



Image: Andrew Slay, *The West Georgian*

Life During Wartime: The Pandemic No One Talks About

By **Brittany Shivers**
Editor-in-Chief

A pandemic, by the dictionary definition, is an illness that is prevalent across the world. Right now, we are living through COVID-19—a pandemic of physiological illness. But physiological illnesses aren't the only illnesses to exist. Addictions and mental disorders are just a few illnesses that don't fall under the physiological category. Nicotine and alcohol addictions are some of the most discussed mental illnesses, but numerous studies show social media can also be considered addictive.

UWG student Anna Grace Henson studies the negative effects of social media and how it can become addictive.

"We are living in a social media pandemic," said Henson. "When we hear of people having drug addictions, it is considered a serious issue. We think 'wow, we need to get these people the help they need.' But no one is ever talking about the social media addiction we all suffer with."

An article by Yalin Sun and Yan Zhang, which was published in the international

journal *Addictive Behaviors*, says that as social media usage increases, the amount of people addicted to social media also increases. Social media addiction comes with many problems including reduced productivity, unhealthy social relationships and reduced life satisfaction. As part of a generation that has grown up their entire lives with smartphones and social media, Henson stresses how important it is to realize that technology can lead to addiction.

"Every time we get a notification on our phone, we get a shot of dopamine sent to our brain—the same chemical that is released when using many types of drugs," said Henson. "I find it hard sometimes to have conversations with friends without them checking their phones, and I am guilty of this too."

Another study conducted by Singh, Dixit and Joshi, which was published as part of the Elsevier Public Health Emergency Collection, shows there is a correlation between COVID-19 and increasing social media usage. However, it is yet to be proven if the increase was just a

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coping mechanism or an addictive behavior arising out of the COVID-19 pandemic. Nonetheless, increased usage causes an increased probability of addiction and other negative consequences.

"During quarantine, I noticed my hours increased tremendously and that scared me," said Henson. "On an average day, I get up to five hours of screen time, which to me is way too many. I know friends that get up to seven or eight hours a day."

With these issues in mind, it is important for individuals to consider how much time they are spending on their phones. Just being mindful of how much time we are on our phones can help us to create better habits. After all, the world is much more than a digital screen.

"The world would be in such a better state if we didn't have social media constantly infiltrating our lives," said Henson. "People would be more genuine, more socially involved and there would be a decrease in mental health reports. Our lives would be so different if it never existed."

NEWS



Photo: Richard Shah, *The West Georgian*

UWG Seeks Visionary Leader for the Provost and VPAA

By Lily Head
Contributing Writer

UWG is in the process of searching for a new Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs (VPAA). At UWG the duty of the Provost and VPAA is to report directly to the President on all academic plans, policies and priorities. They also serve as the dean of faculty.

Executive leadership at UWG created a search committee in May with 16 members of faculty and staff from various departments. Two students were chosen to be on the search committee as well. Due to COVID-19, the search committee has been working together virtually.

The search committee has been working with Myers McRae, which is a search firm that specializes in recruiting leaders for higher education. McRae has assisted the search committee in reviewing applications and determining qualified candidates.

“To my knowledge we have not used Myers McRae at UWG before,” said Search Committee Co-Chair, Laura Smith. “Executive leadership knew about the firm and its reputation, so we were allowed to utilize its services.”

The search committee accepted nominations and applications for the position that were submitted to Myers McRae by Sept. 2. They reviewed the applications and rated candidates on a scale of one to five. Fourteen candidates were chosen to interview virtually with the committee and the five top finalists were selected by the committee after the interviews.

The five finalists came to UWG to hold a

campus-wide presentation, Q&A session with faculty and staff and open interviews with students. The presentations and discussions were held both in-person and virtually through Zoom. Each finalist toured both the Carrollton and Newnan campus. They also met some of the staff they would be working alongside with, if selected.

During the discussions, the candidates showcased their experience and future plans for UWG. Faculty and staff asked candidates how they would work with specific departments within the university. Students were also able to ask the candidates in a separate interview about their qualifications and how they would serve students as Provost and VPAA.

“We have had fabulous participation and have averaged over 100 participants for each candidate’s sessions,” said Smith. “Offering the virtual option was definitely effective and we will do it again in future searches.”

Following the presentations and discussions, the search committee received feedback from faculty, staff and students through an email survey. The search committee will review the survey feedback and make candidate recommendations to the president on Oct. 30. Ultimately, the president will make the final decision for who will serve as the next Provost and VPAA.

