



A look from the inside about the MSU shooting

By Savannah Anderson
Managing Editor

“Secure-in-Place immediately. Run, Hide, Fight.” is only part of an email that was sent out to the entire Michigan State University campus when a shooting broke out at the Union on Monday, Feb. 13. The tragic shooting killed three students and left five more in critical condition.

I was able to get in contact with two MSU freshmen so I could get the story on what they went through. I phoned into two separate interviews and these are their stories.

“It was just your average Monday. I have a meeting every Monday that I walk to, but for some reason I decided to get a ride from one of my senior friends. As soon as she dropped me off back at my dorm after the meeting, I was talking to my roommate when our other friend came in and screamed ‘There was a shooting at the Union!’”

For reference, she lives in Yakeley Hall, just five minutes away from the Union, which is a gathering place with a dining hall, computer lab, apparel store and more. They followed their friend out of their dorm room and into another one where ultimately 6 girls hid out together for the next 4 hours.

“We turned off all the lights, locked the doors, and barricaded the window. We were on the bottom floor so anyone could get in through the window if they wanted. At this point we turned on the police scanner and set it in the middle of the room. We listened to the updates looking up how far away addresses were that we didn’t know. Then we called our moms.”

When she was able to look back at the timeline of the events, she was supposed to be walking past the Union at the time of the first gunshots. It was because she was riding in her friends car that she wasn’t in the exact location.

After the 4 hours, they got word that the



Students gather after the shooting to mourn those lost and those injured.

shooter was dead and the ban was lifted. One of their mom’s picked them up around 2 a.m. when she was finally able to arrive on campus. I was sent some of the messages from this 4 hour time span where they were hiding in the room.

“Like 10 cops passed me on Grand River after I dropped you off” and, “We must have been driving in my car when the shooting started” were the messages sent from her friend who had given her a ride.

Her boyfriend who lives on the opposite side of campus also texted her, “U got knife? Anyone come in window you fight.” and “Door Barricade? Window blocked?”

The second interview I did had a completely different experience, but just as captivating of a story.

“My two buddies and I went to Landon Hall to get some Mozzarella sticks. After that we went to the Union to get a combo, which is something included in our meal plan. We almost sat down with our other friend but we decided to go to Brody instead.”

It is important to know that at this point, there were false reports of the shooter all over campus.



The emergency vehicles gathered outside the school during the shooting.

People were panicking and made it even more difficult for the police to find him and track him down.

“We saw a cop car drive past and we opened our YikYak, which is an anonymous app that some college towns use. We see ‘Shooter!’ posted all over it. We decided to try and go back to our dorms but they told us we couldn’t leave because the shooter was in Brody.

“We were placed into the back with the least amount of windows, the hall by the bathrooms. My friends and I went into the bathroom holding butter knives we grabbed. We called our moms. We were in there for 10-15 minutes and when we left the bathroom, everyone was gone.”

The shooter was never in Brody but he didn’t know that until much later. He said that his fight or flight mode was completely activated and they immediately searched for someone, anyone to instruct them on what to do. They ended up having to leave the hall and were outside with the shooter still at large.

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“We were on the side of campus that we didn’t live in so we couldn’t get into any of the buildings and all the public ones were on lockdown. We were outside for 20 minutes walking around in fear that we were going to die at any given time. The first thing I said to my friends was ‘Stay sharp and keep your head on a swivel’.

I got in contact with my cousin and she and her aunt picked me up while my other friends got picked up as well. Not even 20 minutes after I was picked up the entire campus was shut down and no one could enter. I stayed in their spare bedroom and listened to the news updating me on what really happened.

It was the most terrifying experience I could imagine going through. Now that it’s over I’m angry, sad, guilty, and even hold some regret. I

know people had it worse than I did and I feel guilty for that.”

Listening to both their stories I was given even more perspective on what really happens when you go through something like that. One described themselves as an “emotional wreck” and said “I can’t just go back to everyday life. I know someone who saw the whole thing and she won’t be coming back.” While the other told me that they heard a cop car drive past and they jumped as their first reaction.

