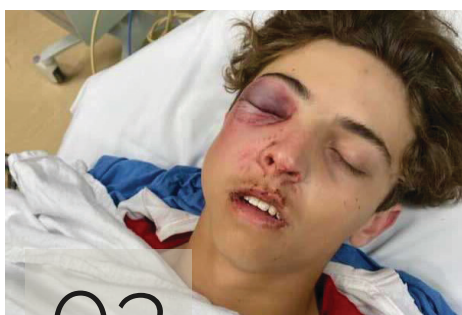


# Livewire.

Volume 14, Issue 2 | January 2023



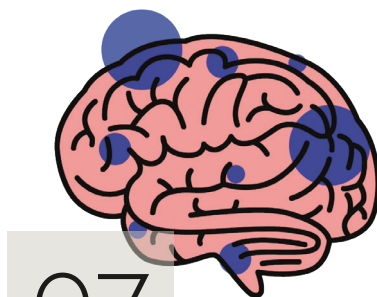
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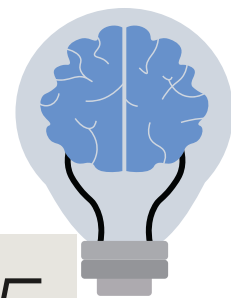
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# Living Through A New Lens

by Kylie Huber

**A** scary, new reality. Junior Damon Merzweiler has experienced a traumatic injury that goes unseen.

On Oct. 27 2022, Merzweiler was attending baseball practice, one he originally was not going to attend due to sickness. But, he convinced his parents to let him go, which was something that his mom, Stacey Merzweiler, felt awful about afterwards. During a scrimmage, he was running from first base to second during a double play, and was hit by the ball less than 10 feet away.

"I thought it was too far to slide outside. I just remember a big thud hit me and everything just went black on one side of my face. There was blood and my

helmet came off and I just ran to one of the coaches screaming that I couldn't see," Merzweiler said.

He had run to Tyler Krauth, a former graduate of Bullitt East who is now the freshman pitching coach. Merzweiler has known Krauth since he was four years old and knew he would help him. "There was a double play at second and Damon tried to duck out of the way but the kid hit him in the face by complete accident. It sounded like the crack of a bat and was really scary. Damon did come to me first yelling my name...he was in pretty bad shape and I knew that he needed to go to the hospital right away," Krauth said.

Originally, Merzweilers grandmother, Mary Kaiser, was there to pick him up from practice. But, a coach had called his dad, Billy Merzweiler, and told him that he needed to get there as soon as possible to take him to the hospital. They did not want his grandmother seeing him this way. His dad then called his mom and gave her the news.

"My first reaction was well, he just got hit by a ball and it's not a big deal. You know all kids have gotten hit at some time or another. Then they said they were taking him in an ambulance to the children's hospital and I knew how serious it was," Stacey Merzweiler said.

Merzweilers eye heals more and more everyday. The before and after of the injury is shocking, but he has made tremendous growth since. "People don't know what happened to him until they really look at his eye and see the difference," Hawkins said.

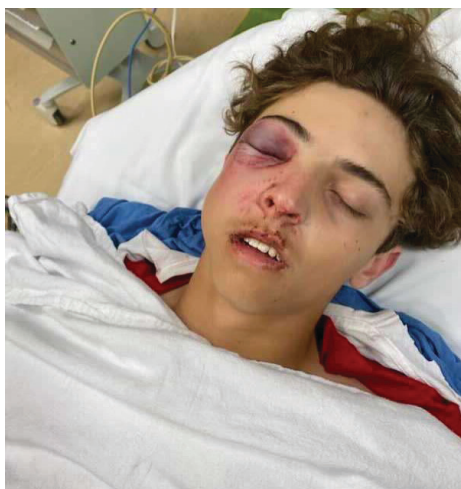
On the ride to the hospital, he does not remember much. "I was with my dad and the doctors in the ambulance. All I heard was the music they were playing and the sirens. They just told me I was bloody and they were cleaning me off. When I got to the nearest hospital, they started getting me ready for surgery," Merzweiler said.

When Merzweiler arrived at the hospital he received an emergency surgery right away because his orbital structure was cracked. He received three surgeries in the total of the three days he was there. The doctors first diagnosed him saying he would never see out of his eye again. But, after each surgery they gained hope and saw more progress each day. Merzweiler's mom explained at that point, the doctors were not sure what he would be able to see or if his eye would ever become undilated.

The idea of not knowing what was happening to Merzweiler was the hardest part for the people who weren't able to see him in the hospital. Many of his close friends struggled with the unpredictable updates. "When I first heard about Damon, I didn't want to believe it was real. I thought it was a joke at first but then everyone started talking about it and I was shocked. So many scenarios ran through my head when I was waiting, 'what if he couldn't see again?' I remember crying in the kitchen with my mom because he was such a good kid with a great heart, he did not deserve this," junior Sam Wilson, a friend of Merzweiler since middle school, said.

"I remember being really shaken up and frightened. I thought about all the possibilities that could happen, and how much he could miss out on. I knew this would affect his life and his sight could have been ripped away just like that," Jackson Clark, another close friend, said.

His girlfriend, Jordyn Hawkins, learned to trust the doctor's process. "I would say it was definitely scary but I kind of had a feeling that the doctors knew what to do and that eventually no matter how many steps it takes to get there, he would be back to normal and it would all be okay," Hawkins said.







When Merzweiler was finally able to go home, things were far from normal. His eye opened late November and he was unable to see anything until mid December. His vision came back slowly and mostly blurry. In the Merzweiler house, the lights were kept off and he had to do everything in the dark due to his light sensitivity. He also had to take 10 eye drops a day for awhile and was going to the doctor everyday for about a month straight doing different tests and things to try and strengthen his eye. He missed school from Oct. 26 to Dec. 15 and was mostly restricted to his house.

Throughout it all, Merzweiler had a strong support system. "My family helped me through a lot of it, my friends were always there for me, Jordyn came over almost everyday, and my dog Luna was always there next to me," Merzweiler said.

"It was a family group effort. He had a lot of caring friends and family that came and helped him. I had a friend (Roni Hester) that actually works for an eye specialist and she had given us such important

information and she even got us in to see a different specialist immediately, after seeing one at UofL who pretty much never see again. So she was phenomenal with helping us navigate it all. It was really just a group effort," Stacey Merzweiler said.

Friends, family and others all sent prayers, thoughts and help to him and his family. After this incident, Merzweiler's life would forever be changed. Many do not understand the effect this had on him mentally and psychically. When he was able, he tried to go back to baseball. He struggled with seeing the ball and the fear of getting hit again, so he was not able to continue playing. Psychically, Merzweiler has no peripheral vision in his eye, has trouble seeing in the dark and is sensitive to certain lights.

"This is something he is going to have to deal with the rest of his life, every single day...I think it has affected his life in many ways. I don't think he can see as well. He can't see as well at night. You know, he

Merzweiler is continuing to heal with the help of his family and friends. These individuals and more supported him every step of the way. "He had a strong support system from his friends. He has a really close friend group and they were always there for him," Hawkins said.

has been through a traumatic experience. He no longer will be able to play sports to a certain point. Everything you have to do he has to watch to make sure no one or no thing hits his eye because he only has one and that's something that's going to affect him every single day of his life," Stacey Merzweiler said.

Despite it all, Merzweiler has made substantial growth since this incident took place. With the support from his friends, family and dog, Luna, he will continue to persevere through new challenges that arise.

by Emi Richardson

# Bleeding for a Purpose

**B**e positive and give back.

A blood drive was held at Bullitt East on Nov. 4, 2022.

The healthcare pathway students were able to help run the Blood Drive alongside a Red Cross team. While the medical professionals got to do the actual blood drawing and all of the technical procedures, the students still held large roles in this process.

All of the students had different roles throughout the day. Some students were signing people in, monitoring patients after their blood had been drawn, running the juice and snack station and some sitting with people as their blood was drawn for support. After the blood drive concluded, lots of students stayed behind to help put chairs away, sweep the floors and roll the tarps up.

“I think it’s a great idea to have it at the high school. I think it gives our students a chance to be able to give back and give to the community,” Health Science pathway teacher Bethany Hensley said. In addition to allowing students in the school a

chance to give back, having the blood drive helped to provide real world healthcare experience to the Health Science pathway students.

Over the whole school day, even with an hour delay to start due to some technology issues, there still managed to be 56 units drawn. Over 150 lives can be saved from 56 units alone. This is a huge success. There were many people that were still in line waiting to donate and the line had to be cut off because school was coming to an end for the day.

Many students who had their blood drawn had never had it drawn before. “It’s for a good cause. I’d rather be lightheaded for a little bit and save lives so it’s worth it,” senior Health Science student Peyton Bibb said. There were a few reactions from people after being finished but this was expected and the whole team was prepared for any type of reaction.

There will be more blood drives hosted by the Red Cross and the Health Science pathway at Bullitt East within the next few months.



# Polio Persists

by Claire Schneider

It's hard to forget the unassuming sugar cube with a bright pink dot on its surface that would change America forever.

Polio, the disease that was every mid-century parents nightmare, was thought to be eradicated.

Millions who were children in the 1950s and 1960s remember receiving the vaccine. America had long been looking for a vaccine for poliomyelitis. Despite being considered eradicated in the U.S., polio is still a risk.

