



# **McKeesport Media Oasis**

**Pilot Program 2018**

# Introduction

We are proud to present the McKeesport Media Oasis.

Throughout the spring and summer of 2018, professionals in the field of journalism spent time with the young people of the YouthCAST program in McKeesport, to help them tell journalistic stories with their own words and images.

A dozen middle school and high school students interviewed members of the community, wrote stories from their own lives, used DSLR cameras to make photographs and flexed their creativity.

This project received grant funding from the Pittsburgh Foundation and Point Park University's Department of Community Engagement and Center for Inclusive Excellence.

We hope you enjoy this fresh look at McKeesport.

*(Cover photo by Sirinity Moorefield.)*

# Students Featured

- Isaiah Johnson
- Paul Francis
- James Fulmore
- Sontee Peterson
- Sirinity
- Moorefield
- Calise Johnson
- Destiny Robison
- Ajayla Johnson
- Nya O'Neal
- Zekiel Palmer
- Skylar Palmer
- Raniah Allen-Mitchell
- Dajere Newby



The students pose with Mike Moorefield, Sirinity's uncle, after interviewing him. Paul Francis, Nya O'Neal, Calise Johnson, Sirinity Moorefield, Mike Moorefield, Isaiah Johnson, Raniah Allen-Mitchell, Sontee Peterson, Destiny Robison. Photo by Matt Petras.

# Joint Foreward

## Andrew Conte

**McKeesport Media Oasis Director**

So-called media deserts are places that no longer have traditional sources of local news and information. McKeesport became one of these deserts when the former Daily News newspaper closed at the end of 2015. Since then, the community of 20,000 residents has not had a printed newspaper. We wanted to create an “oasis” in this desert by helping young people start to tell their own journalistic stories through words and images. Togeth-

er, YouthCAST and the Center for Media Innovation at Point Park University created the McKeesport Media Oasis project. We are grateful for support from The Pittsburgh Foundation and Point Park University.

**“We wanted to create an ‘oasis’ in this desert.”**

These are the stories the student journalists wanted to tell about their community. We hope you enjoy them and learn something about their

**Matt Petras**  
**Journalism Educator**

These young people put together some wonderful pieces of writing and some awesome photographs, often so good that they were surprised by the quality themselves. I frequently got the impression that the students

didn't think they were capable of telling interesting, important stories, of sharing their thoughts on pressing topics and of creating striking visuals that beg to be viewed.

Clearly their work shows that they do.

**Keino Fitzpatrick**  
**YouthCAST Director**

A lack of community reporting can leave residents unaware of local events and developments that can undermine the accountability of public officials and diminish citizens' ability to effect positive change in their communities.

YouthCAST's “Community and Schools Together” Leadership Network and Point Park University's Center for

Media Innovation teamed up with local students to develop the McKeesport Media Oasis Project to support geographical regions that lack access to fresh local news and information. The project is not about specialized responses to news outlets but engaging students who care about local issues of common interest and who want to seek change.

**YouthCAST students visited the Center for Media Innovation at Point Park University in December 2017 to learn about journalism and interviewing techniques, and to try their hands at video production.**



Nya O'Neal uses a professional broadcast camera at the CMI.  
All CMI photos by Andrew Conte.



The student journalists operate the control room.



The student journalists sit in the CMI interview room.



Point Park University student Casey Hoolahan interviews the McKeesport student journalists.

