The CLARION
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Volume 92, Issue 12 *Web Edition* SERVING BREVARD COLLEGE SINCE 1935 Nov. 6, 2026

Brevard College students 'Starstruck' by the artistic and literary prowess of peers

Tom Webb
Staff Writer

On Wednesday, Nov. 4, students gathered at Bill's for an after hours party, with an exclusive menu. The event celebrated the winners of Chiaroscuro's Starstruck writing and art competition. Students from across every major were invited to submit art or writing pieces that fit the theme "Starstruck," a broad subject that students could take in any direction they felt led to.

Winners of the art competition included third place Rowand Breen, second place Autumn Short, and first place winner Hanah Schinsky with her piece titled "Starssss." Schinsky's art piece depicts a purple extraterrestrial woman sitting atop a planet staring in wonder at a ball of light in her hand. To viewers the piece conveys a sense of awe as we see the wondrous gaze in the subject's three eyes and the reflection of the ball of light within them.

In the writing competition students submitted a variety of poetry and short stories. The winners included third place Karis King, second place Vinnie Munson-Jackson, and first place Clarion's very own Madeleine Pollock. Pollock submitted a short poem entitled "371. Bend, Oregon". Pollock stated that the poem reflects on the 371st mass shooting of 2026 in the United States, which happened earlier this school semester at an elementary school in Bend, Oregon. Pollock's poem compares the shooter to the sun, and one of the children who died as a moon.



(Left to right) First place Madeleine Pollock, second place Vinnie Munson Jackson, and third place Karis King with event host and Chirascouro professor Dr. Adam Mills. Photo by Tom Webb.



First-place winner Hanah Schinsky's piece titled "Starssss." Photo by Tom Webb.

"Poetry and art are always political in some way, so what started as something a bit more surface level became a way for me to draw attention to the lives lost in this preventable tragedy. I hope that this sort of poem can help people to reflect on the ways in which we can create change in our communities," Pollock says.

If you're interested in seeing the other submissions and pieces by students who participated in the Starstruck writing competition, stay tuned for this next year's edition of Brevard College's Chiaroscuro, where the work of students who submitted to either Starstruck and Chiaroscuro will be displayed.

This event and the writing competition behind it served as an excellent opportunity for students across campus to demonstrate their skill and passion in the creative arts. Event director Karis

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Brevard College and Transylvania County Library to host McDowell speaker in Porter Center Nov. 10

Rhiannon Giddens will also speak to students at 3 p.m. in the TLC classroom on Tuesday

Madeleine Pollock
Managing Editor

Next Tuesday, Nov. 10, Brevard College will be welcoming folk musician Rhiannon Giddens — a two-time Grammy Award winner and Pulitzer Prize winner— in partnership with the Transylvania County Library, as the guest speaker of the J.R. McDowell Speaker Series; there will be a student- and faculty-only event taking place in the Jones Library at 3 p.m., followed by a community event in the Porter's Center beginning at 7:30 p.m.

The 3 p.m. student and faculty event is free, and attendance is encouraged. Tickets are required for the 7:30 p.m. Porter's Center events; however, tickets are currently sold out.

In a statement from Transylvania County Library, they said: "In this speaking event, Giddens will explore the people, traditions, and perspectives that have too often been left out of the history of American music."

According to her website, "Giddens has made a singular, iconic career out of stretching her brand of folk music, with its miles-deep historical roots and contemporary sensibilities, into just about every field imaginable."

NPR named Giddens one of its 25 Most Influential Women Musicians of the 21st Century, due to her music and advocacy work in supporting Black artists. Giddens was also a founding member of the Black string band, the Carolina Chocolate Drops, and the all-female banjo group, Our Native Daughters, as well as a recipient of the MacArthur "Genius" Grant.

Currently, Giddens works as the Artistic director of the Silkroad Ensemble, which was founded by Yo-Yo Ma, while also hosting a PBS TV show called "My Music with Rhiannon Giddens." Giddens has furthermore made her mark on pop culture through hosting two podcasts and publishing two children's books.

Giddens' contributions to the arts don't stop there: she has written and performed music for the "Red Dead Redemption II" video game soundtrack and was a music consultant on the 2025 film "Sinners." Additionally, she was on the cast of ABC's drama series "Nashville" and worked as a music history expert on Ken Burns' Country Music series on PBS.



