CURRENT (NOUN) — PART OF A FLUID BODY MOVING CONTINUOUSLY IN A CERTAIN DIRECTION;
(ADJECTIVE) — OF THE PRESENT TIME
HERE, NOW.

One of the first things they teach you in a survival class is to get rid of wishful thinking. If you’re lost in the woods, stop daydreaming about being back at the cabin with your feet propped up by the fire. It’s a dangerous false narrative. You’re not at the cabin, and wishing you were won’t make it so.

It’s a hard lesson to learn. Brutal honesty about one’s situation can be... well, brutal. We prefer comfort. So much so that we’ve even given a name to the agony of good times that aren’t quite good enough—first-world problems. We flee our fully stocked fridges for the refuge of the restaurant. Thus, faced with something decidedly uncomfortable, we’re primed to look away, to wish things were different.

But that’s brutal honesty, however uncomfortable, that keeps survivors alive. Survivors own their predicament. Furthermore, they own their mistakes—for them, brutal honesty about what went wrong is the first step to getting it right.

There’s been a lot of wishful thinking these past two years—or should that be 20? Wishing we could behave as if the world isn’t dealing with a global health crisis; wishing we could return to the national unity felt in the wake of 9/11 without returning to the catastrophic loss of 9/11 itself; wishing we could be heard without the burdensome responsibility of listening. It’s a hard lesson to learn. Brutal honesty about one’s mistakes is the first step to getting it right.

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But just as with more acute survival situations, pausing to properly assess and orient ourselves is never a bad idea.

It’s no accident that the most resilient heroes in the stories we love are the people who need first to learn something about themselves. This issue is a bit of a celebration—and a challenge—along those lines. This is where we are. Where do we go from here?
A colony of zoanthids, grown in the reef tank at SHU. “It takes years for these organisms to grow,” Aidan Murphy says, “and they never stop. The Great Barrier Reef is millions of years old, and so is the coral that is still alive there to this day—which is amazing to me.”

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FROM THE ARCHIVE
That was then, this is now, for WSHU.
Araina Haley, 17, knew about the "typical" jobs she could get after high school or college. She was well aware that a job as a lawyer or a doctor could provide her with a great career. As someone interested in the arts, however, she yearned to know what else was out there.

This summer, SHU partnered with a local creative firm, Haddad & Partners, to bring Bridgeport students into the real world of art and design.
DJ Haddad, founder and creative director of the Fairfield-based global creative digital agency Haddad & Partners, also wanted Bridgeport youth to know about the jobs they could get in the creative fields. The idea of starting a type of graphic design summer camp for young people had been in the back of his mind for as long as he could remember.

“I was the art room kid,” recalls the 44-year-old Waterbury native. “I was always drawing, but I didn’t know what I could do with that.”

Haddad was fortunate. His mother, an art teacher, saw his talents and understood that his happiness stemmed from being imaginative. He recognizes, however, that not all educators or parents feel that way. “People tell you, ‘Oh, you won’t make money drawing.’ But there’s so much more to art than just drawing.”

Aiming to fill the gaps of guidance and mentorship that exist in the arts, Haddad partnered with Sacred Heart and the Connecticut chapter of the American Institute of Graphic Arts to present “Summer Studio: Discovering Graphic Design” this past July and August. “I wanted to tell students and their parents that there is a whole world, a whole industry, of high-paying jobs in the arts,” he says.

The four-week program, hosted at SHU, taught 10 young people the ins and outs of graphic design, from Photoshop and InDesign to stop-motion animation and how to present a professional portfolio. Haley’s favorite assignment allowed her to use the vector graphics editor, Illustrator, to develop a music festival poster.

“This all really gives me perspective on the different jobs I can do,” she says. “It also helps me stay persistent. Some of this stuff is complicated. I could have given up, but I didn’t.”

Mary Treschitta, SHU’s art & design program director, was especially thrilled she could offer a venue and faculty to teach the summer studio as it also aligns perfectly with SHU’s mission of promoting the common good of society, recognizing the worth and dignity of every human being, staying committed to excellence and embracing social justice.

Treschitta, who taught the final week of the program, also helped recruit the best and brightest area arts students by networking with art teachers in the Bridgeport high schools. She echoes Haddad’s sentiment that high school students interested in the arts aren’t always given the best guidance or direction. “It’s really important to set them on the right path,” she says. “It’s easy for them to get deflected. They don’t know how to make a career out of the arts.”

In the end, the program’s results were better than even Haddad could have imagined. “My hope was to open their eyes and give some direction to their creativity,” he says. That certainly happened—and so much more. Haddad saw the young people’s talents shine. He saw their abilities, talked to their parents and was pleased he could aid in any potential career decisions.

“These were the kids who lived in the art room,” Haddad said. “They were so mature, so talented. Their work was amazing. It was truly a success.”

Mary Treschitta, Director of the Art & Design Program, in the final week of SHU’s Summer Studio

THE OH-NINE-THREE

It’s not an area code or any kind of hip, pop culture reference. It’s the future of education in Connecticut. And it’s all SHU, through and through.
is looking to make the move directly into superintendent, that the state itself only has about 120 school districts, that only a handful of them are seeking a schools superintendent at any moment in time and that, so far, with only 48 graduates in total, someone from each of the three cohorts has gone on to fill a superintendent’s role. Then you begin to realize that SHU’s 093 program isn’t just leading candidates along a path to certification—it’s blazing an entirely new trail.

“The mission of public education is to bring about student learning for all students,” says Program Director David Title, with heavy emphasis on the penultimate word in that sentence. “It’s why teachers become teachers in the first place.”

It’s also fundamental to the mission of the University. “Central to our curriculum are the themes of access and opportunity, of social justice and of social and emotional health,” says Michael Alfano, dean of the Farrington College of Education. “You cannot have equity in education without them.”

In short, budgeting and personnel management, Villanueva’s “nuts and bolts,” are but a tiny aspect of the role a superintendent needs to assume in a healthy district. There needs to be social and emotional awareness in learning, embraced and exercised at every level and in every classroom. And for that more complete approach to education to pervade, it must be cultivated from the top down.

Furthermore, it needs to be organic, needs to have context, which is why SHU’s program is so tactile, keeping each cohort to a manageable number and ensuring significant and meaningful interaction between candidates and instructors, mentees and their mentors. Ken Saranich, now in his second year as superintendent of schools in Shelton, says that intimacy was key to his decision to apply for the program in the first place and has proven key to his success in the role now. “The personal touch matters,” he says. “Doing the job well is one thing. Doing it with meaning is something different altogether. Knowing that the job and its responsibilities matter to you matters to the people you serve.”

OR A LONG TIME there were only a couple of schools in Connecticut offering the 093,” Alison Villanueva says. She’s speaking of the certification required by the State of Connecticut to become a schools superintendent. “And as you might expect, their focus was on the nuts and bolts of educational management and leadership.

“This program,” she says, now referring to Sacred Heart’s 093 program, which launched in 2018, “goes way beyond the nuts and bolts. It’s very real. Very practical. Very hands-on. So much so that, honestly, from my first day on the job I was drawing on my experiences—not just the ideas, but actual experiences—from my time there.”

