

THE [WIRE]

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The Chase For Answers



“I came out of the interviews with a sense that something was being hidden, that they were not being honest or open ... But who could blame them?”

Letter From the Editor

Abram Buehner

Editor-in-Chief

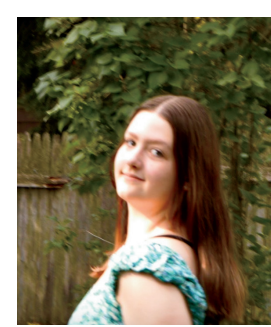
Literally everyone is sick. What's going on right now? Everywhere I go I'm accosted by someone coughing or sneezing and it's just bad timing because I've finally gotten back into a good gym routine and have been eating well and feeling good and you all are trying to ruin this for me. Oh sorry, what I meant to say was "feel better soon."

Well, that's out of my system (unlike the germs in all of yours), and I can happily return to welcoming you to this issue of the Wheaton Wire. Structurally, I think we've found our groove a bit, and content-wise, we keep getting better. I'm very pleased to welcome Jackson Walsh to the team as our Sports Editor, he's delivered some killer athletic coverage for this issue and will continue to do so throughout the year.

And now you know what we all look like! So you can now stop us around campus and thank us for our contributions to print culture, or yell at us for writing stories you don't like, I guess. I'd prefer you did the former. But you can do either. Thanks to Moira for putting this new staff section together, I think it looks pretty nice.

With that, I think it's about time to bid you farewell. So please enjoy another installment in the Wire's storied history as we take you through Midnights, Chase Dining Hall, talking trees, and a whole lot more.

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The Chase for Answers - What's Gone Wrong?

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By Sanjana Kulkarni

When I was waiting in line for my order at dinner time, the steady influx of students at Chase threw the staff member making our orders for a loop. The staff member, who requested to be anonymous, was incredibly tired, missing orders and asked for our patience. I struck up a conversation with them, where they explained that they were incredibly overworked because they were understaffed, and, of course, were dealing with the usual supply-chain issues that Chase encounters routinely. Although it is not in Chase's hands, the staff members usually have to bear the brunt of criticism and negativity from Wheaton students, they explained. They told me that they are so tired they might need to take a day off this week just to rest a little. I did what I could at that time—gave them the space to express their feelings, a sympathetic smile, and a 'thank-you' for my order... and kept an eye out for any entitled students so I could glare at them.

The Wire has done many pieces on Chase, mostly leaning towards the supply-problems with vendors and a lack of fresh produce. This time, I thought I could go in from a different angle. I had already seen tired staff members who did not want to work here, and students who were getting sick because of the food or disliked the taste so much they started making their own meals in their dorms. I wanted to learn more about the individual staff members, how they felt about working at Chase,

their working conditions, and their interactions with students.

After speaking with the evening manager Shawn, I interviewed many of the evening staff. One of the people I spoke with, who has been working in dining services for about a year, said, "working here is quite boring, but I don't mind working here at all." When asked about the morale at Chase, they said "I think it is pretty bad, honestly. At least three or five times a shift I hear people complaining about wanting to go home, and I want to go home too. It is really tiring being here and so many students come and we prepare so much food. The main reason why morale is so low is because we are constantly putting food out. Most students here are really nice but others are really entitled and ungrateful, so seeing that entitlement is discouraging. I can hear people asking for very specific requests or sometimes hear people saying the food we are putting up is gross. A lot of people throw away a ton of food too."

However, that was about last I heard about food wastage, entitled students, and work fatigue. I interviewed more staff members, who all gave me the same answers: "I love to work here because of the student interactions and getting to know the community." When asked about food changes, it was either "we are working on making some changes to the menu including adding some more ice cream options," or "once we get all our ingredients together we will be

able to come up with more variety." All staff members said they had encountered entitled students and said yes to my question rather quickly, but then proceeded to change their answers and report that they personally had never encountered students who were rude to them. One staff member acknowledged that they will get some impatient or ungrateful students, but would try to be extra kind to them or make jokes to coax a smile. "I try to remember the regulars and I try to remember their orders if I can. Everyone is very nice and patient, and I think everyone is happy with the food." Only when I had the chance to talk to one staff member for a long time, without any other staff members nearby, did I get less diplomatic answers. A longtime staff member stated that they wished they got paid more due to seniority. Yet, I got the same answers from everyone I interviewed—they loved to work here, they loved the students and seeing them graduate, and although they were quick to say there are a lot of entitled students or they do work long, hard shifts, they would not elaborate.

I wanted to showcase their stories and do what we could as a newspaper to help other students connect with our staff and help make their days easier given the conversations I had and overheard with them. I came out of the interviews with a sense that something was being hidden, that they were not being honest or open. Maybe

it was me asking for permission to record their voices to help me write this article. Or it was apprehension about spilling the beans assuming nothing would be done. But who could blame them? Their jobs and comfort with other staff members is more important than a kid writing for the school newspaper hoping she could be of help to them. I brought no guarantees, just asked if they were comfortable with sharing their experiences. They did give me a takeaway, though. Maybe they were just being completely honest, and the conversations I had and the testimonies I overheard were just bad days, or anomalies in the Chase operations system. Maybe I was looking to share a perspective that didn't exist. One thing they would like to tell our readers is, "we do really try to give our students the best food we can and have a smile on our faces and give the best service possible. But it is really tiring to work in such a large operation and [work] so hard, so we do care but it may not seem like it sometimes on the outside."

So, dear readers, although I may have failed in my mission to understand the real lives of the staff members, I did come away with something important. We are a college of about two thousand people coming into Chase for breakfast, lunch and dinner. That is a lot of food. Food that is being made especially for us. A little gratitude and kindness goes a long way, especially for the lovely staff that is truly working so hard for us.