Margaret Elmore, born 1946, participated in an early trial of the first polio vaccine. Known as the Salk vaccine, this was an inactivated poliovirus vaccine or IPV. In 1954, she was one of thousands of children who lined up to receive either the vaccine or a placebo injection. "I'm sure they had to get permission from my parents," Elmore said. Shortly after this trial was proved successful, the U.S. government licensed the Salk vaccine.

Bill Hardy, born 1950, remembers receiving the vaccine on April 24, 1960. Rather than the injected Salk vaccine, he received the oral Sabin vaccine, or OPV. Beginning trials in the Soviet Union in 1959, the Sabin vaccine was often given on sugar cubes. Known as Sabin Sundays, on three consecutive Sundays in 1960 millions were vaccinated against the poliovirus at schools and churches. The sugar cube form of the Sabin vaccine allowed for much quicker vaccination, as it was cheaper to manufacture than the Salk vaccine.

Becky Sharp, born 1951, remembers going to John Adams Jr. High School to receive the Sabin vaccine with her family on one of these Sundays. She recalls being given a sugar cube with a bright pink dot on it. "I remember looking at it and looking at it and my dad said, 'just eat it, just eat it,'" Sharp said.

Polio traces back to ancient depictions of paralyzed children, but by the early 20th century polio was a prevalent issue. The poliovirus was most common in children and in its worst form attacked the central nervous system, leaving children

paralyzed. In cases where polio paralyzed the chest muscles, a large ventilator known as the iron lung was used. "I used to go to Kosair Children's Hospital to get braces on my legs adjusted, this was a treatment center for kids with polio and I would see them there in various stages of the disease," Hardy said.

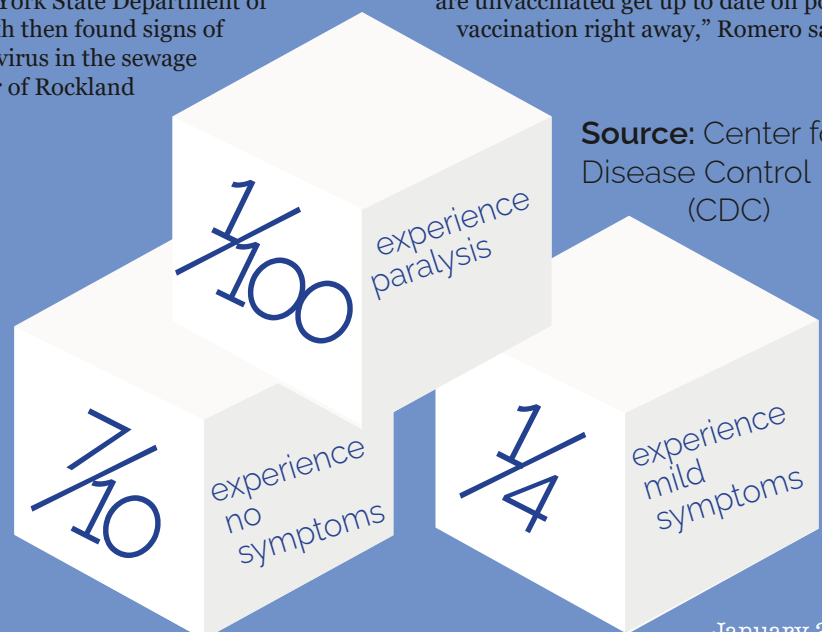
With almost annual polio epidemics, many cities closed places frequented by children. Because polio epidemics usually began in the summer, some correlated the spread of polio with ice cream, bowling alleys or even the beach. "I can remember every summer people being scared to death, they thought maybe the kids were getting polio from the swimming pools," Elmore said. Rather poliovirus was typically spread through the stool of an infected person. During the first major polio epidemic in 1916, there were 27,363 cases of polio and 7,130 deaths in New York City alone. People were desperate for a vaccine. "They were just very, very hopeful that there was going to be something that would stop this epidemic," Elmore said.

Decades of research and hope seemed to have paid off. Though polio has remained a worldwide issue, the list of countries considered to have eradicated polio grows as vaccines become more widely available. Since 1979, polio was considered eradicated in the U.S. However in July of 2022, a case of paralytic polio was found in an unvaccinated young adult from Rockland County, New York. The New York State Department of Health then found signs of poliovirus in the sewage water of Rockland

County, Orange County, Sullivan County, Nassau County and New York City. The poliovirus found meets the World Health Organization's criteria of a vaccine derived poliovirus, a poliovirus mutated from the strain originally contained in the OPV. Since this discovery, the CDC has been stressing the importance of polio vaccination. "We cannot emphasize enough that polio is a dangerous disease for which there is no cure," said Dr. José R. Romero, Director of CDC's National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases during a media statement posted to the CDC's website.

The OPV hasn't been used in the U.S. since 2000, but the CDC recommends children receive four doses of the IPV. Just three doses of the IPV are 99% to 100% effective against paralytic polio. While every state does require children to have at least three doses of the vaccine before entering kindergarten, vaccination rates have dropped.

"I think people are really, you know, vaccine weary and that's just sad but I would say we also have this thing in Kentucky with a large population that probably don't monitor their health," Sharp said. Kentucky has one of the lowest polio vaccination rates in the country. One school in Jefferson County had a polio vaccination rate of 52%. "Polio vaccination is the safest and best way to fight this debilitating disease and it is imperative that people in these communities who are unvaccinated get up to date on polio vaccination right away," Romero said.



# Adolescents for Adderall

by Cooper Bass

One step away from ADHD, one step towards meth.

The chemical makeup of most ADHD medication that is given to children is one methyl group short of its much more dangerous cousin, methamphetamine.

Adderall is one of the most popular drugs to treat Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder or ADHD, a lifelong chronic illness that mostly presents itself in youth. It has a wide range of side effects and general effects on how its users carry out their life. Whether it be because of misconceptions about the drug, a rise in self diagnosis and self treatment or disregard to its dangerous nature, it also happens to be a drug that is widely abused by people.

When the rest of the world slowed down in March of 2020, the brains' of neurodivergents sped up. Life was increasingly harder for those who had ADHD when the pandemic hit. When people whose brains are designed for constant stimulation were expected to sit at home, be productive and even work at home, they can become more aware of just how intense their symptoms are, and they could seek out treatment for this newfound understanding of themselves.

“Parents frequently bring their children for evaluation of ADHD symptoms. This is not a bad thing. It is better

to assess at-risk youth sooner rather than later,” family nurse practitioner and advanced practice registered nurse Jennifer Sherohman said. With the rising concern over mental health and the push for spreading more awareness, parents are being encouraged to get their energetic child tested for ADHD. This in turn results in an incline in diagnosed cases and furthermore, more prescriptions administered for children. “I think there



Adderall can help children in the same way it helps adults.

—Jennifer Sherohman

are a lot of psychosocial reasons that ADHD symptoms are prevalent in society right now and children/adults are seeking treatment,” Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner Lori Henson said. A potential reason could be the rapid introduction of telehealth during the pandemic. One in five people, 22%, now use Telemedicine according to the latest U.S. Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey — fielded Jan. 26 to Feb. 7, 2022. It has made access to professional help much easier as well as saving time for the patient and even oftentimes, saved money.

“Adderall can help children in the same way it helps adults,” Sherohman said. People with ADHD have significantly lower levels of dopamine than neurotypical people have. Dopamine is the drug that your brain naturally produces that makes you feel attentive and focused. This is why one of the biggest signs of ADHD is not being able to sit still or not being able to pay attention over a span of time. This is part of what Adderall targets in the brain to help with impulsive behaviors and decisions.

“Without my medication I am pretty wild. With my medicine I have a couple headaches, but that’s just part of it I guess. It helps me slow down,” sophomore Noah Cheshier said. Cheshier was diagnosed with ADHD four years ago and has been taking prescribed medication since. His medication helps him to communicate as well as improves how he interacts with the people around him. “I think it affects my relationship with other people because it makes them think I’m more annoying without my medicine because I’m just more hyper and more energetic. I like to talk a lot and I just want to do stuff. But when I take my medicine, I’m calmer,” Cheshier said.

These thoughts were echoed by senior Maddie Huml. After being diagnosed with ADHD four years ago, she began taking different prescribed medications but has since settled on Adderall specifically. On the flipside of medication, she has also tried out alternative lifestyle adjustments



On Oct. 12, the FDA announced that Adderall was in a shortage. “I know that it could be months before manufacturers can meet the increasing demand for Adderall use. This is about supply and demand. The pandemic shifted the way we look at and utilize technology in the workplace, the school, and the healthcare system,” family nurse practitioner and advanced practice registered nurse Jennifer Sherohman said. The FDA has warned that the shortage will last at least through the new year. The mix of decreasing manufacturing and increase for demand created the perfect storm for a monster shortage. “For those who use Adderall and can not get their prescription, I would urge you to look at the alternative medications and really focus on those overall good self care habits,” Sherohman said.

like dietary changes and different sleep habits, but none prove to be better than prescription. She now takes a dosage of Adderall along with a low dose of non-stimulant medicine. “The reason I’m on the low dose of the non-stimulant is because my focus wasn’t totally where it should be with the dose of Adderall I’m on now but when I tried moving to a higher dose, I was extremely anxious and I would get shaky and stuff like that. But I would say, with the dose I’m at now, I don’t really experience side effects,” Huml said. “I feel like it helps me be more of who I am because I can regulate my emotions and direct my focus towards things in general. I feel like if anything, it helps me feel more like myself.”

