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Public health researchers at the University of Georgia have embarked on a COVID-19 surveillance initiative in collaboration with research institutions and universities around the world. UGA scientists have been able to track and evaluate the trends in viral loads of infected individuals with COVID-19 using local community sewage water before the infected population develops symptoms.

Dr. Erin K. Lipp, Professor of Environmental Health Science and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, heads the project at the Lipp Laboratory. The project was started a year and a half ago following a brief closure of the Lipp lab due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

Megan Lott, a doctoral student and major project organizer, said they noticed other faculty members' successes with wastewater surveillance and wanted to reopen the lab to be involved with the pandemic.

"We started thinking about ways to engage and use our public health knowledge to investigate the pandemic," said Lott. "We had seen a lot of our colleagues' wastewater surveillance on SARS-COV-2 and they had success with tracking trends by looking at viral loads in wastewater. We jumped on board and focused our direction there. It's definitely been a group effort."

Photo Courtesy of Megan Lott
The Lipp lab has collaborated

with research labs and experts from all over the world who are performing similar wastewater surveillance programs which has become a sounding board for everyone involved.

"This has been a large initiative and an incredible community of researchers that came together and used their skills to help monitor the pandemic," said Lott. "We've been learning from a lot of collaborators...we're not the only ones doing this, and it's been really exciting to learn from other groups."

Wastewater surveillance is a common public health measure often used to study and track the progression of community-spread diseases, such as COVID-19. Individuals who are infected shed viral particles through their stool, which is then collected by the sewer shed and sent to a centralized wastewater reclamation facility. There are many benefits to this type of testing, which doesn't rely on individuals to go out and get tested.

"As the cases increase, the number of viruses in the wastewater increase, and as the cases decrease, the number of viruses in the wastewater decrease," said Lott. "Sometimes when the public health system is overloaded and backlogged with a great number of cases, wastewater

is giving additional information. We are not relying on anyone to get tested. It is anonymous and doesn't require any active surveillance."

These types of surveillance programs can detect infection in communities sometimes even before symptoms develop. This is due to the ability to collect samples from both asymptomatic and symptomatic individuals.

"People shed viruses regardless of whether they are symptomatic or not," said Lott. "It is useful because we are able to get data from both the asymptomatic and the symptomatic. Someone who is asymptomatic may not be going to get tested, so we can detect cases that we otherwise be able to."

Lott says that a wastewater surveillance program is used in tandem with other public health surveillance methods. While many people may never consider wastewater or what happens to it once it leaves our homes, these are important questions for public health officials.

"In public health we think a lot about wastewater—how to best manage it and the best practices," she said. "As a public health microbiologist, wastewater management is one of the best public health tools to manage infections."

NEWS



TEENAGERS’
“DEVIOUS LICKS”
GET TAKEN
TOO FAR

ANSLEY BUTLER
Contributing Writer

In 2021, the popular app TikTok trend called “Devious Licks” was created where students would create videos of them playing pranks at school, even if that meant destroying property. This trend went viral and influenced many middle and high school students to participate.

There have even been instances reported nationwide of students attempting the trend. Youth Middle School, a public school in Walton County, Ga. has had to tighten up on school policy as a result of this trend.

These pranks were occurring the most when students were not monitored or under surveillance. To middle schoolers, that sounded like a green light for devious licks in the bathroom. Prior to this issue, it was typical to have to ask for a bathroom pass to use the restroom during class time.

“The simplicity with middle school students being allowed to use the restroom is part of the past now,” said Sin-

je Butler, an eighth-grade math teacher at Youth Middle School.

Butler said that there were multiple incidents of students participating in “devious licks” videos which lead to students having their bathroom privileges revoked.

The trend resulted in soap dispensers being damaged and taken from the restroom. Students then started to lock individual bathroom stalls and crawl back under them. This forced other students to crawl under the stalls if they wanted access to the restroom.