Villanueva is superintendent of schools for the Watertown school district. She’s one of three current school superintendents in the state who have graduated from SHU’s 093 program. At a glance, three may not seem that impressive a number, but bear in mind that the program has only been around for three years, that not every candidate

LEADERSHIP

LEADERSHIP

CHECK, PLEASE

As the hospitality industry struggles to get its bearings, perhaps it’s time to take an honest look at where it is, how it got here and where it needs to go.

*I SLEPT AND DREAMT THAT LIFE WAS JOY. I AWOKE AND SAW THAT LIFE WAS SERVICE. I ACTED AND BEHOLD, SERVICE WAS JOY.*

RABINDRANATH TAGORE
Ebert is executive director of University special events. His question cuts surgically to the heart of the moment. At its core, hospitality is a bodiless commodity, a thingless thing. It’s the je ne sais quoi that invisibly surrounds the other thing, which, ostensibly, is the thing being sold—the cup of coffee, the meal, the hotel room. And like any commodity, visible or invisible, it is subject to the laws of supply and demand.

It’s been in short supply for a while now. And demand is going through the roof.

“We are absolutely at a flashpoint,” says Kirsten Tripodi, director of Sacred Heart’s hospitality, resort and tourism management program in the Jack Welch College of Business & Technology, where Ebert is often a guest speaker.

“Our biggest challenge is labor,” she says, an issue making itself very evident in the current national shortage of hospitality workers.

To quickly break it down, consider that the industry can be divided into three types of employees. The long-term professionals—those with a genuine passion for the experience of hospitality—serve as the backbone of the industry. But the industry’s size and labor needs far exceed their numbers, so the rest of the hospitality workforce is made up of two other groups: those drawn to the industry by the flexibility of its counterculture hours (such as students and moonlighters) and those for whom the unskilled labor needs
an opportunity for employment that other industries do not (the dishwashers, housekeepers, "burger flippers" and such). But the demands on all of them, from the passionate professionals to the opportunists, are brutal. “No one works harder than a housekeeper in a hotel,” says Tropioli, “or a dishwasher in the dish pit.” Line cooks regularly work 14-hour days at a grueling pace with few breaks. The practice of tipping not only keeps servers’ wages uncertain and unstable, but has recently been linked directly to sexism and sexual harassment in the workplace. And owners and managers must navigate all of it through famously narrow margins in support of an unsustainable business model.

The proof of that unsustainability is all around. Hospitality workers are either leaving the industry in droves or refusing to return to it until circumstances change. For some, it’s the rapid evolution of remote work options that has offered a flexibility previously only found in hospitality. Now actors and moonlighters can earn a predictable income working flexible hours remotely and skip the hassle of customers asking waitresses to show them their smile for the tip. For others, the pandemic provided a rare moment of reflection, and the waitresses to show them their smile for the tip.

But rather to expedite the mundane “busywork” of hospitality workers so they can focus on what they do best: elevate the guest experience.

Then, as for those workers themselves, Tropioli points to the European model of hospitality, where “service is considered a profession and compensated in an appropriate way.” It might cost more, she acknowledges, but also notes that the U.S. hospitality industry has been artificially inexpensive for far too long. As such, prices changing to appropriately reflect the cost of all commodities—including labor—might well be termed a “correction.”

One thing is certain: the moment is ripe for an industry revolution. “We’re pasted right now to change the model,” she says. “The question is if we have the chutzpah to do it.”

The four-year grant from the federal Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA) Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training Program will form a critical collaboration between the School of Social Work and the master of public health, physician assistant and occupational & service learning programs. With a focus on cross-disciplinary, team-based, culturally inclusive behavioral health care, “students will be working to build the behavioral health workforce in primary health-care settings,” says Bronwyn Cross-Denny, associate professor of health sciences. Students will act as supports to the University’s community partners, helping to recognize behavioral health symptoms in populations with a history of being underserved—symptoms those populations might be hesitant to bring up or might not even realize are unhealthy and can be addressed.

Cross-Denny is collaborating with Elizabeth Johnson-Tyson, clinical assistant professor in the School of Social Work, to develop a signature training series in support of the school’s social justice and anti-racism mission and the interdisciplinary focus of the grant. The benefits of the programs will be threefold, Johnson-Tyson says.

“The community partners will have additional supports via the presence of our students always. Patients will benefit as they are treated with dignity and respect and the community is learning how to improve their behavioral health needs met. And finally, developing a workforce to specifically meet the needs of underserved populations will undoubtably improve the wellbeing of the service recipients.”

Clinical Assistant Professor Mauria Rhodes adds that the grant will bolster SHU’s work with its existing community fieldwork locations and allow the University to expand to new internship opportunities throughout Fairfield County. “It will allow us to help our partners as well as mental health-care providers,” she says. The effort caught the attention of Congressman Jim Himes (D-Conn.), who told his constituents in July that the project was especially important for pandemic- weary citizens. “As our communities move past COVID-19, a lot of the challenges remain, which is why ensuring there are enough mental health professionals in our area is more urgent than ever.”
NO GIRLS ALLOWED

Lois Schine has heard a lot of people tell her what she cannot do in life. She’s just never listened to them.

IN AN ERA when girls in high school were being told that they could train only for careers as nurses, teachers or secretaries, the guidance counselor at Lois Gildersleeve’s (the future Lois Schine) Brooklyn, NY, high school told her that she should study for a career that involved math. After consulting with her physics teacher, the field was narrowed to engineering.

“My father thought it was a great idea. My mother didn’t,” laughs Schine. She was determined to follow her gift. Her parents decided that she should study engineering, but she needed to find a school within commuting distance, as they did not want her to “go away” for college.

“We don’t accept girls” was the line Schine was told again and again as she reached out to apply to engineering programs. Finally, the mechanical engineering school at Pratt Institute, right in New York City, conceded to allowing her to take the entrance exam.

“The dean for mechanical engineering called me in and said, ‘Miss Gildersleeve, I think we should take a chance on you,’” Schine remembers. It was a chance worth taking. Schine, the only woman in the engineering school, maintained the highest GPA in the mechanical engineering department. At the end of her first semester, the dean called her back in to tell her, “You really justified my decision.”

She even garnered the attention of the engineering honors fraternity, Tau Beta Pi. “They said they couldn’t make me a member, because they were a fraternity, but they still wanted to give me a key,” she recalls.

She graduated summa cum laude from Pratt in 1947. “Big companies came to the school to interview the top third of the class,” says Schine, and every one of them interviewed her. “They all said the same thing. ‘I’m sorry, Miss Gildersleeve. I’d love to offer you a job, but we don’t hire girls.’”

It was General Electric that finally offered Schine a job. They sent her to their advanced research lab in Schenectady, NY, where she helped design a saltwater battery for Navy torpedoes. After three months there, she was moved to Bloomfield, NJ, where she built heat pumps and oil burners. Three months later she was moved again, this time to Bridgeport, CT. She chose to make Bridgeport her home.

Two of her professors from Pratt began teaching engineering at the University of Bridgeport. “They prevailed upon me to come down there and teach,” Schine says. She stayed at the University of Bridgeport for several years.

It was during this time that she met Leonard Schine, a local attorney. After they married, she stopped working outside the home to raise her family of five children. She continued to consult on engineering projects once her youngest was in high school.

The Schines were introduced to Sacred Heart University through a mutual friend of [SHU’s founding president] William Conley. Leonard became Sacred Heart’s lawyer and began a relationship that would span decades and would include a scholarship and a building in his name. He was a member of the SHU Board of Trustees when he passed away in 1982.