“We were given a diverse pool of highly qualified candidates for our faculty, staff and students to consider,” said Smith. “As a committee, we will determine who we feel are the most highly qualified candidates to recommend based on the feedback we receive.”

According to the provost search website, “The University of West Georgia seeks a transformative, visionary, and strategic leader to serve as provost and vice president for academic affairs.”



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NEWS

Campus Catholics Hold Dedication Ceremony for New Facility

By Madeline Wilbanks
Copy Editor

The Campus Catholics at UWG has held its services and events at Kennedy Chapel on campus for over a decade. Recently they added a second facility right across from the east side of campus known as the Campus Catholic Center. The dedication ceremony was held Saturday, Oct. 3, to commemorate all the hard work and dedication that went into getting the building finalized.

“I think the Catholic center is important to the university because it’s just another way we can serve our students and support them in their journey while they are away from home,” said Director of Ministry at UWG, Norma Rothshadl. “It was an area that was not being served as robustly. We have served students at UWG for over 50 years, but now we have a place where they can come to find support, have the opportunity to pray and be in fellowship with students.”

The center was created for students to be able to have what Rothschadl calls a “home.” It is a place where they can feel safe, whether they are religious or not. Rothschadl

also wants it to be a place where students are able to speak and interact with others who are not only there for them physically, but in all aspects of life.

“We have noticed a lot that our students have experienced anxiety and stress magnified by our current situation,” said Rothshadl. “Staying home even I think makes it more difficult, so we are glad to be here as a support to our students.”

Because the pandemic is on-going and the house is not that big in size, the process to get it all in order has proven to be more complicated than it would be in normal circumstances. However, despite the challenges of opening the facility, the Campus Catholics still plan to hold its services while keeping all COVID-19 guidelines in place in order to keep current and future students safe.

“We have all the typical protocols being used, even by the campus,” said Rothshadl. “So facemasks are required inside, and we are using hand sanitizer on every other table inside.”

The facility holds many events on a weekly basis such as fundraisers for the Pregnancy Resource Center, Bible

studies and annual services.

When hosting these events, the facility makes sure to enforce COVID-19 guidelines and other safety precautions. Its main priority is keeping the students healthy while also providing opportunities for them to be involved in the campus ministry.

“We have opportunities for prayer, for church service and for the celebration of Mass,” said Rothshadl. “We have right now a women’s ministry, a men’s ministry and Bible studies. But we also offer a lot of social activities.”

The Campus Catholics are eager to start this journey of being able to serve students in a new way. Providing a home for them is just one step. Now the organization can move forward with its goal of being a blessing to everyone who walks through the doors of the facility.

“Regardless of the number of Catholics I think we should just serve the student body as a whole,” said Associate Director of Campus and Young Adult Ministries, Allen Austin. “If there are 100,000 Catholics or there is one Catholic, we should still be on campus trying to reach students.”



Photo: Madeline Wilbanks, *The West Georgian*

NEWS

Clery Act: A Tool for Students' Safety

By Alma Beauvais
Contributing Writer

UWG's annual crime statistics report is easily accessible for students to track criminal activity on campus in order to stay safe. Thanks to the Clery Act, all public and private institutions of postsecondary education participating in federal student aid programs are required to release an annual campus security report to the public. This federal law of 1990 was enacted in honor of Jeanne Clery, who was sexually assaulted in her residence hall room and murdered at Lehigh University in 1986.

Per Clery Act requirements, all reports must reveal crime statistics ranging from drug possession to sexual assault and murder for the campuses and surrounding areas. Clery Act Coordinator, Lt. Mike Keener, is responsible for preparing and publishing UWG's Annual Crime and Fire Safety Report.

"I joke actively that the only four people on campus who read this are me, the university attorney, who reviews it, the president and our chief because no one really cares about this stuff," said Keener. "And the sad truth is they really should. The parents should care, and the students themselves should take personal responsibility for their own safety and should be aware of the crimes that occur in whatever area they live in.

"The active choice that students can take is to educate themselves on the Clery Act," continued Keener. "And more specifically, through the Clery Act, educate themselves on the risk of crimes that occur on campus and resources that can assist with those crimes should they occur. A big part of the Clery Act is to give information about what the

disciplinary processes are and information on what resources are available to victims of crimes on campus."

Keener uses daily crime logs to track on-campus crimes and collaborates with the Carrollton Police Department through shift rollups. The shift rotation reports get forwarded from the chief of police and inform UWG Police Department of any crime that could qualify within UWG's geographical limitations.

