

HEALTHY TRAILBLAZER JOURNAL

Introducing DePaul's newspaper

Welcome to the *Healthy Trailblazer Journal*.

Our newspaper will focus on topics dealing with how people feel emotionally and physically.

Our goal is to report on many topics, such as being active, eating healthy food, developing friendships, staying positive, and staying focused.

For instance, in this issue you will read about why getting enough sleep matters, how the pandemic affected students and teachers, and what a young poet thinks of the pandemic.

This issue has been produced by the eighth graders at DePaul. We are led by Mr. Leonard, DePaul's middle school religion and social studies teacher, who serves as editor of the newspaper.

You might be asking yourself "Why is our newspaper about health?"

"Health will always be important to human life," Jehiel said.

"Health is an important part of our life and we should take it more seriously," Nashiya said.

Health matters in everything you do. So we think about health broadly. In the future, you likely will see articles about music, art, sports, and more.

We named the paper the *Healthy Trailblazer Journal* for several reasons. The name "Journal" pays tribute to the first African American newspaper called *Freedom's Journal*, the first Black-owned and operated newspaper in the United States. It was established in 1826. "Trailblazer" is a name associated with the DePaul community. And "Healthy" is the theme of the paper.

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Pandemic alters sleep habits

A year in quarantine has had at least one benefit for DePaul teacher Mr. Grzywinski. He said he is getting more sleep than he did before the pandemic.

"Sleep is a weird thing," said Mr. Grzywinski, who goes by Mr. G and teaches fifth grade social studies and seventh and eighth grade English Language Arts.

"If I get the perfect amount of sleep I feel ready to take on the day. If I get too much or too little I am working at 75 percent capacity."

He said he tries to go to sleep every night by 10 p.m. The perfect number of hours of sleep for him is 10 or 11 a night. He said he has always liked to sleep. Even in high school, when his friends would stay up all night, he would tell them, "I can't do that."

Getting enough sleep is important because it helps you be alert and focused for another day, according to kidshealth.org, an award-winning website for children about health.

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Illustration by Ava Thongvanh

Pandemic can make it hard to sleep

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Too little sleep over a long period of time could affect a persons’ growth, the website says.

Kids in elementary school should sleep between 9 and 12 hours a night, according to health experts. Teens need between 8 and 10 hours of sleep a night.

In a recent interview, Mr. G. said he believes that many of his students are getting less sleep now than before the pandemic. They are staying up later because they can attend class from home and can get an extra hour of sleep in the morning.

Mr. Leonard, a DePaul social studies and religion teacher, agreed with Mr. G that students are staying up later.

“Students are staying up later but want to stay connected with friends because they are not seeing them physically or personally they are relying more on electronic devices,” said Mr. Leonard.

He said he is sleeping more during the pandemic. “I am not running around as much.” Before everyone needed to stay home, Mr. Leonard said he’d often go to a movie or a restaurant. “My life is more stationary now,” he said.



Mr. G. said he uses a filter on his phone to block out blue light. The blue light interferes with the body’s process of going to sleep, according to the National Sleep Foundation.

Here are some tips to help you if you are having trouble getting enough sleep, says kidshealth.org:

1. Follow a bedtime routine.
2. Don’t keep a TV in your bedroom.
3. Limit foods and drinks with caffeine.

—By Healthy Trailblazer Journal staff

What’s it like to teach during COVID

Mr. Leonard, a DePaul religion and social studies teacher, said he has gotten much better using technology during the pandemic.

However, he said, he still prefers to sit in a classroom and listen to his students. For him, breakout rooms don’t compare to in-person conversations. He said he misses hearing students talk about God in religion and historical stories about people in social studies.



Plus, he said, students don’t participate as much when they are on Zoom. He said he feels they are not as motivated. So he often tells jokes and plays music to brighten his classes and make virtual learning fun.

Mr. Leonard said he is excited to go back to the school building, but he feels that he will have to re-train himself to get up earlier and get out of his home-schooling routine.

—By Nashiya Morant

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Learning all the technology has been the most difficult part of teaching during the pandemic, said Ms. Henry, a sixth grade teacher.

She said her approach to teaching has not changed. “But I had to make sure that my students

understood the technology so that virtual learning could be a success,” she said.

Because her technology knowledge “has advanced tremendously,” she said, “... that has encouraged me to go back to school online to get my master’s degree.”

Going through the pandemic, she said she learned about herself that “I am not as resistant to change as I thought I was.”

—By Joshua Harris

Editor’s note: Ms. Henry is Joshua’s mother.

DePaul Healthy Trailblazer Journal

A publication of The DePaul Catholic School, an Independence Mission School in Philadelphia. Eighth grade reporters include Kwonnie Alexander, Jason Baldwin, Isaiah Carson, Zaniyah Chandler, Jimena Cruz Cerrato, Jehiel Ferrell, Alex Granger, Joshua Harris, Davontae Kellam, Nashiya Morant, Desmond Roberts, Dion Robinson-Tamagni, Robbyn Thomas, and Ava Thongvanh.

The *Healthy Trailblazer Journal’s* faculty advisor is Mr. Leonard. DePaul’s principal is Ms. McKenzie.

A *Healthy NewsWorks®* project www.HealthyNewsWorks.org

Healthy NewsWorks is an independent nonprofit organization that seeks to empower elementary and middle school students to become researchers, writers, critical thinkers, and confident communicators who advance health understanding and literacy through their factual publications and digital media.