Thomas Melady, president of the University at the time, called on Lois Schine to pick up the mantle. She reminded him that she was not a lawyer, as her husband had been. “He said, ‘I know that. And that’s how I got to be a member of the Sacred Heart board,’” a post that she held for 37 years, before retiring last year at the age of 93.

Before that happened, however, she did manage to accomplish one more feat of engineering.

In 2019, Tau Beta Pi—the fraternity-turned-society that couldn’t admit her all those years ago—invited Schine and several other women to their 50th anniversary celebration of accepting women. During that ceremony, she was finally officially inaugurated into the Tau Beta Pi Engineering Honor Society.

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Aidan Murphy ’22 got into growing coral by accident. One December day, when Murphy was home sick from grade school, his mother’s former boss—also a family friend—showed up at the Murphys’ Walpole, MA, home with a 30-gallon freshwater fish tank he didn’t want anymore. “Merry Christmas,” he said. “Take it.” When Murphy’s mom protested, the family friend replied, “It’s a get-well gift ... and your problem.” That problem became Murphy’s life’s work. By the time he was 13 years old, he’d turned that freshwater tank into a business, selling $100 of freshwater plants a month to aquarium stores. Outgrowing his original setup, he got a job as a restaurant host at Clyde’s Grill and Bar so he could upgrade to a 50-gallon saltwater tank—one that required its own custom plumbing system (and an additional 25-gallon filtration tank underneath).

A FaceTime tour of his current setup reveals a kaleidoscope of underwater color. He grows a range of corals to sell and trade, as well as to donate to aquariums and reef rebuilding projects. Most of his corals are small polyp and large polyp stony corals, but he also raises bounce mushroom corals, which are rare.

“I’ve known students who kept small saltwater tanks before,” says Murphy’s adviser, Associate Professor of Biology LaTina Steele, “but never on his scale and not SHU students. He’s obviously incredibly passionate about his reef tank and has a talent for keeping it healthy.”

That passion is immediately evident as he speaks of the processes and patience necessary for coral growth. He discusses water salinity and pH levels with the same enthusiasm others use to compare the career stats of Babe Ruth vs. Barry Bonds. And, much like sports fanatics that always end in simple admiration of the artistry of the athletes, Murphy always seems to come around to the sense of wonder at the heart of his study. “It takes years for these organisms to grow,” he says, “and they never stop.”
The Great Barrier Reef is millions of years old, and so is the coral that is still alive there to this day—which is amazing to me.”

In addition to saving the world one polyp at a time, Murphy is also the viola section leader for the Sacred Heart Orchestra and part of the Sacred Heart University String Quartet, as well as being a global ambassador for the University. And, as if that’s not enough, he continues to help out as a shift supervisor when he’s needed at Clyde’s Grill and Bar—the same place he began working to pay for his first saltwater fish tank.

Still, it’s obviously the water that is Murphy’s home. His senior year of high school, he spent two weeks in the Dominican Republic rebuilding rock barriers that had been disrupted by storms. If the group saw fragments of coral where they shouldn’t be, those fragments were collected, sorted and replanted in artificial reefs until they were strong enough to be moved to a larger, more established reef. “I knew then that this is what I wanted to do,” he says.

Murphy first learned about SHU because one of his cousins toured the school. He was drawn to the University because of the new custom reef tank being built there at the time, which was finished his junior year. In his first research project at SHU, he took his oldest piece of coral and grew it to “a massive colony of 70 polyps,” he says.

Fragments from that colony were split into two groups and fed differing proteins, phytoplankton (microalgae) or zooplankton (microscopic organisms), to see which food source prompted more coral growth. What he and his fellow researchers found is that the food source doesn’t really matter “on its own, but we think that there are other compounding factors that will affect the ability to intake food,” he says.

Murphy’s question is whether or not the microalgae impacts the condition of the water, and if that has an impact on the coral’s ability to survive and thrive. In short, what the organism does to the environment of the coral “might be a little bit more important than the proteins within the food.”

Between the work he’s done with his own
tanks since childhood, that high school trip to the Dominican Republic, his time on campus in Fairfield and a semester abroad on the SHU in Dingle campus, Murphy has a remarkable firsthand understanding of the options before him in marine science. At the moment, his professional inclinations lean toward aquaculture, the breeding of ornamental fish for aquariums or breeding coral for aquariaums or restoration, with the goal of cutting down on illegal and/or overharvesting of these organisms.

“We don’t think of the implications of pop culture on the world,” he says. “When a movie like Finding Nemo comes out, and Clown Fish go from $1 a fish to $25 a fish, they’re all being poached and overharvested,” he says. It was even worse when Finding Dory, the Finding Nemo sequel, was released in 2016. The main character is a Blue Tang fish, a variety that went from $50 a fish to “well over $200, and they can’t be bred in captivity like a Clown Fish can,” he says.

The Gemmatum Tang, which is in the same family as the Blue Tang, only lives off the coast of Madagascar and sells for $700 a fish. If someone can figure out how to breed a kind of Tang Fish in captivity, it eliminates the factors that endanger the fish and disrupt ecosystems, he says. “You bring the price down while also deterring poachers from harvesting from the wild.”

Whatever he does, Steele knows he’ll be an effective marine science advocate. “Getting people to care about marine science is half the battle when it comes to conservation of any marine species,” she says.

“I was watching documentaries and researching the world at a very young age,” Murphy says, noting that his parents and family, but especially his mom, have always engendered and encouraged that curiosity that drives his passion. “I always found learning about the different parts of the world—especially the oceans—fascinating.”

**JEN A. MILLER** is a regular contributor to the *New York Times* and the author of *Running: A Love Story*. **
Pluribus

There’s a lot of talk about normal—“the return to normal,” “the new normal,” “normalcy.” But how will we know it when we find it? And was it ever what we thought it was anyway?

BY DAVID COPPOLA

The coffee that starts your day.
The television program that ends it.
The commencement exercise at the completion of your university degree.
The sacraments and “smells and bells” of Catholic Mass.

Rituals.
Their practice gives a sense of normalcy to life, moments of reassuring predictability answering questions before they get asked. If your day starts with coffee, it starts with coffee—no question. If your Sunday morning involves going to church, that practice alone—completely separate from any merits of faith—is a mental oasis. In an uncertain world, even just one hour a week of certainty (“I will be at Mass. We will sing. There will be a homily and Communion, followed by coffee and doughnuts.”) is itself a balm for the soul.

There are other benefits, too. Rituals help define the community, however diverse that community may otherwise be. Every student is awarded a diploma upon graduation. Regardless of their differences, or the diversity in race, age, gender, nationality, the uniformity where the gifts of the Holy Spirit (wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, piety and fear of the Lord) would be evident, achieved by committing one’s trust to the magisters, faith, the joy of truth and, above all, the love of God. But again, the unity of the community should not be mistaken for anything like homogeneity. To expect uniformity in higher education is to assume memorization is the pinnacle of learning when, in fact, quite the opposite is true. Bold ideas are the antithesis of rote memorization. They are the product of divergence. Further, their merit and worth are tested in challenging scrutiny from a variety of perspectives, experiences, fields of expertise and so on. Indeed, a fundamental ritual in academia is the “defense” of one’s dissertation. Throughout history, disagreement produces the new idea and diversity tests it. Where unity exists is in the community’s passionate quest for a higher truth.