Although these experiences are vastly different, they were both traumatic and gave insight about what it’s like to live through this harrowing and more commonly occurring nightmare. Keep Michigan State University in your thoughts and remember those who were lost in this tragedy.



We here at Brevard College will be keeping MSU in our thoughts and prayers.

Changes in the Brevard College Caf

By Caroline Hoy
Co-Editor in Chief

Myers Dining Hall has been a hot debate around campus for some time now. Many students have stated that they refuse to eat there but there has been a new change brought to the Caf.

Steve Smith has been brought to Brevard College as a consultant and has the new position of Director of Dining Services. He has been working hard to improve the cafeteria. Last week, Feb. 9, he started up a Student Dining Committee to gather students’ input on what is happening in the dining hall.

Many issues were brought up by the students at the dining committee. Some issues that were brought up by students include: more vegan and vegetarian options, different fruit options such as berries, pineapple, melons, allergen labeling and non-dairy options. Smith is trying hard to address as many concerns as possible to make sure we are all pleased.

Many students over the past few years have been refusing to eat in Myers Dining Hall for a variety of reasons. One student said they do not eat the food due to not feeling they could trust it. Another student said they do not eat in the Caf because they are too picky of an eater. I personally am not the biggest fan of the Caf, although I eat there, because I have had some issues eating there (food poisoning).

Smith is working hard to make the cafe a place where students can feel comfortable to eat again. He would love more input from students and has a suggestion box in the front of the Caf and trust me, he takes input seriously!

Many students are excited about the new changes being brought to the Caf. Senior history major, Reagan Lane, said, “I am beyond thrilled with the improvements the dining hall has made in the last couple weeks! The variety and quality of food has increased exponentially.” Another student, senior biology major, Haley Flippin, said, “The new cook is making me enjoy the food here again.”

It’s not just students who are enjoying the new changes being brought to Myers Dining Hall but also the staff of Brevard College. Jessie Tucker, Academic Success Coach, Director of the Writing Center and Education & FYE Instructor, said, “I have enjoyed some

new dishes in the Caf as well as the enthusiasm about positive changes. I am very glad to hear that students’ opinions and requests are being heard!”

My confession of the day is that the Myers Dining Hall has been one of my least favorite parts of my day as a student for quite some time. I dread eating there due to the fear of getting sick and knowing I won’t enjoy what I am eating. But these new changes have made me excited; I am enjoying my meals again, and trusting the food! I can’t wait to see what other changes Steve Smith has to offer in Myers Dining Hall and how happy they will make the students!



Photo by Caroline Hoy

Some meals from the Caf before the changes. Photos from Jan 18 (right) and Jan 12 (left).



Photo by Caroline Hoy

Brevard College professor appears on streaming crime show

Brevard College Assistant Professor Michael Moreschi recently appeared on the crime story show, "Death by Fame," which went live on Feb. 7 on the Investigation Discovery channel.

Moreschi participated in the program because of his involvement with the murder case of Christina Grimmie in 2016.

Moreschi worked in the Orlando Police Department for 28 years before moving to Brevard in 2020. He admits that he left the field because he was "done" with murders. He also says that he usually declines filmed interviews for this high profile case, but Christina's father, Bud Grimmie, personally reached out to ask if he would be interested.

"It was tough for me to watch because I've left that life," said Moreschi.

Moreschi teaches Criminal Justice at Brevard College, using examples of real-life cases that he worked on throughout his career. On a Friday morning, there were almost no empty chairs in his Introduction to Criminal Investigation classroom, which stands out in a school known for its small class sizes. Moreschi presents the Grimmie case as an example of possible stalking and undiagnosed mental health concerns, noting the more subtle clues learned from a career in homicide

investigations.

"I think you learn more from the truth of the case," said Moreschi. He tells his students at the beginning of each course, "If we are going to have a serious discussion on policing in this country, then I'm not going to sugar coat it. There are murders in our country every day."