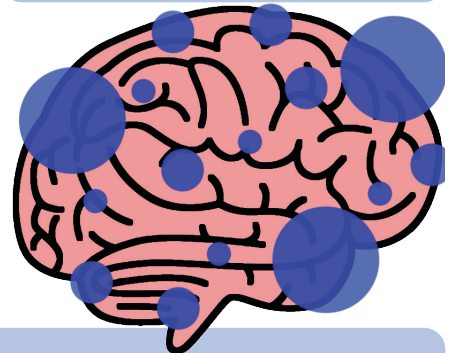
With a majority of all administered medications, ADHD prescriptions also have side effects that are hard to ignore. “It gives me stomach problems. It affects me a lot. I think it’s the dosage amount,” Chesser said. “I hate medicine. It just makes me feel sick and I don’t like it. It makes me feel different than my normal self.” With a higher dosage, Chesser gets intense effects like migraines and headaches but lowering the dosage to help to nullify the effects just makes the drug less effective at what it was built to do. Nonetheless he is still grateful for his medications and he wishes he could tell his younger self to routinely take it so he could “be more mature and pay better attention.”

When you introduce something as valuable as Adderall to children who are diagnosed with poor decision making skills, there are unfortunately instances where the drug could be irresponsibly shared. “It is never okay to sell or share your script with anyone other than who it is intended for. There is a sudden death warning on these

### Brain with ADHD



### Neurotypical Brain



## Dopamine in the Brain

prescriptions,” Sherohman said. There are a plethora of reasons why people, and especially children, should never take unprescribed Adderall. “If you have an undiagnosed heart defect, irregular heart rhythms, or uncontrolled blood pressure you increase the risk of sudden death. Stimulant medications, like Adderall, can cause changes in mood like aggression, anxiety, suicidal thinking, manic behaviors, insomnia, hallucinations, etc. You could also have an allergic reaction to the ingredients in Adderall,” Sherohman said. It is vital that when dealing with substances that directly affect the neurotransmitters in your brain, you use caution and you also need to consult your healthcare profession beforehand.

“I don’t think that students fully grasp how dangerous these drugs could potentially be but, I think that’s just the nature of being a teenager,” AP Psychology teacher Sarah Akridge said. In this AP class students learn about lots of different types of medications and Akridge makes sure to

try her hardest to thoroughly educate her students of medicinal safety. “I do teach it as a precautionary thing. And that’s not just with Adderall, it’s

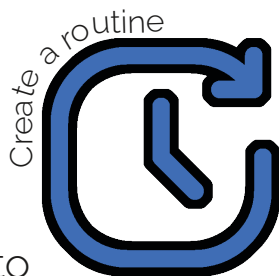
medications in general,” Akridge said. “We always talk about how it’s so important not to just rely on the medication because there’s so many side effects or you can become tolerant to it. So we always try to talk about other types of treatments too. Like therapy, coping strategies and stuff like that.”

“I think the biggest misconception with any ADHD medication, not just Adderall, is that this will speed you up so you can do all the things you need to do.” Sherhman said. “For those who suffer from ADHD, you know your thoughts race. Taking ADHD medication can actually make you feel tired.” Adderall’s job is to slow down the mind and the body, this is to allow people to focus and remain calm, it does not make people feel euphoric like some are led to believe.

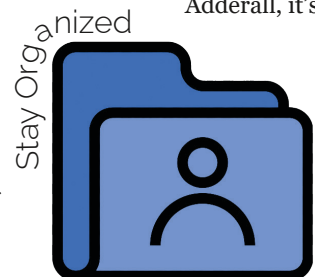
“I rarely see children on Adderall consistently into adulthood. Most ADHD patients go on and off medications based on life circumstances,” Henson said. “There are several different lifestyle interventions and medications that are helpful for ADHD symptoms. ADHD symptoms improve with organization, routine, structure, exercise, and dietary changes.” Some patients can work with their doctor and wean themselves off of medication. Based on the person, the disorder may be more manageable later on in life and there isn’t a need for medication when they could just adjust a part of their life to get the disorder under control.



Get more sleep



Create a routine



Stay Organized

Daily habits to help manage ADHD without using standard medication:



# Healthcare is a Human Right

by Brandon Mudd

This is America.

Just like Childish Gambino's song points to racism as a prominent issue in the United States, another incredibly pressing issue is the country's lack of a universal healthcare system.

The United States has continuously violated the human rights of each and every citizen who has ever been denied access to healthcare, and creating a universal healthcare system is unequivocally what the U.S. needs to do. Any good society's goal should be creating the most logical and fair systems and that's what universal healthcare is all about. It is long overdue that the U.S. puts the needs of its people over greedy corporations and Big Pharma.

In 2020, the U.S. was the only nation in the world to vote no on a United Nations (UN) general assembly resolution voting to recognize affordable healthcare for all as a human right. Despite the UN not being able to adopt the resolution due to the United States' status

as a permanent member, the majority of the United Nations, the World Health Organization, the American Bar Association and

countless world renowned universities, such as Harvard, recognize healthcare as a human right. The concept of a human right is designed to be flexible so that rights can be added as society progresses, and in the current developed world, it is without a doubt, possible for every citizen of every country in the world to have access to healthcare. If the small and poor Pacific island country of Tuvalu, the brutal Russian regime and the incredibly populous country of China can all find ways to create a public healthcare system, then there is no reason that the richest country on the planet cannot find a feasible way.

The backbone of a government is to ensure the people's best interest is pursued. According to a 2020 Pew Research Center survey, 63% of all adults in the United States believe that it is the government's duty to provide a public healthcare option. The government's failure to create one, is the government's failure to abide by the will of its people and their best interest.

Many opponents of universal healthcare point to the cost of it. However, of every country in the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) the United States, the only country without a universal healthcare system, spent the highest percentage of its gross domestic product (GDP) on healthcare, so it is simply illogical to say that a universal healthcare system would be more expensive. With the United States taking first place for healthcare expenditures out of all the OECD countries, Switzerland comes



63%

of American adults want a public option.

Source: Pew Research Center Survey

# Average Health Spending

Source: OECD

#1



12,318 USD  
Per Capita

#2

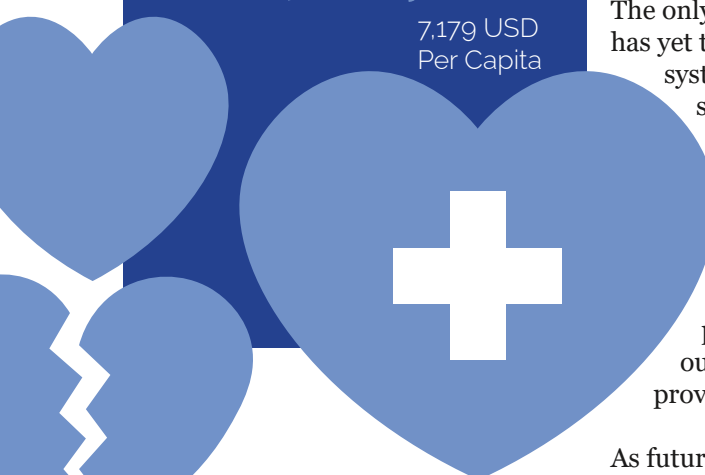


7,383 USD  
Per Capita

#3



7,179 USD  
Per Capita



in second. However, the United States spent around 17.1% of its GDP on healthcare while Switzerland spent only 12.3%. The United States spent nearly an entire 5% more of its GDP on healthcare than the second highest country in the OECD without having universal healthcare.

Another main talking point of universal healthcare's opponents is the wait time for appointments in countries that have the system. However, according to the Peterson-

Kaiser Health System Tracker wait time in the United States is, on average, the same as other countries. In many cases, insurance companies have wasted time obtaining referrals and approvals when life saving care was needed. Sometimes, countries with universal healthcare experience backups and appointments can take awhile to get into. However, in life saving circumstances, universal healthcare has proved to be more effective at ensuring treatment.

The United States has access to more medical technology than any other country in the world. That's why its citizens are told they have the best healthcare in the world. However, despite having the best resources, the country has the highest rates of chronic disease burden in all OECD countries, and the highest rates of infant mortality, heart attack deaths and childbirth deaths. Comparably, the other OECD countries with universal healthcare have drastically lower rates of each of those as well as two times less obesity.

The only reason that the United States has yet to create a universal healthcare system is because its political system is failing the people. Logically, universal healthcare is the answer, which is something that every other country in the world has recognized. However, due to the extensive lobbying of pharmaceutical companies our government has lacked to provide this to its citizens.

As future generations get more and more progressive, the United States can only hope that the trend follows in its political parties, and finally, the people of the US can get the universal healthcare they deserve.

# A Gift Of Life

by Cameron Brown

A debate for decades.

Signing up to be an organ donor is no simple feat, however some hope that spreading information about the process will prompt more to sign up.

Students at East have many personal experiences with Organ Donations. Advances in ways of Organ Donation have prompted some to sign up, even with potential myths and rumors about the process looming.

With rising numbers of kidney failures and other medical conditions, the need for the donation of organs is ever growing. "I think there should be more awareness for it because I know it's not really talked about," senior Lark Hammack, said. "Awareness is a major concern for most. With the myths and rumors of organ donation looming over potential donors, cause them to be hesitant about donating."

If you're interested in signing up to be a donor, <https://donatelife.org/> is the Kentucky website.