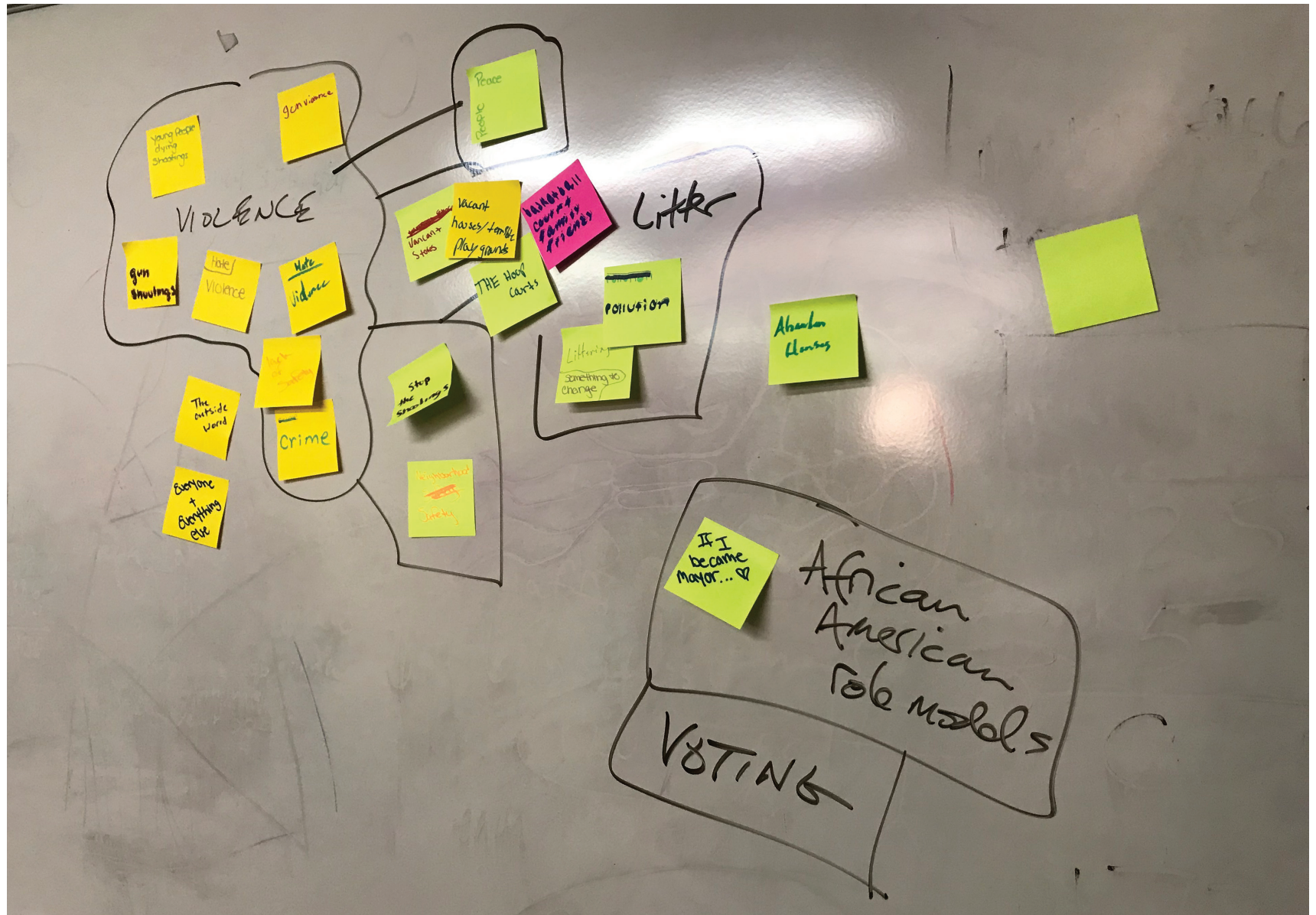


The student reporters talk on-camera at the CMI.



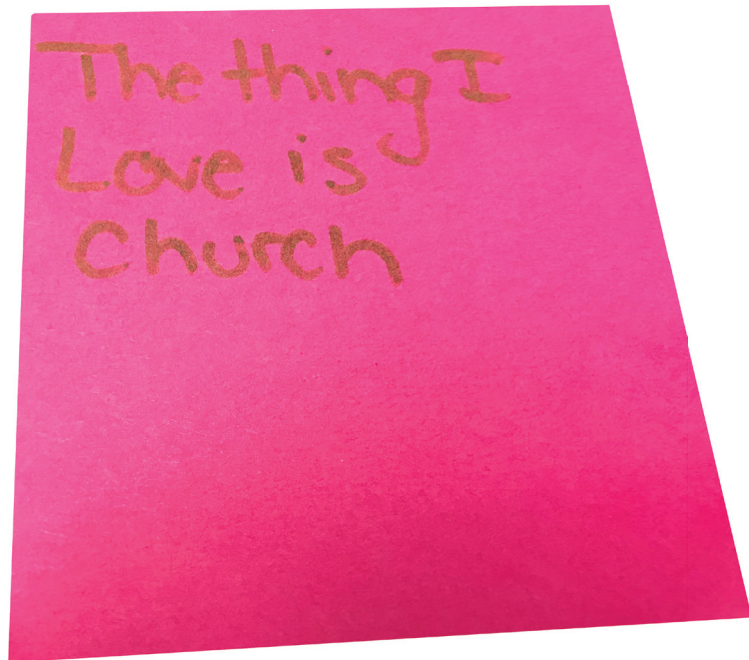
Calise Johnson on the control room screen.