Not that these lofty goals have never faltered. In his 1977 book, Unity and Diveristy in the New Testament: An Inquiry into the Character of Earliest Christianity (revised 2006), British divinity professor James Dunn illustrates how early Christian scholarship erroneously pointed more toward an either-or/unity-in-uniformity narrative as regards the early Jewish-Christian relationship. Unfortunately, as Dunn explains, this stemmed less from actual uniformity and more from a sense of personal preservation and career advancement. Early universities were heavily influenced by the Church, and the work of the scholar was expected to be consonant with the teachings of the Church. This connection between loyalty to authority and the determined merit of one’s scholarship powerfully influenced scholars and eventually became part of the rationale for professional tenure.

It also created an illusion of uniformity when, in truth, challenging authority was much more the foundation—both to higher ed and the Church. Consider Abraham’s “bargaining” with God to have mercy on Sodom (Genesis 18) or the often-contrary opinions of great rabbis in the Talmud or even the best intentions of those with whom we may disagree, valuing unity in diversity—seems to be lacking in our quest to return to “normalcy.”

Humans are at our best when we trust in the dignity and good will of others and when we resolve to do deeds of justice and compassion together. The rituals that help us accomplish such a mission are at their best when they are performed with thoughtful intentionality. Consider the rituals around greeting. In the Western cultures, the practice is to shake hands. In Eastern cultures, it is to bow. In both cases, the ritual originates in the performance of vulnerability, of physically expressing that one is not a threat and trusting that the same is true in reciprocation. What is the practice of wearing a mask in public if not exactly that? Yet even as we have seen the power of a mask to help save lives, it is met with the unmasked and acerbic suspicion of science, government and other institutions, largely because it is a ritual that seems disruptive to the familiar comfort of the rituals that have come before, even as both serve the same end. In short, the practice of a ritual has come to be valued over its purpose.

If we are to become one as Jesus calls us to be, then the time to be learnen in the world is now. The end of the past academic year and the start of this one saw many universities returning to the rituals of awards, ceremonies, commencements and celebrations. The speeches at these events carried great import in the name of unity and diversity and the dignity of the individual and community. The extra efforts to provide generous hospitality, celebration and trust were a call to reconnect to unity and community—especially in the lingering adversity and doubt over the future of the economy and continued health challenges. Our journey forward as a University, Church and people compels us to reexamine our rituals, to rediscover the humility lying at our core, to trust in the dignity of the other and dedicate ourselves to fostering old and new rituals that bring life, truth and support to all in God’s name, who is Unity in Diversity. 

David Coppola is Sacred Heart’s former senior vice president of administration and planning.
Is it that classical music station that does the news, or that NPR station that plays classical music? The truth is, it’s a bit of both—and so much more.
In 1980, when George Lombardi first walked through the front door of WSHU, it was just a small space in Sacred Heart’s main academic building. Whether or not he knew it at the time, Lombardi—student and part-time engineer—had found home.

Over the next 40 years, Lombardi and WSHU grew together. As Lombardi rose through the station’s ranks, ultimately assuming the role of general manager, WSHU blossomed from a small university station with 700 listeners into a fully fledged NPR member station with 13 frequencies, over 175,000 radio and 46,500 digital listeners and 17,000 active supporters. The station moved, too, from that cramped space in the main building: first, to an inconspicuous little house tucked away on the western edge of campus—the sort of place that, if you didn’t know what it was, you wouldn’t know what it was—and then, in 2018, to a three-story, state-of-the-art building featuring two full studios and four editing suites, plus offices and the George J. Lombardi Lobby.

“It’s the station that George built,” says A. Rima Dael, who came to WSHU as a station manager in 2019 and succeeded Lombardi as general manager of the station upon Lombardi’s retirement in December of last year. “It was a turbulent time. “COVID-19 challenged every business to pivot, be nimble and think differently,” says Dael. “We had reporters recording stories under blankets and in closets as their makeshift studios,” she remembers.

A veteran of nonprofit organizations with experience in the public media, arts and education sectors, Dael reached out to her contemporaries to see how they survived 2008 and the Great Recession as a way to frame what could happen, she explains. What she learned was that, for WSHU to survive, time and action were of the essence. “Those who acted proactively and quickly to pivot, make cuts and manage expenses, plus those who continued to fundraise and write grants, fared better in recovering from the recession.”

But a rapidly shifting business model was only part of the storm the station needed to navigate. “There was also a lot going on regarding the mental health impact of the pandemic and the national racial reckoning,” says Dael, herself an Asian American.

Her priorities were clear. WSHU was essential to the community, whose members relied on it as much for its even-handed, fact-based reporting as for the cultural balm of its music programming. And to protect the health of the station, the health of the entire staff would be of greatest importance. “This staff is our greatest asset; preserving their employment was a key priority,” says Dael.

Dael spent time checking in one-on-one with managers, “specifically with our staff of color and working parents, to make sure folks were hanging in there.” The station held mental health workshops for managers and staff. “Mental health was a real issue to manage personally and on behalf of the team,” she says. “The nonstop news cycle, the kind of news we were covering, the pace of work and having to work from home did take a toll. It was hard.”

The challenges didn’t end there. “There were the real issues of security for news organizations during this time too,” Dael says. She credits Gary MacNamara, Sacred Heart’s executive director of public safety, his staff and the University for ensuring the safety of the WSHU team.

“Our goal is to deliver content that educates across the spectrum of news, culture and classical music,” says Dael. “As a Sacred Heart University licensee, that goal is essential to everything we create.”

Indeed, serving that mission with integrity requires quite the balancing act. “We’re often asked if we’re a classical music station that delivers the news or a news station that plays classical music,” says Janice Portentoso, communications director for WSHU. “The truth is we’re both—and then some.”

Solutions-based journalism stories, such as diving deep into affordable housing in New Haven or education and transportation issues for Fairfield County, are evidence of the newsroom’s community ties. Likewise, the station is working to strengthen relationships with African American, Asian American, Latinx, Native American and immigrant communities from around the region. “Our reporters aren’t just parachuting into a community for a story,” says Dael. “They work to partner with and become part of a community to tell the stories of all the people who live in our region.”

Of course, it’s not only local stories WSHU brings to its audience. As an NPR affiliate, the station delivers news from around the nation and the world. The challenges didn’t end there. “There were the real issues of security for news organizations during this time too,” Dael says. She credits Gary MacNamara, Sacred Heart’s executive director of public safety, his staff and the University for ensuring the safety of the WSHU team.

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and around the world. And sometimes the nation and the world turn to WSHU.

ON DECEMBER 14, 2012, when a shooter walked into Sandy Hook Elementary School and fatally shot 20 students and six adults, Ebong Udomba, senior political reporter at WSHU, was sent to the hospital to cover incoming patients. Only two arrived from the scene. He then went to the school.

“You’re not aware of what you are dealing with at the time,” says Udomba. “You aren’t thinking about having a national story. You are only concerned about reporting the most accurate information possible.”

But it was more than a national story. Udomba found himself fielding calls not only from Reuters and other NPR affiliate stations, but the BBC and outlets as far away as South Africa and Australia.

It was also the most devastating story of his career.