Rhiannons Giddens is a musician, storyteller, and advocate.

In 2015, Giddens created her own music festival that uplifted Black artists called "Biscuits & Banjos," taking place in Durham, N.C. In 2026, this vision has turned into a foundation — The Biscuit and Banjos Foundation— that is committed to celebrating and supporting Black culture.

Correction in haunted Brevard College article

An article in the Oct. 30 issue, "Is Brevard College haunted?," erroneously stated that the WLEE program moved into Ross Hall in 1994. The program was created in 1994, but it did not move into Ross Hall until 1998.

Beth Banks was a WLEE student at BC from 1993 to 1996. When she was a student, she said Ross was a residence hall for music students. "We also used it for our annual Haunted House fundraiser for BC Recycles," an event visited by the whole town, she said. "I also heard some ghost stories back then."

We regret the error, and we thank Banks for bringing it to our attention.

Transylvania County votes majority Democrat in 2026 midterms

Liam Smith
Staff Writer

On Nov. 3, the United States observed the Midterm Election Day; locally, here in Transylvania County, the voters elected a Democratic candidate to every contested office. Here's a breakdown of who the 16,337 Transylvanian voters elected.

North Carolina did not hold a gubernatorial election during this cycle; instead, two Congressional seats were on the line. For the U.S. Senate seat, former N.C. Governor Roy Cooper (DEM) ran against Michael Whatley (GOP); Cooper led the polls with 53.68% of the county's voters– the state of N.C. did vote Cooper in, flipping the seat's party with an approximately 825,000-vote lead.

In the race for the U.S. Congress House of Representatives District 11, candidates Jamie Ager (DEM) and Jennifer Balkcom (GOP) were challenged with the fourth worst gerrymandered state in the U.S., according to The New York Times. With the entirety of Western N.C. voters at the ballot, Ager flipped the House seat with 54.75% of Transylvania's votes, and around a 54,000-vote lead total.

Now down to even more local elections, the County Board of Commissioners' seat was at stake; Owen Carson (DEM) and Byran O'Neill (DEM) led with 53.11% of votes, whilst George C. Sutherland (GOP) and Kevin Howell (GOP) collectively received less than 47% of the vote.

The County Board of Education was up for grabs as well, but, as with the Commissioner seat, two Democrats, John Lanier and Bonnie Kelley, led with a combined 51.81% of Transylvania's voters. Republicans Chad Owen and Shanaia Powell won just over 48% of the vote.

In the State Senate races, Tom Downing (DEM) for Seat 50 won with 51.84% of the county vote. Mark Burrows (DEM), who is married to Betsy Burrows, a retired Brevard College professor, flipped Seat 119 with 53.18% of the vote.

In the State's judicial branch, Anita Earls (DEM) won re-election to the State Supreme Court with a 1,067-vote lead in the county. In the Court of Appeals, democrats John Arrowood, Tobias Hampson, and Christine Walczyk won individual seats with 51.90%, 51.91%, and 52.18% of Transylvania's votes, respectively.

There were five uncontested seats won by Republicans: Gene Johnson for N.C. Superior Court Judge, Abe Hudson for District Court Judge, Andrew Murray for District Attorney, Kristi Brown for County Clerk of Superior Court, and Chuck Owenby for County Sheriff.

In the Non-Partisan County Soil and Water Conservation District Supervisor, Aaron Siniard narrowly won by exactly 300 votes.

Regarding all three Constitutional Amendments to require photo identification for voting, limiting tax-income rates at 3.5%, and property tax levying limits, approximately 60% of all Transylvanian voters were in favor of them.

In conclusion, Transylvania County voted largely for Democratic Party candidates in the 2026 Midterms. Regardless, looking at the election results in a scrutinized view of the county should encourage all voters to continue to exercise their right to vote in the future. Many of these races were won by narrow margins, meaning that every vote counts.

LETTER to the EDITOR

Reader responds to article about AI-created flyers

Editor's note: The following email was sent in response to an article in our Oct. 23 issue titled "If Brevard won't trust students to design a poster, who will?"

Hey Autumn,

I was reading your article from the 10.23 issue about AI images. I wanted you to know that I personally reached out to the art department on Sept 21st to inquire about art students doing flyer work for our Instagram accounts, and only had one art student reach back out to actually make flyers. I was hoping you would advertise in The Clarion that we are always looking for students to do so and they can reach out directly to me if they are interested. At this point, it is volunteerism/building their portfolio, but if enough students are interested then I could potentially turn it into a work study position.

