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# The Montgazette

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## The Students' Voice

Issue 76

Serving Montgomery County Community College and the Surrounding Community

December 2018



Students of the Spanish Department, Tanisha Martinez (left) and Isabella Santangelo (right), bring traditional Day of the Dead characters to life as La Catrina (Martinez) and La Llorona (Santangelo).

[Read more on Page 4.](#)

Photo by Bridget Depew

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# from the Editor

## Be the Gift That Keeps On Giving

**Bridget Depew**  
The Montgazette Editor-in-Chief

So, we continue into the holiday season! I hope we've worked off the extra weight from Thanksgiving. I hope we've also enjoyed quality time with family and friends. If we're particularly ambitious, we've begun our holiday shopping. But even though the Thanksgiving holiday has passed, it (hopefully) didn't take with it the two elements that will carry us throughout the remainder of this year—and of our lives: giving and giving thanks.

How often do we say, "Thank you"? I don't mean in response to being given a gift. I mean a general "thank you" for life—for health, for freedom, for safety. It is true that we could all stand to have a little more money in the bank. But in our daily efforts to chase the almighty dollar, we often lose perspective

and fail to remember how truly blessed we are. We forget to simply slow down and exhale a "thank you." A healthy spirit of gratitude can do wonders for a cloudy perspective. Not just on a holiday, but every day.

To say this is a busy time of year is an understatement. Class deadlines loom, exams taunt us, and sleep is evasive. It is crucial that we take care of ourselves and remain focused as we wrap up these last few weeks of the semester. It is equally important that we take care of others.

Not everyone is looking forward to the holidays. For some, it is a time of pain, of remembering the loss of loved ones. For some, it is a lonely time—family and friends may live out of state; relationships may have ended. Regardless of

the reason, for some the holidays can be a source of sadness that is almost palpable, leaving them feeling hopeless.

Some of us, however, may have a surplus of happiness. Family and friends are good. The job is good. Life is good. For those of you who fall into that category, this year I challenge you to step outside your comfort zone and reach out to someone in need. I'm not necessarily speaking of monetary need. I'm referring to emotional need. I challenge you give of yourself.

All too often, when we ask someone how they're doing, we expect the stock responses, "I'm fine. Doin' okay." We may even hope for it, because we are in a hurry. No one can really blame us. Life slows down for no one.

Might I encourage you, though, to slow it down yourself? Might I encourage you to take pause, look someone directly in the eye, and with all sincerity ask, "How are you really doing?"

You may catch them off guard. The truth is, they may not be prepared to dig deep and engage in a vulnerable conversation. That's okay. They don't have to. What does the spirit good is simply knowing someone cares enough to take a moment—and give a moment.

Students, staff and faculty of Montgomery County Community College, I truly hope all of you enjoy this holiday season. Don't forget to say "Thank you!" And don't forget to give from one of your most precious commodities—your time. Happy holidays!

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### About The Montgazette

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# My Jewish Life: Reflection on Pittsburgh Killings

Maxwell Danoff  
The Montgazette Contributor

I awoke on October 27 to the horrific news a man opened fire in a Pittsburgh synagogue, killing 11 congregants and wounding six others. The report was unconscionable: A man entered a place of worship and shot defenseless, innocent people. They were celebrating the Hebrew naming of a baby at Tree of Life synagogue. The next day I prayed with others at my synagogue for the victims and their families.

This evil act brought me back to the tragedy of September 11, 2001, and a pivotal moment in my life.

Jewish culture and values have always been integral parts of my upbringing. My earliest memories are steeped with Jewish customs and traditions: lighting menorah candles and making latkes to celebrate Hanukah. My parents instilled in me the value and appreciation of my Jewish heritage. What's more, I have always had a strong interest in Israel.

My parents belonged to Har Zion synagogue when was born. I began my Jewish education there when I was nine. My sister and I were fortunate to be called to read

the Torah together, a double blessing during our B'nai Mitzvah. Jewish law allowed us to celebrate jointly because we are close in age.