And yet there were lessons learned that helped the station grow and prepare to deal with challenges it had not yet considered. “There were legacies that we learned from a station perspective on how we covered Newtown. We were then and are still a small station. Being thrust into a situation larger than one would think we have the capacity to manage set us up to be able to cover the pandemic well,” says Dael. “We have always risen to the occasion, and it is embedded into our mission to provide the fullest, most dynamic and diverse programming extends to every corner of the station—including the music. In other words, as Dael says, “It’s not just dead white guys.”

Kate Remington, WSHU’s music director, elaborates. For most, the idea of classical music equates to Mozart and Beethoven and Bach. “But the deeper you dig, the more diverse community of composers and performers you find,” she says. And record labels have finally become much more aware about releasing music by underrepresented composers and performers, she adds. As a result, “There is such a treasure trove of fabulous music by composers whose music has been overlooked, in some cases for hundreds of years,” she says.

What’s more, that diversity in programming extends beyond racial and cultural definitions, as evidenced by Remington’s Music Respawn podcast, available on the WSHU website. In it, Remington dives into the creation of the background music in popular video games.

The idea for the show came to her after her son moved away to go to college and the two stopped running around with their characters,呆 played Destiny—a tradition they continue to this day. Loving the music playing while they were running around with their characters, Remington reached out to one of the composers and asked if he would be willing to talk about his game music for a series. So spawned Music Respawn.

“I had no idea about the care composers have to take with the music, making it work with the game and the sound design while ensuring it interesting and creating a story arc,” says Remington.

Upon the release of the Music Respawn podcast in 2015, Remington noticed she was attracting a younger demographic of Twitter followers. “I’ll tweet when I am going to include game music during my program, so they’ll tune in to listen,” she says. WSHU and Music Respawn have even presented concerns by the Videri String Quartet, who, in addition to their traditional repertoire, play their own arrangements of music from games. “It was such a great experience to see younger kids not only appreciating music from Zelda, Halo and Final Fantasy VII, but Shostakovich and Debussy as well,” said Remington. “Plus, their parents had a chance to hear how sophisticated music in games can be.”

Finally, WSHU is as dedicated to growing from within as it is to serving the educational and cultural needs of its community. Dael was elected to NPR’s board of directors and begins her three-year term in November, an opportunity not only to serve NPR and raise WSHU’s stature within the NPR family, but also to bring the best practices of the public radio system and access to NPR training back to WSHU.

“I think of us as the radio equivalent to a teaching hospital where you have students doing the actual work,” Dael says. “Here, our interns and fellows are on the air, in the production booth and out in our communities. They are integral to who we are as a station.”

In turn, the station seems integral to who those students become as journalists. NPR reporter Will Stone interned at WSHU. One of the station’s first fellows, Jessica Opatich, received a Fulbright Scholarship and went to Africa to focus on women’s use of community radio. Another former intern, Rebecca Liebson, was published in the New York Times shortly after graduation. And former intern Maria del Mar Piedrabuena, who lives on Long Island, started her own Spanish language news publication.

Dael beams. “I’m proud of our legacy,” she says. “Of what we’ve done and how we continue to foster excellence in our future journalists.”
When SHU Head Athletic Trainer **LEO KATSETOS** was named Division I Athletic Trainer of the Year, he was shocked.

No one else was.
hadn’t personally worked with Sacred Heart’s dance team all that much. But in April this year, the team was headed to Florida to compete on the national stage and needed an athletic trainer to accompany them in case something should go awry. Katsetos, 45, SHU’s senior associate athletic director and head athletic trainer, stepped in to help out.

By the end of the week, the team had earned a place on the podium and Katsetos had earned a place in their hearts. So much so that, celebrating their success with the team at the beach, Katsetos found himself suddenly swept off his feet and lifted over the team’s heads to chants of “Leo! Leo! Leo!” before being ceremoniously dunked in Florida’s crystal blue water.

“I didn’t fight it,” he admits. “I was proud of what they’d accomplished.”

Judy Ann Riccio, SHU’s athletic director, remembers the moment well as she was also in Florida that same week with SHU’s cheerleading team. When the cheerleaders found out they were national champions, the first call they made was to Katsetos. “He’s someone so interested and so invested in every team’s success,” Riccio says.

But that’s Leo for you. Passion isn’t anything extra—it’s the norm. It’s the driving force behind everything he’s done in his career.

Katsetos’ parents, immigrants from Greece, owned and operated a family restaurant on Chincoteague Island, the small, seven-mile-long island off the coast of Virginia famous for its tourism and small ponies. Katsetos grew up in the bustling restaurant with his siblings. He did his homework there, and as soon as he was old enough, he worked there, folding pizza boxes, busing tables, delivering food, working his way up to waiter and even helping his parents manage the restaurant. “We really only went home to sleep,” he remembers. “My work ethic comes from my parents. It was instilled in me at a young age.”

High school on the island consisted of about 40 peers (“We were the second-smallest public school in Virginia”). When Katsetos wasn’t concentrating on his academics or working at his parents’ restaurant, he was playing a sport—baseball, football, soccer or basketball—something for every season. “Everything I did was based around athletics.”

But it wasn’t until his freshman year at Old Dominion University that Katsetos started to consider athletic training as a career. “I tore my ACL my freshman year,” Katsetos said. “Not being on a DI roster, I was given the rare opportunity to perform my rehabilitation within the athletic training department at ODU, which meant I got to see firsthand what the sports medicine team did to support me.”

It was an eye-opening experience. Athletic trainers are highly-qualified, multiskilled health-care professionals whose responsibilities include primary care, injury and illness prevention, wellness promotion and education, emergent care, examination and clinical diagnosis, therapeutic intervention and rehabilitation of injuries and medical conditions. Working with the athletic trainers at ODU, Katsetos realized he was never going to be “good enough” to play college sports, but he could still be around sports and interact with the athletes—all while having a large influence on their success. “I realized what it meant to help people,” Katsetos said. “Getting a student-athlete back on the field or the court after injury is amazing—it’s amazing for the athletic trainer and for the athlete.”

Ultimately Katsetos double-degreed at ODU, earning his master’s there in 2001. Hired by Sacred Heart as an assistant athletic trainer shortly thereafter, his career was up and running. He was making a good impression on his supervisors and colleagues, getting on well with the student-athletes and truly enjoying being part of the Pioneer community. Then something weird happened. He started feeling numbness and tingling sensations in his lower extremities in the fall of 2003.

“I thought it was coming from my...
back and that I may have a herniated disc or two,” he recalls. After seeing a team physician, he learned his discomfort was not coming from his spine. He was referred to a neurologist. An MRI revealed multiple sclerosis (MS), a disease that affects the central nervous system. Typically, in the first few years after diagnosis, episodes of symptoms come and go in flares or “attacks.”

“It was more than a shock,” Katsetos remembers. “The more I read about MS, the worse I felt mentally.” Katsetos started to dwell on his MS prognosis. An otherwise healthy and active male in his 20s, the thought of losing his vision or ability to walk was a hard pill to swallow. His last bad episode was in 2007. “It hit me hard,” he said. “I woke up one morning and realized I couldn’t use the left side of my body. I spiraled down a road of depression and it really scared me.” After a few months, everything returned to normal. Katsetos said at that point, a switch flipped inside of him. “I told myself I needed to take better care of myself in order to be prepared for the worst that MS has to offer.” He made lifestyle changes, altered his diet and added more exercise to his routine. He lost about 45 pounds and even began to train in endurance races.