Please know our goal is never AI; most of the graphics are done in Canva which still has AI aspects to it, so I've learned. Nonetheless, the goal is always to keep it in house with our students if possible.

Please let me know how I can help bridge the gap!

— Rachael Olive

Olive is Associate Dean for Students Engagement & Leadership in Campus Life. I recommended that she reach back out to the art department to remind students of her original offer. That being said, it is important that students—whether art major or not—volunteer for this opportunity.

By stepping up to design these materials, students gain real-world experience that classroom assignments do not comapre to. Designing graphics for active accounts gives students portfolio pieces that carry weight with future employers and potentially even clients. Working directly with staff members provides experience in navigating creative briefs, client feedback, and brand guidelines—skills that are essential regardless of one's intended career path.

Showing strong student interest right now is the direct pathway toward securing funding for paid work-study positions in the future. Beyond professional development, taking on these projects ensures that Brevard's visual identity remains rooted in genuine student expression rather than automated and generic algorithms.

If we want the college to prioritize human creative talent over artificial intelligence, we have to show up and meet them halfway.

Anyone interested in creating graphics for campus accounts should reach out directly to Rachael Olive— olivern@brevard.edu—to get involved and start building their portfolio.

The light pollution predicament

Tom Webb
Staff Writer

If you haven't noticed by walking around campus in the late evening, then let me tell you: campus is dark. When the football lights shut off and there isn't enough fog to carry light particles from street lamps far and wide, the campus is dark. A good many of our street lights in the central part of campus between Tornado Alley, Dunham, and the Library no longer function, and though some of these lights have yellow tape on them denoting they will be fixed soon by Duke Energy, there is one question that concerns me even more than the lack of a time line on repairs; should we actually fix these lights?

Before you get the pitch forks and torches, hear me out.

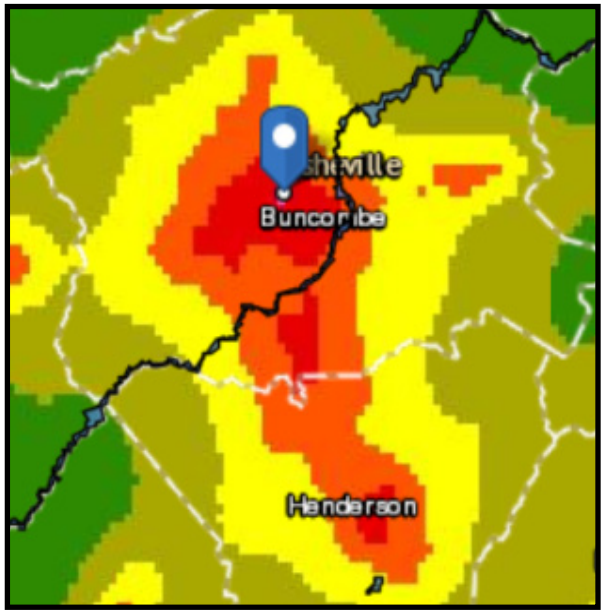
Light pollution is a major issue around the world, and it's a major issue within Brevard as well, but what is light pollution, and why is it such a problem?

Light pollution is caused by artificial light in populated areas blocking out the natural night sky. This causes a disruption in the circadian rhythm of both humans and animals (their natural sleep-wake cycle), and disruptions in the hunting, mating, and migratory patterns of nocturnal species. Researchers are even beginning to see a connection between light pollution and disruptions in circadian rhythm that can lead to the accelerated development of cancer in humans, due to a disruption in neuroendocrine physiology caused by the poorer sleep that humans receive in light polluted areas.