Our religious event was scheduled for September 13, 2001. Two days earlier, planes hit the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. My parents and extended family were devastated. It seemed unfathomable to celebrate our B'nai Mitzvah in light of this tragedy. We contemplated canceling the event. Friends and family could not travel by plane since airports were closed. My parent's decision to proceed with the B'nai Mitzvah, however, speaks volumes about our Jewish faith.

Our B'nai Mitzvah was more poignant than we could have imagined. Pennsylvania dignitaries, family and friends filled the auditorium. Tears flowed as my sister and I read from the Torah, and the Rabbi gave his sermon. This significant moment in time harkened back to my Jewish values. The Jewish people have always overcome tragedy, bloodshed and setbacks by their determination and positivity. Our B'nai Mitzvah occurred

at such a pivotal moment that it changed my life forever.

It was an awakening in my Jewish life and ingrained Jewish teachings in my soul. My faith teaches respect and love for others, charitable giving and tenacity in overcoming obstacles. These ideals are my blueprint for situations in daily life.

I am fortunate that I will

connect with my Jewish roots on a 10-day trip to Israel in January 2019. I look forward to experiencing the Holy Land and my faith firsthand.

I also experienced my faith firsthand in my synagogue as we prayed as a community for the community grieving at the Tree of Life synagogue. Through the ages, the

tenacity of Jewish people has always overcome tragedies and setbacks throughout biblical times, Auschwitz (the Holocaust), September 11th and the Pittsburgh shootings. My Jewish experience has taught me that good always overcomes evil.

Max Danoff is a Liberal Studies major who lives in Bryn Mawr.



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# Montgomery County Community College Celebrates Dia de los Muertos

Bridget Depew  
The Montgazette Editor-in-Chief

On Oct. 31, the Spanish department hosted a “Day of the Dead” event in Parkhouse Hall at Montgomery County Community College. The “Day of the Dead,” or “Dia de los Muertos”, traditionally celebrated on November 1, All Saints Day, is the day the Hispanic culture celebrates the

passing of their loved ones, as opposed to mourning them. They view death as merely another part of life. Tanisha Martinez, a Liberal Arts major and co-host of the event, says, “[Death] is just another passage ... and it’s something to be celebrated. Just because that person is dead, doesn’t mean

we have to forget them.”

On the Day of the Dead, Hispanics traditionally make altars that display a photo of

their loved one who has passed, surrounded by items of special significance.

Continued on page 5



Tanisha Martinez, Professor Elortegui and Professor Gamauf of the Spanish department

Photograph by Bridget Depew



Dr. Copel, dressed as La Llorona, happily serving pastries to students in attendance.

Photograph by Bridget Depew

ON CAMPUS



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## Dia de los Muertos, continued from p. 4

Some of the characters represented on “Day of the Dead” are La Catrina, typically shown as a lavishly adorned skeleton and given the title “the Grande Dame of Death,” and La Llorona—a young Spanish woman who killed her children after she was scorned and abandoned by her husband. According to legend, remorse consumed her as she wandered the streets, where she lamented the loss of her children until she died.

According to Martinez, on Day of the Dead, “Our cemeteries, especially in Mexico, are always greatly adorned. In Mexico, it’s more of a great honoring thing, so there will be tons of flowers and beautiful candles to light up what most people would see as a more somber [scene]. In preparation for the holiday, we put [out] orange marigold petals and ... disperse them from the tombstone of the family, and make a pathway to [the family’s] door, leaving [the] door open—to allow the entity of the spirit to come in as it pleases.”



Tanisha Martinez, a Liberal Arts major in the Spanish department, dressed as La Catrina, displays a replica of an altar that would be erected in honor of loved ones who have passed away.

Photograph by Bridget Depew

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## Let Your Voice Be Heard!



Students get into character with Day of the Dead costume paraphernalia.

Photograph by Bridget Depew

# Where Has Your Congressional District Gone?

**Thomas M. Boccuto**  
The Montgazette Contributor

U.S. Rep. Brendan Boyle (D-PA) was on campus Oct. 24 to show support for those who work in the music industry during District Advocate Day, sponsored nationwide by the Recording Industry Association of America and GRAMMY. Montgomery County Community College hosted a local observation in the new analog studio on the Central Campus. Just days earlier, Boyle voted for the Music Modernization Act, which will require fair payment for songwriters and artists, and copyright protections for producers and engineers.