Butler said that there is a new policy on bathroom breaks now. The eighth-grade students are not allowed to use the restroom during class change and can only go during their designated time that is assigned to them.

This was implemented for all middle schoolers and teachers can only allow three students at a time to go to the restroom. There are signs blocking off the restrooms during class change which pro-

hibits students from entering.

There was even a bathroom chart that had to be signed off by teachers and students to ensure that there was no damage done to the bathroom prior and after the restroom break.

The new bathroom policy takes place during the actual class period rather than hall change.

“This is impacting students and teachers due to it taking up class time, where we should be teaching and students should be learning,” said Butler. She says this has given eighth-graders less freedom and caused them to be more restricted.

At Youth Middle School, there are repercussions if a student gets caught participating in this trend. It will result in in-school suspension and will be brought to the attention of the resource officer if property is damaged or stolen.

“The school enforcing stricter approaches throughout the day has led to the decrease in cases of ‘devious licks,’” said Butler.

Photo Courtesy of Sinje Butler



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NEWS



FLORIDA PROPOSES DON'T SAY GAY BILL

ALEX AMOS
Contributing Writer

Photo Courtesy of Associated Press

Florida's House of Representatives passed the Parental Rights in Education bill on January 20 to protect the rights of parents with children in the public school system.

The legislation was coined the name "Don't Say Gay" bill because of its restrictive actions against the LGBTQ+ community by attempting to prohibit the discussion of self-identification in classrooms.

The bill states, "A school district may not encourage classroom discussion about sexual orientation or gender identity in primary grade levels or in a manner that is not age-appropriate or developmentally appropriate for students."

Many organizations have petitioned against the bill including Chasten Buttigieg, the spouse of United States Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg.

"This will kill kids," said Buttigieg in a tweet. "You are purposefully making your state a harder place for LGBTQ+ kids to survive in."

Buttigieg has confirmed that he will be lobbying for the bill's dismissal in the next hearing.

"It's scary for the kids that are in public school," said Grayson Boyd, the president of UWG's Queer Student Al-

liance (QSA). "There's going to be a lot of problems and a lot of scared kids."

QSA members are beginning to worry for the youth who may be affected by the bill for multiple reasons.

According to the Trevor Project's 2021 National Survey on LGBTQ+ Youth Mental Health, "42% of LGBTQ+ youth seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year, including more than half of transgender and nonbinary youth."

"As a whole, this bill tells us that we are shameful and that we are supposed to hide," said Boyd. "A lot of people know that they are gay when they are kids and growing openly into adulthood with that confidence and knowledge is so important. "I think that it's so vital at the middle or early high school age for kids to figure themselves out," Boyd continued. "You should be able to discuss, experiment and do weird things like dying your hair bad colors to help find your identity."

In addition to Florida's hostility towards the LGBTQ+ community, Georgia's school system has also shown small acts of malice towards the community with a recent occurrence from Oglethorpe Avenue Elementary. A

student's artwork displaying the statement, "Gay is OK," was taken down by the school's administration and allegedly compared to Nazi symbolism.

"I think that we all know that it is hard to live in the south like this," said Boyd. "It is hard for the kids who know that there are lawmakers out there making legislation directly against who they are as people, and it will be even harder for those kids who haven't even figured out their identity yet."

As the bill moves forward on its journey to becoming law in Florida, UWG's QSA prepares for the possibility of it making an appearance in Georgia.

"Right now, we are specifically in talks with Carrollton High School and Carrollton Junior High and we are trying to support queer kids as best as we can," said Boyd. "I sometimes think part of helping is just giving more support to the community."

As of now, the bill is awaiting hearings with the House Judiciary Committee and Senate Education Committee.

"It's going to be terrifying, and we're just going to have to watch things unfold," said Boyd. "We have to hope that kids will be getting the support they need at home."