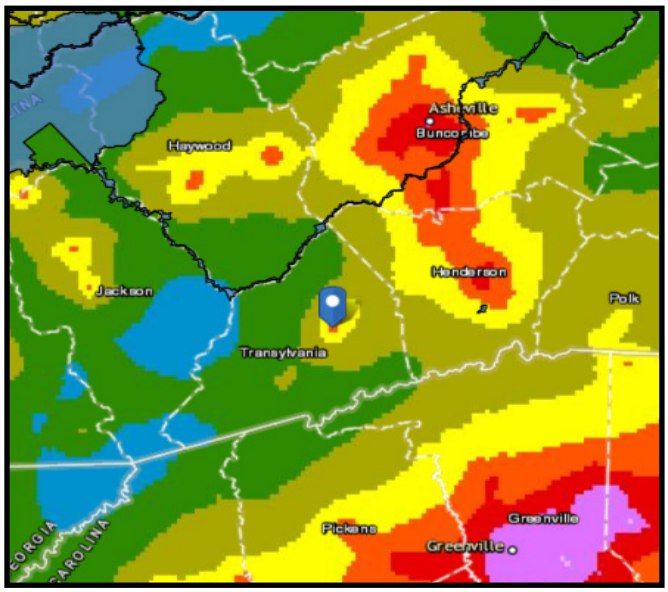
On the wildlife side, migratory birds flying by night see an increased collision rate with buildings in light polluted areas. Bird collision rate is exasperated even further by evenings that have high levels of fog and low cloud cover. This is due to the fact that water droplets suspended in air refract light better, causing an increase in the amount of light scattered and an increase in the amount of light pollution an area receives overall. Birds aren't the only animals affected either, studies have shown that amphibians living within light polluted areas emit fewer mating calls throughout the evening, thus reducing their chances of reproducing.

Amphibian populations are already declining across the globe due to factors such as habitat loss and pollution, and considering how Brevard is located within a biodiversity hotspot, one boasting some of the highest numbers of amphibian species in the world, it is something we should be protecting any way we can, and that includes reducing light pollution.

Using an interactive global light pollution map created by the University of Boulder, we can see just how bad the light pollution is in Brevard and the surrounding Transylvania county compared to both New York and Asheville. Overall, Brevard is not nearly as bad as Asheville is, and neither city is nowhere near as polluted as New York City. However, it is noteworthy that Brevard is a bright spec on the map of Transylvania county. Transylvania county as a whole is brighter than it should be as well, as many consider National Forests and Parks to be an area of respite from light pollution. The fact that the county possesses no areas of true darkness, or even areas of greater darkness, is a sign for concern.



Map From University of Boulder Showing Light Pollution in Asheville, red denoting moderate to severe light pollution



Map From University of Boulder Showing Light Pollution in Transylvania County, note the bright spec around Brevard and how even in Pisgah Forest there is still mild light pollution (marked in green).

Comparing Transylvania County to an area of darkness such as out in the rural areas on the west coast, we can see just how smothered our night skies truly are. While we are definitely not as bad as an urban super center like New York City, we still are unable to see a true night sky. You might ask, 'well what is a true night sky?' A true night sky is one where the light from the stars is actually able to reach the earth uncontested by light sources on the ground. Even though you may think that you know what a real night sky looks like, the majority of us have never seen something like it in our lives, especially if we are from the East Coast.

So what is the solution here? If it wasn't obvious, no, I don't think that we should power down every light across campus and spend our nights in total darkness (though that would be most beneficial for both animals and your sleep schedule). There are a few options available to us. Firstly, moving away from high power LED bulbs.

While LED lights are more sustainable, the high lumen ratings of many of these bulbs means that they are a greater contributor to light pollution than their fluorescent counterparts. Switching to a softer type of LED light that is on the warmer end of the light spectrum, or even going so far as to install red light bulbs would contribute greatly to a reduced amount of light pollution.

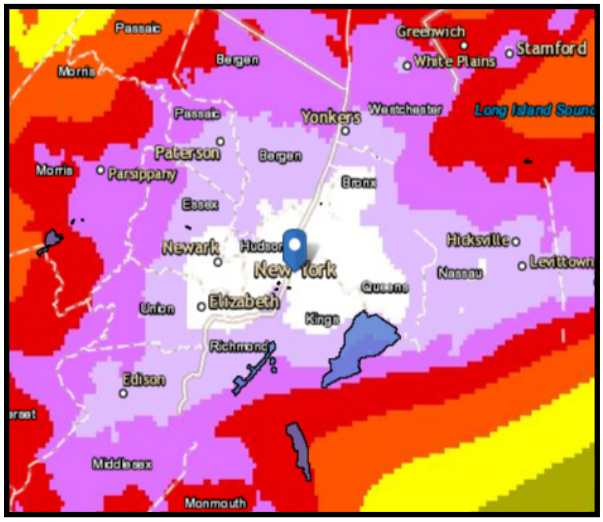
Red light bulbs specifically are better due to the fact that red is the shortest wavelength of visible light, meaning it travels shorter distances. Red is also not a color that nocturnal animals are typically capable of seeing, so it would not interrupt their nightly routines.

