lawrence County saw a rise in deaths from COVID-19 around December into the new year according to data from the Pennsylvania Health Department Dashboard. December 10th marked the most cases announced in one day for Pennsylvania at 12,818 new confirmed cases. As of March 16, 2021, Pennsylvania has administered over 3 million vaccines, 9,891 of those full vaccinations being in Lawrence County.

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by **Sierra Kish, Monica Kurjan, Jessica Stamp and Dallas Tripoulas**

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WRITING HISTORY AT YSU

By yomag (<https://theyomag.com/index.php/author/yomag/>) / May 9, 2021

by Sydney A. Stalnecker

On the fifth floor of William F. Maag Jr. Library, behind the glass windows, sits the Archives and Special Collections. For the last year, Youngstown State University’s archivists have been collecting information and materials for the COVID-19 YSU Experience Repository.

Cassie Nesor, curator of the Maag Library Archives, conducts the collection for the repository.

“A repository is a safe place where you keep things,” Nesor said. “In our work it is a synonym for the archives.”

She divided the repository into two sections: the university’s response to keep the public informed, and the personal experiences of students, faculty and staff.

The materials submitted and collected are kept digitally and are going to be made available for future researchers to get a well-rounded understanding of the pandemic’s impact on campus.

The archives already house records of documents published yearly by YSU.

“We collect the university history regularly,” Nespors said. “We collect things like the news reports from the marketing department, board of trustees minutes, all of The Jambar’s.”

However, she recognized the usual gathering of this information wouldn’t be enough to capture exactly how COVID-19 was affecting the campus and the students attending it. YSU also began to change how it reported COVID-19 related news, which led Nespors to change her means of collecting information.

Lisa Garofali, an assistant archivist at Maag Library, has helped Nespors collect materials since the beginning.

“It started in the spring when everyone was sent home,” Garofali said. “At the time, we all knew this was something unusual, and it was an event that was significantly affecting people and their lives.”

In April 2020 they began collecting the university’s response to the pandemic through websites, emails, documents and posts from social media.

“I save the Dashboard every week in a PDF. I save the COVID website that we have. I saved information from the Environmental and Occupational Health and Safety Department,” Nespors said.

YSU President Jim Tressel also made an appearance in the repository as well. Nespors saved the videos he posted on social media platforms, such as Facebook, YouTube and Instagram, as well as videos of him at town hall meetings.

The only physical materials Nespors has collected so far are the care-packages given out by the university upon the students’ return to campus. These include YSU-themed face masks and hand sanitizer packaged in a little grey bag with the “Y” logo on the front.

Nespors realized only gathering information on the university’s response was leaving out a major component of the pandemic’s effect on campus.

“As the summer wore on, I thought it would really be nice to be able to collect how people are responding to that,” Nespors said. “How they feel, how they shifted classes, what kinds of problems that created for teachers and for the students.”

Some of the first personal experiences she collected were of the video messages sent to spring 2020 graduates from family members.

“During graduation, they asked families to send video messages to the graduates, so I have those kinds of files,” she said.

The Dana School of Music performed at the 2020 commencement ceremony, which was recorded. The video was sent to Nespors and accompanies the video messages.

She began asking students, faculty and staff to write personalized, first-person accounts related to their COVID-19 experience and submit them using the form located on the homepage of Maag Library’s website.

“There should be a web link for a form that you fill out, and you type your COVID story,” Garofali said. “If you have any other type of media you would like to send us, whether it be music or a video you could email the archives.”

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The document on the website provides suggestions for possible story ideas. Students can write about the shift to remote learning in the spring, studying and working from home, working at an off-campus job – particularly in the service industry – and staying in touch with friends and family.

Nespor knew putting out a news release asking for story submissions wouldn't draw much attention. She reached out to Shelley Blundell, an assistant professor of journalism and communications and the adviser for YO Magazine, to publicize the collection and create another outlet for student submissions.

As the magazine adviser, Blundell proposed the idea to Zach Mosca, the Editor-In-Chief of the magazine. He agreed to dedicate the spring 2021 edition of YO Magazine to "COVID Voices."

"Every story in the magazine is going to be about somebody's experience with COVID-19 or how COVID-19 has affected campus, has affected the local Youngstown area, etc.," Mosca said.

The special edition of the magazine highlights the COVID-19 YSU Experience Repository, but it is not included in the repository itself. The archive already has a different collection for all editions of YO Magazine.

"My goal is that 50 years from now, when students wonder about this time and what it was like they can go and read some of the stories that are in this repository and get a good understanding of how our lives changed," Nespor said.