Kurt Vonnegut at 100: Kurt and my Father

By Paul Bisbort

November 11th will be the 100th birthday of one of the world's most idiosyncratic, visionary, imaginative, subversive, humorous, and quintessentially American writers. Kurt Vonnegut Jr. was born in Indianapolis on November 11th, 1922, one hundred years ago.

Vonnegut unfortunately passed away in 2007 but his contribution lives on—whether in the brightly colored Dial Press binding on a Barnes & Noble shelf or via the novels, movies, television shows, and other modes of artistic expression that echo his work. In his hometown of Indianapolis, a Kurt Vonnegut Museum & Library champions his work and features a giant mural of Vonnegut himself on the side of the building.

One person that can tell you about Vonnegut's importance is my own father. In 1996, he took up a job writing and editing a photo collection book for photographer Jill Krementz. Krementz's husband was

none other than Kurt himself. Down on East 48th Street in Manhattan, my dad found Vonnegut sitting on the front steps, smoking a cigarette. "I recognized him from blocks away," he says. "He was so distinctive looking, with that bushy hair and melancholy face."

"Want a pretzel?" was the first thing Vonnegut said to him, offering him one of those long pretzels that look like cigars. "Jill won't let me smoke in the house, so I sit out here," he explained.

"I sat down and we had a friendly chat," my father recalls. "He turned out to be just like his image, a sort of friendly, eccentric old uncle who liked to laugh at bad jokes. I got to know him better on later visits."

My father already knew of Vonnegut before meeting him. This was all the way back in high school, when his older brother left behind paperbacks of Vonnegut's novels after moving to college. My father says it was only

later when he realized the importance and brilliance of Vonnegut's work.

"They are warnings to humankind, couched as science fiction and humor." Some of these warnings came from Vonnegut's observations of American culture, but much came from his own experiences serving in World War II. He was in Dresden when the city was bombed by the Allies, despite the city being a civilian center with no military significance. A city full of innocent people, of historic architecture and artistic masterworks, all blown up in an instant. "I don't think he ever fully recovered from the trauma of that."

One of the most distinct memories my father has of Vonnegut is when he went to an outsider art fair with him. My father briefly mentioned in passing to Jill Krementz a fair of "untrained artists with crazy visions, some of whom live in abandoned school buses," and as soon as Kurt caught wind of this, he was on-board.

My father's friend, Mike Smith, the outsider art dealer that told my father about this fair, was ecstatic that Vonnegut was at his event. He went around introducing people to his "good friend Kurt," whom he had only just met. Vonnegut didn't mind at all. "Vonnegut was in his element at the fair. He took in all this weird, wild art, transfixed by the brilliance of the colors and the eccentric graphics."

My father would see Vonnegut every few months between 1996 and 1999. The last time he saw him was in 2003, at an event at the Mark

Twain House in Hartford. Twain was one of Vonnegut's favorite authors. However, Vonnegut's biggest influences were simply conversations with strangers—cab drivers, street dwellers, and the like. He wasn't interested in showing off any intellectual affectations. This is reflected in his distinct prose, which is written "clearly and simply without a lot of subterfuge," as my dad describes it.

In Vonnegut's 1961 novel *Mother Night*, Howard W. Campbell Jr. is given a covert task to act as a Nazi propagandist in order to give secret information to the US government. No one could ever know about this covert operation, meaning the whole world remembers him as a hateful fascist. Campbell eventually realizes his propaganda was so damaging that no amount of clandestine help to the Allies could counteract it. Despite telling himself he was helping America and didn't actually believe the Nazi rhetoric, in the end, his intent didn't matter: he was just as evil as any other Nazi. Vonnegut, when asked to describe the message of this parable, writes "we are what we pretend to be, so we must be careful about what we pretend to be."

Go on any social media platform and you will find boundless amounts of smugly ironic posts intended to shock or provoke. These ideas, regardless of their joking intent, can spread to impressionable minds who take them as genuine. If there was one thing Vonnegut valued, it was earnestness. In our postmodern, tumultuous, digitally-fuelled world where "truth isn't truth," his message is more important than ever.



(L-R): Charlie Lucas, Kurt Vonnegut, Mike Smith, Alan Bisbort // Photo by: Jill Krementz

The Little Things at Wheaton

Elsie Carson-Holt

1. Library Coffee

For those who complain that Norton has no nice, cozy coffee shop to study or hang out in—I agree with you and I feel your pain. Let me introduce you to what has become my saving grace: the Madeleine Clark Wallace Library, and specifically, its coffee. The light at the end of my tunnel is the Keurig Machine at the library help desk. They have a fine assortment of different pods. My favorites include the Starbucks French Roast and the Green Mountain Maple Pecan, both of those with the vanilla creamer are absolutely divine.

Grab whatever delicious beverage you have selected and take it to one of the many mildly comfy seats placed around the library. Want to nestle on a window seat that overlooks the road... but also some lovely trees? Head to the third floor mezzanine! In the mood to feel like you're trapped in a 1970s drama taking place at a third-rate liberal arts college? Go to the Valentine Cole Room (if they ever open it up again). Have you ever wanted to become sensory deprived and claustrophobic in dim lighting? The collaboration rooms in the basement are the place for you!

2. WCCS

Wheaton College Radio Station (called WCCS, an acronym I genuinely don't understand despite being a member since my fresh-

man year) is an underutilized and hidden gem at Wheaton. My dumb little radio show where myself and two friends play whatever songs have been stuck in our heads that week to an audience that includes my sister sometimes, at least one of our girlfriends, probably two of our friends and literally no one



else, is the highlight of my week. The radio station is genuinely a very cool place, and hanging out in there fills a space inside of me.