The more feasible option for Brevard College,

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The argument for a dark campus

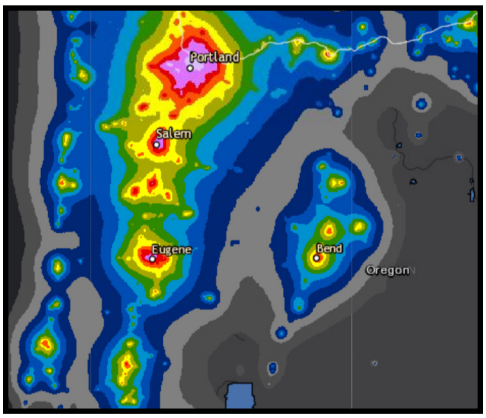
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Map From University of Boulder Showing Light Pollution in New York City, the bright white meaning that this is an area of extreme light pollution

however, would be to install motion sensor lights on the street lights that mark our path ways. If it is only pedestrian traffic and not car traffic, then motion sensor lights would be a wise solution both because it reduces light pollution by making usage as needed instead of constant, but also because it would save on energy costs for the school.

Light pollution is a problem that is often ignored. It's not as visible of an issue as land or water pollution, and also most people don't see a problem with a well lit street or walk way in the evening. The harm to animals and our own sleep schedules should not be ignored however. Brevard College's status as a school within an ecological hotspot should be something that the school both brags on and defends,



Map From University of Boulder Showing Light Pollution in Oregon, the large gray areas marking areas with no light pollution

and reducing the amount of light we use each night is an excellent option for creating a more sustainable campus.





The second- and third-place submissions by Autumn Short and Rowand Breen (Submitted by Chiaroscuro Staff)

Chiaroscuro's Starstruck writing and art competition

Continued from page 1

anyone interested in submitting to Chirascouro that they still have time. Submissions close on November 13th and many classes are offering extra credit to students who submit to the journal. Pieces should be emailed to chiaroscuro@brevard.edu.