LIVING WEST

LITERARY ARTISTS COMING TO UWG

TAYLOR BLESSETT

Health Correspondent



Photo Courtesy of UWG School of the Arts

The University of West Georgia is hosting the School of Arts Reading series of literary artists this spring. Artists will speak to students about their own personal creative journeys and read from their work.

Recently, UWG hosted Irish poet Annemarie Curran in January, who read from her most recent poetry collection, "The Poison Glen".

Chad Davidson, Director of School of the Arts and English Professor, prepared a lineup of literary artists to speak at UWG. Having visiting authors gives students insight into potential careers and inspires them to create.

"Exposing our students to professional authors—many at the peak of their own powers, others at the start of long, illustrious ca-

reers—is paramount, but our surrounding community also benefits from the wide range of contacts our faculty have," says Davidson.

"Creative writing students ought to be involved in these processes," continued Davidson. "They should feel free to speak to their professors about writers they're excited about. Through generous funding from The Warren and Ava Sewell Foundation, the School of the Arts has the capacity and means to bring in multiple authors each year, but the creative writing program often hosts writers of their own."

2022 Blackwell Prize in Writing winner, Amina Gautier will also visit UWG to read from her short story collection, "The Loss of All Things", Monday, March 14 at 6 p.m. Events

such as these allow students to come and tap into their creative spaces and see that such things are possible.

"Students wishing to be more involved in creative-writing should take creative writing classes," said Davidson. "ENGL 2060, our get-away class, has no prerequisite. There are then intermediate and advanced classes in poetry, fiction, nonfiction, screenwriting, and more. Become part of our rich writing culture."

The next upcoming artist will visit February 16 at 6 p.m. The artist that is visiting is accomplished, four-time Emmy-winning documentary filmmaker, Paul Allen Hunton; Hunton will be discussing his latest film, "Between Earth and Sky: Climate Change on the Last Frontier" and his many other projects.

VOLUNTEER AMBASSADORS WRAP UP "SPREAD THE WARMTH" DONATIONS AND PREPARE FOR CANNED FOOD DRIVE IN FEBRUARY AMONG OTHER EVENTS

JANNETTE EMMERICK

Reporter

As a cold winter and heavy rain storms set in, proper clothing becomes vital for the health and safety of those in need. UWG's Volunteer Ambassadors created the "Spread the Warmth," event, a clothing drive to benefit the Emergency Shelter in Carrollton. The Emergency Shelter is a non-profit organization that serves the Carrollton community by providing temporary shelter, showers, minimal food and clothing. Like any nonprofit, donations become integral for not only supporting the community but also involving the community.

UWG's Volunteer Ambassadors hosted a coats and blankets donation drive for the Emergency Shelter between Jan. 10- 20. Starting Jan. 21, the ambassadors and other volunteers sorted the donations before giving them to the shelter the following day.

Volunteer Ambassadors and UWG Volunteer Programs strive to give back to the community even more in the coming year.

"When I first came, I first asked the students: What would you all like to do with the community?" says Khalis Thomas,

Coordinator of Student Leadership and Volunteer Programs in the Center for Student Involvement and Inclusion (CSII).

The Volunteer Ambassador opportunities seek to give UWG students leadership skills and autonomy in their efforts engaging and connecting with the Carrollton community.

While Thomas suggested gathering coats and blanket donations, the Volunteer Ambassadors elected to donate to the Emergency Shelter specifically.

"Volunteer Ambassadors are the organization that plans and executes [every volunteer project] that's going on," says Thomas. "But we have volunteer UWG students come to actually volunteer with us whenever we do something."

While the role of Volunteer Ambassadors serves as a leadership role, all students are provided opportunities to volunteer through CSII programs.

The ambassadors hosted "A Dream Come True: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Service Learning Day" on Jan. 18, where volunteers put together 100 hygiene kits including soaps, toothpastes, toothbrushes and shampoos among other hygiene products for the homeless.