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Student: Poetry is powerful

Editor's Note: Cydney Brown is Philadelphia's Youth Poet Laureate for 2020-21. She is a junior at Abington Friends School. She was interviewed by reporters on the staff of the DePaul Healthy Trailblazer Journal about her passion for poetry and how it helped her during the pandemic. Responses have been edited and condensed.

Q. What made you choose poetry to express your ideas?



A. I tried many different things when I was younger. I wanted to be a singer. I liked tap dancing. When I found poetry, it was something of my own. It was something

that I knew I could carry on with. Poetry is powerful and lets your voice be heard .

Q. What topic is most important for you to write about? Why?

A. I write about anything I am feeling. Over the summer, Black Lives Matter and police brutality were heavy on my mind. During the pandemic, I have reflected on different things. When an issue or something is important to me, I have to write about my thoughts.

Q. Has the pandemic influenced your poems? If so, how has it affected your writing?

A. I am definitely writing more. I am totally virtual this school year. Due to the pandemic, I have more time to write poetry because I don't have to commute to school anymore. By making time to practice what I love to do I found more balance during the pandemic.

Q. How is poetry helping you get through the pandemic?

A. It's really helped me a lot. Sometimes, I won't be able to talk to my family because everyone is busy with work or school. I write. If I can get it down on paper, I can better articulate my thoughts and I better understand what I am going through.

Q. How has Amanda Gorman's poem during the inauguration influenced your poetry?

A. We looked at the poem in class yesterday. Having a black female influencer, someone who looks like you, on TV is incredible. As a poet, I love her play on words and alliteration. She inspired me to try different things out.

Q. What were you thinking when you saw Amanda Gorman? How did she make you feel?

A. I was so in awe seeing someone who looks like you on TV for everyone across the world to hear her share her voice, her truth.

Q. How have you changed since the pandemic? Have you changed for the better or worse?

A. I would say I changed for the better. At the beginning of the pandemic, I cared about everything someone would say about me. I have learned that your opinion of yourself is all that matters. If you are doing a good job that is what matters. I am learning to live my truth, doing what I want to do.

Editor's note: This article about Cydney Brown will also appear in Leading Healthy Change In Our Communities 2021—Doing the Undoable in a Pandemic. The book will be published this spring.

Welcome to DePaul's newspaper

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We want you to read our newspaper for a number of reasons.

“It is important to read because you can learn more about your mental and physical health,” Jimena said.

“People should read our paper because it is relatable,” Nashiya said.

Jason said the information in the newspaper can “help you prepare for the day,” he said.

We hope that you enjoy the *Healthy Trailblazer Journal* and that you will want to get involved. We'd love for you to write us letters about what you think of our newspaper. If you want to contribute an article, please contact Mr. Leonard, or send a message to the eighth grade staff.

“The pandemic has reminded us that health is such an important issue,” Mr. Leonard said. “We are going to be the voice of what makes a healthy lifestyle.”

Reflecting on a year like no other

Something I learned about myself is that I can draw and I draw pretty well. Another thing I learned about myself is that I can stay up late at night for a long period of time without going to sleep. Even though I know it's not good for you to stay up and not get enough sleep, I still do it, but I'm working on it.

Something else I learned about myself is that I can cook and bake. How I learned I could do this is when I was bored and I went to the kitchen and started to cook burger and fries.

—By Dion Robinson -Tamagni



During this pandemic I became a lot more independent. I started realizing I have to earn more money and be productive on my own as a teenager approaching high

school. I have grown into a young man ready to take action and I am very proud of myself. In conclusion I have become more independent and a better person.

—By Joshua Harris

Something that I learned about myself is that I need to take a break. The pandemic has taken a really hard mental toll on me. A lot of personal things happened because of it and I was just sad a lot of the time. But my family helped me to climb this mountain. The main part that I learned was take care of yourself and family and friends are the most important things in this very short life of ours. Cherish them and keep them close.

—By Jehiel Ferrell

I learned how to be alone. Humans are social beings and we think we need interaction but the pandemic showed me that I can be alone with only three people: me, myself, and I. This experience greatly improves my independence on what I think I can and cannot do. Now I see that life is truly limitless.

—By Alex Granger

Something that I learned

Illustration by Ava Thongvanh



Illustration by Healthy Trailblazer Journal reporter

about myself during this pandemic is that life is short and fast. There was a lot of death during the pandemic. I felt sad and scared. I learned to become a good, honest, and mature young man. I learned to keep my body and mind healthy. I learned to do my homework early and fix my bed to help me become more organized. I learned that sleep and rest are important for my growth, emotions, school work, and health.

—By Kwonnie Alexander

During this pandemic I've learned that I'm more open to my aunts and my grandparents. I don't keep secrets from them anymore, and I'm more helpful and caring.

—By Zaniyah Chandler

During my eighth grade year at DePaul, I missed seeing my friends, teachers, classroom, and special classes because we just loved to have fun during the school time.

—By Jason Baldwin Jr.

Things I learned about myself during this pandemic are that I don't like sitting in front of a computer screen all day. Even though I have been stuck in the house since March 12 I've been spending a lot of time with my family.

—By Desmond McCann-Roberts

Joshua Harris offered this riddle: If you work at a Samsung store are you a guardian of the galaxy?