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The pandemic experience is different for everyone, but some may be struggling mentally more than others. Photo by Feggy Art, licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

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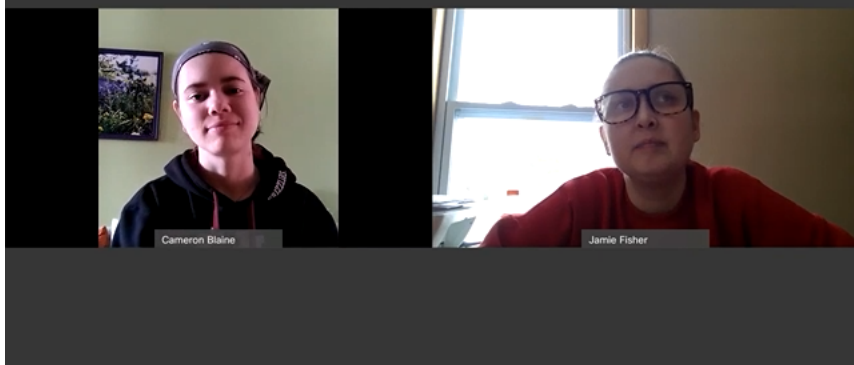
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by **C. Aileen Blaine**

“It was very stressful at the beginning,” Jamie tells me. “Not only now was I a mom, a wife taking care of the house, a college student — I was also a teacher on top of it all.”

Youngstown State University student Jamie Fisher and I are talking about the effects the COVID-19 pandemic has had on our lives. We are both sitting at a dining room table, smiling and laughing. We’re both dressed in sweatshirts, with our hair pulled back because we can’t be bothered to style it. Our faces are bare and tired. It’s the quarantine uniform, we joke.

But we are not sitting at the same dining room table. Instead, we sit, eyes trained to our screens, in our own homes, in true pandemic style. In fact, many miles separate us, but because of the times we’re living in, the closeness I feel to Jamie in these moments supersedes the physical distance.

Everyone’s “stay at home” experience has been different, so I want to know more about Jamie’s experience. I ask her how changes brought on by the pandemic lockdowns have affected her life.

“I was feeling very overwhelmed,” she says. “‘Stay at home’ meant for me, literally, *stay at home*. I don’t let people in my house, I don’t go to people’s houses. I don’t go out,” Jamie says. No trips to the grocery store, no ventures to the gas station, no nights out at a favorite restaurant, per doctor’s orders.

I ask her how she weathers the isolation.

“Alcohol,” she says with a laugh, but it isn’t completely carefree. “Everybody knows. My husband, my son ... If I had a day where I had classes, and then my son was just off-the-wall crazy and I was teaching him, my ass was pulling out the Jameson bottle at the end of the night and they knew it.”

Jamie’s honesty is refreshing and even humorous, and it’s a great showcase of the positivity she radiates. She explains that the bottle of Jameson isn’t something she relies on, but a quick shot or two *has* served as a temporary crutch to get through some of the more difficult days, when reading and physical activity just aren’t enough.

But for many others, such a confession is not so easy to make — even to themselves. Many Ohioans have found their mental health to be just one more casualty of the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to a [pandemic report \(https://mha.ohio.gov/Portals/0/assets/AboutUs/KeyIssues/key-issues-BH%20and%20COVID%20-%20LiteratureReview.pdf?ver=2020-07-10-111409-600\)](https://mha.ohio.gov/Portals/0/assets/AboutUs/KeyIssues/key-issues-BH%20and%20COVID%20-%20LiteratureReview.pdf?ver=2020-07-10-111409-600) by the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, an [Express Scripts report \(https://www.express-scripts.com/corporate/americas-state-of-mind-report\)](https://www.express-scripts.com/corporate/americas-state-of-mind-report) stated that within a month of the pandemic's onset in the United States, prescriptions rose for anti-anxiety medications by 34.1%, antidepressants by 18.6% and anti-insomnia drugs by 14.8%. According to a [Nielsen report \(https://www.forbes.com/sites/thomaspellechia/2020/03/25/nielsen-says-beverage-alcohol-retail-sales-are-soaring-during-the-crises/?sh=4a74d3d92444\)](https://www.forbes.com/sites/thomaspellechia/2020/03/25/nielsen-says-beverage-alcohol-retail-sales-are-soaring-during-the-crises/?sh=4a74d3d92444), alcohol sales “soared” and online purchases rose 55% within the first two weeks of Ohio's coronavirus lockdown.