3. Doing Laps Around the Pond

Nothing is better than calling a friend back home, chatting with your grandparents, or fielding questions from your mother asking if you'll be coming home for Thanksgiving while also pacing frantically around the pond, dodging groups of freshmen leaving Chase. Alternately—when things get overwhelming, nothing is

better than channeling that manic energy and blasting an album of your choice through earbuds while doing a few laps until the feeling passes. The best part about this experience is how many people you awkwardly pass several times who are also just walking in a large circle over and over again.

4. Balfour-Hood Café

If I am seen begging for meal swipes or being punished for getting caught stealing food from Emerson Dining Hall it will be because I spend all my Lyons Bucks buying egg and cheese bagels from Balfour-Hood every morning. The food here is genuinely the best on campus. Featuring delicious sandwiches, hamburgers, sushi, and probably some of the best fries I've had in my life, Balfour-Hood Café keeps me going. The staff here are also some of the friendliest and most pleasant peo-

ple I have the joy of encountering in my day-to-day life.

5. The Wheaton Woods

Obvious, yes, but still worth writing about. God Bless the Wheaton Woods. If walking around the pond a few times doesn't fix that manic energy I was talking about, sitting in the woods will. While not huge, if you're willing to trail-blaze, or alternatively, go down every path, you can find some really cool spots. The quiet is only sometimes interrupted by music blasting from the athletic fields, but even then it's not hard to tune out! Find a little clearing to lay down in, read or journal, or just sit and enjoy it for an hour or so.

6. Day Trips

While Norton cannot boast any real places to go outside of some restaurants and nice parks (which are good), we are located in relatively close proximity to some high-quality places. Thirty minutes away is the lovely city of Providence, Rhode Island. Boston is nice, especially in the Spring and early Fall. The Cape and Provincetown are truly some of my favorite places I've been in my life and also have some great swimming opportunities which is a real draw, at least for me. So that's something to look forward to during the dark Winter days.

Photo Source // Moira Sankey

Wheaton Athletics

By Jackson Walsh

1- After quarterfinal win, men's soccer suffers a crushing defeat

The Wheaton College Men's Soccer team lost in the NEWMAC semi-finals to the #1 seed in the conference, nationally-ranked Babson, on Thursday, November 3rd. The 1-0 road loss came all the way down to the final minute to play, the game was 0-0 into the 89th and final minute when Babson's Louis Gazo found the back of the net for the winning goal.

Both Wheaton and Babson went back and forth with chances the entire match, until the Beavers broke through with the gut-punch goal in the final seconds. However for the Lyons to get to the point of nearly sending the match to overtime is a testament of how gritty the 2022 squad was. When Babson came to Norton to face off in the regular season, it did not seem like the teams belonged on the same field. The Beavers came away with a 5-0 blowout victory which left Wheaton in a tough position. The team as a whole stepped up after that and made a run at the end of the season to grab the 5th seed in the NEWMAC playoffs.

When playoffs came around, the team learned they would be without Alasdair Ferrier. The Sophomore was the team's leading goal scorer this season, and the conference leader as well, with a whopping fifteen goals. Although it was a monumental loss, the squad was deep enough to go into the quarterfinals and defeat WPI on the road 2-1. Jack Brusso and Luke Strange netted the two goals for Wheaton and they have been as steady as they come throughout the season. The game was knotted at 1-1 with 20 minutes to play but the Senior Brusso scored the final goal of his Collegiate career to lift Wheaton to a 2-1 win. The run to the semi-finals would also not have been possible without the Senior Keeper Cam Millington. Millington kept teams off the board day-in-day-out and was perfect in net in the loss at Babson all the way until the last minute. That could

have been a 2-3 goal game if Millington didn't step up and make multiple big plays in goal.

The Lyons ended the season at 9-5-6 and earned their first playoff win since 2018. A successful season, and an even tighter bunch who went into every game and practice all on the same page, a team that truly brought what their coaching staff wanted every day. Although the final result is not what the team had hoped, it was a season to remember. The Lyons will graduate a talented Senior class but as always, it's gonna be next man up.

2- Back where they left off

After a 2021-22 season that sent nine swimmers to the NCAA D3 national championships, the Wheaton Women's Swim and Dive team got right back to their dominance to kick off the 2022-23 season.

The Lyons opened up the season in the pool with a record of 3-0, comfortably winning all of their meets. Wheaton defeated Div. 2 Bentley 180.5-115.5, then at home on Friday, October 28th, the women crushed Roger Williams 202-81, and then the day after at Wellesley they came away with a 161-133 victory. Two returners leading the way were Katie Walz and Reese Hartmann. Walz was recently named NEWMAC Women's Swimmer of the Week for October 24-30. It was the second time Walz has received this honor and she was certainly deserving of it this time around. In wins over Bentley and Wheaton's home win over Roger Williams, Walz won all three of her individual events (100 Yard Freestyle, 50 Yard Freestyle, and 100 Yard Butterfly).

Joining Walz in the week of success was Hartmann. In the three wins, Hartman dominated the backstroke events, winning every single backstroke event in the young season. In all three wins Hartman also contributed by swimming the opening legs of the 200-yard medley relay

in which she swam none other than the backstroke. Senior Emily Edds is also off to a hot start. Edds is a staple of the relay teams and has shown her endurance as well. In the Wellesley meet, Edds was able to take the 500 Yard Freestyle. Junior Meg Dickinson tallied contributing points for the Lyons in the first three meets as well and is always a key part of the relay teams.

Talia Dalton and Ella Feneide are two names out of Minnesota in the First-year class that have already shown how impactful they can be in the pool. One big thing that jumps out is Dalton's win in the 1000 over Roger Williams. This is an event that All-American Lydia Dacorte dominated in her time in Norton. For a Wheaton swimmer to come out and win that event in their first home meet is a testament to how strong this program is and how quickly and how well Head Coach Barret Roberts was able to recruit and rebuild his program. Feneide is also another first year that has contributed greatly. Feneide recently won the 100 Yard Freestyle and 200 Yard Freestyle in the road victory over Wellesley. Her and Walz are two swimmers you will usually see on the podium in the freestyle events, regardless of the competition.