# Rose, Thorn, Bud

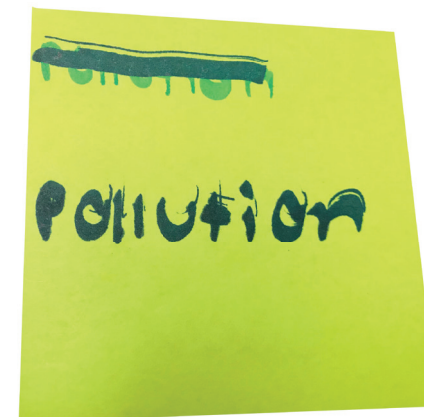


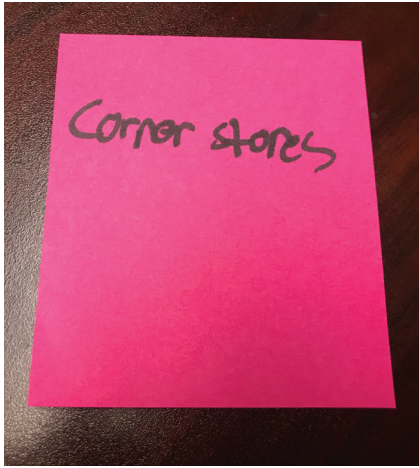
# Primer on the Rose, Thorn, Bud Exercise

The YouthCAST students really started talking about their community when they engaged in a Rose, Thorn, Bud exercise, based on the LUMA Institute's System of Innovation for Everyday Design Thinking.

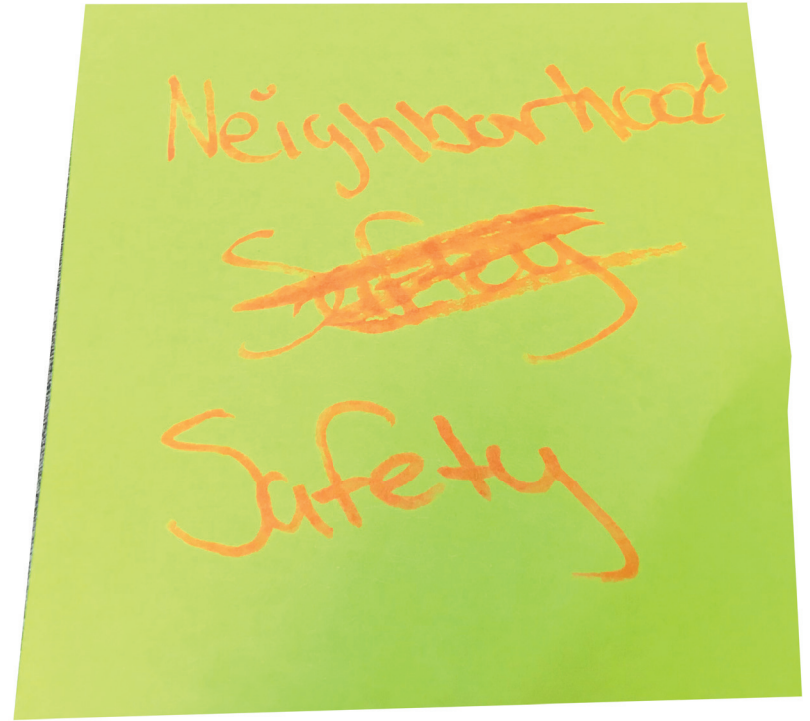
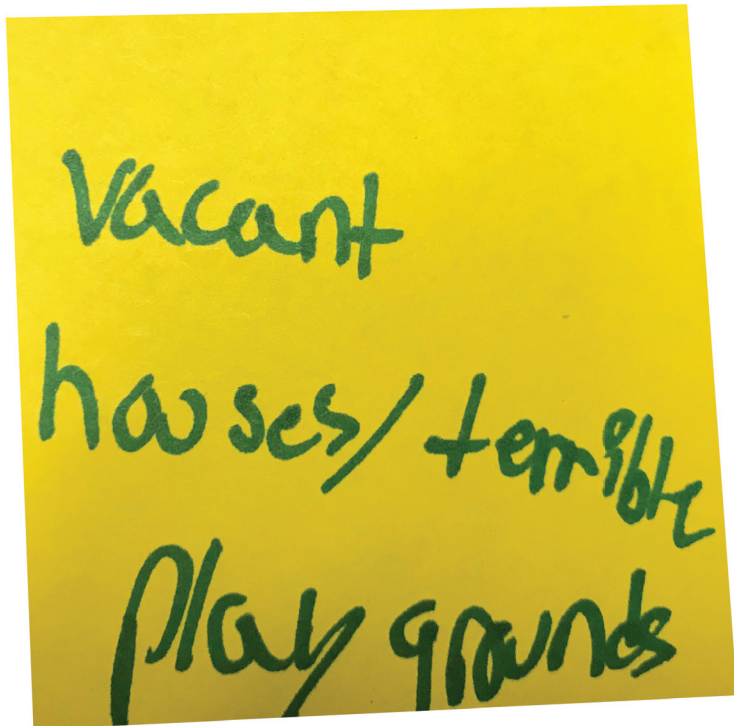