The mass shooting at the Pulse nightclub was just two days after Christina Grimmie was murdered, and Moreschi was a first-responder on the scene. Criminal justice is one of the most popular majors at Brevard College. Moreschi says that a person needs to be driven to solve puzzles and communicate well with others in order to be successful in that line of work.

"I'll be the first to admit that I didn't have to work very hard to solve this case," Moreschi recalls. "It was quickly obvious who had killed Christina Grimmie. But I try to show my students the level of commitment necessary to go into this field."

Viewers can watch Moreschi on "Death by Fame" on Investigation Discovery, Episode 3.

Brevard College is committed to an experiential liberal arts education that encourages personal growth and inspires artistic, intellectual, and social action.



Professor Moreschi ready for his close up.

How to get enough sleep as a college student

By Reece Rubio

Contributor

Lack of sleep has many negative side effects that can be short or long term. It includes memory problems, bad performances academically and athletically, depression, anxiety and other health problems. The list goes on and on.

So how much sleep should we be getting as college students? According to the National Sleep Foundation, adults between the ages of 18 and 25 need 7-9 hours of sleep each night.

If you're like most college students, you know that during the week 7 to 9 hours can seem quite impossible with jobs, sports, and other things in addition to being a full-time student. A recent study of University of Georgia students found that most college students get between 6 and 6.9 hours of sleep per night, but if a survey was done, a lot of college students would probably be in the 4 to 5 hour range.

Here is an alternative if 7 to 9 hours of sleep just doesn't fit into your schedule: napping!

The Mayo Clinic suggests you keep your naps short and in the early afternoon. Taking a nap too late in the day can make you feel groggy and mess up your sleep cycle. They suggest you take your naps before 2 p.m.

The length of these naps is also important: between 10 and 20 minutes, according to the Mayo Clinic. A nap that is too long will have negative side effects similar to the ones mentioned earlier. A nap over 30 minutes is considered too long.

According to the Sleep Foundation and many sleep experts, a so-called "coffee nap" might be the way to go.

To accomplish this type of nap, the Sleep Foundation says to go into a dark, comfortable room with your coffee. Down the coffee relatively fast, set your alarm for 20 minutes, and go straight to napping after you drink the last drop. Try not to sleep much longer than 20 minutes as you will reduce the benefits immensely.

When you wake up from this nap you should feel more alert than ever and ready to take on the rest of your busy day, according to sleep experts.

Do not rely on this method everyday though, because just like with doing anything too often, your body will adapt. If your body adapts, the benefits will not be as helpful.

Consult with a physician if you have any health related concerns before attempting. Other than that, enjoy your nap!

Tests and assignments at Brevard College are likely to change thanks to AI Chatbots

By Heather Hay
Contributor

Brevard College instructors tested out an Online Artificial Intelligence (AI) Chatbot on Wednesday to see how it can impact classwork, and discussed the problems and changes that will need to be made in light of what they found.

The goal of the *Food For Thought* talk event was to practice with an AI called, OpenAI, where test answers, essays, and a syllabus were created in seconds with very close accuracy according to the nine instructors who attended. Although, according to the nine instructors all from different programs, it came with a few problems for both students and teachers.

A computer program called a chatbot has been used online for a while to reply quickly to basic customer questions. The *new artificial intelligent chatbot*, which was released for broad use in November, is designed to recognize the intent behind multiple part questions and return essays, poems, scripts, and much more, although with varying accuracy.

According to many recent news stories, instructors are aware that students have been using AI to create answers for homework and tests. But instructors said that students may not know that the AI's sources are not perfect or which classes are appropriate to use AI as a tool.

Accuracy.

"Students may not know which references could be fake, or that the information is completely inaccurate and not even close," said James Brooks, Educational Technology Specialist at Brevard College.