# The Price for Life

by Jack Binkley

Hospitals are necessary for our survival as people. We rely on the care that they provide in times of need. During COVID-19 especially, people sought the resources they required from hospitals. But, this frequently lifesaving care comes at an unimaginable price that many cannot afford.

The American healthcare system is wildly inflated. Every day, sickly individuals must combat the ailments that affect them and the skewed bills that come with being treated; bills that are notable for costing an arm and a leg. The cause of this are insurance companies: our very solution.

When hospitals first came to commercial light, their pricing was relatively straightforward. They charged for the cost of the procedure with a bit extra to keep the hospital afloat. But as insurance companies rose to prominence, they requested large cuts off of the chargemaster prices, by leveraging the number of patients that they feed into the hospital. To combat this, Hospitals created 'Fake' prices and logged them in the Chargemaster: a list of prices for all services the hospital provides. This becomes an issue when the prices designed for insurance companies are turned onto you, the patient. CDC data (2022) shows 31.6 Million American adults are without coverage, 10% of the population.

People with coverage face these prices when they go 'Out-of-Network'. Out-of-Network being a phrase used to describe a service or product that is not covered by an insurance company. Oppositely, being

'In-Network' is when your insurance company does cover the services and equipment that are used for your care. Anything can be out of network ranging from the surgeons operating on you, the equipment used to treat you, even the medicine in an IV. This is no small fee either. In Denver, a woman was charged \$303,709 for a surgery she was told would cost \$1,337. The hospital she was treated at was under the assumption that her insurance company was in-network which gave her the falsified prices.

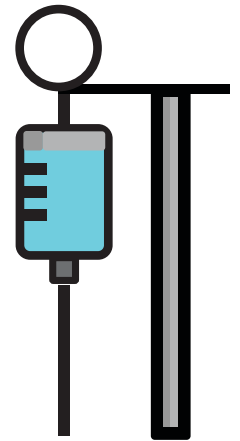
Said woman latter was able to sue the hospital under grounds of false advertising. After a tumultuous & litigious battle, she won the case, with her debit being settled. But this isnt always the course that has to be taken. Patients in need of this life saving treatment must either deal with widely garnished wages & legal pursuits, to result in what was already agreed upon in their eyes.

Prices have only come to these margins in recent years. BLS (Basic Life Support - Red Cross) data shows that hospital prices have increased about 2.1% each year in the past decade alone. That's an increase of 21%, sending prices of even small items to obscene numbers. This pales in comparison to the margins that insurance

# \$4,432,571,558

the total amount of gross patient revenue from hospitals nationwide in the past year alone. A multi billion dollar industry.

Source: American Hospital Association



# 16%

Of people who are admitted into the hospital system every year go out of network.



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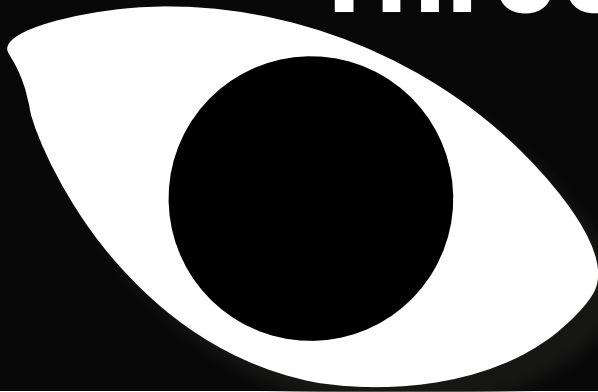
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# An Appointment Through Their



# EYES

by Brandon Mudd

Looking at it, it's clear that this issue is happening right under everyone's noses.

Racism can be found all throughout our society, and even in the medical field.

With racism impacting the everyday lives of people of color in the United States, it's sadly no shock that it even impacts them in the medical field, a place where everyone is supposed to feel safe and comfortable. Due to a history of systemic neglect and oppression, combined with the lack of education around people of color's individual medical issues,

these disparities in health have been created. Like most problems in society, the route to overcome this is through education and change.

In the summer of 2020, protests across the country pointed to the rising public awareness and detestation for systemic racism. However, most conversation around systemic racism has revolved around its involvement in the policing system, but the role that racism plays in the medical field is just as harmful and still mostly unnoticed.

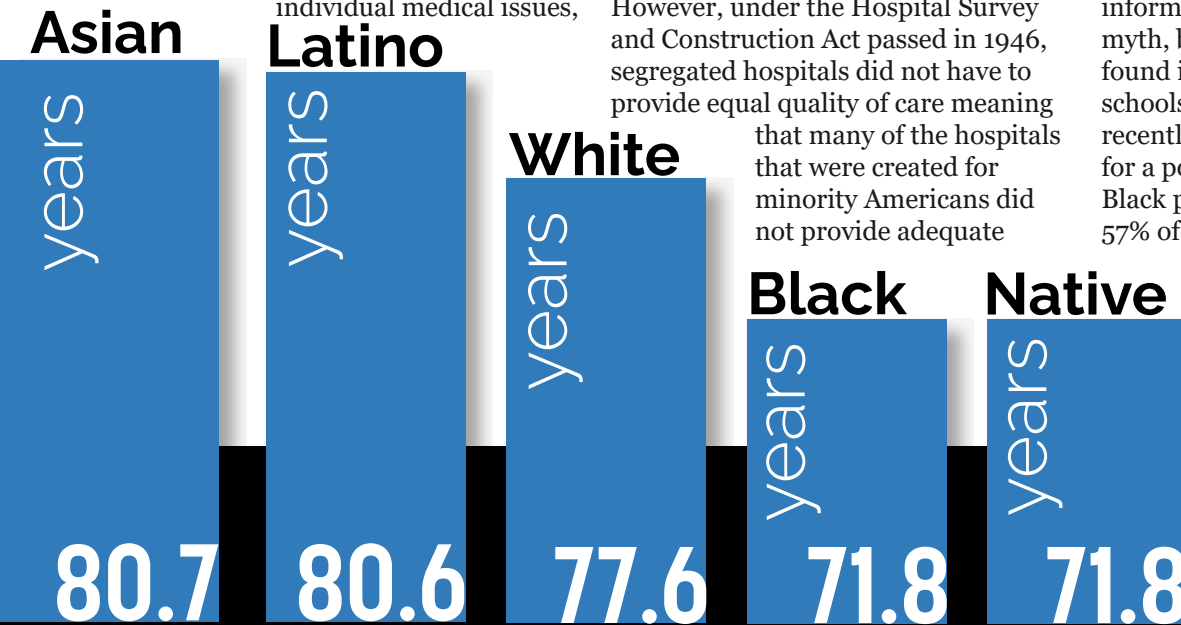
From the start, hospitals were created to service all people regardless of race. However, under the Hospital Survey and Construction Act passed in 1946, segregated hospitals did not have to provide equal quality of care meaning that many of the hospitals that were created for minority Americans did not provide adequate

services which created a significant gap in health that can still be seen today.

One of the most obvious ways that this issue manifests itself is in obstetrics, which is the field of childbirth. Black Women are six times more likely to die during childbirth than a white woman. This is mostly due to misleading scientific racism that states black people feel less pain than their white counterparts. Meaning that, a lot of the time, many Black Women don't get their pain adequately attended to during the birthing process causing medical compromise. This information is not only a societal myth, but something that could be found in many books taught in medical schools across the country until very recently. When going to the doctor for a potentially broken extremity, Black patients received an X-ray scan 57% of the time in comparison to the

74% of white people that received one, which directly highlights this pressing issue.

Due to racism negatively impacting the economic success of racial minorities, many have a statistically harder time gaining access to medical treatment. Many labor laws that ensure compulsory



Average Lifespan by Ethnicity In the U.S. (2019)

Source: Center for Disease Control (CDC)



# 6x

A Black Woman is six times more likely to die during childbirth than a white woman.