Each student wrote something they loved about the community on a pink sticky note, for the Rose. They talked about loving school, home, church, the corner stores, and places where they feel safe. Next, each student wrote something they hated about McKeesport on a yellow sticky note, for the Thorn. Immediately, they started talking





about violence, guns, gangs, abandoned buildings, litter and broken playground equipment.



Finally, each student wrote on a green sticky note about a Bud, or something they would change. One student, Ajayla Johnson, talked about how she wants to see more African American leaders in the community.

That discussion led to the students later interviewing state Rep. Austin Davis, who was elected that spring in a special election as Allegheny County's first African American representative from outside of Pittsburgh.



# Photo Safari Spring, 2018



Sirinity Moorefield self-portrait. Photo by Sirinity Moorefield.



Photo by Isaiah Johnson.



Anthony Marshall, 60. Photo by Dajere Newby.



Photo by Skylar Palmer.



Photo by Sirinity Moorefield.



Photo by Nya O'Neal.



Ajayla Johnson. Photo by Skylar Palmer.



Photo by Skylar Palmer.

# YouthCAST journalists interview senior residents of McKeesport

YouthCAST journalists talked with several senior citizens who live in McKeesport, leading to this exchange:

**Shirley Felton, declined to provide age:**

“You don’t see people that you know in McKeesport. They’re either dead or they’re at War-Mart. One or the other. There’s people I have seen in McKeesport, I have not seen in, say, maybe ten years. They’re in Way-Mart. That’s as far as they go.”

**James Lewis, 68:**

“There’s not a write-up like the Daily News

used to have. The news told everything in McKeesport. Now you don’t know what’s going on. Like if you see it on the news, if McKeesport’s on the news, it’s for something bad, like a house fire or somebody got shot or something negative. There’s no positive news. Like we used to have obituaries. We don’t know who dies now in McKeesport. We don’t know anything.”

**Felton:**

“You have to go online, and everybody doesn’t go online.”

**Lewis:**

“Everybody doesn’t



Ernest Everson, 73, James Lewis, 68, Shirley Fenton, and Jessie Brownfield, 73, share their thoughts about living in McKeesport and not having a printed local newspaper. Photo by Dajere Newby.

have a computer. I don’t.”

**Felton:**

“I have one. I don’t use it.”

**Sirinity Moorefield:**

How do you find out what’s going on in McKeesport?

**Lewis:** “We don’t. If you don’t have a computer or get on the In-

ternet, you don’t know anything. Or word of mouth. The grapevine, you know what I’m saying? That’s it. I used to get a newspaper every day, read it from end to end, find out what’s going on.”

**Felton:** “You find out that someone’s deceased after they’ve been buried.”



Jessie Brownfield talks to the students. Photo by Calise Johnson.



Shirley Felton talks to student reporters. Photo by Calise Johnson.