He went on to explain that the papers generated won't access any peer reviewed journal articles. It will access the latest medical information available online, but often gets it wrong. The Bing AI Chatbot from Microsoft uses an AI that is pulling current real references you can click on at the bottom of the page.

AI bots can also mix up historical figures with the same name and combine their facts together in the same paper.

Lack of insight.

Instructors present also discussed how using an AI just generates words and doesn't promote actual learning. Students aren't thinking critically about their answers or incorporating specific information that was covered in class, which is usually the most important part of a quiz answer.

Papers written by an AI Chatbot will also lack the depth of meaning that comes when a writer

works on an essay over a period of time by taking things step by step, like the essays written in English classes. Students who submit an AI generated essay for writing classes won't be able to fool the instructors because they would have already seen the writer's research, outline, and personal writing style. Someone can ask a Chatbot to write about unicorns in the style of William Faulkner, but they wouldn't empathize with its tragic journey to find itself. Grammarly is often encouraged as a writing tool, because anyone can still learn from it, but it won't tell show if specific points are valid.

Is it Plagiarism?

Technically, a person doesn't write the words, and the program is pulling from sources across the internet. If a student didn't write the piece, is it plagiarism? Currently, colleges don't have any specific rules in place that address AI assisted work, although there isn't anything to stop an instructor from spelling out how to use it in their classrooms.

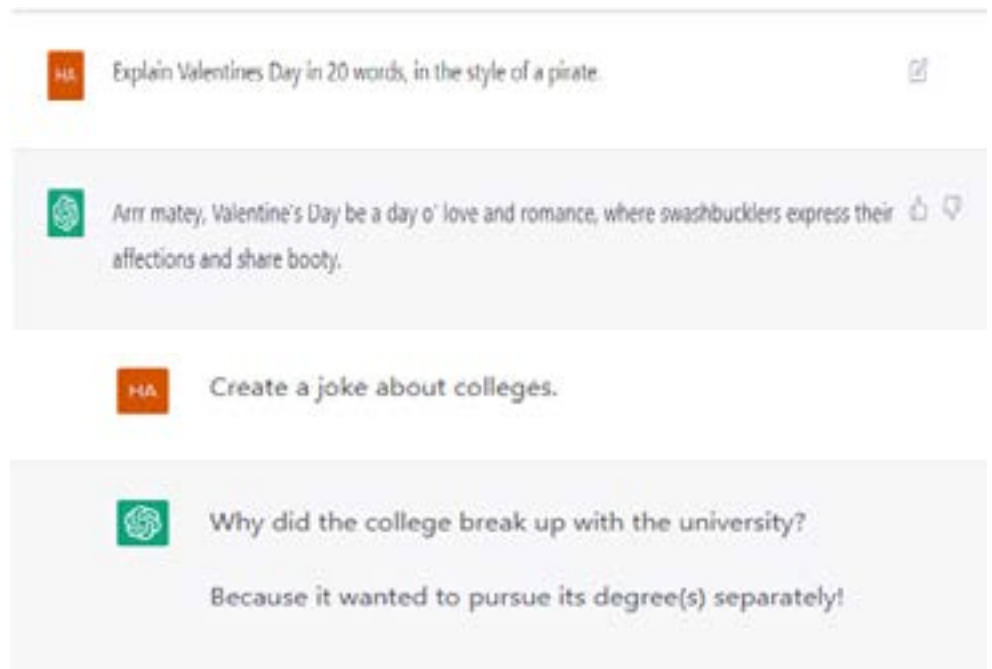
An, who teaches a business course, has already started noting in their syllabus that students must cite the use of an AI. Dr. Marie Jones, Director of the Library, and instructor said teaching students the proper use of AI

chatbots is similar to the time when instructors had to teach students about the proper way to use the internet.

Changes to teaching.

Creative instructors will be finding new ways to grade work. Projects could possibly be graded more on an oral presentation, or a hands on experience. Written work may be followed up by an in-person session of reviewing the writer's explanation of their reasoning behind their work. This may also change how teachers create classes. An AI can create a syllabus for a class in minutes, freeing up time for instructors to plan more complicated projects.