3- Heartbreak in Boston

The Wheaton women's soccer team lost 3-2 in overtime to Emerson in the opening round of the NEWMAC playoffs on Tuesday, November 1st. The game seemed to be locked up for Wheaton but it came down to the last forty seconds in which Emerson was able to score two goals in clutch time to defend home field and advance.

Wheaton would have been deemed the winner... if this game was played last season. Rule changes at the beginning of the season made the playoff overtime format different from the past seasons. Instead of the traditional sudden-death overtime, the rule is now that both sides will just play out twenty minutes of over-

time, if the game is still tied after that, it would go to penalty kicks. In the last few minutes it seemed like it was a sure victory for Wheaton, to upcoming PK's, and then eventually to total heartbreak.

Wheaton was trailing 1-0 with around twelve minutes remaining in regulation, and the Lyons were able to tie it up when Senior forward Safie Recht took advantage of an Emerson defensive mistake and found the back of the net to score her conference-leading tenth goal. Neither side would score the rest of regulation and the game and overtime would now try to decide a winner. Just four minutes into the twenty minutes of overtime, Kate Wickenheisser got off a shot on goal, the Emerson keeper made the save, but was unable to hold onto the ball. The ball deflected back into the field of play and Lily Brown was in the right place at the right time to net her fourth goal of her Sophomore season.

The energy and excitement for Wheaton gave the squad momentum for the rest of the overtime, and the defense held Emerson scoreless in overtime all the way up to forty seconds to play. Just forty-seconds away from advancing to their second-consecutive NEWMAC semi-finals, Simone Barragan-Shaw of Emerson scored to tie the game at two. The mentality changed to getting a win in PK's for Wheaton, but Emerson had other plans. With just ten seconds left in overtime, the Wheaton defense could not clear the ball out of their defensive end and it resulted in a nightmare scenario. Caitlin Johnston of Emerson intercepted a pass and scored to give Emerson their second goal in thirty seconds to cap off the improbable comeback to give Emerson the 3-2 home victory.

Wheaton ends the season on the road in the playoffs as they did last year, and will have to fill the shoes of a very talented senior class that wore the blue and white for the last time November 1st in Boston.

Midnights Reviews

By Nicole Janeiro & Sanjana Kulkarni

Nicole's Review:

Taylor Swift's 10th studio album, *Midnights* was not what I expected to say the least. Leading up to the album release, I created a list of my predicted song rankings after the *Midnights* album track titles were released, and my predictions were completely off. Not only did I not properly prepare myself for Taylor's warped voice in songs such as *Labyrinth* and *Midnight Rain*, but I was also pleasantly surprised by the songs *Maroon*, *Question...?*, and *Lavender Haze*. Going into album release day, I had extremely high expectations for track five, *You're On Your Own, Kid*, mostly because of Swift's impressive track 5 reputation. Unfortunately, I wouldn't say it lived up to my expectations other than the fact that I strongly believe *You're On Your Own, Kid* has the best bridge out of every song on the *Midnights* album.

Hot take: I strongly believe the song *Anti-Hero* has been overhyped by Taylor before its release and has continued to be overhyped by Swifties ever since the album's release. Don't get me wrong, I think *Anti-Hero* is very relatable, I just don't find it as impressive as most of her other songs on this particular album. And for the record, anyone who has been pronouncing *Anti-Hero* like "AntEYE-Hero" is WRONG. Taylor announced the track title by pronouncing it like "AntEE-Hero" and pronounces it the same way in the song itself so GET IT RIGHT.

Alongside *Anti-Hero*, I think the song *Karma* has been overhyped as well. I acknowledge the cleverness on Taylor's part in hinting at the song almost two years in advance in her "The Man" music video, but I also found this song to be more underwhelming than I expected.

At first listen, I thought the 3am bonus tracks were mid, but they have significantly grown on me ever since listening to them for the first time. In fact, I can admittedly relate to the song *Glitch* to an unhealthy extent which is most likely part of the reason why I have it ranked within my top five favorite songs from this album. I understand the initial sentiment regarding the lack of Lana Del Rey's feature in *Snow On The Beach*, however, I find that her and Taylor's beautiful voices compliment each other very well.

To this day, I can proudly declare that *Vigilante Shit* is the best song title on the album even though I expected more from it. Like many songs on this album, *Vigilante Shit* reminds me of former Taylor Swift eras, but this particular song also reminds me of Billie Eilish's musical approach. *Maroon* reminds me of another past Taylor song, *King Of My Heart* from her *Reputation* album, and *Lavender Haze* is almost as if the songs *False God* and *I Think He Knows* (both songs from Taylor's *Lover* album) had a baby.

The song *Bejeweled* has grown on me ever since the album's release, mainly because I am lov-

ing the TikTok dance trend and it's one of my new go-to songs to play while getting ready to go out with my friends. Other than *Bejeweled*, I highly recommend adding *Mastermind*, *Vigilante Shit*, and *Lavender Haze* to your getting ready to go out playlists!

As of right now, my favorite song from this new album is *Maroon*, but we shall see if this song stands the test of time in its current position. Overall, I think it's easy for people to jump to the conclusion that this album isn't good in comparison to her other albums, especially her older content, without really giving the album a chance. I firmly believe that trying to embrace the content contained in each and every song will result in a deeper appreciation for *Midnights*.

Sanjana's Review:

I was among the throngs of fans counting down the days until the release of *Midnights*. When the album did come out, however, I was disappointed. Taylor Swift has been in this industry for more than two decades and has released fantastic albums across genres from soft pop to folk to hard pop and has never faltered in adding her "swiftness" to the music she makes. When you think Taylor, you think intense, emotional, and rocky lyrics that will literally make your feelings come to life. Bottom line: her music is relatable.