Those who are isolated and stressed are more likely to use self-medication to alleviate their negative feelings and emotions. For some individuals, increased substance use can lead to a substance use disorder. Because isolation — *stay at home* — and stress are such hallmarks of the coronavirus experience, it's to be expected that many Ohioans' mental and emotional states are being pushed to their limits. If left unchecked, the crisis is expected to grow as more individuals lose their jobs, their loved ones and their livelihoods to the virus.

“Some students are concerned about health and COVID,” Dr. Ann Jaronski, licensed psychologist and director of Student Counseling Services at YSU, says. “Many are anxious about managing school and other commitments remotely. Some are struggling with family and other relationships concerns, heightened by being ‘home.’ Many are stressed and overwhelmed because things are not back to how they were in February 2020. Social, political and racial concerns are affecting some students [as well].”

“Basically,” Jaronski said, “we are seeing the same concerns we always have, some are just exacerbated because of the pandemic and lack of connection with others.”

These compounded issues cause many individuals of all backgrounds and education levels to seek out ways to cope with the current circumstances. For some, this means engaging in activities like exercising, cooking or reading. For others, it's using too much technology, eating and sleeping poorly or consuming drugs or alcohol.

The pandemic has also changed how mental health care providers are able to help those needing services. What were once in-person sessions now have to be conducted remotely, which can be inaccessible to some for a variety of reasons.

Due to licensing laws and liability insurance, counseling services provided by Ohio offices are only available to those who reside in the state. In the case of YSU, Student Counseling Services has been able to assist students in locating mental health services where they are located.

“It's been difficult to switch practice strategies from all in-person to all-remote,” Jaronski says. “We've been seeing fewer students, but have been able to provide more services to those students.”

Nevertheless, the pandemic hasn't been *complete* doom and gloom for mental wellness.

“There's more talk about the mental health impacts related to COVID,” Jamie L. Miller, licensed clinical counselor and clinical director at Alta Behavioral Healthcare of the Mahoning Valley, says. “There's much more opportunity for telehealth therapy services, where in the past, insurance companies weren't so interested or willing to pay for those services.”

Other developments in mental health awareness have had the opportunity to take off due to the pandemic. Alta Behavioral offers a program called Youth Mental Health First-Aid Training, which focuses on increasing awareness of mental health issues that might be present in young adults. It focuses on helping teachers, coaches and other adults recognize the signs and symptoms of mental distress in those who might be struggling.

“If you kind of liken it to first-aid training, or CPR training — where you’re learning how to respond to the signs and symptoms of a stroke,” Miller says, “it helps reduce the stigma.”

Since those early days in March 2020, Jamie has had an emotional journey, but she’s on the right path.

Alcohol might have been a temporary crutch, but she has other ways to get through these difficult times. She goes for bike rides and walks with her son, she reads voraciously and she makes humorous videos on TikTok. She video calls with friends and family, too.

And when things get to be too overwhelming, she sets a timer and allows herself to cry.

“When that timer goes off, I wipe the tears away. I take another deep breath and I tell myself, ‘All right, Jamie, knock it off. It’s time. We’re done — we cried it out. No more. Let’s get it together,’” she says.

Most importantly, she’s altered how she views being stuck at home.

“Thinking about things in a positive way,” Jamie says, in her cheerful, smiling way, “truly that’s helped my mentality.”

She becomes serious and caring, adopting her “mom-mode.” Despite technological limitations, her concern for others is palpable.

“There’s no reason to be ashamed, there’s no reason to be embarrassed,” Jamie says, looking at me through the screen. “It’s okay to ask for help. Everyone needs help in this world. You know that phrase, ‘It takes a village’? It takes a village.”



The pandemic experience is different for everyone, but some may be struggling mentally more than

others. Photo by Feggy Art, licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0



If you or a loved one is struggling, hotlines are available to help. Image courtesy of U.S. Army Korea (Historical Image Archive), licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.



The mental health crisis has escalated due to the pandemic. In order to cope with exacerbated stresses and emotions, more Ohioans are turning to coping mechanisms like alcohol, tobacco, technology and food.

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HEALTH CARE STUDENTS ON THE FRONT LINES

By yomag (<https://theyomag.com/index.php/author/yomag/>) / May 9, 2021

by Abigail Cloutier

On Christmas Day, Cheyton Watkins donned her scrubs and headed to work at Mercy Health St. Elizabeth in Boardman, Ohio — on a COVID-19 floor. On her way out, she grabbed a stack of Christmas cards she made for the 24 patients on her floor after her Christmas Eve shift. As she passed the cards out, nearly every patient shed a tear.