Brevard College Jazz Ensemble to Present 'Night Fusion' on Nov. 9

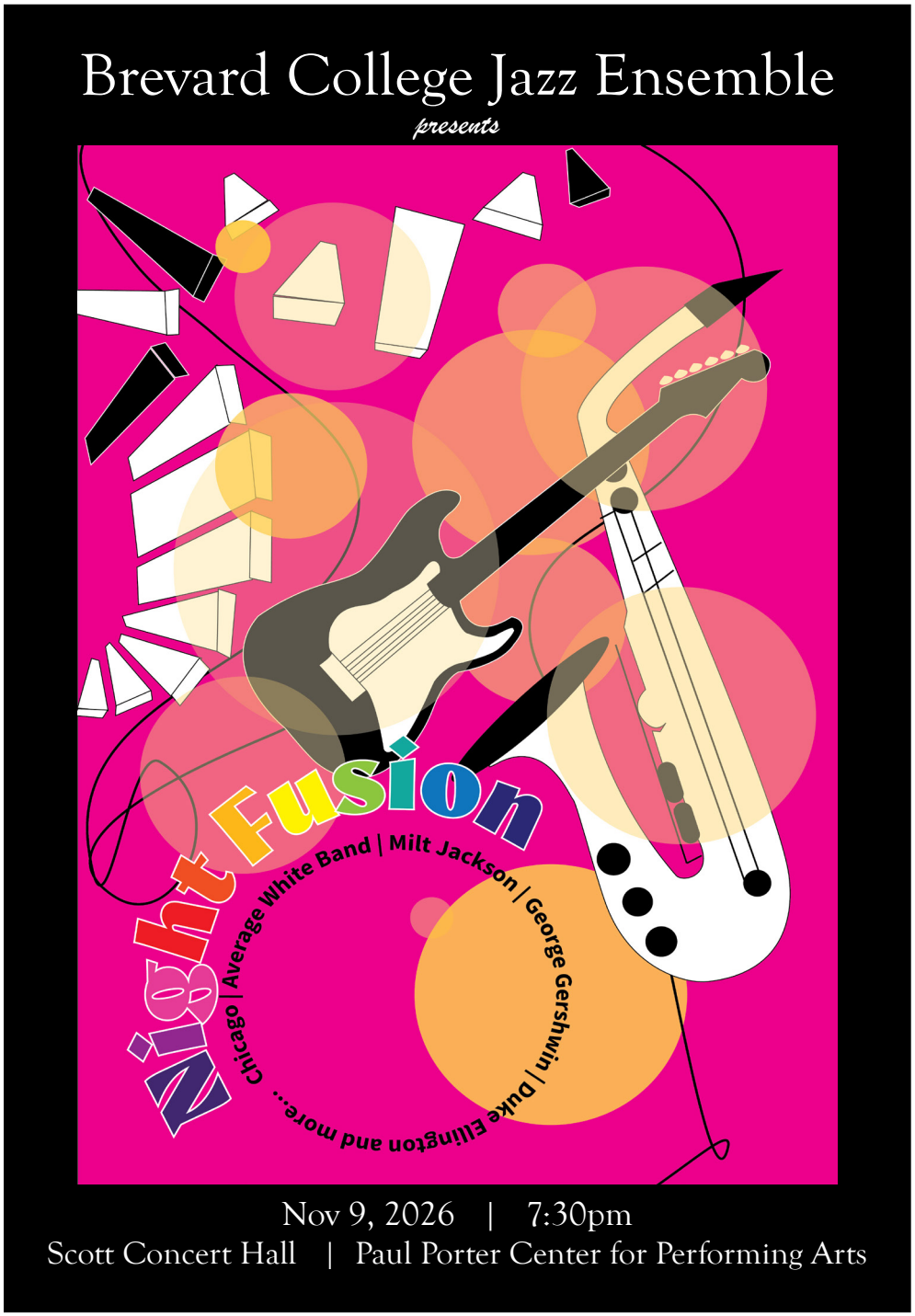
The Brevard College Jazz Ensemble will present "Night Fusion," a concert featuring music by Chicago, the Average White Band, George Gershwin and Duke Ellington on Monday, Nov. 9 at 7:30 p.m. in Scott Concert Hall at the Paul Porter Center for Performing Arts.

Directed by Dr. Nick Stow, the concert will feature a mix of jazz, big band and contemporary selections, bringing together music from several eras and styles.

The ensemble includes Brevard College students, faculty and community musicians. The performers are Wes Parker, alto saxophone; Ryan Hargis, tenor saxophone; Erik Rhodes, baritone saxophone; Richard Lewis and Kara Cannon, trumpets; Scotty Waters, trombone; Wren Crook and Charlie Cooper, guitars; Vance Reese, keyboards; Ian Mazzanti, bass; and Tristan Fortney, drums.

Stow, director of the College's Jazz Ensemble, has served as an adjunct instructor of music at Brevard College since 2023, teaching applied saxophone, applied clarinet, woodwind methods, aural skills, and other courses. Outside the classroom, Stow performs with several local musical groups, including the Blue Ghost Quartet, Unpaid Bill and the Bad Czechs, the Heavy Lifters, Nacho and the Stowaways, the Brevard Philharmonic, and the Brevard Community Band.

The concert is free and open to the public. For more information, call (828) 641-0605.



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Brevard College Percussion Ensemble

presents

Old New BORROWED BLUE ...and red

November 6, 2026 | 7:30pm

Scott Concert Hall

Paul Porter Center for Performing Arts

BREVARD COLLEGE

Join us for a program featuring percussion music from Baroque classics by Antonio Vivaldi to contemporary works by seven-time Grammy-nominated composer Andy Akiho. The performance will showcase a range of musical styles and arrangements accompanied by a dynamic lighting display.

This concert is free and open to the public.

BC Cheer clinic to take place on Nov 15

Brevard College Cheer is looking to add a few more athletes to the roster for this upcoming basketball season.

Think you have what it takes to join the team? Join us on November 15th at 9:30 a.m. for our recruit clinic. You'll get the chance to meet the coaching staff, meet the team, and experience what it means to be a Tornado Cheerleader. We are looking for male and female cheerleaders for stunting and/or tumbling.