"I will actually look at them and add whatever is appropriate to our crime log, based on the rules that Clery has, which are many and varied," said Keener. "I read every incident report when it comes in.

"And so does our investigative team, and so do our patrol lieutenants, who are over our actual patrol officers," continued Keener. "That data is used in real-time to adjust strategies."

Although the Reports are primarily created for students and parents, they are of great use to the UWG Police Department, who rely on the statistics to be reactive and proactive. UWG officers can determine crime uptakes and patterns allowing them to develop new strategies to better ensure student safety each semester.

"Homecoming is a good example," said Keener. "People complain a lot about excessive officer presence at homecoming. The background of that is that in 2014, 2015, 2016, there were a lot of homecoming related incidents in the city.

"We know this can be a very violent night, and we have people from Atlanta, who aren't associated with our campus, coming out to party with our students—

some of them are gang members or otherwise near do wells," continued Keener. "So, we will increase our patrol during those time frames to suppress that activity to protect our students."

With just a few clicks on the UWG's website, students can view the current 2019 annual crime report. However, the 2019 report only mentions crimes from 2016 to 2018, not those that occurred in 2019 because when it came out on Oct. 1 the year was not over yet. More crimes were likely to happen for the three remaining months by the end of 2019.

"If you want to know what's going on around campus, look at the crime logs," said Keener. "The point of a crime log is to allow people to have that ready instant access to what's going on.

"Now per the Clery rules, the crime log has to be available during normal business hours, and putting it online is part of meeting that requirement," continued Keener. "It's always available."

Keener updates the daily crime logs according to the Clery rules. The daily crime logs are all digital, which makes them easy to maintain and to edit. The crime logs are accessible from anywhere by anyone. Each month is set on a separate page listing the crimes with the necessary information for each incident. The data includes the date the incident was reported, when it occurred, the location and nature of the incident and case number.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 annual report's distribution deadline has been extended to Dec. 31. It will only report crimes that occur from 2017 to 2019.

NEWS



Photo courtesy of Thomas Lawson

Leading the Pack:

Thomas Eddie Lawson Teaches History Through Storytelling

By Taylor Jackson

News Editor

Thomas Eddie Lawson is a graduate student with an applied master's degree in teaching. However, he is not the average college student. After graduating from Virginia Tech in 1990 with an undergraduate degree in History, Thomas served in the military for quite some time.

"I joined the army fairly late," said Thomas. "An economic recession in the early-mid 1990s caused me to join in 1994, at the age of 26.

"I joined as an M1A1 Tank armor crewman," continued Thomas. "I was deployed to Iraq in 2009-2010 and completed 3 years in South Korea. I served 23 years before retiring as an SFC at the age of 49 in 2017," continued Thomas.

By joining the military Thomas had learned many different things about himself that shaped him into the person he is today.

"I was an average kid that spent most of my early days playing sports and just getting by," said Thomas. "I lacked discipline and maturity to be a truly dedicated student. It took me a few years along with the military training to mature into who I am today."

After spending so many years in the military, Thomas was ready to experience more. One can only imagine all the things Thomas witnessed while being deployed in other countries.

"After 23 years I was ready for a change and ready to settle down," said Thomas. "My wife and I purchased our retirement

home, so I wanted a short career that would not force us to move anymore. And hiring on with the army as a contractor did not offer the security to allow us to do that."

By retiring from the army Thomas was able to follow another path—one he has always loved. A life where he gets to spend some more time with his family contrary to when he was deployed and be able to share his passion of history with others.

"I have always enjoyed coaching and talking history with my army buddies, so I figured I should transition to doing what I really love which is teaching and coaching," said Thomas.

An advantage that Thomas has over other history teachers and professors is the fact he lived through a few



Photo courtesy of Thomas Lawson

wars himself. It may not be some of the wars that are in printed textbooks since they happened many decades ago, but that is okay. It is the inside perspective he has to offer his students/ colleagues on wars that is more prevalent to them.

"I like to lecture," said Thomas. "Teaching history is telling a story, and I really enjoy telling the stories that make us who we are both as individuals and a nation.

"Most of my students seem to enjoy my lectures, just not day after day of it," continued Thomas. "I have learned many different strategies to keep my students engaged and still get to tell my stories about history and from my travels around the world."

ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

‘Ratched’ on Netflix Is More Than Just a Thriller

By Terrion Newton
Contributing Writer

The psychological thriller, *Ratched*, made its debut on Netflix on Sept. 18. Considering the eight episode series has the same cast members and writers as *American Horror Story*, it was no surprise that the film was captivating and suspenseful.