As a staff member, I tested it out for personal use by asking the AI chatbot to write a script for the movie "The Guardians of the Galaxy Part Three." The result was a boring mix of predictable quotes and vaguely described spaceships in search of the infinity stones. (Which is inaccurate considering that many marvel movies have already explained that the stones are no longer lost.) The scenes completely lacked the ridiculousness and *humanity* that only I love about the previous movies. So James Gunn still has a job, thankfully.



Some examples of AI's level of humor.

Strong teacher with a strong mind

By Bailee Harding
Staff Writer

On Feb. 10 I got the pleasure of meeting Dr. Uzzie T. Cannon. She is an associate professor of English and teaches African American Literature here at Brevard College. She was such a delight to talk to!

From Simpsonville, South Carolina, Dr. Cannon started out on an athletic scholarship at Appalachian State University to play basketball and get her undergraduate degree. She then transferred to Southern Wesleyan University in South Carolina and got her BA in English. According to Dr. Cannon, D-1 basketball was fun and she loved traveling and getting to meet new people—she was what we would describe as a “true student athlete.”

“I wanted to be a student first, and division one basketball is quite demanding,” she said. “So I just felt that I would have a better college experience all around if I were at a different school.” This was her reason for transferring.

At Southern Wesleyan, she still played basketball but there was a better balance between being a student and an athlete. She attended graduate school at Winthrop University, where she got her master’s degree in English, and then went on to get her Ph.D. at the University of North Carolina Greensboro. She specializes in African American Literature, Composition in Pedagogy and Digital Humanities. Other than basketball which she did in school, she likes to travel. She also said she likes to read leisurely.

“I love fiction—I love reading fiction,” she said. “And I love photography; I’m a serious photography enthusiast.” She owns a few cameras (one of which we had the pleasure of seeing at the African American read-in which she organized Tuesday evening in Dunham) and she’s a huge fan of black and white and digital photography.

“And I like watching old movies,” she said. “Well...when I say old movies, I should say movies from the ’80s.” And she actually gave me quite a few recommendations about movies for me to watch because I like watching how movies are made.

She fell in love with African American literature, she said in large part because of great teachers from elementary all the way up through college. “They nurtured in me something that was already there: a love of reading,” she said. Her mom also fueled her love of reading by buying her books.

“Fortunately I had the privilege of having African American teachers early on, starting in elementary school,” she said. “So there

was always an awareness of work by African American people; so early on I knew that people like me wrote books. It was never this thing of ‘I didn’t know people like me wrote books.’”

As a black girl growing up, I found this enlightening. It’s weird growing up and not knowing there are people like you who do amazing things. Dr. Cannon went on to say that it was during her sophomore year in high school when she had to read Lorraine Hansbury’s “A Raisin in the Sun.” She had to read the play and she says there was some kind of dynamic there she kind of enjoyed. What really set her off was James Baldwin’s short story “Sonny’s Blues.”

“‘Sonny’s Blues’ ignited something in me and I was like ‘Gosh I really like this story!’” she said. “But I really didn’t think about it as this body of African American literature. So when I got to college, that’s when I decided to do an independent study on black, female writers, and that was the starting point.”

I was impressed with that answer as a woman who wants to be a writer and I want to make an impact on people with my writing. I then asked her why teach African American literature. “I think that was something that people don’t really know the culture of and thus understand how African American literature can differ from mainstream literature or other literature,” she said. Which she is actually very correct about.

She continued: “When you’re dealing with a culture there’s some unique aspects and when you’re thinking about the way we speak, our values, those things are going to be different for us. Not better or less, it’s just different. That’s for anyone, any ethnic group; and so growing up and thinking about the interactions I had with my family. I love that. I love that value: That family values that tradition. The singing, the joking, all of that. So when you recognize

that African American literature embodies all of that, I just want to study it!”