Source: American Medical Association

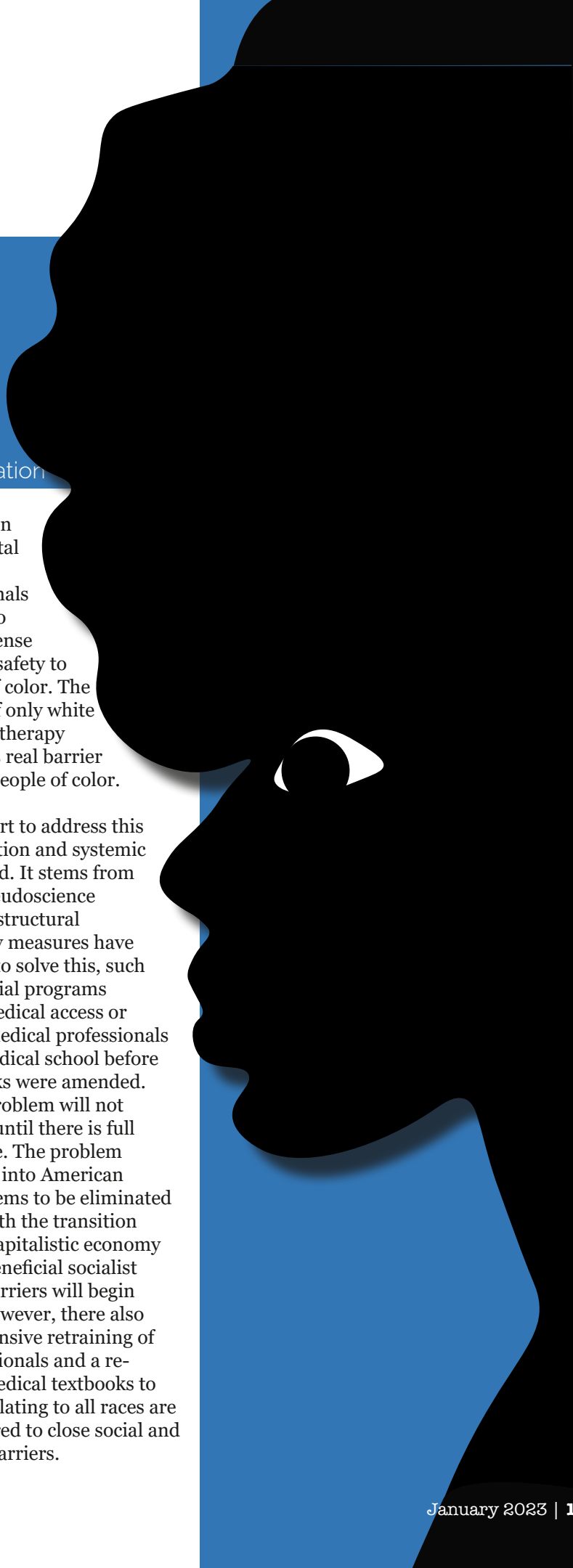
medical insurance don't apply to fields surrounding agriculture, service and domestic work that have been historically occupied by large numbers of people of color. COVID-19 highlighted this issue through Latino people. Latinos had a significantly greater life expectancy than white people in the United States pre-COVID, but they saw their average life expectancy drop from nearly 81-years-old to 78-years-old, causing this gap to close. In comparison, white people only saw their average life expectancy drop one year from around 78-years-old to 77-years-old. This shows that even though the average latino lifespan is longer than the average white lifespan, their lack of access to resources negatively impacted their health at a greater rate.

Another large problem is that many conditions, especially ones that relate to skin or where visual symptoms appear in the skin, display themselves differently in the skin of many people of color. This is not something that is always taught in medical school so many doctors misdiagnose or lack to diagnose their patients of color with these skin conditions.

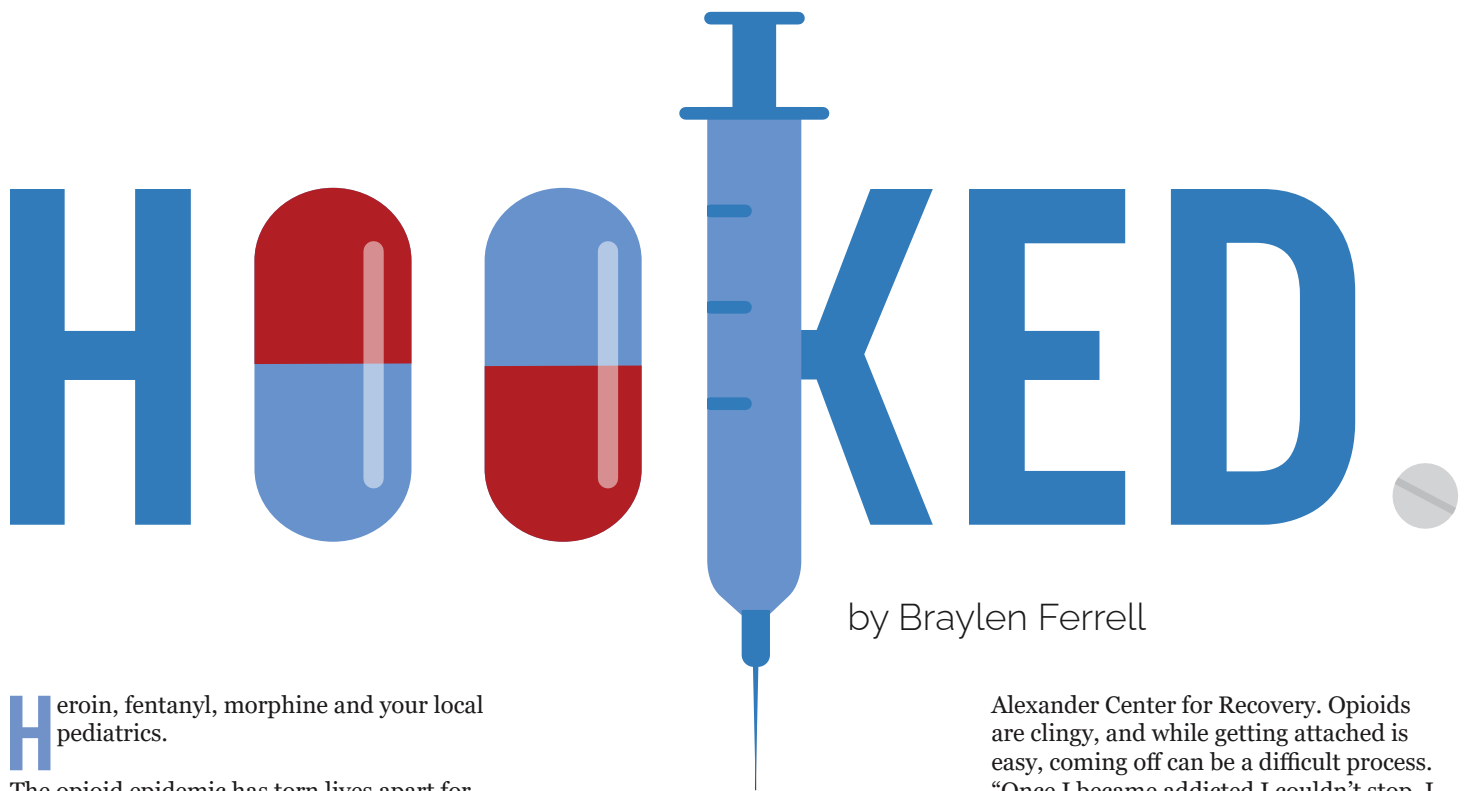
Aside from the physical health of racial minorities being statistically worse than their white counterparts, mental health issues are found at higher rates among people of color as well. Indigenous Americans have the highest suicide rate of all people in the United States. This is due to the lack of

people of color in the field of mental health and the white professionals not being able to provide a real sense of reliability or safety to their patients of color. The cultural myth of only white people going to therapy comes from this real barrier in the field for people of color.

To make an effort to address this problem, education and systemic change is needed. It stems from a mixture of pseudoscience combined with structural problems. Many measures have been proposed to solve this, such as extensive social programs that increase medical access or retraining for medical professionals who went to medical school before certain textbooks were amended. However, the problem will not be truly solved until there is full systemic change. The problem is too ingrained into American capitalistic systems to be eliminated under them. With the transition from a greedy capitalistic economy to a mutually beneficial socialist one, physical barriers will begin to be closed. However, there also needs to be intensive retraining of medical professionals and a re-evaluation of medical textbooks to ensure issues relating to all races are effectively covered to close social and informational barriers.



# H O O K E D .



by Braylen Ferrell

**H**eroin, fentanyl, morphine and your local pediatrics.

The opioid epidemic has torn lives apart for many years, and continues to surge.

Opioids may provide relief from pain, but they cause an onslaught of other health troubles. However, health side effects aren't the worst of the drug. Even with that, the ability to get your hands on opioids is easy as ever.

Often given after surgery or injury, opioids are considered a wonder drug due to their effectiveness in reducing pain. However, they are also effective in getting people hooked. "It actually doesn't take long for a person to become dependent on the relief and euphoria that those opioids produce, because they're not long lasting. It takes multiple doses daily to continue to get that relief, both physically and mentally," Kerry Ferrell said, who was in the pharmaceutical field for over 23 years. Strong and temporary euphoria is a dangerous combo. "If not closely monitored by the prescriber, the patient can become addicted almost without realizing it," Ferrell said.

"When I was seeing a pain management doctor, I would tell him every visit it wasn't pain management he was practicing, it was drug management. I was disillusioned and frustrated with the lack of options or treatments available that weren't opioids. When I expressed concerns about possible addiction, he always responded there is a difference between psychological addiction and physical dependency. That is purely bullshit semantics, the end result of either is the same," Jamie Friedman said, who has used opioids on multiple occasions due to

surgeries. The relation between the user and doctor matter, and while they all may not end in addiction, lingering effects can still be felt after the prescription. "I eventually quit pain management and opioids. Within a few months I was so much better physically, the long term use of opioids is known to increase pain levels, which means you have to take stronger and stronger opioids," Friedman said.

Opioids and other painkillers may relieve pain, ironically however, they are quite effective in causing it. "Most definitely. Some of my more serious side effects were physical dependency, mental fog, nausea, vomiting, drowsiness and slower breathing rates to mention a few," Friedman said.

Because of their hidden approach, it doesn't take much to get absorbed by their effects. "I saw literally hundreds, if not thousands, of patients fall victim to the addictive nature of opioids. People who would literally rail against marijuana or cocaine use would be taking 240 opioid tablets a month. Eight to ten per day. They would attempt to get a refill five to six days early every month," Ferrell said.