So when *Midnights* came out, I

was beyond disappointed. *Midnights* tries to do something new, something different than her previous albums. She is trying to stray away from the heartbroken girl trope to something more mature, more "take charge of my own life because I am a badass." But she didn't quite lean into this new style of music—almost like she was afraid that without her usual style, her fans would not appreciate her as much.

This semi-dive into a new genre landed her somewhere in the middle. She neither brought her broken-hearted intensity nor the damsel in distress. She also didn't fully lean into the *Reputation* kind of music that declares herself as her own savior. I could not relate to the lyrics, nor could I fully feel what she perhaps wanted me to feel. Still, this may come from my bias, as I recently found out that her ten minute version of *All Too Well* was about a three month fling with a man ten years older than her. So the intensity of those feelings were all too... weird.



Source // Spotify

The Wood-Wide Web

By Lily Maguire

Did you know that the total amount of trees in the world amounts to around three trillion? That's about 400 trees for every person on the planet. And what's even cooler is that most of these trees are connected to the others through what scientists have called the "wood-wide web."

It's called the mycorrhizal network, and depending on the environment and species, most trees are connected by the same type: the arbuscular mycorrhizal network (AM Network). Mycorrhizal is a thin-stranded fungus that lives in the soil and surrounds the roots of trees. A group of North American Dendrologists, in association with Harvard, conducted an isotope tracing experiment and discovered that trees can send nutrients to other trees that cannot get proper nutrients by sending them through this underground network.

So what does this mean? Scientists have observed a striking resemblance between the mycorrhizal network and the human brain, claiming in an article by harvard.edu that the networks "[facilitate] tree communication, memory and learning" by sending electrical, hormonal, and chemical signals to each other to signal distress, or warn of disease. Trees can also communicate their need for nutrients. Through the process of photosynthesis, trees create sugar in the form of glucose. They can trade the Carbons

for the Nitrogen and Phosphorus that the fungi provides, which are needed for photosynthesis and survival. This trade with the fungi is the case for most plants except carnivorous plants, which don't have access to these mycorrhizal fungi, which is why they need to digest bugs to receive this Nitrogen and Phosphorus that they lack. Smithsonian Magazine remarks that an estimated thirty percent of the sugars photosynthesized by trees are absorbed into the mycorrhizal system, so it can be assumed that a percentage of a similar number is returned to the trees from the fungi in Nitrogen and Phosphorus.

According to Suzanne Simard, there are Mother trees in every forest acting as central "hubs," which prioritize the health of the forest. Mother trees aren't necessarily "female," but act with a human maternal instinct to care for the young. Mother trees tend to have larger and deeper roots, which have access to water and more nutrients to share and disperse to the young saplings whose roots aren't yet developed. They share the nutrients by passing them along this shared mycorrhizal network.

While scientists aren't sure of the exact process of sharing nutrients, they have conducted experiments, like the isotope tracing recorded by harvard.edu for example, that have yet to reject this hypothesis. This experiment involved two tree

saplings next to each other in the same soil and under the same conditions, except one tree, the Birch, was injected with CO₂, while the Fir tree was shaded to prevent photosynthesis. Due to this predicted underground connection, the Fir tree could still survive due to the Birch tree's donation of absent nutrients.

Simard has found Mother trees to follow this experiment and assist in the young saplings' health and growth by nurturing them in this way. In Smithsonian Magazine, a student of Simard's, Allen Larocque, questions, "Is it a sharing hippie lovefest? Is it an economic relationship? Or do mother trees just get leaky when they're old? I think all these things are happening, but we don't know."

What we know is that all trees, not only the Mother trees, contribute to the mycorrhizal network, and although there is no emotional connection between the trees driving this network, it can resemble this. German forester and author, Peter Wohlleben, compares tree behavior to elephants. He says that trees will continue to nurture their neighbors with these shared nutrients, even if they are only a stump, similar to how elephants will continue to mourn and care for their kind even after they have died.

Due to this continued connection of the forest, despite living or dead trees, deforestation has proved

to decline the overall health of a forest, despite its appearance of helping. On the surface, deforestation allows for more sunlight, contributing to faster growth and a higher rate of photosynthesis in the new trees. However, this abundance of sunlight simultaneously disturbs the preferred conditions of the forest by drying out the usually moist soil. This affects the abundance of nutrients available in the soil and affects the trees. Incredibly, leaf size can change depending on the available nutrients, so with less abundance, the leaves will be smaller, resulting in less photosynthesis, and then again, less nutrients will become available in the soil.

The abundance of nutrients also affects the signals being sent along the network, so with an absence of nutrients comes an absence of signals. This leads to a higher rate of insect infestations and diseases in trees due the lack of distress signals being sent. Deforestation also disrupts the system by uprooting the trees and disturbing the peace underground by ripping out the roots and the mycorrhizal systems attached to them.

So I mentioned distress signals being sent along the network. What are these? Well, trees can not only communicate their need for nutrients during droughts, changes in the environment, or when they're young, but they can also send electrical distress signals to each other to warn of disease or

predation. A great example is the African Acacia trees responding to giraffe predation.

All trees have this ability to send distress signals, and Simard has even remarked that these electrical signals resemble that of damaged human tissue. However, these are signals sent through the underground mycorrhizal network. What's different about these African Acacias is that they send their signals through the air.

Upon detection of giraffe predation, the "injured" tree will release a distress signal in the form of ethylene gas to then travel to neighboring trees. When this gas is received by the surrounding acacias, they will begin to produce a toxic compound in their leaves called tannins, which, if consumed in large amounts, can kill giraffes, and other large herbivores.