MS can be considered an “invisible disease”—most people don’t see what someone with the condition is going through. They don’t see the fatigue and the strain it puts on a person. “I have tough days and I have good days,” Katsetos says. “I just want people to know that an MS diagnosis is not a death sentence.”

“Leo is in tip-top shape,” Riccio says. “People wouldn’t know he has MS. The only reason they do is because he’s such a champion for the cause.” Katsetos organizes an annual MS walk in Westport each year called “Sacred Hearts for HOPE.” He has also worked extensively with the MS Society over the years, even serving as ambassador as well as the National MS Society spokesperson in 2006. But that is exactly how Katsetos approaches his condition—and life. He realized a long time ago that while he cannot control the cards he’s dealt, he does have control over how he plays the hand. “I have MS. It doesn’t have me.” In short, embrace life and make the most of it. That philosophy, which he lives even in the face of his own challenges, is inspiring to more than just the student-athletes whose lives and careers he touches. This past July, Katsetos was named the Division I Athletic Trainer of the Year by the National Athletic Training Association. Making the accolade even sweeter, Katsetos was nominated for the award by his former supervisor and mentor at SHU, Julie Alexander, now one of the head athletic trainers at Eastern Connecticut State University. While the accolade left Katsetos “shocked, but really humbled,” he continues his work in the same quietly affable vein which was born on Chincoteague and found its home at SHU. “You just walk around, get to know everyone, try to make a difference and achieve the most.”

Kimberly Swartz is associate director of media relations at Sacred Heart University.
“Sky So Blue”

And SHU.
Despite any best intentions to never forget the tragedy of 9/11, there is a growing population who are simply too young to remember it. Five years ago, New York Times and Sacred Heart University Magazine designer Timothy P. Oliver set out to tell the stories of 15 individuals lost that day. The result was Finding Fifteen, his book that year was adapted as the award-winning Sky So Blue. The designer Timothy P. Oliver set out to tell the stories of 15 individuals lost that day.

This is one of those stories.

Bobby Greff celebrated his 18th birthday on top of the world. The observatory deck of the South Tower of the World Trade Center was closed for the night to tourists, but his father had some pull. He was one of the first police officers to patrol the Twin Towers after they opened in 1972. Family and friends joined them. They broke out in song 1,300-plus feet above Manhattan with views as far away as Connecticut.

That was 1980. Twenty-one years later, Bobby nearly lost his life in the same tower. He didn’t. Thanks to God. Thanks to his train- ing. Thanks to luck.

And, perhaps most of all, thanks to John P. Skala.

Bobby and John were Port Authority police officers. On September 11, 2001, the pair was on the Jersey side of the Lincoln Tunnel when a motorist pulled over and said, “Officer, I just heard on the radio that a plane hit the World Trade Center.” Bobby ran to a spot where he could see the Manhattan skyline across the Hudson River. The top of the North Tower was billowing dark smoke. “Get there,” the captain told them. Each grabbed a vehicle and raced through the tunnel and down the west side of Manhattan, arriving minutes after another plane struck the South Tower. It was shortly after 9 in the morning.

“One of the first things I remember seeing,” Bobby recalls, “was one of the wheels of an aircraft laying in the middle of the street.”

Many who survived that day compared the scene to a war zone. Chaos, screaming, crying, running. And casualties. Outside the lobby, first responders gathered small groups of civilians who had just escaped from the lower floors. They kept them close to the building, trying to time the moment when it was safe to flee to safety.

“They were trying to make sure a body wouldn’t fall on them,” Bobby says. Between the towers, a police sergeant barked, “Nobody goes in without a Scott Pack!” Bobby and John ran to retrieve their packs—the breathing apparatus first responders use in smoke-filled buildings—but they had only one between them. Only one man could go inside. Bobby, 38, the senior of the two, was going in.

“No, you’re not,” John said. The 31-year-old was a rare first responder—a cop AND a paramedic. “I’m going in. Someone’s hurt and I can help.”

John gave Bobby his gun to secure. Bobby helped John on with the Scott Pack, then grabbed John’s face and kissed him on the forehead.

“I’ll see you later,” Bobby said.

How SHU came to the aid of a filmmaker

“The film was all but finished,” Tim Oliver remembers, “but we just weren’t happy with the sound quality of the narration at the beginning and end of the film. It didn’t feel right. It felt disconnected from the rest of the film.”

He expressed his frustrations to Deb Chute, executive director of visual communications here at SHU. “You know,” she said, “we have a terrific sound studio here ...”

He was put in contact with Keith Zdrojowy, studio manager at the Martire Broadcast Center on campus. Oliver and his co-director, David Trapasso, came to the studio and recorded new tracks to incorporate into the film. “Everyone there was just so terrific,” Oliver says. “So supportive and eager to help the project.”

“And it made all the difference,” he continues. “It seems like such a small thing, but it’s really no exaggeration to say it wouldn’t be the same film without it.” High praise, considering Sky So Blue has already been named “Best Documentary Feature” at the New York International Film Awards and both the Seattle and Chesapeake Film Festivals, as well as being selected and/or nominated for a host of others.

It also appeared at the newly refurbished Sacred Heart Community Theatre in Fairfield in a private screening (public screenings are typically not allowed during a film’s run on the festival circuit) on September 7. To find out where you can see Sky So Blue—and catch Sacred Heart in the film’s credits—visit skysobluedocumentary.com.
If John Peter Skala, known as Yash to his family, was born in Clifton, NJ, on June 30, 1970. His parents, John and Slawka, were born in a Ukrainian section of Poland, but met in the United States.

Like his big brother, Mike, and their big sister, Irene, John attended St. Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic School during the week and the adjacent church on Sundays. They learned the Ukrainian language, culture and customs. They hung out and played sports at the Ukrainian Center on Hope Avenue in Passaic.

Yash graduated from Clifton High School at 17. A few years later, his big brother Mike became a police officer for the Passaic County Sheriff's Department. Yash tried his hand at a few different things until, in 1993, the same year that terrorists detonated a truck bomb under the North Tower of the World Trade Center, he announced he was going to the Port Authority Police Academy. “He didn’t tell anyone that he wanted to be a cop,” Mike says. “But we were all proud of him.”

When Larry Mays first met John at the police academy, he thought the young Ukrainian-American was a “snot-nosed wiseass” with a big smile. At the time, Larry was a corrections officer for the Bergen County Police Department, but had always dreamed of being a police officer. Larry, 33, took ribbing from the other recruits who thought the single father with three children was a little too old to become a cop.

“Life is something to chase,” Larry says, “as opposed to life coming to you.” John shared that view. Not surprisingly, Larry and John gravitated toward each other.

After graduating, the two were assigned to the Lincoln Tunnel along with another classmate, Jimmy Hall. Bobby Greff preceded them by one year. There was a strong feeling of camaraderie at the Lincoln Tunnel, but these four would develop a special bond, coming to be known as “The Four Horsemen” because they were such good cops, such good friends.

Still, being a cop wasn’t enough for John. He also wanted to become a part-time paramedic for the Clifton Passaic Medical Intensive Care Unit. As part of his training, he would volunteer for up to 12 hours in the emergency room at St. Vincent’s Hospital in Lower Manhattan, often before or after a long shift in the tunnel.