Unfortunately, a victim of opioid addiction can be just about anyone. "I was already an alcoholic. But then ahead of a surgery I was given opioids to treat the pain. And because of me already being addicted, all I did was trade alcohol for opioids," Jessica Webster said, who is a recovered opioid addict now working at the Robert

Alexander Center for Recovery. Opioids are clingy, and while getting attached is easy, coming off can be a difficult process. "Once I became addicted I couldn't stop. I was getting high to satisfy a craving beyond my mental control. My body's telling me I had to have it. I had to have it to function. I had to have it so I wouldn't be sick. I could no longer imagine my life without it, but I wanted to stop and couldn't," Webster said.

"In the mental aspect of it is I will obsess and obsess and obsess because I just want to feel better. And my mind will tell me that drugs are going to fix it. And I remember times when before I would get my drugs already feeling better, even though I hadn't put anything in yet just because I knew what was getting ready to come," Webster said. Mentally, opioids can be just as destructive. Because of this, getting off of them can be nearly impossible.

The worst side effects of opioids are not found in the symptoms, rather the effect it has on the life around you. "In the midst of addiction, we will sacrifice everything that means worthwhile to us. I will sacrifice my morals, my self respect. And it's not because I don't care about my family. It's not that I don't care about my daughter. I was just willing to do whatever I had to do to satisfy that craving. And I remember times my family begging me to stop. I remember the judge telling me this is your last chance when I was fighting for custody of my daughter that I now haven't seen since 2014. There's not a day that goes by that I don't think of her. And every year on her birthday I will get a card and fill it out and put it up because I forfeited

that opportunity to be the mother that she deserved,” Webster said. Opioids and addiction hold no morals, and can tear so many things apart. “I had instilled so much fear within my sister that she wouldn’t even watch the news. My sister had to make the choice to not have anything to do with me or watch me kill myself. And she couldn’t bear to watch me kill myself, so she decided to have nothing to do with me,” Webster said.

The core of the crisis isn’t found in the pills themselves, rather the distribution. “The reason opioids are prescribed so often is

because of their effectiveness. They do reduce pain. But I still believe they’re over prescribed. Most doctors want to do right by their patients. But they also wanna keep them. And declining to accede to your customer’s wishes is a sure fire way to get them to seek satisfaction elsewhere,” Ferrell said. It’s not difficult to get a prescription, and with that comes many, many risks. “The pharmaceutical companies, some profit driven doctors, our government, are morally responsible for creating the opioid crisis. However, there are many, many doctors that prescribed fully believing they were medically helping their patients. Only to realize that they were in violation of the hippocratic oath they took, to do no harm,” Friedman said.

While opioids are

destructive, they are not the final nail in the coffin. “I now have such an amazing relationship with my sister. I couldn’t find another place to go (after rehab). And so I talked to my sister about it, and my sister was like ‘Just come here’. This is a woman who went and opened her door for me. This is a woman who didn’t come and see me when I was incarcerated for three years. This is a woman who even when I first got out, didn’t really have much to do with me because of the fear I had instilled in her at that point. Now she’s telling me I can live with her,” Webster said. “I’m a survivor. Statistically, I wasn’t meant to make it out. But here I am. Although I lost the rights to my daughter, I’ve been in front of judges with women I’ve sponsored and been a part of them getting their children back. I have had the opportunity to speak in front of judges about the disease of addiction. That’s something I was never supposed to do. I should have been dead. Between the overdoses and the lifestyle I was living,” Webster said. Even when put against all odds, people are able to go on and speak out on their experiences.

“

I have total empathy for those trying to break the addiction to opioids.

-Jamie Friedman





Over 142,000,000  
Opioid prescriptions given in the  
U.S. in 2020.

1 in 4  
People become addicted after  
long term prescriptions.

75%  
Of drug overdose deaths in 2020  
involved opioids.

Over 932,000  
Lives taken by opioid overdose  
since 1999.

**A**lthough addiction can feel like an uphill battle, there is hope.

Addiction affects people every day, but recovery options are becoming more prevalent.

The road to recovery from Substance Use Disorder is unique for every individual, treatment experiences are different and ever changing. Over the years, the options for treatment and recovery have greatly expanded due to the rise of the Opioid Epidemic. This has resulted in more options for patients locally.

Addiction is a chronic, progressive and often fatal disease and although addiction cannot be cured, it is possible to manage. It is extremely important to find treatment that works for each individual case and implement safety protocols such as Overdose Rescue Training and other Harm Reduction strategies. "I am tired of seeing kids, moms, dads and family members in general have to bury their loved ones due to addiction. I know that there is hope and lives can be saved by reaching out and trying to help one another," Justin Broughton, founder of Robert Alexander Center (RAC) in Mt. Washington said.

**Sources:** Center for Disease Control (CDC), National Institutes of Health (NIH)

# Road to Recovery

by Audrey Stepp

Treatment and recovery availability within our community are vital.

“Substance Abuse, 9 times out of 10, causes depression for the addict, which is also scary because that person will start to think or believe that their life has no value,” Lexi Jones, a daughter of a parent in Long Term Recovery, said. The Opioid Epidemic has caused lots of heartache for families due to the amount of deaths. Kentucky is usually ranked around 3rd in the nation for overdose/poisoning deaths.

With so much loss, more strategies have been developed to manage this illness. Traditional non-medication treatment such as 12 step programs, counseling and group meetings are still widely used today. In recent years, evidence-based medications have been implemented such as naloxone/ narcan, fentanyl test strips, and prescriptions such as Vivitrol. “We have tons of options for recovery in this day and age. We have halfway houses, 28 day programs, 30 day programs, 90 day programs, long term programs, IOP (intensive outpatient). Everyone’s story is different and needs are different so get in touch with someone in the recovery community and find out what best suits them or they can contact myself and I will help them figure out what they need to do and will direct them,” David Heath, a person in Long Term Recovery, said.

Recovery is so important because of the mental and the physical toll it could take on the patient’s health.

Broughton of RAC said, “Addiction has affected our local community in many ways. Recently, due to the isolation protocols of COVID-19 I have seen more people become addicted to alcohol or other substances due to having too much downtime and lack of unity or connection with their normal everyday routines.” Addiction affects us locally in a more emotional way as well. “I have also seen addiction affect our community by way of people losing their lives. Mount Washington is such a small, tight-knit community where everyone knows everyone. When something tragic happens, it not only impacts the family but also the community as a whole. When battling addiction, it affects the entire family, not just the addict/alcoholic,” Broughton said.

One recovery option that we have locally is the RAC rehab recovery program. “Our treatment goal is to physically and emotionally stabilize individuals and to provide appropriate clinical and medical interventions and support for those struggling with substance use disorders and those that love them,” Broughton said. There are many different treatments at RAC. “What I see work best is when someone completes Detox, Residential, Partial Hospitalization, Intensive outpatient and continues outpatient

totaling 6-7 months of continuous programming and accountability,” Broughton said.

Recovery is a long and delicate process that consists of lots of trial and error. “For anyone who has a family member, parent, friend or just a loved one in general who’s struggling with addiction, please know that your feelings are valid. You are not alone. And most importantly, absolutely none of what you’re going through is your fault. Never blame yourself. I understand what you’re going through and there’s always someone to talk to. Things do get better, keep hope no matter what,” Jones said.

Personal experience in rehab and recovery is different for everyone, you just have to find what works for you. “As far as the Addict goes, in the beginning we hold onto the idea that recovery is extra and that we can figure it out on our own. Well I tried to figure it out for 10 years and failed miserably. It wasn’t until I was broken enough to ask for help and actually try recovery that I got better,” Heath said. “Getting my family back, making amends for all the harm I caused and not breaking another promise. True peace of mind and the ability to deal with emotions without putting a substance in my body,” Heath said.

If you, or someone you know is struggling with substances of any kind, reach out and talk to someone.



# The Season of a LIFETIME

by Raegan Jackson

Unrivaled.

This season our football team proved they truly are unrivaled by going 14-1 and winning the 6A State Championship. After facing a tough loss against Spencer County early in the season our Chargers made a strong comeback and went on to have a 14 game winning streak carrying them all the way to the State Championship. Throughout the season they faced much adversity and doubt but overcame it all and they came out victorious as state champions.

This season our Chargers opened the season with a loss to Spencer County however they did not let that get them down. The team came together and came back the next week ready to win. "Going into week one big headed and everyone talking about how good we were gonna be all the seniors coming up, I feel like we deserve that loss because I don't think we would be where we are without that loss," senior Peyton Stafford said. With letting that first game go the Chargers were able to turn around and have the season of a lifetime winning 14 straight games including the 6A State Championship.

In past years it's no secret that the Chargers have struggled to go far in the playoffs however this year the team went in with the confidence that they could go further than they ever have. "We had a lot of adversity, we had a lot of people trying to put us down and say that we weren't going to be a good team or we can't beat Male or go to State or win any big games, but I think our last game shut that up," senior Braxton Joslin said. The Chargers quickly turned everyone's doubt into confidence when they beat Male for the first time in the regular season. "At the beginning of the season when we beat Ballard we were like okay we've got the calibers and then we lost but then after we really beat Male for that first time it was like surreal and we realized that we really have a good chance (to go to state)," senior Running Back Mason Guathier said.

After beating Male for the first time in East history the entire student section rushed the field to celebrate with the team. Feeling that support the Chargers' confidence was boosted and they knew they could go as far as they wanted with the whole community rallying behind them. The team then went on to dominate in the playoffs by beating Manual, Central Hardin, Butler and Bryan Station.