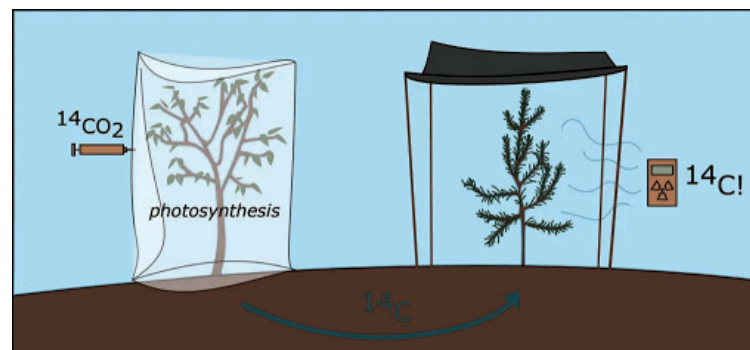
Yet giraffes have evolved with acacias and adapted to these conditions. Giraffes only eat into the wind, causing this ethylene gas to blow behind them, so they can still progress forwards to eat at neighboring trees. This is the case only under ideal conditions; thus giraffes have also discovered another tactic. Somehow they've discovered that ethylene gas can't travel farther than 100 yards in the air before being diffused. Knowing this, when the wind isn't blowing in their favor, or not at all, giraffes will only eat from trees that are more than 100 yards apart to avoid the consequences of eating the toxic leaves.

So trees can communicate, but is it really communication? Many

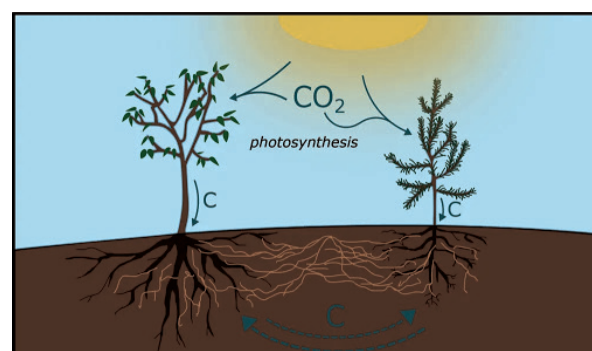
scientists have argued this point and have stated that the "communication" of trees isn't on purpose. It's an evolutionary trait and created through adaptation, not from conscious effort. The idea that trees can communicate is a fantasy, implying trees are like those in movies and children's books. Scientist Stephen Woodward tells Smithsonian Magazine that "[the trees are] not firing those signals to anything, they're emitting distress chemicals. Other trees are picking it up. There's no intention to warn." The implication that there is the emotion behind these signals is strictly fantastical, not scientific.

Despite these arguments, experiments conducted and data collected all fail to reject the hypothesis that trees are communicating with each other. Whether it's with conscious choice is unknown and remains as one of nature's many mysteries. Trees do not have nervous systems, yet comparisons to human and animal behavior can be made. Wohlleben says he uses comparisons to make the topic more easily understandable for everyone, as well as making it more interesting and fun.

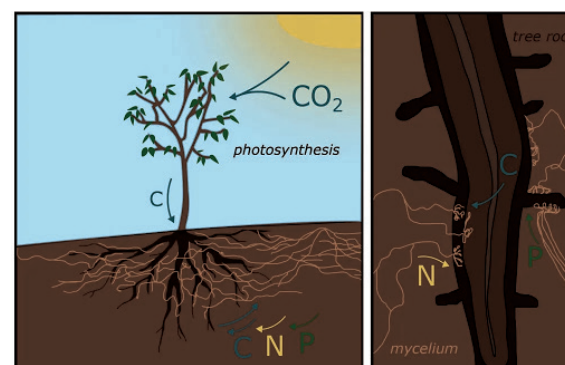
So while the fact is known but the intention is not, it's safe to say that more research is needed, since this is a relatively recent study with Simard publicly announcing tree communication in 1997. Nevertheless it's hard to argue that tree communication isn't fascinating, and I can't wait to hear more.



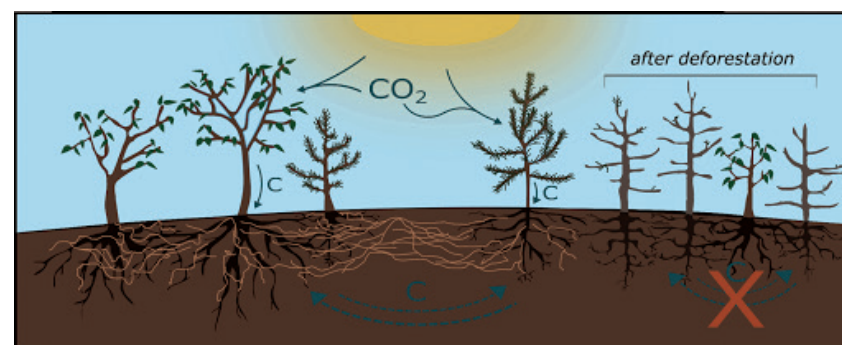
Picture from harvard.edu demonstrating the isotope tracing experiment done by Dendrologists. The Birch tree (left) is pumped with $^{14}\text{CO}_2$, while the Fir tree (right) is shaded from photosynthesis. The diagram shows the discovery of the Fir tree gaining the proper nutrients from the Birch's underground donations.



Picture from harvard.edu demonstrating the shared distribution of Carbon along the mycorrhizal network. The Birch tree (left) and Fir tree (right) are both connected underground by the same network.



Picture from harvard.edu demonstrating the symbiotic relationship between trees and the mycorrhizae. Trees give the fungi Carbon, trading it for Nitrogen and Phosphorus, which the fungi possess. The image on the right shows how the fungi attach themselves to the roots, sometimes going inside, in order to release their nutrients for the trade.