In February, the Volunteer Ambassadors will host a canned food drive beginning Feb. 14-23. But volunteer events are not always focused on helping the Carrollton community, but also enriching the



lives of UWG students through other events encouraging connection and involvement.

"We also have an event coinciding [the drive] on Feb. 11 called 'Heart2Heart,'" says Thomas. "Volunteer Ambassadors will be hosting a speed-friending event. So that students get to know more people, especially after Covid, it's kind of hard."

"Heart 2 Heart" will be hosted in the campus center ballroom on Friday at 6:00 p.m. to 7:20 p.m.

Thomas hopes the students will step up and establish a strong volunteer outreach in the wake of social distancing and lock downs. Volunteering provides an opportunity to give back to the community in impactful ways. Whether a student wants to get connected with others, fulfill volunteer hours, wants to pay it forward or all of the above, UWG offers a platform for any outreach.

For more information or questions regarding how to become Volunteer Ambassador or become more involved in volunteer opportunities, students can email Thomas at kthomas@westga.edu.

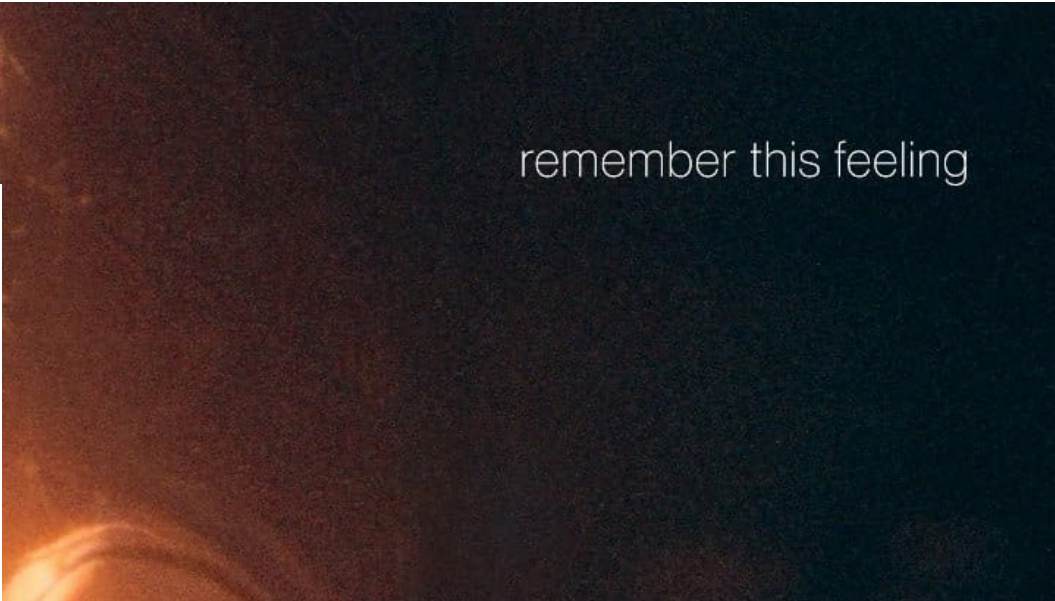
ENTERTAINMENT



LONG AWAITED
SERIES
EUPHORIA
SHAKES THINGS
UP IN ITS
SECOND SEASON

ALANNA KING
Contributing Writer

The popular HBO series, Euphoria, had its second season premiere in January. Fans have been waiting three years for the second season after COVID-19 related delays slowed down production. Now, the show is back with one plot twist after another in each episode. Euphoria follows a 17-year-old drug addict named Rue and her schoolmates who struggle with their identity, sexuality, substance use and relationships. Season one showed promise for Rue, who regularly attended narcotics anonymous meetings, had a mentor and was sober for a few months. Season two started off with Rue lying to her friends and family about her substance use after she relapsed. Over the last three episodes, she has fallen deeper into the depths of her vice and has resorted to dealing drugs to increase her supply. A love triangle has formed between Rue, her sometimes-girlfriend Jules and a substance use-enabling partner, Elliot. While Jules was jealous of Rue's new friend at first, she finds herself forming a connection with Elliot. A second love triangle forms when Nate, East Highland's residential jock, hooks up with Cassie, his ex-girlfriend's best friend.