Watkins is a junior nursing student at Youngstown State University. She started working as a personal care assistant in August, 2020. Within months, the medical surgical unit she works in at St. Elizabeth quickly became designated as the COVID-19 overflow unit. By Christmas, Watkin’s basic duties of drawing

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bloodwork, changing bedsheets and responding to patient requests morphed into monitoring coronavirus patients.

“Those 24 patients, I made a difference in their lives. It reinforced what I’m doing. I know this is what I want to do. Even through a pandemic, it’s really made me understand why I’m doing this,” Watkins said.

Health care students fresh out of college or still in clinical training have never known their field without the pandemic. But students from all health professions, including nursing, dental hygiene and long-term care administration stepped up to the challenge.

Some, like YSU senior dental hygiene student Katie Clement, found she had to throw some of the skills she learned in classes out the window. For example, hygienists stopped using tools like electronic ultrasonic plaque scalers and polishers as a safety precaution due to the potential production of aerosolized bacteria. The hands-on skills associated with tools like manual hand-scales became even more crucial.

“It was a lot more time-consuming, but we still make it work,” Clement said. “We’re really efficient with that, so honestly, it helped us in the long run, because we have those hand skills.”

Besides the obvious stresses of working on the front lines, issues like the interruption of degree requirements are contributing to health care students’ pandemic-related stress in a big way. In the spring 2020 semester, clinical rotations where students get most of their hands-on patient experience moved from in-person to online simulations.

“I’m a visual learner, I like to do things and get comfortable with my patient care. So, when clinicals first went online, it was my first semester actually in a clinical. I was stressed that I wasn’t going to get bad experiences. But I think that’s why I started working at the hospital and that’s made up for a lot of my missing out on clinicals,” Watkins said.

Giovanni Bruno is a senior nursing student at YSU and also works in a cardiovascular ICU at a hospital in Cleveland. Clinicals have since moved back to in-person experiences, but he likened his online clinical experience to a video game.

“I hate to say like, it was almost like a video game treating a patient, but that was kind of the idea,” Bruno said.

[According to research published by the National Institute of Health](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7370915/)

[\(https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7370915/\)](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7370915/), factors like exposure level, years of experience and personal background, proximity to COVID-19 ‘front lines’ and coping mechanisms were all risk factors in the development of post-traumatic stress symptoms for healthcare workers.

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In an analysis of seven studies by the Department of Psychology at the University of Turin (<https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.569935/full>), there was between a 7 to 35% increase of trauma-related stress in women, nurses and frontline workers due to unprecedented demands and responsibilities.

“You go into work every single day, and you see the same things every single day... you have to put that face on ...” Because this is my job – My job is to take care of these patients and to work help them get through this,” Watkins said.

“I talked to some of the other girls in my nursing program who are still working on a COVID-19 floor... my friend said she thinks she’s going to quit, because she just sees people dying all the time. It takes a toll on your mental health.”

The increase in health care students’ pandemic-related stress has not escaped the notice of those teaching them.

Dr. Nicolette Powe is the public health program director at Youngstown State University. While she’s noticed an increase in awareness of the institutions of public health departments, she noted the face of public health has changed.

“Typically, in the past, if you worked in the WIC [Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children] office, you worked in the WIC office. Now, it’s all hands on deck,” Powe said.

“It doesn’t matter what department you work in, everyone has some newfound role in supporting efforts relating to COVID-19. In theory, in the long-term, that can be a plus because now you have more public health professionals who are more integrated with all facets of public health.”

According to Powe, lack of public health staff and funding is contributing to the burnout of public health students and employees.

“I’m concerned that without new funding sources, and maybe perhaps even a restructure of how public health works – the local and state health departments, they’re not equipped to do the large, massive amount of work that has to be done now. They need additional funding to support these newfound demands and expectations,” Powe said.

Daniel Van Dussen, the program director for Long-Term Care Administration, noted that although students are getting hands-on experience in nursing homes, it comes at a cost.

“They’ve seen residents die from this, so this is very serious, but getting into this field, you’re dealing with the end of life. But the manner and the inability [for families] to see [their] loved one before they’re gone has really impacted them,” Van Dussen said.

According to Van Dussen, the increased demand for long-term care employees puts more strain on existing workers, something he hopes will change after the pandemic.

As more people receive vaccinations and case numbers decrease, students have also seen their stress decrease. Watkins and Bruno have both received their vaccinations, and Watkin’s floor no longer hosts COVID-19 patients.

Despite changes brought about by the pandemic, most healthcare students are on track to graduate on time.