No experience, that's okay! We will work with you and see if you're a good fit!

Current Brevard College Students can use the discount code listed below to get $30 off registration. Visit https://shorturl.at/D7OM9 to register! We can't wait to see you there!

Discount Code: BCSTUDENT

If you have any questions or concerns, reach out to Head Coach Amber at hunterhenleye@brevard.edu

What is Cyclocross?

Elli Clark
Staff Writer

With fall well underway and winter quickly approaching, the Brevard Cycling team has begun their second race season of the year. In comparison to the Southeastern Collegiate Cycling Conference in which they competed in a variety of mountain bike disciplines, the team will spend the coming weeks dialing in prep for cyclocross.

In the much less well-known, but equally as exciting discipline, riders race on a modified road bike with narrow, knobby tires. Oftentimes these races will take place in the wildest of weather conditions: slippery mud or snow and rain or high winds. All of which simply add to the adventure of the sport. Cyclocross is the discipline where any type of rider, whether a roadie, downhiller, or cross-country devotee, can flourish.

The origins of this particular sport have become quite the urban legend. As the story goes, it first began, all the way back in the early 1900s, as an exhilarating way for European road cyclists to maintain their fitness during the winter months. It was said that they would race from one town to another by cutting through farmers' fields, over hills, and fences. In an article published by Ted's Bicycles in Colorado Springs, they claim that the sport only truly gained traction and popularity after Octave Lapize won the 1910 Tour de France and credited the win to his off-season cyclocross training.

In a typical cyclocross race, there are guaranteed to be an array of classic features that include steep run-ups and stairs, barriers to jump, sandpits to ride through, and tight 90-degree turns that challenge the rider's skills and athleticism. All of this is jammed into a short 2- to 3-kilometer race course that the racers will loop for 40 minutes to 1 hour, depending on the category.

The coolest aspect of all of it: this atmosphere. There is never a dull crowd at a cyclocross event, especially when the crowd gets out the cowbells and rings them loud for some high-energy cheering. A friendly heckle is always welcomed too!

Brevard's cycling team has a series of local NCCX races to attend over the next few weekends. These will be on Sunday, Nov. 8, in Hickory, NC; an XCC GVL MTB race on Saturday, Nov. 14, in Travelers Rest, SC; and another NCCX on Sunday, Nov. 15, in Dobson, NC. On the weekend of Nov. 21 and Nov. 22, there will be two NCCX and UCI races just 40 minutes down the road in Hendersonville, NC. Finally, on Tuesday, Dec. 8, a select group will travel to Fayetteville, AR, for the Collegiate Cyclocross nationals.

DeBella finds Steele on corner kick to send Tornados to USA South Tournament Championship

A sophomore combination on an 84th-minute corner kick lifted Brevard College women's soccer (13–1–5) past Greensboro (10–5–5), 1–0, in the USA South Conference Tournament Semifinal on a rain-soaked Wednesday afternoon at Ives-Lemel Family Field.

Sophomore right back Natalie DeBella found sophomore midfielder Janie Steele, whose header goal sent the Tornados to their third USA South Conference Tournament Championship match in the last four seasons as BC advances to take on top-seed Southern Virginia.

The Tornados were knocking on the door all afternoon, totaling 23 shots and 10 shots on target before Steele's strike—the fourth for the Trussville, Alabama native of 2026. DeBella's assist marked her team-leading fifth of the season for the second-year Tornado out of Buford, Georgia. Her assist was her second goal-scoring contribution vs. the Pride of the year, as she scored the match-tying goal in a 1–1 draw earlier in the campaign.

Brevard's defense was once again stellar, as the unit notched its 14th shutout of 2026. Abby Nunez earned her nation-leading 13th shutout in goal, saving the only two shots the Pride put on target. BC's backline of DeBella. Sophia DePasquale, Addison Goins, and MK Smoak played all 90 minutes of the match with relentless pressure on GC.

BC's outstanding unbeaten streak at home is now at 42 matches, dating back to Oct. 15, 2022. BC is undefeated, 5–0–2, in its last seven USA South Tournament matches.

Brevard will play in the program's third USA South Tournament Championship, seeking its second-straight crown. BC will travel to Buena Vista, Virginia, on Saturday for a 6 p.m. kickoff against top-seed Southern Virginia at Knight Stadium.