Picture from harvard.edu displaying the overall process of trees sharing nutrients. The arrows in the middle show a working relationship between the trees, due to the connection of the same type of mycorrhizal network. On the right, the image shows how trees on different mycorrhizal networks cannot share nutrients with each other.

Unsung Heroes of Wheaton College: Sungsook Charpentier 9

By John Morris

For the next feature in our “Unsung Heroes of Wheaton” series, we chose Sungsook Charpentier, one of the many underappreciated custodians on campus. Many of you will know her as the cheery woman who gives out candy in the Madeleine Clark Wallace Library, or gave, rather, as her shift was recently switched over to the Mars Science Center to allow her to work better hours.

I first met Sungsook last fall while I was working the graveyard shift (8pm - midnight) on Sundays at the library. For most of those four hours, she would be the only other person in the library besides myself. This gave us plenty of time to get to know each other and for me to really start to see what a delightfully funny and kind person she was. While I was working a 4am-8am shift during finals week last winter, all while battling off the combined side effects of the COVID Booster, Flu Shot, and a mild cold, she unlocked the library kitchen for me so I could microwave a mug cake, the first food I had eaten in days. This was, and I mean this earnestly, one of the kindest things anyone has ever done for me.

I sat down with Sungsook in a biology classroom during her twenty-minute lunch break, where she not only brought homemade Korean food for herself, but for me and the Wire staff as well. She was delighted to show me a large green tupperware filled with wonderfully made fried rice with ground beef, tofu, fresh carrots, garlic, onions, sesame oil and sea salt. Earlier this

semester, during her last days working at the library, she also made vegetable fried rice for the library staff, myself included. Both were mouth-wateringly delicious, by the way.

John Morris: How long have you worked at Wheaton?

Sungsook Charpentier: Five years. Last August, on the 28th, was five years. So five years and a couple months.

John Morris: Would you say you like working here at Wheaton?

Sungsook Charpentier: I love it. I love it! That’s why I look so happy all the time for you guys! That’s why I make you guys food! I love it!

John Morris: And we all love you. Everybody I know who’s met you or has gotten candy from you all loves you and they all talk about you as a highlight of their day and somebody really nice they know on campus. I think you’ve touched a lot of people with your generosity and your kindness.

Sungsook Charpentier: Thank you so much! Sometimes I don’t even know the people, I just give them the candy. Sometimes I know them, sometimes I don’t. Two days ago, some lady came up to me and said, “Hey Sungsook, you’re not at the library anymore?” and I said “I’m not there anymore. I’m not working up there no more”. She said “I miss you,” and I said, “I miss you too. I understand, but I’ve

moved here now.”

Sungsook worked the third shift at the library for three years, which meant that as much as I dreaded being there until midnight one night a week, she was there cleaning until much later than that multiple times a week. As I mentioned, earlier this year she was able to switch to an earlier shift at the Mars Science Center, meaning she wouldn’t have to work so late, something she’s very excited about.

Sungsook Charpentier: I was working the third shift up there. I can’t sleep. I had passed out a couple times already. Almost. (Laughs) I almost got into two car accidents. I can’t do that anymore. Three years! I worked there for three years!

John Morris: Do you like working here more than the library?

Sungsook Charpentier: Of course!

John Morris: Is it just the hours, or...

Sungsook Charpentier: Yeah, it’s just the hours.

John Morris: You’ve cooked a lovely meal for the Wire staff, and you made us fried rice when you were leaving the library. Do you enjoy cooking?

Sungsook Charpentier: I looooooove to cook! I cooked for my son when he was growing up. He said to me, “Ma, I love your cooking.”

John Morris: What’s your favorite thing to cook? What do you enjoy cooking the most?

Sungsook Charpentier: Everything.

John Morris: Everything?

Sungsook Charpentier: I enjoy everything but pork. I don’t eat pork. Sometimes, I don’t like some fish, but I cook with it a lot when I’m making Korean food.

John Morris: So, South Korean cuisine is your speciality?

Sungsook Charpentier: Yes, this is my food. Kimchi, I always make kimchi. Yesterday, I gave some to two people. They loved it and one of them asked me, “can you teach me?” I told them that “I wish I could teach you, but there’s no time. It would be too hard”.

John Morris: What was the first job you ever worked?

Sungsook Charpentier: My first job was in a nursing home. Lots of old ladies, old guys.

John Morris: Not as fun as college kids?

Sungsook Charpentier: No, no, I love everybody. Sometimes, the people I meet here are so sad. But that’s okay, I can pray for them. Everybody’s different, you know what I mean? Sometimes I find people crying, and I tell them “I’m so sorry” and I give them some candy.

John Morris: Here at Wheaton?

Sungsook Charpentier: Yeah, here. At the library, I would find people crying in the bathroom. When they came out, I would ask them if you wanted some candy and then they'd be happy.

John Morris: Like I've said, you've touched a lot of people here. A lot of people really love you.

Sungsook Charpentier: I love these people. I feel like you guys are my sons and daughters. Really. God touched my heart when he gave me this job, and I said "Thank you God."

John Morris: Do you feel at home here? Do you feel like you're a part of the Wheaton community?

Sungsook Charpentier: This is my second house! When I first got here, the first thing I cleaned was the break room, so I could use it for my lunch time or break time, because this is my second house.

John Morris: Do you have a message for the students at Wheaton?

Sungsook Charpentier: A message? Just respect. Treat each other with respect. And smiling. Talking is good. I like it when everybody says "hi" to each other, you know what I mean? When someone needs help, I help them. Respect. That's my style.

John Morris: I think a lot of people could learn from you.

Sungsook Charpentier: Yes. Yesterday, my son said, "Ma, thank you so much. You've taught me every-

thing. I appreciate you. I love you," and I told him I loved him too.

John Morris: It's all about respect.

Sungsook Charpentier: Yes, some people don't understand though. To them I say: step back. It may take a few hours or a couple days, but it will be better.