“When you get through the rough exterior,” Bobby says, “you find a heart of gold. He would do anything for anyone at any time.”

He was the life of the party. He was family. He was everyone’s little brother.

Yash also found time to work with children at the Ukrainian Center where the Skala children spent hours playing when they were growing up. On September 10, 2001, Mike was walking out of the center as Yash was walking in.

“Want to come have a drink with me?” Yash asked.

“I can’t,” Mike said in a rush. “Another time.”

Larry Mays was returning home after dropping his daughter at school when he heard about an airplane crashing into the World Trade Center from Howard Stern. He switched the station to WCBS 880 AM, where his good friend, traffic reporter Tom Kantic, was broadcasting live. “I could tell from his voice,” Larry recalls, “that this was not a little Cesna that crashed into the tower.”

It instead was an airliner—Amer-}

“Metal detectors in schools. Shoes at the airport. We didn’t have to deal with any of that growing up,” says Tim Oliver, author of Finding Fifteen and co-producer of its spinoff documentary, Sky So Blue. “We had an innocent childhood.”

The project began in 2015 when Oliver was a designer at Golf Digest and began work at One World Trade Center, or “Freedom Tower” as it is often known. There are two entrances to the building. The main entrance is on West Street, but tenants of the building can also enter through the 9/11 Memorial. As the memorial does not open to the public until after the morning rush hour, WTC tenants have the opportunity to move through the space free of any crowds or tourists.

“The scale of the thing really hits you,” Oliver says. “It sort of can’t help but give you a moment of pause.”

In these moments of pause, Oliver would allow himself to find a name on the memorial at random. Through the course of the day, he would research the individual on the Internet, sharing what he would find with his family that evening.

“This casual research into the lives of everyday citizens—united only by their singular tragic end—quickly became a significantly meaningful part of his day, a simple moment taken out of the grind each day to honor a life he never knew. It wasn’t long before his family needs someone to help it be heard.

In the end, both the film and the book are less about 9/11 and more about the world as it was on either side of that day—when politics mattered less and people mattered more, when the base, tribalist impulses of human nature weren’t an excuse for the absence of humanity. If either work seems obvious in its chorus of reminding us that there is more to bring us together than there is keeping us apart, that’s exactly how it should be. Sometimes a truth too obvious to see needs someone to help it be heard. — TIM OLIVER

Finding Fifteen

Tim Oliver, author of Sky So Blue—John Skala, Diane Urban, Kris Romeo Bishudjai, Anthony Luparello and Amy Jarret.

Given the time constraints of film, however, the decision was made to focus on just five individuals from the book.

In the process of making Sky So Blue, a new thought occurred to the creative team. “Nearly one in three Americans has no living memory of the events of 9/11,” Oliver says. It’s one thing to never forget. It’s something else to have never known—to have never known what it was like to welcome friends and family at the gate, to have never known a country not at war, to have never known public discourse without the polarization that has become the norm.
ican Airlines Flight 11. Shortly after departing Boston and bound for Los Angeles, terrorists hijacked the Boeing 767, altered course and deliberately flew the plane into the North Tower between the 93rd and 99th floors. Larry raced home and turned on the television as United Airlines Flight 175, hijacked by a second group of terrorists, crashed into the South Tower. Larry was supposed to be working the afternoon shift at the Lincoln Tunnel. His instinct was to head to the Towers, but his training told him the tunnel had to be secured immediately. Larry struggled for years with his decision. “I feel like I should have gone to the Trade Center,” he says. “But nothing would have changed that day if I went there.”

John’s brother Mike was at work at the Detective Bureau of the Passaic County Sheriff’s Department that morning. After being sent out to secure the courts and federal buildings in Passaic County, Mike was summoned back to his office in the early afternoon. John was missing, he was told. He was last seen by his partner entering the South Tower.

If

AFTER BOBBY SAW John disappear into the lobby, he hooked up with a New York City police officer. They descend ed into one of the stairwells, helping people escape to safety. Within minutes, they felt a strong shudder and knew they had to get back up to street level immediately.

With the South Tower disintegrating around them, the officers took cover in the large U.S. post office on Church Street. “All of a sudden, everything outside is black,” Bobby remembers. He knew that the South Tower was gone. He knew John was in there. But John being John, he probably got out, taking as many people to safety as he could carry. Bobby couldn’t let himself think anything different. He was in “cop mode.”

Accompanied by the NYPD officer, Bobby headed outside to where the South Tower had stood minutes earlier. The race was on to save as many people as possible before the North Tower would inevitably come down. They had less than 30 minutes. The North Tower collapsed in front of Bobby and the world at 10:28 a.m. After more than an hour of saving others, Bobby had seconds to save himself.

Bobby’s wife, Kathie, spent the day with no idea whether her husband was alive or dead. She had earlier picked up their four children from school. The kids played downstairs while Kathie watched television upstairs, desperate for any news about her husband. “I’m alive,” Bobby said when he was able to get a call through to her at 8 p.m. He and the NYPD officer had run north and ducked into a delicatessen. They were stunned from the death and destruction all around them, yet were miraculously unhurt. “But I’ve gotta go,” That’s all Kathie got. That’s all she needed. Bobby was still on duty during the worst day of his career.

Driving himself home later that night, thoughts of everything he lived through were playing in his mind. Thoughts of the towers in flames, thoughts of the desperate office workers jumping from the top floors of the North Tower. Thoughts of the one Scott Pack. Thoughts of the first collapse, then the second. Thoughts of John never again going home to his family.

When he finally, wearily walked through his front door, Bobby and Kathie hugged forever. He was safe.
But Bobby and Larry still had one more duty.

Bring John home.

A FEW DAYS AFTER the attack, Bobby and Larry were called into their captain’s office. “We found John’s body,” he told them.

Police protocol is to immediately notify the deceased officer’s relatives once there is a positive identification, Larry says. Always go in person. Always go in a pair. Always ask permission to enter their home. Always get to the point. Bobby and Larry drove to John’s mother’s house in Clifton that night. As a fellow cop, Larry called Mike to tell him to meet them there. Mike knew what that meant.

But at the house, John’s sister, Irene, was blocking their path. “Larry, if I let you in the house, my brother John is dead.”

John’s mother, Slawka, took it the hardest. She had lost her husband to leukemia in 1997. Now her youngest son was murdered four years later.

Friends and neighbors filled Slawka’s house that night. Bobby and Larry didn’t leave Clifton until after 1 a.m., but they were back into work by 9 a.m.—where they found the captain, several superiors, a union representative and a psychologist all waiting for them.

There was no other way of saying it. The body found was not John. It was a horrific, mind-numbing mistake in a horrific, mind-numbing week.

Bobby slammed a glass door so hard it shattered. He almost came to blows with a sergeant.

Although the family held out hope that John’s remains would someday be found, to date they have not been. On October 21, 2001, a memorial service with full police honors was held for John P. Skala at the church the Skala children attended their whole lives. In September 2005, the family bussed personal items that belonged to Yash in a grave next to his father’s at the Holy Spirit Ukrainian Catholic Cemetery in Campbell Hall, New York.