Not only does she like studying it; she also wants to share it to show the impact and contribution that black culture has had on our American culture. She also explains that what she hopes to accomplish through her teaching is:

To share knowledge

Encourage critical thinking

Share her culture and help understand the human condition.

I also asked her if she had a favorite author that she likes of African American descent and she said the best way for her to answer that was to go by genre because she has so many favorites. Her favorite poet is Audre Lorde, whose poem “Power” she read at the African American read-in. It rendered us speechless. All I could say to her was “wow” at the end of it.

Her favorite essayist is James Baldwin and her favorite fiction writer is Toni Morrison, specifically her novel “Song of Solomon.” Other forms of black fine arts she likes are black photographers.

And for any future students of hers she gets she says this:

“I am very passionate about critical thinking and writing. I think people who really want to understand the human experience really need to pick a book and read about it.”

I enjoyed doing this interview with Dr. Cannon and getting to know her, she’s very fun, and we actually laughed and recommended movies and other forms of black arts to each other for about an hour. If you get a chance, go say hi and get to know her, and Dr. Cannon, thank you so much for taking time out of your day to share with me some of your wisdom and ideas. I had fun talking to you!



Brevard College welcomes a new Director of Communications!

By Caroline Hoy
Co-Editor in Chief

Brevard College is happy to welcome its brand new Director of Communications, Sara Schmidt. Schmidt grew up in the mountains of NC. She was originally born in AL but moved to Hendersonville at a young age. She is a Bearcat through and through!

Schmidt went to UNC Chapel Hill for a degree in Journalism and Mass Communication. In college, Schmidt was on the broadcasting track and planned to be a director.

After college, she moved out to LA to work in film production but after a few months she missed the mountains and came back.

After moving back to the mountains, she became a camp professional and worked in camps in the area for many years. Schmidt has

lived in Brevard for about ten years now.

She has a passion for communication and is excited to focus on that in her new position. She is also excited to learn why other people love Brevard College and discover her own reason. Living in the Brevard area, she has heard of Brevard College many times but never had too many interactions with it. Our new communications director is excited to finally be a part of the college!

In her new role she will be focusing on conveying the vision for the college from the Office of the President and work with people in different departments. Her goal is to be helpful and to encourage collaboration.

An interesting thing about Schmidt is that she minored in technical theatre in college and played the oboe throughout middle school, high school and college. She also has a dog named Penelope who has a pretty mustache and cute eyebrows.

Many people may know Andrew Schmidt, the Director of Development at Brevard College,

but people may not know that Sara and Andrew have been married since 2018. They even have a son together named Arthur.

We are very glad to welcome Sara Schmidt to the Brevard College family and we are happy to see what she has planned in her new role as Director of Communications. at the college.



Sara Schmidt smiles for the camera

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Chiaroscuro Presents

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH POETRY SLAM

Bill's Boiler House
Tuesday, March 14
6 pm

Use the QR Code below to register to read a work related to Women's History Month

Alumni Profile

Jamie Atkinson

By Paul Morgan
Contributor

The marketing mantra for Boys and Girls Club of America is “Great Futures Start Here.”

Jamie Atkinson, Brevard College '13, is working both ends of that meaningful mantra, both for the kids who participate in the local Cindy Platt Boys and Girls Club, and for her own personal fulfillment.

Her current job as Assistant Operations Director for the local club is not one that she had envisioned when she arrived on the BC campus as an imposing volleyball freshman in the fall of 2009. “I thought I wanted to be a math teacher,” she said. “My undergraduate years were a blur of math classes and volleyball.”

“I had found BC through volleyball,” the Spartanburg, S.C. native continued. “But like so many, and after visiting several schools, it just felt comfortable here. Guess I’ve always been a mountain girl at heart, and, as clichéd as it sounds, I just felt at home at BC.”

After graduation in 2013, Atkinson signed on to work in BC’s Athletic Department. Like most BC employees, she wore many hats, from helping with game operations to assisting student-athletes as they learned to navigate the ins and outs of college life.