While *Ratched* has plenty of thrilling moments to offer, it tackles several human issues including mental health and discrimination.

Nurse *Ratched* is hell bent on working at a psychiatric hospital to help free her brother who committed murder. During her quest, she discovers more about her own life and a deeper purpose.

Set in 1940s America, lesbians had no real place for freedom and expression. Being open about it was dangerous and risky. Nurse *Ratched* witnesses the inhumane treatment of lesbian patients done by Lucia State Hospital in order to cure their “disease.” Ironically, she too is a part of the lesbian community. She denies her own urges at first but gradually comes to the realization that being with a woman is her destiny.

The writers and directors do a phenomenal job of expressing history all while creating a suspenseful sur-



Photo courtesy of Netflix

rounding. The struggles of being a lesbian during this time were not minor and it should be acknowledged. A more challenging question arises as the plot unfolds. Is Nurse *Ratched* really there to seek freedom for her brother, or did fate guide her there to fight for herself?

Besides all of the interesting characters, *Ratched* serves as an educator for its viewers. Schizophrenia and Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID) are discussed extensively. Dr. Richard Hanover is very flawed and not really the perfect person to be in charge of a mental health facility. However, his care for his patients, particularly Charlotte Wells, is heart-warming.

Wells exhibits an ex-

treme form of DID and Dr. Hanover notices it immediately when she visits his office. It is important to note also, that right before Wells has an episode, she explains the trauma she endured in her past that caused it. The viewer not only gets to watch entertaining and/or gut-wrenching scenes, but they also get to experience what it’s like to witness someone having these psychotic episodes.

For some, this may ease misconceptions or stigma about mental health issues. Starting conversations is a huge step in the right direction. Mixing real-life problems with entertainment helps audiences relax and feel more confident about addressing certain circumstances that they may face daily.



Photo: Richard Shah, *The West Georgian*

SCENE BUT UNSEEN

This is the fourth photo in our series *Scene but Unseen*, where we feature art, objects and strange things around the UWG campus. This interpretive art piece can be found near the TLC. These photos are also posted every Thursday on our Instagram @the_westgeorgian.

ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT



Photo courtesy of Netflix

Captivation for Crime Junkies: ‘American Murder: The Family Next Door’

By Reilly Robbins
Contributing Writer

I have never considered myself a true crime junky, but after watching *American Murder: The Family Next Door*, I might have to reconsider.

The true crime documentary is a Netflix original about the disappearance of Shanann Watts and her two young daughters Celeste and Bella. On social media Shanann’s life looks perfect, but behind closed doors her marriage to Chris Watts was falling apart. After returning from a work trip, Shanann’s friends quickly became concerned for her safety after not being able to get in touch with her. The search for a pregnant Shanann and her two little girls swiftly began. Days later after failing a polygraph test, Chris confessed to the murder of his pregnant wife and their two little girls.

The film’s director Jenny Popplewell exposes Shannan’s hidden life that

was overshadowed by a glorified social media account. It seems that Watts posted just about every aspect of her life on social media, making her life look nearly flawless. It gives the viewer a better understanding of the type of life she and Chris shared. They really seemed to be in love when looking at her Facebook account, but Shanann’s private text messages with her friends revealed there was a lack of intimacy in her relationship with her husband. She constantly accused Chris of cheating and eventually caught him after reviewing bank statements. She was fully devoted to Chris, but he was devoted to himself and his girlfriend. I wish the film discussed the involvement of Chris’s mistress in the murders more. However, the way in which Popplewell displays Shanann’s text exchange to give the viewers more insight on the privacy of her life was unique and well-executed.

Popplewell’s use of archived footage to tell an in-depth version of the chilling story was absolutely bril-

liant. The film begins telling their story the day before their disappearance all the way to the end of Chris’s trial. All the footage in the documentary is from archived police cameras, interrogation rooms and national coverage interviews. The day after Shanann and the girls went missing, Shanann’s “worried” husband went on live national television begging for their safe return, but he knew where their bodies laid. After knowing what really happened, watching Watts plead for his family back was utterly disturbing.

The way Popplewell used real footage made the documentary much more alarming because it allows viewers to develop a relationship with Shanann and her girls. This gave an unsettling picture some value.

Ultimately, Popplewell gave the facts of this case in an elegant manner without screening anything visually disturbing. If all true crime documentaries had the cinematography elements of this one, I would watch a lot more crime documentaries.