remember this feeling

Photo Courtesy of HBO Max

Nate refuses to acknowledge Cassie's presence at school, which, along with lying to her friends about being single, pushes Cassie to the brink of insanity. Nate faces pressure at home when his father, Cal, realizes that his secret of having relations with an underage person outside of his marriage might be exposed. Lexi, Cassie's quiet sister, has been observing this mess from the outside and decides to write her unsuspecting sister and friends into a play to be performed at school. It is safe to say that Rue is at her make-or-break moment. As of the third episode, she has cut ties with her mentor and increased her intake and access to drugs. She has further isolated herself by using drugs, lying to everyone about her usage leaving no one looking out for her. If she continues this path, she will succumb to her addiction and this could have serious, life-threatening consequences moving forward. The two love triangles forming in this season dance on hot coals. For Rue, Jules and Elliot, a slow burn might bring Jules and Elliot closer together and Rue becomes more isolated and avoidant. For Nick, Maddy and Cassie, one stray spark is all that is needed to ruin a close friend-

ship between the girls and the confusing relationship between Cassie and Nate. Cal's secrets, which lie on a disk circulating its way through this town, will be exposed eventually. Euphoria shows the dramatic consequences of Rue's substance abuse but never shows the other characters consequences for their actions. When Jules drank and partied all night on New Year's Eve, the audience never saw the hangover that surely followed the next day. Elliot regularly uses the same drugs as Rue, but his addiction is never portrayed to be as bad as hers. For a modern-day show, Euphoria still gives its audience a black and white portrayal of substance use. On one side is Rue who is what most people would consider a typical drug addict. On the other are teens who can drink or do the occasional party drug without seeming to be affected. For Euphoria to accomplish its goals of showing the nuances of substance use, the director should show the effects of drug use as the abuser comes down from a high. Many twists and turns lie ahead of Euphoria fans and season two carries on this spring. Euphoria is available to stream on HBO Max with new episodes airing Sundays.



SPIDER-MAN:
NO WAY HOME;
THREE
SPIDERMEN?!
A REVIEW.

BRITTANY MERSFELDER
News Editor



Photo Courtesy of Sony

"Which Peter are you talking to?" "Spider-Man No Way Home" breaks records by pouring fan-service into almost every scene. In the newest installment of Marvel's fourth phase of the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU), "Spider-Man No Way Home", there was not a second in the film that did not include fan service. Fan service is when a company will cater to the fans and what they want to see. The film alludes to many of the Marvel TV series that have been released on Disney Plus over the past year. Watching those series plus the prior films give way to a better understanding of the films. The film starts with Spider-Man/Peter Parker, played by Tom Holland, running to hide with his girlfriend MJ, played by Zendaya, after his identity is revealed by Mysterio, the villain from the previous Spider-Man film. Peter Parker and his friends are applying for colleges, finding out that his identity being released to the world made it harder for them to get into MIT. This frustrates Parker, making him wish the world never knew who he was. Parker goes to see an old colleague of his, Dr. Steven Strange. Dr. Strange is known as a powerful sorcerer who can manipulate space, time and reality. He fought with Parker as well as the Avengers and many others at the end of Phase three. Parker hatched a plan to ask Dr. Strange to make the world forget who Spider-Man truly is. While Dr. Strange was casting the spell, Parker manipulated the spell by changing the parameters multiple times. This caused the spell to be botched, creating a rift from multiple universes. After the spell was botched, villains from older Spider-Man movies began showing up. The first villain Tom Holland's