After the event, Boyle was asked how he felt about the 13th

Congressional District, his district, being redrawn. Currently, it includes portions of Montgomery County. Since 2015, Boyle has served residents of the oddly shaped district that was carved up in 2011 for political benefit. This process is called gerrymandering. Borders of the district stretched from Lansdale to Northeast Philadelphia and from the Olney section of Philadelphia to King of Prussia. After a PA Supreme Court ruling in 2017, maps of gerrymandered districts, including the 13th, were redrawn. The map redrawn in 2018 was approved by Governor Wolf. Beginning in January 2019, Boyle will serve the 2nd Congressional District, which

does not include Montgomery County.

Boyle said he had mixed feelings about the redistricting. "I oppose gerrymandering. I think that the district should be drawn in a fair way. I, as a state legislator (before becoming a congressman), voted against the congressional redistricting in 2011 because I knew the map was one of the most gerrymandered in the country." He said he was glad that the state supreme court ruled against the gerrymandered districts.

At the same time, Boyle said he was "sad" about losing his Montgomery County constituents. "We have done an awful lot of work in Montgomery County, representing about 350,000 residents. On a personal level, I am sad that I will no longer represent them."

For perspective, before the

ruling in 2017, Montgomery County was represented in the 2nd, 6th, 7th, 8th, and 13th districts. Now, on the new map, Montgomery County lies completely within the 4th District.

The state supreme court's ruling that allowed Pennsylvania lawmakers to redraw their congressional map sparked action across the country. Potentially gerrymandered congressional maps are now being challenged in courts in Texas, North Carolina, Maryland, and Wisconsin.

Democrats are ecstatic about this development. Meanwhile, Republicans are not. In fact, U.S. House Representative Ryan Costello, who used to represent the 6th District, just retired because of this ruling.

Locate your U.S. congressional district using the URL [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov).



U.S. Rep. Brendan Boyle supported local musicians during District Advocate Day on Oct. 24. Montgomery County Community College was a local host for the Recording Academy and GRAMMY organization's nationwide event. Days earlier, Boyle voted for the Music Modernization Act, which requires fair payment for songwriters and artists, and copyright protections for producers and engineers.

Photograph courtesy of the MCCC Communications Dept.

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# Going Above and Beyond: Phi Theta Kappa Inductees Explain Their Success

Loue Repsik  
The Montgazette Contributor

Students who push themselves to excel in their education can see the payoff in their grades, and even in cold, hard cash. Montgomery County Community College hosted the Phi Theta Kappa Induction Ceremony at the Science Center Auditorium on Central Campus on Oct. 11. There were 79 students who met the eligibility requirements and were invited to join the honor society.

Kat Araya, a Liberal Studies major from Ambler and the president of Phi Theta Kappa, attributes her motivation to get into the honor society to the average scholarship of \$2,500. Nearly 70 percent of students inducted into the honor society in Pennsylvania receive federal aid, according to Phi Theta Kappa's data on student success. Also, 94 percent of these students finished their associate degree and transferred to a four-year institution. In comparison, only 37 percent of other Pennsylvania students completed their associate degree and continued their education.

"We can help you refine and achieve your goals and give you leadership and travel experience and a social outlet, but you need to utilize the honor society to enjoy it fully," said Catherine Parzynski, adviser of Phi Theta Kappa. Parzynski explained that to be invited into the honor society, students must maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.5, have completed at least 12 credits at the college, and uphold the college's code of conduct.


"Each chapter has a president, secretary, treasurer, and four vice presidents who budget for events and plan meetings, service projects, and travel experiences," said Parzynski. Students chosen for leadership positions also keep minutes for their meetings, which take place twice a month in the fall and spring semesters. Parzynski added that students enjoy travel opportunities to conventions regionally and nationally, and they participate in service projects every fall and spring.