She had begun a Master’s program at the University of Central Florida in 2017, and graduated with a degree in Nonprofit Management in 2019. “I had no intention of leaving BC,” Atkinson said, “but my

Master’s opened a whole new world for me,



Jamie Atkinson (middle) and two award-winning mentees

the world of non-profits and the idea of working with kids. I decided to take a chance and accept a job at Boys and Girls in 2018.”

She did not have particular expectations upon going to work at Boys and Girls. “I knew that I faced a huge learning curve,” she said, “and the idea of leaving the place I had loved for ten years was a little scary.”

Fortunately, she quickly found a group of people who care more about others than themselves. “These folks get up every day and devote their time to helping young people

be the best possible versions of themselves and supporting families at the same time,” Atkinson said.

“I think the most satisfaction aspects of the work that I do come from the little things. It’s the late night message from a parent thanking you for helping their child finish their math homework; or the teenage coming into your office to let you know that today is better than the day before; or watching a staff member delight in a special “ah-ha” moment when working with a child.

“We live in a very special community,” Atkinson continued. “I can’t tell you how satisfying it is to watch our community rally around Boys and Girls to make sure that our kids have all that they need.” After working as the Boys and Girls Operations Manager for some two years, Atkinson was promoted to Assistant Executive Director in 2020. In that role, she again wears many hats, including responsibility for human resources, grant oversight, helping directly with the needs of kids and families, and supporting the direct services staff.

As the Boys and Girls mantra says, “Great Futures Start Here.”

Looks like BC’s Jamie Atkinson has found a home where she is not only making a real difference, but is finding both personal and professional fulfillment as well. How much better can it be?



Photo by Destini Pettit



Photo by Destini Pettit

Environmental Science Pedagogies students practiced leading workshops focused on water resources last week!

The Silent Rockstar Vol. 5: Sob Stories

By Isaiah Collison
Copy Editor

The Silent Rockstar is not here just to tell us what is wrong, he offers solutions. I have examples of better living I want you to learn from. This week, you'll meet Grapes, a proud boxer with a compelling background that will inspire you. Watch for the lessons of self-worth, dignity, and respect.

Grapes: How's it hangin'? I'm Grapes.

Back when I first started boxing, a trainer picked me from the back of the room where I was hiding. A dog. Not just any dog, but a badass, dragon-dawg named D-Bone. Every time I'd gripe in training, he'd haul off and attack me. Point blank. It was FUBAR, 69-96'd, like some sort of demented punishment or something else terrible. I couldn't believe D-Bone was a part of my reality, the aggressive accountability partner. If I had a dollar for every time he made me feel sorry for myself, I could fund a new Pluto.

The attacks grew more painful. It was after having the bones in my legs chomped on and my left chest clawed at, that I calculated two choices. Either stop doing the thing that he attacks me for, or let him kill me. He is perfectly capable of doing that I might add. My hatred for this mutt grew quickly. I blamed him every way and every day until his bite saved my career.

I was babying a stinger on my arm when D-Bone bit my wrist and nearly took my dominant hand. I was silent. Even though it was dawn, it clicked that I was inches from losing my career. It took two weeks to turn my attitude around but I soon started taking boxing more seriously. I wanted to regain the drive I had before I lost my house to a fire. It ruined my perseverance and determination. Just like that, just saying it to myself, I began improving. I made sure D-Bone felt my new demeanor. I couldn't beat him yet, but I quietly pissed him off for not forking over a free toy-limb. I vowed to D-Bone I wouldn't die like a ragdoll. And I wouldn't burn under pressure.

Then we stepped in the ring. Me with a newfound courage, D-Bone with a new plan. Something changes when you practice making vows in your mirror...

I made it to the final round without tapping out! It was only then that I succumbed to my

exhaustion. I was allowed to pat his scaly fur for the first time. I caressed his rough ears. He licked me and was bleeding on me. Strange, no? I knew I hadn't made any cuts during our sparring. I was searching his body when he told me he was bleeding for me...; he was bleeding confidence into me. He said I should beat him soon and his blood began to seep into my shorts. I didn't think much of it although I was drenched in thick red fluid.