Peter Parker interacted with was Doc Oc, who is from the original Spider-Man 2. Doc Oc is also known as Doctor Octavius. Parker was chased by Doc Oc until he was found to not be his Peter Parker who was played by Tobey McGuire, not Tom Holland. Dr. Strange helps Parker catch Doc Oc and put him in a cell reminiscent of jail. Dr. Strange then asks Parker and his friends to capture everyone who came from other universes and trap them into similar cells. The group begins to watch for disturbances around the world only to find Electro and Sandman appear out near a power station. Electro is from "The Amazing Spider-Man" films and Sandman is from the Tobey McGuire Spider-Man films. Tom Holland's Spider-Man captures both villains, sending them to their jail cells. After catching the two villains, Parker's Aunt May calls him to tell him the last one he was looking for was with her. This villain is the Green Goblin, one of the more powerful enemies in the original Spider-Man series. Aunt May suggested helping save them as they are people too. Green Goblin wanted to help Parker with his goal of saving the villains instead of killing them, then Goblin turned on him, in turn killing Aunt May. This was the saddest part of the movie, bringing tissues with you to the theater. After the passing of Aunt May, Parker sets out to kill them all. While Parker was trying to fix the villains, MJ and Ned were busy dealing with finding Andrew Garfield and Tobey McGuire's spiderman using Dr. Strange's ring portal. They were originally trying to locate their Peter Parker (Tom Holland). After each person introduces themselves, they ask where their Peter Parker

would have gone. Andrew Garfield and Tobey McGuire's Spiderman say they enjoyed going to the tallest building to let their emotions out and get away from everyone. They find Tom Holland's Spider-Man in a tall building. MJ and Ned hug him and give him a chance to grieve his loss. The two other Spider-Men introduce themselves. All three Spider-Men agree to try and save the villains if at all possible. Each one had thought of serums to revert or undo their abilities. They begin to work on their serums. A long-awaited moment was given to the fans as fan service. This was the moment where each individual Spiderman was pointing at the other spiderman, asking the question "which Peter Parker are you talking to?" The rest of the movie was spent saving the Spidermen villains while dealing with Dr. Strange trying to contain the spell that broke out of the box again. Each villain is saved even after Tom Holland wants to kill Green Goblin for killing his only living family member. Strange completes a spell for Tom Holland's Spider-Man to ensure no one, not even MJ or Ned, will remember who he is. Parker drops out of high school, rents his own apartment and makes his own suits. He begins to renew his name as your friendly neighborhood Spider-Man. This movie was great. It had action and many acts of fan service. It had moments of hilarity and moments of sadness. The only aspect that was not enjoyed by all would be the lack of use of Ironman's weapons. Granted Parker could not use his weapons anymore because of what happened with Mysterio, there must have been more that he could have potentially used. Overall the movie is worth the watch. Just be sure to bring tissues to the theaters.

SPORTS



On June 30, 2021, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) adopted the Name, Image, and Likeness policy.

College athletes can now profit off of their name, image and likeness with the school they are attending within the new regulations and provide guidance to college athletes, incoming recruits, their families and the member schools of the NCAA. In other words, all college athletes for all sports can use themselves as a “brand” to receive sponsorships and financial compensation as long as it falls within the bylaws of the state and conference of the school.

According to the bill, collegiate athletes have the ability to “engage in NIL activities that are consistent with the law of the state where the school is located”. The policy allows university boosters and donors to secure business deals for athletic departments or for one specific student-athlete that is being recruited by the school. Businesses approach the school about a certain student-athlete that they want to advertise their brand or company and athletes can now hire agents to help them secure NIL deals and compensation.