“I’m just really proud of all my classmates and everything they’ve had to do throughout this pandemic, and all the changes we’ve gone through,” Clement said.

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RETURN TO NORMALCY FOR YSU FOOTBALL

By yomag (<https://theyomag.com/index.php/author/yomag/>) / May 9, 2021

by Michael Wolfgang

The Youngstown State University football team made its long awaited return to Stambaugh Stadium this spring for the first time since the fall of 2019. After the long layoff caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, fans, players, coaches and everyone involved finally got their chance to return to the Ice Castle.

In August of 2020, the Missouri Valley Football Conference postponed the football season to the spring of 2021, which would include a full eight-game spring league schedule with the Football Championship Subdivision Playoffs to follow.

This past February, before the start of the spring season, YSU announced that they got the green light from The Ohio Department of Health to allow 3,600 fans inside the Ice Castle for each home game.

Ethan Solger, Head Athletic Football Trainer and Assistant Athletic Director for Sports Medicine at YSU, credited the success of the spring season to the student athletes and the sports medicine staff.

“Most people don’t realize what it took for athletic department staff (athletic trainers, strength coaches, equipment managers, etc.) to be able to safely put student athletes on the field,” Solger said. “Most don’t realize the financial implications it created by allowing our student athletes to have the best experience as possible and keep them safe at the same time.”

To Solger’s knowledge, no outbreaks or mass transmissions of COVID-19 were seen as a result of athletic practice or competition on the field and that more virus transmissions occurred during non-athletic activities.

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Stambaugh Stadium, Youngstown State University III. **Photo by Jack W. Pearce, licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0**

Austin Snodgrass, Manager of Athletic Ticket Sales at YSU, said that people were excited to be back after a one-year absence.

“To be able to come to an event on campus was exciting for our season ticket holders and loge members,” Snodgrass said. “I think the fans that were here almost seemed more engaged than before. Fans are happy to be back and they got to see the progress that is being made on the field.”

Snodgrass went on to say that for one of the home games, the ticket office came close to having more people wanting tickets than there were tickets available.

Tickets had to be purchased in advance as they were not available at the stadium on game days.

With Stambaugh Stadium having a maximum capacity 20,630, the athletic ticket office is planning to host attendees up to about half capacity in the fall, which would be 10,315 fans.

Alek Koberna is a sports broadcasting student at YSU and he got the chance to make it to one of the home games. Koberna said that while it was not the normal level of excitement, the energy still had a presence.

“The game day atmosphere was in a way still there. When something good happened on the field it felt like a full stadium,” Koberna said. “It was great to be back at Stambaugh and for once it felt like something in this crazy year felt normal.”

Michael Belcik, a wide receiver on the YSU football team, talked about what it was like down on the field with only 3,600 fans in the seats.

“At times, those 3,600 fans felt like a lot more than 3,600,” Belcik said. “Down on the field, things did not really seem to change. The fans that were there were loud and they were rooting on the team and city that they love, which is Youngstown.”

With the hope and the idea that there will be more fans in attendance in the fall, Belcik is hungry for more fans at the Ice Castle.

“We hope to have more fans in the future because it honestly helps us win football games,” Blecik said. “Home field advantage is a real thing and we take that seriously here.”

The Penguins finished the season with a disappointing record of one win and six losses.

After being cooped up for over a year, just a small number of fans were able to enjoy a football game this spring. As the Penguins continue to grow as a football program and as society begins to navigate our way out of this pandemic, better days seem to be ahead.

The Penguins will play 10 games in the fall as they will begin the season on Thursday, Sept. 2, against Incarnate Word Academy at Stambaugh Stadium.

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STREETLIGHTS, PEOPLE

By yomag (<https://theyomag.com/index.php/author/yomag/>) / May 9, 2021

by Elizabeth Coss

Warren, Ohio – a city of lights and bar fights is one of the most well-off cities in the tri-county area. A culmination of upper class, working class, and lower class that together create a unique experience for anyone to visit. Most visitors may have official business in the courthouse, a shining staple for the city, a center for industry and local retailers. Or perhaps someone is visiting for the history and culture that Warren is so well known for.

Packard Music Hall and Museum are landmarks that highlight the old and new in a well-kept historical district lined by the fullest trees and the brightest streetlights. Brick houses and willow trees create the sense you're no longer in the 21st century, but are taking a stroll through past decades. Most people visit Warren for the music element. Live music populates bars and outdoor venues and electrifies the city, like the River Rock at the Amp, an amphitheater just a short distance from the Courthouse. However, another staple highlighting the city's roots and rock music happens to be an alley – yes, an alley.