"If you're invited to join the honor society, definitely go for it," said Anna Frick, a Psychology major from Harleysville. She said that being a part of Phi Theta Kappa opens connections with other four-year schools around the country and also looks good on a resume. Emily McLaughlin, a Fine Arts major from Lansdale, said that she plans to attend Savannah College of Art and Design and will receive a scholarship because of her involvement in the honor society. "You must be a concrete and sound person. Take your work seriously, follow up on your word, and be reliable," said McLaughlin.

To be invited into Phi Theta Kappa, students need to keep their grades up, and Frick suggested relying on friends for support and to create a study group. "Talk to your professors, explain your situation, go into the tutoring center and see if they have any advice for you," said Frick. Justin Ziegler, a Business Administration major from Harleysville,

added that students must be driven academically and be devoted to helping their community. "You will hit hard times, so stay driven no matter what. You don't know what you're capable of. Push yourself to the edge and go above and beyond," said Ziegler.

The students invited to join Phi Beta Kappa now have new opportunities to develop their leadership skills within a community of motivated students. With Phi Theta Kappa's purpose of encouraging scholarship, fellowship, leadership and service, there are many reasons for students to work hard to be invited to join.



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# Therapy Dogs on Campus: Just What the Doctor Ordered

Ashley Bauer  
The Montgazette Contributor

Playful dogs are what the doctor ordered to relieve students' stress on the West Campus of Montgomery County Community College on Oct. 17. The therapy dogs, Tessa and Toby, were both rescued at approximately six months of age. Students surrounded the dogs and sat on the floor, playing; smiles lit up their faces. Carol and Pamela, the owners of the playful pups, who kindly brought them in, are the real heroes of the story. The dogs wore service vests that made students a little hesitant to pet the dogs, yet Carol and Pamela convinced them to go ahead. This is their third year bringing the dogs into the school, and the students seemed to love it. Being able to take time away from the stress of a test, or a long class, to relax and hang out with a couple of frisky pups can really turn a student's day around.



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# Taking the Secret for Student Success to Japan

**Bridget Depew**  
The Montgazette Editor-in-Chief

In movies where a professor speaks words of life to a student body, encouraging them to press on, that professor could be based on Montgomery County Community College's Dr. Craig Smith. He has put much thought into how to help students succeed. It begins when they first arrive on campus.

New students can become overwhelmed by new people, surroundings and workloads. Smith, the Director of Student Retention and Success, developed the Theory of First-Year Engagement, which focuses on helping students stay in college and graduate. The key is connection. When new students interact with faculty and staff members, they begin to develop positive bonds in this new stage of life.

Smith's theory is gaining

attention. He spoke Nov. 27 at the 6th Annual Conference on Management and Social Science in Osaka, Japan, about the importance of connection for student retention.

Student retention is defined as the percentage rate of the first-time and first-year undergraduate students who continue their education at the College the following year. Smith says it is crucially important, and that it does not happen by accident. "You [have to] make that connection and make [the student] feel like they're the only one in the room. Talk to them. Engage them. Hug them. Acknowledge them," he said.

Those personal touches are what students here at Montgomery County Community College experience when they encounter Smith. His open-door office policy

welcomes students to sit down with him and not only receive academic advice but "life" advice as well. He takes the time to really get to know the students. "I'm good at helping people and maximizing their potential," he said.

Dr. Smith recognizes that maximizing potential must begin during the early days of students' arrival. At Montgomery County Community College, he created Montco WOW (Weeks of Welcome) for the college. He explained that students enter the College, wander around and leave with a lot of debt, so it is important to engage them early in their educational endeavors. He also spearheaded Dine & Dialogue—a sit-down opportunity for students to engage with the professors of the College.

He believes it is important to take the knowledge out of the classroom and bring it into a more intimate setting, conversing with faculty and having real-life discussion, so that students may get an idea of who their professors really are. Craig states that it is an opportunity to get a different perspective and to get rid of the angst, fear and intimidation new students can feel upon entering college.