D-Bone says I showed up the next day and broke every punching bag in the gym. "All the chains in there looked like chains with no pendants!" D-Bone was so excited and proud of me that he started breathing fire everywhere. All I remember, is the entire gym erupting into flames and burning to the ground. I was shook but D-Bone laughed and smiled.

D-Bone: Time to crank the blood up a dozen notches. Welcome to manhood Grapes! Raaa!!!

D-Bone has weird, harsh sayings and ways. The first thing he did when we got to the new gym was slash me across the face with his sharp claws. Apparently, I was "out of it" and "moping." My first reaction was to check that area; my second was to whine. I swallowed them both and stared D-Bone down. His defenses were up in case I tried anything stupid for his making me go through that. All of his claws gripped the ground. He could taste the tears I had on my mind. D-Bone's my trainer but he's a saboteur so all that buddy-buddy stuff went out the window right then and there.

I took a deep breath in front of D-Bone and he loosened his clutch. He was wagging his dragon tail every which way. He could hear my heartbeat; I could see his drooling. I know when his tail does that, D-Bone's warning me he's ready to eat. Usually, I would've thought about the easy days but I loved the opportunity to keep dominating the old Grapes. The pitiful Grapes. It was no longer about the fussy dragon-dawg.

One day my matter won't matter. I will have to surrender control. Until then, I'm deep in my drive not to be devoured. I intensified my workout routine, starting with putting a bulletproof vest over my chest. D-Bone says that's when the name Grapes started to fit me.

After hours at the gym, I'd go pat him and his blood would seep through everything. Somehow "bulletproof" doesn't mean "blood proof".

Grapes: Can I rap to y'all about complaining? Sob stories don't change your lives. Crying, whining, and moaning, squealing off to people you believe should care...

Grapes: Just keep your head up! Don't be scared. Don't make everyone nearby hear the story you rehearsed. You may be welcoming another round of torture. Just crawl when you're down. Do another round of life. I promise you it's manageable. Keep going!

I have not won all of my personal battles but here I stand. I have done right by my life. I call it love. In this position, I love D-Bone. He gave me what I needed.

When I first ignored D-Bone's insults, it wasn't even about him. I had just closed my jar of excuses and wasn't opening it back up for any reason. From behind the 8-ball, I became its enemy, a 007. The kind of hitman that always gets the job done no matter the obstacles. To the real ones, this is how you smack talk. Smack everything talking! Life hasn't had much for me since. Pfff, I haven't heard a peep from that 8-ball. D-Bone has motivated me to want to grow.

His lack of sympathy tells me the only person left to fear is me. One day we'll get some fine, sweet wine and I'll ask him about himself.

Grapes: Oh, D-Bone wants to bark a few times. Let's take a listen.

D-Bone: Aye! Take this column from the babies then go find *yourself* a corner to cry in. You smell like failure. You so plastic, the surgery enhancers only need to fix your bogus attitude! You faker than an Instagram cheek you suckas in the mass! You better know who you are in this world cause I got everyone's scent, dog! I can hunt yo' ass down in all this spare time! I dug in Grapes' mind a little bit. He used to feel sorry for his sorry ass. Now he's leaking fire into all of us!

D-Bone: He withstood my attacks because on everything I love, the only way is through. Bump the bull\$hit. I'm D-Bone!!



Cookie's Crumbles #6

Big Matchup

Art by Oreo Ellis
Story by Isaiah Collison

Cookie's Crumbles #7

Making Connections



Narnia in the Attic?



Students from Dr. Bringle and Dr. Everett's C.S. Lewis LINC course class are recreating Narina from "The Chronicles of Narnia." This popular story was written by C.S. Lewis between 1950 and 1956. The series of seven books was later turned into three movies, the most famous being the first movie: "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe."