John Morris: You learn over time.

Sungsook Charpentier: Yes. You guys teach me a lot too.

John Morris: Oh yeah? What have you learned from Wheaton students?

Sungsook Charpentier: Lots of high level stuff. People show me what they're working on. It's really exciting. I'm in classes two times a week learning English. I'm studying speaking, writing, and reading. So I'm learning a lot. Today I canceled on my teacher to hang out with my son, since he's visiting right now. I had to make food too.

John Morris: You're a very busy woman. Were you born in South Korea?

Sungsook Charpentier: Yes, in Seoul. I've been here 24 years.

John Morris: What are you looking forward to right now?

Sungsook Charpentier: I don't know. I wanna open up a restaurant. I'd love to open up a restaurant.

John Morris: Wow!

Sungsook Charpentier: I have to think about it. We'll see.

John Morris: Would you be making Korean food?

Sungsook Charpentier: Yes! Of course! Have you ever had dumplings? I make the best dumplings! Next time, I'll make you dumplings. I promise you.

John Morris: If you opened a Korean restaurant, I promise you all the Wheaton kids are coming.

Sungsook Charpentier: It may be too far from here.

John Morris: At the very least, I'm coming. I promise.

Sungsook Charpentier: Oh, thank you so much, John. We'll see. Maybe I'll do a food truck.

John Morris: Oh, that would be so cool.

Sungsook Charpentier: I don't know, maybe. I don't know. I'll think about it.

I wish I could include the whole interview, with all of its jokes and laughter, but unfortunately, I am only allowed so much space to write. I cannot overemphasize just how funny and wonderful of a person Sungsook is, and how she, like our entire custodial staff, works very hard to make this campus clean. So, if you see her in the science center, say hi, ask her how her day is going—I've found it's always worth it. We're all a part of the same little circle of people who spend most of our time here at Wheaton, we might as well get to know each other, and like Sungsook said, make sure to treat each other with respect.



Horoscopes (Unhinged)

By Moira Sankey & Madison Morin

Due to everyone being sick and huddled in their dorms, this edition's horoscopes will be matching zodiac signs with squishmallows!

Aquarius (Jan. 20 – Feb. 18)

Stacy the Squid

Pisces (Feb. 19 – March 20)

Santino the Platypus

Aries (March 21 – April 19)

Stix the Skeleton.

Taurus (April 20 – May 20)

Ben the Teal Dino

Gemini (May 21 – June 20)

Avery the Duck

Cancer (June 21 – July 22)

Chanel the Cinnamon Roll

Leo (July 23 – Aug. 22)

Mariah the Lamb

Virgo (Aug. 23 – Sept. 22)

Philippe the Frog

Libra (September 23 – October 22)

Patty the Cow

Scorpio (October 23 – November 21)

Jack the Black Cat

Sagittarius (November 22 – December 21)

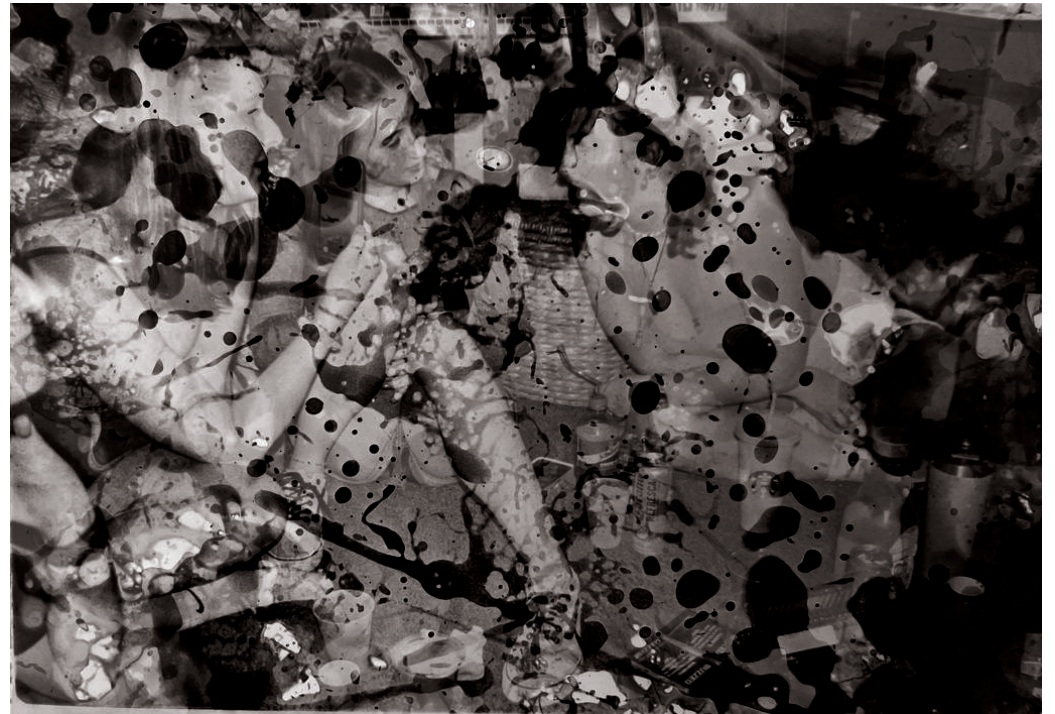
Celine the Hen

Capricorn (December 22 – January 19)

Gregory the Goat

Art From Wheaton

Wheaton is known for being a liberal arts school, with a large emphasis on art. Here at The Wire, we want to do our best to showcase student art and give it the recognition it deserves. This edition's featured artist is Madison Morin, a junior and the managing editor of the Wheaton Wire.



Have a piece of poetry, flash fiction, or visual art to share? Send it to thewheatonwire@gmail.com for a chance to be featured!