The college years can be an anxious and unnerving time for students. Smith has a way of calming those nerves and teaching students to redirect that anxious energy and turn it into success. He does not do it behind a podium in a classroom. He does it from his office—with one-on-one encounters and a smile that says, "I believe in you."

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# DISCOVER YOUR NEXT...



# West Campus Open House Attracts New Students

Ashley Bauer  
The Montgazette Contributor

Lorie Finn said Montgomery County Community College turned her daughter's life around, and she wanted to ensure visitors at the West Campus in Pottstown learned the benefits of attending. Finn greeted prospective students and their parents to the College's Open House on Saturday, Oct. 13.

Stationed at the door of North Hall, Finn explained the perks of attending the College. She made students aware that the school offers everything they need to learn through online courses, which they can attend without leaving the comfort of their own home. She also mentioned that the school is very affordable for students throughout the county.

Many families send all their children to the College. During the family-oriented event, the school involves both students and parents in its activities. A mother and her two daughters—Julia, a prospective psychology major and Alyse, a hopeful realtor, were thrilled with the information and options they received. Brothers Matt and Daniel also wandered through the open house and had some interesting information to share. Matt talked about the university center, where four-year schools offer classes through the College. Daniel was interested in game design.

Dr. Melinda Copel and Dr. Andrew Kosciuszka, professors in the Arts and Humanities Division, were two helpful, friendly faces present at the open house. Interested students do not have to major in art or music to

take a course in that field.

Montgomery County Community College is full of opportunity for absolutely everyone. A young woman named Paige, a prospective music major, had nothing but wonderful things to say. She said that school representatives made her aware that they would go above and beyond to help her in whatever way they could. The music director told her if she had any concerns, she could even contact him directly. She was nothing but thrilled when leaving the school.

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# Autism Advocate Appears on “The Ellen DeGeneres Show”

Rahul Thevar  
The Montgazette Contributor

Ben Hartranft, a friend to many Montgomery County Community College students and “Mayor of North Penn (High School)” advocates for autism awareness and raises money to find answers for the disorder. He spread the word nationally on “The Ellen DeGeneres Show” show Oct. 22, and, in return, received surprises from her and the Philadelphia Eagles.

At age two, Hartranft was diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). He could speak only 20 words, according to Patch.com. Now, he can’t stop talking.

The 20-year-old is also an ambassador for the Eagles Autism Challenge. He set a personal goal of raising \$10,000 for the cause by working two jobs.

Meanwhile, for three years Hartranft has dreamed of being on “The Ellen DeGeneres Show.” Nearly 40 people lobbied for him to appear. They sent messages and videos explaining

how Hartranft’s efforts align with Ellen’s “One Million Acts of Good.”

Hartranft’s dream began to come true when he was contacted by a producer about appearing on the show. Ben received a call to do a Skype interview with a producer but was not allowed to tell anyone about it. Hartranft said, “It was hard to keep it a secret.” Then the show contacted him to come to Hollywood for an Ellentube taping at the Warner Bros. Studios on Oct. 22. Ellentube is the “video destination” for Ellen. There, fans can find official clips from the show, as well as viewer-submitted videos, plus games and giveaways.

Hartranft said, “They told me I would sit in the audience for a show and would not get to meet Ellen. They were tricking me.”

Instead, Hartranft sat on Ellen’s white couch and chatted with the Emmy-winning TV host as well as with former Philadelphia Eagle,

Jon Dorenbos, a long snapper from 2006-2017. During their conversation Hartranft told them, “Having autism is not a bad thing, and it doesn’t characterize who we are. We are unique and special, just like a rainbow.”

According to Inspiremore.com, during the show, Hartranft enjoyed more surprises: tickets to Universal Studios, Eagles gear – including a helmet signed by the team - and a \$10,000 donation by Shutterfly to more than meet his Eagles Autism Challenge goal.

“I cried because I was so blessed. I am so happy that money is going to research to make a difference for people with autism.”

Ben wasn’t the only one overjoyed. Friend and Montgomery County Community College student Jared Pelleck said, “It was amazing seeing Ben on ‘The Ellen DeGeneres show’ and spending

time with Jon Dorenbos. Ben has a great personality [and it was great that \$10,000 was donated] to Ben’s Eagles Autism Challenge.”