Since moving up to a 6A school East has never been able to go far into playoffs so it was a huge deal to not only the team but the community as well that the Chargers had gone as far they had. Going into State semi-finals the Chargers travelled to Bryan Station and all of Mount Washington travelled right along with them. "After beating Manual I felt like dang we could do this (go to state) by going to practice and working our butts off and then after beating Bryan Station it was so nice because the whole city of Mount Washington was there like there was not an empty seat," Stafford said. The community continued this comradery by following the team to Kroger Field for the 6A State Championship against Male "That was one of the coolest things. We tried really hard this year to create unity around our program to one talk to our guys about playing for our team, our staff and our community as a whole and two tried to get the community more involved to come together to get that small town football field," Head Coach Keegan Kendrick said. Having the community behind them was all the Chargers needed to come together and pull off of one final win.

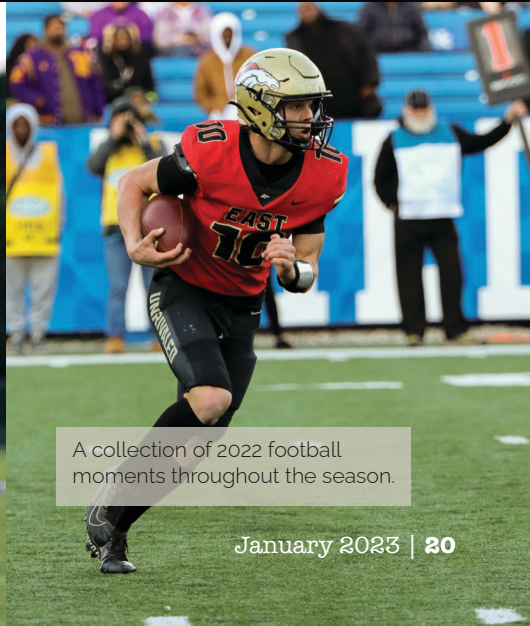
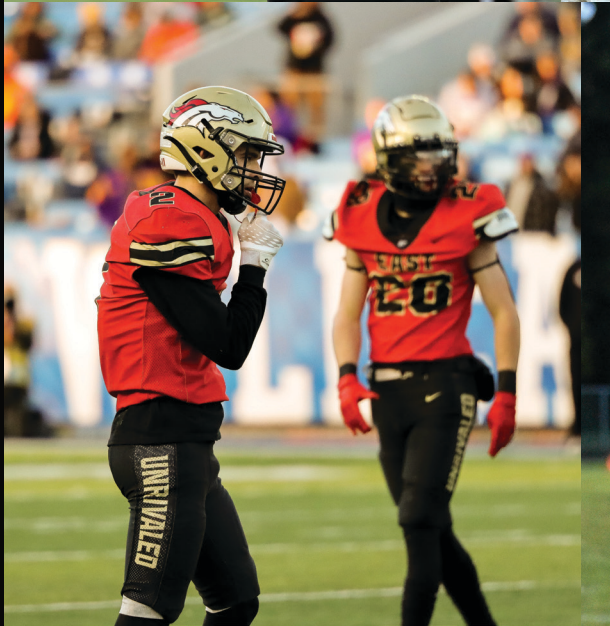
For some players the realization that they were going to State hit immediately and for others it took seeing Kroger Field to realize just how far they had gone. "I really think it was the bus ride coming into Kroger (field) that it really hit me that we were going to State and not treating it like just another game but as soon as we got there and walked into the facility and everything it just started to hit and things were just surreal," Joslin said. With all

the excitement of being at Kroger Field and playing in the state championship it took the Chargers a few plays to get their jitters out. "We knew we weren't playing to the best of our ability, we just had little mistakes. We knew we had a powerful offense, we knew people couldn't stop us, so we went out on the field and we all just executed the way we knew we were supposed to and drove down the field," Guathier said. Male opened the game with two back to back touchdowns but East managed to make a comeback and get the win. "I can't even put it into words. Just overwhelming emotion. Honestly my knees were just going out and buckling with the overwhelming emotion of what we just did and what we overcame in that game to do it," Kendrick said.

After winning the state game as the team travelled back home the whole of Mount Washington waited in the school's parking lot to celebrate with the team. "It was so cool pulling in and we had Santa leading us it was so cool, the parking lots filled and it really showed how big and how amazing our community is and how much they cherish us and it was truthfully something amazing and it made me feel real good," Joslin said. Once the team arrived fireworks were set off and everyone came around to watch the team ring the bell for a final time this season. To top the night off everyone went into the gym and Head Coach Keegan Kendrick gave a speech and seniors Travis Egan, Mason Guathier, Peyton Stafford, Camron Brogan, Nolan Davenport, Braxton Joslin, and Jacob Kauffman led the crowd in a 'Slow Clap' chant.

With an opening season loss, injury and doubt it would have been easy for the Chargers to give in to the pressure and come out defeated, but they faced every challenge head on and as a team and came out victorious. For every player from the incoming freshman to the leaving seniors this was a season that they will never forget.





A collection of 2022 football moments throughout the season.





A collection of 2022 football moments throughout the season.



# Behind the Scenes of CHAMPIONS

by Bryce Elder and Kadence Owen



Trainers Kristen Harmon and Liam Ireland pose holding the 2022 6A Football State Championship Trophy. Both trainers worked with the players and many other sports teams throughout the year to keep the teams healthy. "Liam is helping out a lot, he takes the stress off Kristen by sharing the work," junior linebacker Gabe Henderson said.

**B**etween taping, testing, and stretching, the trainers stay busy.

There is a lot of effort that goes into keeping the athletes at Bullitt East healthy. Things that range from stretching out cramps, doing tape jobs, and implementing new rehab programs into practice. The trainers here stay busy year-round helping.

Liam Ireland has been an athletic trainer for 4 years working for prestigious programs such as the LA Rams and Louisville Cardinals and now he is in his first year at Bullitt East. Kristen Harmon is in her 18th year of being a trainer with this being her 3rd at Bullitt East.

Before 2022, the school only had Harmon to deal with all of the sports by her lonesome. But before the new year East

hired Ireland to help take the workload off of Mormans shoulders. "Liam is helping out a lot, he takes the stress off Kristen by sharing the work," said Junior linebacker Gabe Henderson.

Ireland has seen many bad injuries including spinal injuries, wrist fractures, and many dislocations over the short time he has been working as a trainer. Football being the most common sport to cause injury because it is one of the highest contact sports. "My injury was an ACL and they have dealt with it perfectly, getting me into rehab/physical therapy as fast as possible, pushing my limits to where I can get back on the field as quickly as possible," said Henderson.

A big part of their job was creating new ways to reduce the amount of injuries that

the athletes can do during practice or at home. "Working with Coach Hefner and implementing shoulder rehab programs. We've been able to, especially this year, get specific rehab programs for kids to do each day during athletic conditioning, whether it's knee, ankle, or shoulder injuries. We have been able to do more to get ahead of some of that stuff," said Ireland.

Keeping athletes motivated while in recovery is a tough job to do. Trainers also take care of an athlete's mental health while in the recovery stage from a big injury. Most athletes are motivated by the long term goal of returning to their sport, but for some it takes a little more. "Celebrating the little things is a great way to keep an athlete motivated to recover," said Harmon.



# Work Hard Play Hard

by Brooklyn Sauer



Senior Gage Thorpe can often be spotted throughout the school. Whether he is running around for cross country and track, organizing events for SLAM, Beta or NHS, or screaming at the top of his lungs in front of the Redzone Rowdies, Bullitt East's student body is no stranger to his face. However, another thing Thorpe deals with on the daily is seizures that, despite their unexpected nature, he still is able to work past to continue a normal teenage life.

Thorpe's seizures impact his day-to-day life in a variety of ways. For example, participating in the extracurriculars that he enjoys has to change due to the unexpected nature of his seizures. Through it all, Thorpe's senior year is turning out to be one of his favorites.

"I am always worried about what happens if I have one, like, right now? And what will happen if I do have one, how will that affect the people around me, like the students?" Questions like these often go through Thorpe's mind on a day-to-day basis. For instance, there are times

when Thorpe may unexpectedly have a seizure during a class change, causing the hallway to be closed down. "That's always the worst," Thorpe said. Though the official cause for the seizures are stress and anxiety, Thorpe's doctors still can't pinpoint exactly why they happen, hence the randomness. Most importantly, however, Thorpe hopes that people knows that he is okay while having a seizure. "I'm fine my body's not getting brain dead because of me having one...they don't need to worry about it, just kind of let it happen," Thorpe said.

From day to day, the severity of Thorpe's seizures can vary greatly. "There are some days that are worse than others, that's pretty much with anything, but, like I could have one a day, like one seizure a day, or I could have multiple a day, and they're really draining," Thorpe said. Despite this, Thorpe still works to carry on with his day after having a seizure.

"I try to put on a fake face that, like, they're not draining, but I'm so tired afterwards, but you just kinda have to put on the face that everything's fine and you'll get through it," Thorpe said. Still, Thorpe finds a way to make light of the bad situation. "It is easier because I have to wear this headband, so I don't have to worry about my hair in the morning, that is a plus about all this," Thorpe said.

“

I just try not to let it affect me.