Through the winding streets and chaotic parking, a short alley can be seen that is covered in graffiti and street art. Looking down that alley at first glance, rust and grime elongate the path, but as you enter it, the alley becomes more lively. Graffiti gains color and meaning, and the rust assembles sculptures; all

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dedicated to one man, Dave Grohl.



Artworks that accompany the area. **Photo courtesy of Elizabeth Coss**

Dave Grohl Alley: home to the 900-pound drumsticks that hold the Guinness World Record for largest pair of drumsticks, but also home to a series of small businesses that line and share the alley. Brick-faced and grit-covered, the shops are covered in the same graffiti memorializing the Warren native and rock legend who played drums for Nirvana, and eventually went on to lead his own band, the Foo Fighters. Local musicians have idolized him, viewing him as a precedent for what's to come from the Warren-Youngstown area. Jarrett Walters, a YSU student and member of the band East 9th, has been a part of the local rock scene since in 2016.

"I listen to the Foo Fighters almost daily," he said. "Dave Grohl being the drummer of Nirvana, another band I frequently listen to, it's such a big impact on me because I love that grit and that raw rock-and-roll sound. Alternative and Indie-rock is what East 9th primarily plays, and we've covered Foo Fighters songs."

When asked what Dave Grohl Alley represents, Walters described the alley as a symbol of home to him.

He elaborated that it's, "Always the goal when being a musician is you want to be that touring rock-star and having that so close to home is almost like a beacon to symbolize this is where I came from. This is the dude that came from the same area and did it first."

Walters also expressed that as a musician it shows promise and reward that, "It's a place to remember and go back to, and maybe get an alley of my own, if ever possible, if I ever make it onto such a grand stage in the way that Dave has."

Jarrett feels that the area has been given "a spotlight," thanks to Grohl. "The Youngstown music scene has always been so diverse and versatile." He went on to mention The Summit Radio Station who have highlighted the Warren/Youngstown area and that, "Dave Grohl is always a name that's tossed around

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with such like, praise, and high authority; Dave Grohl Alley, and Dave Grohl himself have done such a great job doing that, because I know he's proud of where he comes from."

Dave Grohl Alley, and Dave Grohl himself have inspired more than just the music scene. They have both helped the local businesses and retailers in Warren. Back in 2016, Dave Grohl had visited his alley and visited several shops like All American Cards & Comics, and even The Box Gallery, a tattoo shop located on the alley.



The sign leading to the infamous alley. **Photo courtesy of Elizabeth Coss**

I spoke to Aaron Chine, owner and tattoo artist at The Box Gallery. He hasn't seen too much walk-in traffic, but, "We see people and talk to people everyday in the alley that are just coming through to see the alley," he said. "It's kind of a cool place for people to get together, and where artists can show their artwork."

However, something I noticed on my trip to the alley was the amount of trash and litter lying about. I had contacted Warren City Maintenance about it – they simply told me they were not responsible for the alley. I asked Chine about the alley's upkeep, to which he responded, "It's not unkempt by the city – it's been pretty roots up at this point, but it's not necessarily the businesses down here, it's more of the artists. Artists from all over, but mainly local, but from Youngstown also who kind of contribute the artwork and we kind of take care. Trumbull Art Gallery was doing it for a while, but they haven't done it for years, so it's kind of just up to the artists at this point."

As far as the alley being kept up, it seems no one really wants to accept responsibility for it, which is sad to hear as a Warren City resident who has seen numerous streets covered in trash. To hear that Dave Grohl Alley would become the same if not for local artists and the shopkeepers hurts.

As far as the experience, I didn't necessarily feel safe there. I am a 20-year-old woman who carries a taser on me wherever I go – the walk up to the alley left me gripping the taser in my pocket. When I entered the alley, I relaxed a bit more and felt comfortable amongst the bright colors of the graffiti and spray paint. I also felt relaxed by the lights coming off of the businesses in the alley, like Modern Methods Brewing.

I felt drawn into the shops and wanted to know more about where I was. However, it pained me to turn around and blankly stare at a parking garage and a Burger King. The enjoyment of small, local owned industry that was housed in buildings older than I lost some of its charm in the backdrop of modern civilization. But looking back, I still felt like I was enjoying my time. To see these sculptures and paintings dedicated to a man who has made it big from a small time city, known for its lack of luster and hard earned grit, filled me with pride. Even though it was not the prettiest area, it still felt like home.