Looking back on his dream come true, Hartranft said, “I am still pinching myself. I talk about it [even] when no one else is around. It was so exciting.”

He said it was “cool” to hang out with Dorenbos. “He is kind and funny and does so much for the City of Philadelphia.”

Hartranft’s advice to Montgomery County Community College students: “Make sure you dream big, pursue your dreams and never give up.” He follows his own advice.

An article about Hartranft’s appearance on “The Ellen DeGeneres Show” and video clips can be found here: <https://www.ellentube.com/article/philadelphia-eagles-autism-challenge-ambassador-ben-hartanft-needs-your-help.html>.



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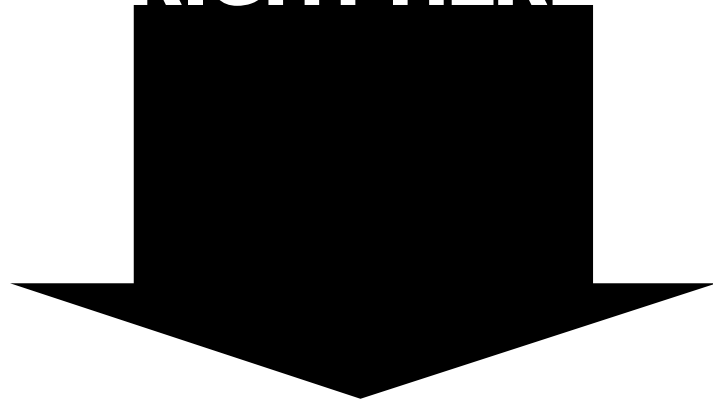
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## Mustangs Women's Soccer Season Ends with a Loss, but Positives Remain

Joshua Young  
The Montgazette Contributor

On a windy afternoon, under overcast skies, the Montgomery County Community College Mustangs Women's Soccer season came to an end with an 8-1 loss at the hands of the Bucks County Community College Centurions.

The game began well for the Mustangs, as Emily Crosby-Piczek netted her seventh goal of the season for an early 1-0 lead. However, the Centurions tied the game less than a minute later and scored the next seven goals to rout the Mustangs.

The Centurions dominated from the time of possession, keeping the Mustangs wide, and not allowing their players to get to the center of the field for a clean shot. The Centurions, who boast two players who have 50 points and 10 goals, used their acclaimed offense to pull away in the second half.

Nevertheless, the Mustangs' head coach, John DiCriscio, believes that there are some positives to be taken from this match.

First, DiCriscio pointed out that the

Mustangs' roster is almost entirely made up of freshmen. (The team has one sophomore.) Regardless, the Mustangs were still able to open scoring against the Centurions' "A lineup," DiCriscio said.

"The match was Bucks' 16th match of the season, compared to our sixth. I would consider this a positive step in the right direction," DiCriscio remarked. At the same time, he cited defending set pieces as the area most in need of improvement.

With the season over, players and coach turned to reflecting on the successes and failures the team experienced throughout the season.

DiCriscio said that the team's cohesiveness and willingness to display sportsmanship throughout the season is what he will remember most about this team.

Jess Tolkacz, a midfielder and goalkeeper for the Mustangs, agreed with DiCriscio. Tolkacz said she will always remember the team's perseverance and

desire to help one another.

Tolkacz was also named Mustang "most improved player" by DiCriscio. Tolkacz stepped up to play goalkeeper due to an injury to freshman Johnnie Keegan, and she improved to league average statistics by the end of the season.

Tolkacz said she was honored to be named most improved player. "Being the most improved means that the work I put in during endless practices, and taking advice the coaches offered, paid off," Tolkacz said. "This being my first year playing soccer, I was unsure of what to expect, but I was determined to learn and work hard to build my skill."

Tolkacz also talked about the enjoyment she got from being a part of the Mustangs.

"What I will remember most about this team is how much fun we all had together on bus rides and at practices and games, and how well we worked together," Tolkacz said. "I couldn't ask for a better team to play with."

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