A prime example of

how an athlete can utilize the NIL bill is Quinn Ewers. Ewers was the number one rated quarterback in the 2022 class according to ESPN’s recruiting rankings. The Texas prospect was originally committed to Texas before reclassifying himself to the 2021 class. Once he was reclassified, he decommitted from Texas and accepted a scholarship to play football at Ohio State University. While at Ohio State, Ewers signed a three-year, \$1.4 million contract with GT Sports Marketing. In exchange for autographs, Ewers made over one million dollars as a freshman in college without ever playing a down of football for Ohio State. He then entered the transfer portal at the end of the 2021 season and transferred back to Texas where he was originally committed in high school.

The majority of NIL deals occur on the Division I level. Schools such as University of Alabama, University of Georgia and Ohio State University. Bigger schools with larger sports programs have more accessibility and funding to recruit and allocate their resources.

But what about the smaller schools competing on Division II and Division III levels? There

Photo Courtesy of Associated Press
has not been much noise buzzing about athletes at UWG receiving NIL deals according to Matt Cooke, UWG’s Assistant Athletic Director for Events, Marketing, and Media Services.

“We have a handful of student-athletes who have publicly announced they are taking NIL deals but nothing has occurred yet,” says Cooke.

The market here in Carrollton at a D-II school compared to Athens, Atlanta or Tuscaloosa is almost nonexistent. The bigger schools will pursue the best athletes available but now in the offseason, more athletes are entering the transfer portal during the off-season. Schools such as University of Georgia, Georgia State and other well-known schools are seeing an increase in transfers from student athletes.

“Our goal is to educate student-athletes on the business side of things. If an athlete has a deal, it is our job to support our athletes and we want to help give them the tools to secure their money,” says Cooke.

The future of college athletics has changed; new expectations will affect how students play with the NIL bill intact, especially at the smaller schools like UWG.

SPORTS



WOLVES BASKETBALL WIN THREE IN A ROW

LEMUEL MBUINGA
Contributing Writer

Photo Courtesy of UWG Athletics

UWG Men’s Basketball started off the season a bit rocky but have been quickly improving. The Wolves won three consecutive games on Jan. 5, 19, and 22, improving their record to 7-9.

The Wolves defeated Delta State, Montevallo and Auburn Montgomery during their three game win streak. No other team in the Gulf South Conference has won three games in a row this season. The Wolves hope to build on their streak and keep the momentum going.

“It definitely feels good to win three straight,” said UWG Men’s Basketball player Deng Nhial. “We [UWG] haven’t been winning as much as we’d want to but this is a good sign. We still have more work to do as the season goes on but this gives us some motivation to push.”

UWG went on a three game losing streak twice earlier in the season. They were one of the lower seeds in the conference. Coach Moore knew that adjust-

ments had to be made for the Wolves to improve.

Coming off of an NCAA tournament appearance last year, the Wolves are still confident that they can make it back despite their trials. The Wolves still have several games to play before the GSC tournament. Moore still believes they can turn things around.

“Win or lose, Coach Moore is always going to believe in us,” said Nhial. “We have been through ups and downs as a team which only makes us stronger.”

Seth Brown-Carter and Michael Zabetakis have been carrying the offensive load for the Wolves during this streak. Both are among the top three scorers on the team. Brown-Carter is tied for first in scoring for the Wolves, averaging 14 points a game. Zabetakis is second on the team, averaging 12 points a game.

When the team is clicking on the offensive end, the rest of the team follows suit

and the Wolves become difficult to beat.

“Having guys like Michael and Seth is just great because they enhance our offense,” said Nhial. “They are really good at making plays for themselves and for others.

“We didn’t have Seth last year due to off-court reasons,” Nhial continued. “We still had success but now to see him back doing the things we know he can do is a great thing.” From this point on, Coach Moore and the Wolves already know what to expect. The GSC is full of good teams and any team can be beaten whether they are at the top of the standings or at the bottom.

“We understand that it’s a long season with ups and downs,” said Nhial. “However, as a team, we will always go into each game with the mindset that we’re going to win.”

The next Men’s Basketball game will be Feb. 5 at 4 p.m. at the Coliseum against Christian Brothers University.