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FEEDING HOPE: HOW LOCAL NONPROFITS ARE HELPING THE FOOD INSECURE

By yomag (<https://theyomag.com/index.php/author/yomag/>) / May 8, 2021

by **C. Aileen Blaine**

In the city of Warren, Ohio, there is no shortage of vacant lots that are home to plots of land used for vegetable patches. Where once stood tall, imposing school buildings now wilts produce meant to go to those in need.

From the compost of these wilting gardens rises the promise of another solution to food insecurity.

The Mahoning Valley is just one of many areas in [Ohio](https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/ohio) (<https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/ohio>) — and the nation — riddled with food deserts. According to the most recent [data](https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2018/overall/ohio) (<https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2018/overall/ohio>) released by Feeding America, over 65,000 Trumbull and Mahoning County residents are considered food insecure. This means many residents lack

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access to grocery stores nearby — and those who may live near a grocery store might still lack a means of transportation to get there. This leaves corner shops and convenience stores as the only viable resources for food.

If there's one thing these mom-and-pop shops are good for, it's for selling the things that will kill you: alcohol, tobacco and junk food.

Junk food — think chips, soda and candy — is so prevalent because of its long shelf life. What doesn't sell in a day might sell in a week or a month and will taste no different. It tastes good, and it's relatively inexpensive when considering the markup fresh foods and produce have to undergo to be even slightly profitable for the seller.

So what does the future of the food desert hold? Will it become full of tiny oases branding the badge of mom-and-pop corner stores?



Local nonprofit organization Trumbull Neighborhood Partnership works with other local groups to provide access to healthy, fresh foods for Mahoning Valley residents. **Photo courtesy of C. Aileen Blaine**

In Warren, Ohio, a nonprofit organization is taking the steps to combat food and housing insecurities. Trumbull Neighborhood Partnership (<http://tnpwarren.org>), partnered with other local nonprofit organizations such as the Youngstown-based Healthy Community Partnership (<https://hcpmahoningvalley.com>) to launch the Healthy Convenience Store Initiative. The initiative strives to make fresh produce more accessible to those lacking transportation or access to traditional grocery stores by partnering with local convenience shops.

TNP formed in 2010 as a part of the Raymond John Wean Foundation (<https://rjweanfdn.org>) in an effort to assist with community development and organization in the Mahoning Valley. In the early days, TNP joined forces with another local community group, Garden Resources of Warren, to establish small community gardens scattered around the city.

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In 2017, TNP decided to shift more effort into meeting Valley residents where they're easily reached: at the corner store.

For the first few years of the healthy foods initiative, much of the time was spent making contact with store owners, community members and sponsors while also applying for grant funding.

Matt Martin has served as TNP's executive director since the organization's launch. He says much of its initial launch focused on building relationships with the community.

"There's no shortcut to organizing and relationship-building," Martin says. "You have to show credibility and become trustworthy and build a relationship. And honestly, you have to be able to offer something in exchange."

One of the biggest challenges in the healthy eating initiative is recruiting store owners into the program. Many are hesitant because of overhead charges that make actually gaining a profit from selling produce challenging, and others are wary of organized programs resembling "the government." Gaining their trust is just the first step.

For Christian Bennett-Mosley, the healthy food access retail coordinator at TNP, the fight to bring healthier foods to local neighborhoods is something personal. She grew up in a food desert in Youngstown.

"I was exposed to just your regular Family Dollar in my old neighborhood," she says. "I remember going there to get chips and nothing else."

When Bennett-Mosley was 12 years old and her family moved to Hubbard, Ohio, she realized the differences between her peers' upbringings and her own. They didn't share the same experiences of budgeting for food and relying on food stamps to eat.