JOHN P. SKALA was a Port Authority police officer for eight years. The recipient of two meritorious duty medals and a member of the New Jersey Honor Legion, John was also posthumously awarded the Iron Cross of Valor by the Ukrainian Youth Association. In 2002, a new EMS building in Passaic was dedicated in his name, and the Ukrainian Center on Hope Avenue renamed its gymnasium the John P. Skala Memorial Auditorium. In 2009, a plaque honoring John was placed inside the administration building on the Weehawken side of the Lincoln Tunnel.

As for Bobby and Larry, a year after 9/11 the friends decided to honor John with something deeply personal. They sat down to get matching tattoos: John’s missing badge, with a crack down the middle. A badge of honor. His shield, under their shields. His shield, over their hearts.

The attack on New York was an attack on America. The attack on the World Trade Center was an attack on the Port Authority. Its headquarters, with an estimated 1,400 employees, was in the North Tower. Thirty-six other Port Authority police officers and commanders died on September 11, 2001. The department suffered the worst loss of life ever in a single event in the history of law enforcement in the nation.

Finding Fifteen is available on amazon.com
When she was a toddler and would only walk on her toes, Salinaro was diagnosed with spastic diplegia cerebral palsy (CP). This type of cerebral palsy affects the muscles in her legs, making them stiff and contracted. They often won’t do what her brain tells them to, and she can’t always keep her balance.

When she was 2, Salinaro underwent surgery to lengthen her Achilles tendons, allowing her to walk flat-footed, and began physical therapy, the primary treatment for CP. She hated every minute of it. “It made me feel like the odd kid out, and I wanted no part of it.” When she was 5 years old, Salinaro attended a birthday party at a taekwondo gym. She loved the sport, but “I was one of those kids who tried everything and quit everything,” she says. She lasted a couple of months the first time, “I wasn’t training for anything in particular,” she says—and earned her black belt at the age of 14.

That year, she traveled with the team to nationals and watched two of her friends make the national taekwondo team. She was inspired. “I wanted that. But I had no outlet for it.” At the time, she had never heard of para sports, and para taekwondo didn’t exist. So, she began experiencing pain in both hips. “They are talking about removing all neurological disabilities from taekwondo,” she explains. “If taekwondo isn’t available to me, I’ll switch sports,” she says, undaunted. She has plans to compete again in 2024 and 2028, but there may be a hiccup. “They are talking about removing all neurological disabilities from taekwondo,” she explains. “If taekwondo isn’t available to me, I’ll switch sports,” she says, undaunted. She has already reached out to contacts on the U.S. Para Track and Field Team and is also eyeing Para Powerlifting. “There is no way that I’m done,” says the woman who was once the girl who quit everything. She

“I would quit for periods at a time, because I didn’t think I was good enough to be there.” Then she joined a league sparring team at age 13, and everything changed. “I made friends there. They accepted me for who I was. They didn’t care what I looked like when I kicked. It was a much more supportive group,” she says. Reinvigorated and bolstered by friends, she continued to train—though, at that time, “I wasn’t training for anything in particular,” she says—and earned her black belt at the age of 16 while sparring against fully abled competitors ... and losing.

Then, in 2016, taekwondo was added to the 2020 Paralympics program and Salinaro suddenly had a tangible goal: the national para taekwondo team. At her first event, she classified into a disability group that competes within the sport. Salinaro began competing around the world as a para-athlete. She medaled at the 2016 U.S. Open, Canada Open, New York State Championships and U.S. National Championships. In 2017, she medaled at the World Games, the London World Para Taekwondo Championships, the Pan-Am Para Taekwondo International Championships, U.S. National Championships, Asian Para Open and U.S. Open—and was named to the Para National Team.

Salinaro continued her international tour until 2019, medaling at home and in Europe, Africa, Mexico and Australia, but began to notice she wasn’t performing as well as she had been. “I had no idea why. I was training just as hard, if not harder, and going to physical therapy all the time,” she says. Then, during the downtime of the pandemic, she began experiencing pain in both hips. She had torn both labrums, the ring of cartilage on the outside of the hip joint, and required surgery—a blessing in disguise as it increased the flexibility of her hips. After recuperation and returning to action, Salinaro became the first woman on the U.S. Para Taekwondo Team to qualify for the Paralympic Games in Tokyo.

She is also the first athlete with cerebral palsy to compete at this level of the sport on any stage. Stepping onto the mat in Tokyo on September 3, “All I could think was, ‘Oh. My. God. I’m at the Paralympic Games.’ Just being there was a win in itself,” she says. “I realized in that moment that whatever happens on that mat doesn’t matter because I’m here.” Salinaro lost both her fights in Tokyo. “Yes, winning would have made it 100 times better,” she says with a smile. “But I made it there.”

She has plans to compete again in 2024 and 2028, but there may be a hiccup. “They are talking about removing all neurological disabilities from taekwondo,” she explains. “If taekwondo isn’t available to me, I’ll switch sports,” she says, undaunted. She has already reached out to contacts on the U.S. Para Track and Field Team and is also eyeing Para Powerlifting. “There is no way that I’m done,” says the woman who was once the girl who quit everything.
The season-that-almost-wasn’t became a season no one will forget. The 2020 football season was ... odd, to say the least. Truncated. Delayed. Burdened by constant precautions and testing, it was hardly the season anyone wanted.
And yet, some lemons do become lemonade...

Last April, the Pioneers ended their irregular regular season by defeating #25 Duquesne in an overtime nail-biter on the road. With that win, they clinched the NEC championship title and a play-off berth in the FCS Tournament.

Though the Pioneers were knocked out of the tournament in their first-round game, they didn’t go down without a fight. The 19-10 loss to #5 Delaware earned the team one more accolade to top off the season—a national ranking. Sacred Heart finished the year ranked 22nd in the final Stats Perform FCS National Poll.

It’s just the second time in program history that Sacred Heart has ended the season in the national rankings. The 2014 squad was 23rd in the FCS Coaches’ Poll and 24th in the Sports Network Poll after winning its second Northeast Conference championship in a row. This season marks the Pioneers’ fourth NEC title under Head Coach Mark Nofri.

Congratulations to Coach Nofri and all the team on their patience, their perseverance and their stunning performance.
FROM A TINY room in the old main building where WSHU began, to the tiny house (top) where the station lived for decades, to the new, state-of-the-art, three-story facility (bottom) that is home to their offices, studios, editing suites and George J. Lombardi Lobby today, WSHU has time and again proven itself to be “the little station that could.”

CELEBRATIONS ALL AROUND AFTER MARQUEZ MCCRAY FOUND NASEM BRANTLEY FOR A 29-YARD TOUCHDOWN PASS IN OVERTIME TO SET UP THE PIONEERS’ WIN AGAINST DUQUESNE, EARNING THEM THE NEC CHAMPIONSHIP TITLE AND A PLACE IN THE NCAA FCS TOURNAMENT

FROM THE ARCHIVE

Like a kitten who sees a lion in the mirror, WSHU has only ever defined itself by its mission.
It's one thing to read a magazine. It's another to walk the campus, visit the chapel, take in a game or a show, maybe catch up with a former professor or an old friend. Or just marvel at how we've grown.

Come back to SHU. We'd love to see you.

Plan your visit to campus by contacting Todd Gibbs, executive director of development & alumni engagement, at 203.365.4526 or emailing gibbst@sacredheart.edu.

We are Pioneers.

IT'S NOT JUST A RINK. IT'S A RALLYING POINT. JOIN US ON THE ICE.

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