-Gage Thorpe

While Thorpe is still involved with many of the things that he enjoys, the way that he interacts with his extracurriculars changes due to his seizures. "I always have to be with someone that knows what

to do... like if I'm at a game there's like seven administrators all around me at all times," Thorpe said. However, he and his peers don't seem to mind the extra eyes. "The crowd at Redzone, they don't mind too much, they're really welcoming there," Thorpe said. Though it is a bit of an



Thorpe running in a cross country meet. Thorpe continuously works hard in cross country and track and has a leadership role among the team. "He's kind of become more of a leader, taking a leadership roles and just helping to guide some of the younger kids," Coach Nathan Lentz said. (Photo Credit: Kylie Huber)



adjustment for Thorpe from his previous years at Bullitt East, he nonetheless still enjoys his time in the Redzone.

As for cross country and track and field, he has naturally assumed a leadership role as a senior along with appreciating his ability to do the sport he loves. "Obviously, he's encountered a lot of challenges within the last year, but he's always been fairly mature, but I think he certainly has come to appreciate running, and sport, and being able to do those things maybe a lot more," cross country coach Nathan Lentz said. Thorpe has still participated in cross country races this season despite his seizures posing a physical hinderance.

With these involvements alongside his medical condition, it seems like Thorpe may always be on the go. "There's some days where I'm, like, going to that meeting, then going to work, then having to come back to school for Redzone," Thorpe said. While not the normal relaxing senior year many of his classmates are experiencing, Thorpe's last year is turning out to be one of his favorites. "Honestly



Thorpe among his fellow Redzone leaders leading a slow clap. Thorpe has found that the students at Bullitt East have been very accepting and nice about the changes that come with his seizures. "People don't really poke fun at me about it but just, people being nice about it is pretty cool," Thorpe said. (Photo Credit: Cooper Bass)

doing all of those clubs and athletics is a lot of fun so it's worth it, it's worth juggling," Thorpe said. Being involved in six different activities, not to mention having leadership roles in some, is a balancing act that Thorpe is still able to do on top of his other responsibilities and condition.

Thorpe's experiences are certainly not what most people envision their senior year to look like, though he strives to not let them affect him. "I just try not to let it affect me because, if it affects me, then it just makes everything worse, I just try to live the normal life of a teenager despite having all these issues, because if I do let these issues worry me and take over then it'll be a lot harder," Thorpe said. Though Thorpe's life doesn't seem normal compared to the average highschool student, though he still has found ways to be a teenager despite them.

Though he was worried about people treating him differently at first, Thorpe has found the opposite to be true. "I



Thorpe cheering on the football team from in front of the Redzone. The nature of Thorpe's seizures are very unpredictable, which can lead to them happening anywhere, including in the Redzone. "I could be having fun in the redzone, and then one will happen, or I could be sitting in the office and one will happen so it's kinda random," Thorpe said. (Photo Credit: Cooper Bass)

couldn't imagine a better school to have these issues with, the school's amazing," Thorpe said. Though the severity of his seizures have changed, Thorpe's social life has remained unaffected. "They're more inviting than last year, especially, but people are really nice to me about it, like they're awesome," Thorpe said. In general, Thorpe is just having fun with being so involved with the student body this year. "I am more involved than I was last year, the seizures do kinda affect it a little bit, but it's pretty fun. I'm having a lot of fun, just with all the people," Thorpe said. Thorpe's extracurricular involvement and perseverance are exemplary of an amazing, high achieving student within our school.

# Think About It

by Katelyn Powers, Natalie McGarry and Maddie Huml



Graphic by Brandon Mudd

**A** mental health pandemic is on the rise. Mental health issues are becoming worse or more frequent in this day and age.

There are many different reasons for mental health issues becoming more frequent. Our school is doing its best keeping up with this increase and making sure many resources are in the building. Although it's not perfect, the goal of improving is always in mind.

Worldwide there has been an increase in people experiencing severe mental health issues. This has created a high demand for treatment, a much higher demand than some places can provide. Things such as lack of funding and staff shortages are a big part of the problem in itself. Therapists and counselors are often fully booked for several months before an appointment slot opens up or some schools just don't have the money for having a licensed therapist at the school. "Mental health is a huge need in the community we just don't have, especially after the pandemic, we just don't have enough people to cover everyone who needs a therapist," Youth Service Center Coordinator Erin Emmington White said. White is one of the multiple faculty members at our school who is here to help the students if it's needed.

Having a safe environment for students to be able to talk about their emotions is important especially for a big school. "Sometimes it's hard to have an environment where you can just talk and I think that's something that's really important to have," sophomore Maddy Beckham said. Beckham is a student who has had a past with mental health struggles and has used the school's resources for her own benefit. From Mental Health America over 1 in 10 youth in the U.S. are experiencing depression that is severely impairing their ability to function at school or work, at home, with family or in their social life. "It's just important for you to be open and honest when you're struggling so you can get the right resources to help you," Beckham said.

At our school, there are many different resources available to students in need of counseling. Whether it's stopping by White's room or talking to a teacher they feel close to, students have different opportunities to get the help they need at our school. "I can't help with algebra or physics but I can help with all the stuff that affects your lives and talk to students if they ever need it. I can also connect students with more long term connections if they need those resources," White said. There are currently three

therapists that make weekly visits to the school to provide sessions for students. These three therapists have full caseloads, which means they aren't available to see additional students for the time being but White is working on getting more to our school with the increase of student body.

With not only having the trained professionals such as White being able to help the student body, teachers and trusted staff are another resource. "Just having someone is really important and there's a lot of teachers here that are willing just to help and gladly listen to you," Beckham said. Many other students use the school's resources just like Beckham when they feel like they need it. Having the opportunities to reach out to people and get help allows for students to acknowledge what they need and in the end, help them have better mental health.

Anxiety and depression are the two most popular issues dealt with in a high school. Around 30% of teens in high school either deal with an anxiety disorder or depression. "I normally talk to kids if they're in the middle of a panic attack

and help calm them down and help them get into a space where they're ready to get back to class because that's the goal, for you to be in class," White said. Being able to acknowledge these issues in teens at our school and community can lead us to ultimately helping the students who need it.

Our school has goals to improve in the mental health direction and department as a whole and not only with our already present staff. Having three counselors and White being a resource for students gives them ability to have connections and not be alone. "I help with mental health and other ways of help but all the way up to severe mental health and everything in between. My job is just to really be here for the students who need it," White said.

**15.08%**

of 12-17 year olds reported suffering from at least one major depressive episode in the past year.

**Over 2.5 M**

of youth cope with severe major depression.

Source: Mental Health America (MHA)

**60.3%**

of youth with major depression do not receive any mental health treatment.



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# Dear Reader...

**T**he medical field continues to progress as our society does. We have access to thousands upon thousands of new technology and medication that has made healthcare stronger than ever. Often we put our faith and trust into these new advances, but sometimes they are not always perfect.

Everything we know changes day by day and evolves as we do. Whether it's an unplanned pandemic that turns the world upside down or getting an undiagnosed cold, we learn to take what we hear with a grain of salt and are left to figure out what we truly believe for ourselves. We'll never fully know everything in the field but with the tools we have today we are able to learn more and gain more of an understanding of it.

Medicine itself and what we know about it is constantly evolving. The healthcare system has altered how we receive our care and even the medicines themselves. We are able to live longer, cure diseases that would have never been thought of, and survive a pandemic. From the new discoveries to failed tests, it's advanced our world into what it is now. The strides and accomplishments that have been made over time have helped our world grow into what it is now and will continue to help us move forward.

These advances, along with the imperfections, are ever present in our own community. As you have read, we have a background of various healthcare experiences. Throughout the good, bad, and ugly our community has supported us through it all. From Damon Merzweiler's traumatic experience, the blood drives we hold at school or our sports trainers pushing our football athletes to make history, healthcare is within it all.

While we can try to work to help individual issues by spreading awareness and making these issues more known to the public, the root of the problem is the system itself. We can work towards breaking down stigmas and misconceptions that are often present throughout the medical field to improve our current situation as much as we can.

We hope as a reader you now understand some of the stigmas and misconceptions that are present in the medical field in our world today along with the various ways it has affected us. But, also how much we rely on it. As a society we need to continue to overcome setbacks and obstacles the world and the field has thrown at us. We hope that as you read you come to realize the weight of the medical field and the severity of the topics we have mentioned in this magazine.

Sincerely,  
The Livewire Staff

# MEET THE STAFF



**Back:** Colton Harbolt, Raegan Jackson, Kylie Huber, Jack Binkley, Milana Ilickovic, Isaiah Wright, Spartan Farrar, Bryce Elder, Brandon Mudd, Braylen Ferrell. **Middle:** Shelby Heath, Caroline Williams, Maddie Goodwin, Kyla Combs, Kadence Owen, Cameron Brown, Trenton Bibee, Audrey Stepp, Claire Schneider, Anna Drake, Cooper Bass, Maddie Huml. **Front:** Violet Wise, Macie Brown, Cadynce McCubbin, Brooklyn Sauer, Emi Richardson, Katelyn Powers, Grace Willis, Natalie McGarry.

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The Livewire operates as an open forum following the guidelines laid out by the Student Press Law Center which our staff presented to the Bullitt County Board of Education.

The staff appreciates your patronage and, as a public forum, encourages any feedback or submissions you care to offer. Letters to the editor must be typed and submitted via email, to Mr. Steinmetz's mailbox or directly to room 606 within one week of the publication to which you are responding. Letters will not be censored, but must be deemed appropriate according to staff policies to be published. In order to be eligible to appear in the magazine, all letters must be signed and verifiable. Names may be withheld upon request, but must be submitted with the original letter.

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