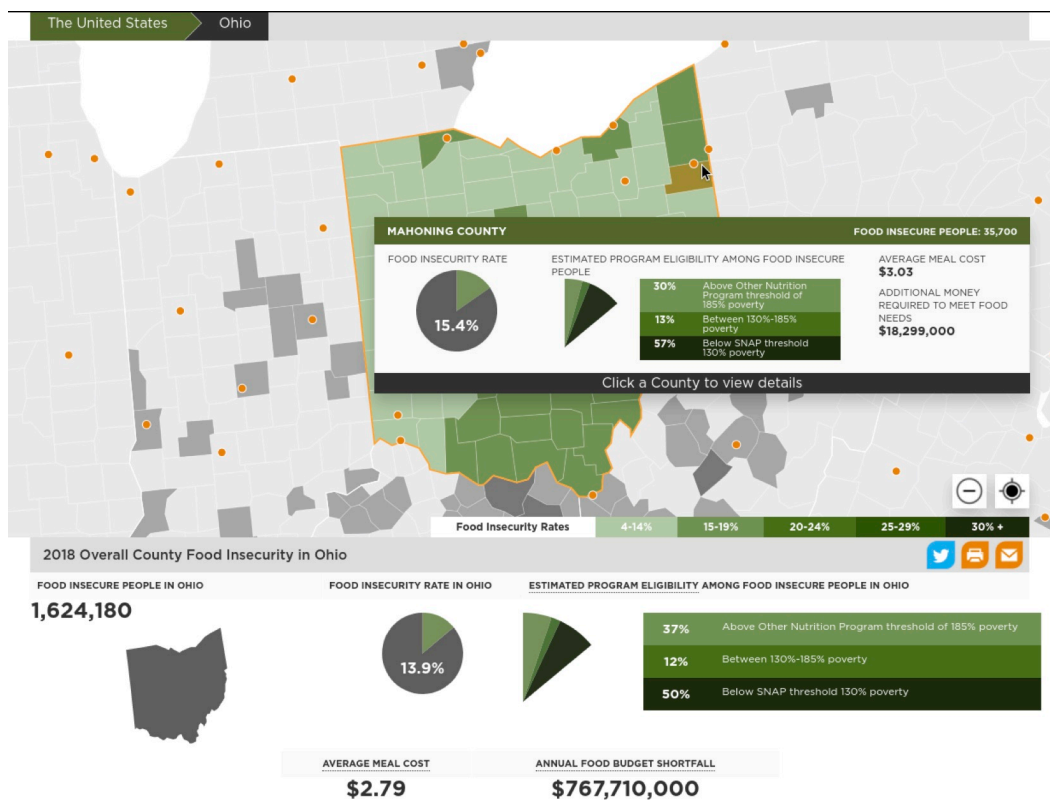
"Moving there allowed me to see just how much of a disadvantage that I was in, being in a single-parent household," she says.

An alumna of Youngstown State University's geography program, she uses her background to understand better how terrain affects neighborhoods and how communities engage with each other. Her work with TNP lets her blend her knowledge of geography with a deeper understanding of food insecurity in the area as well.

"We want to see a goal where distribution is not an issue anymore, where local distribution companies will actually work with store owners," Bennett-Mosley says.

Even though it hasn't been easy, there's a payoff to time spent building these relationships. Sarah Lowry, the director of Healthy Community Partnership and an adjunct instructor at YSU, says programs like the convenience store initiative also bring not just the community members together, but also the organizations in the Mahoning Valley.

"There are more organizations working consistently together, planning together and doing together," Lowry says. "More organizations see the benefit and value of taking a truly collaborative approach that is built on strong relationships that are rooted in transformation rather than transaction."



This screenshot from [Feeding America's Map the Meal Gap 2018](https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2018/overall/ohio) (<https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2018/overall/ohio>) dashboard shows how Trumbull and Mahoning counties are just two of the 33 Ohio counties with more than 15% of residents considered food insecure. Trumbull and Mahoning counties have an average food insecurity rate of 15.45%. **Data provided by Feeding America, 2018**

TNP and HCP work together as members of the [Healthy Food Retail Action Team](https://hcpmahoningvalley.com/healthy-food-retail/) (<https://hcpmahoningvalley.com/healthy-food-retail/>) to help expand and support nutrition incentive programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program's Double-Up program, which allows eligible residents to "double their dollars" at participating locations. Between Mahoning and Trumbull counties, there are almost 10 community stores either currently offering or preparing to launch fresh produce. For example, in early April 2021, TNP announced the launch of their produce cooler in Lucky 7 Food Mart near downtown Warren.

"Studies say residents want to see groceries. They want to see a store that sells actual healthy food, not just junk food," Martin says.

With the collaborated efforts of these small-scale organizations dedicated to large-scale improvement, the future of food access to Valley residents seems bright. Youngstown mayor Jamael "Tito" Brown supports organizations' collaborations to solve problems in the area.

"We have to work more together than we do apart," Brown said in a 2019 address at the Youngstown/Warren Regional Chamber's Good Morning, Youngstown! breakfast.

"This willingness to think bigger, bolder and longer term was exciting and different," Lowry says. "I wanted to be part of this shift in thinking and doing in the place I call home."

So, the next time you find yourself strolling past the vacant lots that are home to plots of vegetable patches, or the next time you walk into Lucky 7 Food Mart on East Market Street and see its shiny new food coolers, just remember the people who have joined together to make these possible.

“We’ve done a lot in 10 years,” Martin says. “This is definitely something that I’m particularly proud [of].”

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