James Lewis speaks with Ernest Everson.  
Photo by Calise Johnson.



The student journalists interview the seniors. Photo by Dajere Newby.

# YouthCAST Student journalists interview state Rep. Austin Davis

Photo by  
Andrew  
Conte



The students interviewed Austin Davis, state Rep. in the 35th Legislative District. They spoke with him about African American leadership, education

and challenges. The following pages include some of their notes and takeaways.



# Take-aways

## Isaiah Johnson

This experience was one that I will always remember. State Rep. Austin Davis was definitely not shy and answered my questions in a way that really inspired me. He said he is working on changing pollution, violence and school safety. Austin Davis is an amazing person and my inspiration.

IJ: What advice do you have for young people who are striving for success?

AD: "Persistence even when people tell you, 'No.' Don't take it as your answer. Work hard."

IJ: What advice do you have for young African American people who are being told they are not good enough to

get what they want?

AD: "Don't believe it. If you want it, go get it."

## Sontee Peterson

Rep. Davis: "The economy has changed from manufacturing. We can get there through technology and engineering. We have to figure out how to solve basic problems like infrastructure. How can we connect people to work centers faster?"

One idea: Expanding the busway from McKeesport to Downtown Pittsburgh and to Oakland.

## Calise Johnson

Rep. Davis: People will always try and doubt you. They'll never tell you, "You were right." Listening makes a great

my biggest take away from today was that don't let nobody tell you what you can do and with your card and if you put your mind to anything you can reach but if you don't try to do anything you won't make it that far

Doyere

Newby

leader. Listen more than you speak.

Davis is currently trying to improve education and public safety. Students now are coming to

school with more issues. The press is important to a free society.

CJ: What is a leader to you?

AD: "Someone who listens. You have to know what people want. I listen more than I speak."

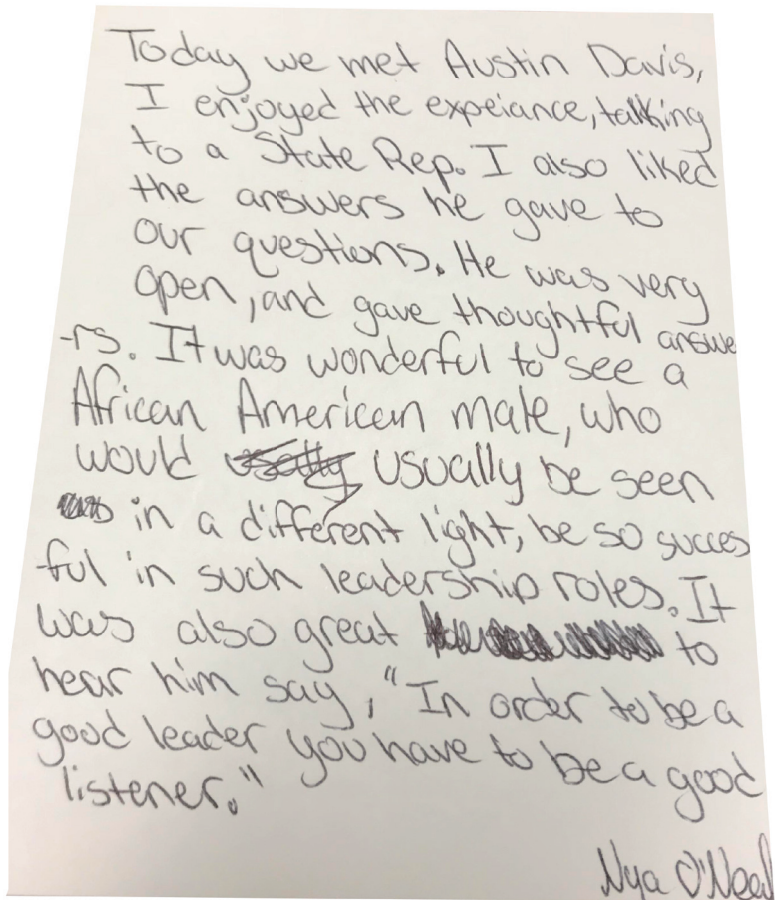
AD: "People will always doubt you when you try to do something big. When people doubt me, it makes me want to

do more. They'll never tell you, 'You were right.'"

CJ: What do you plan to do to better MCK-eesport?

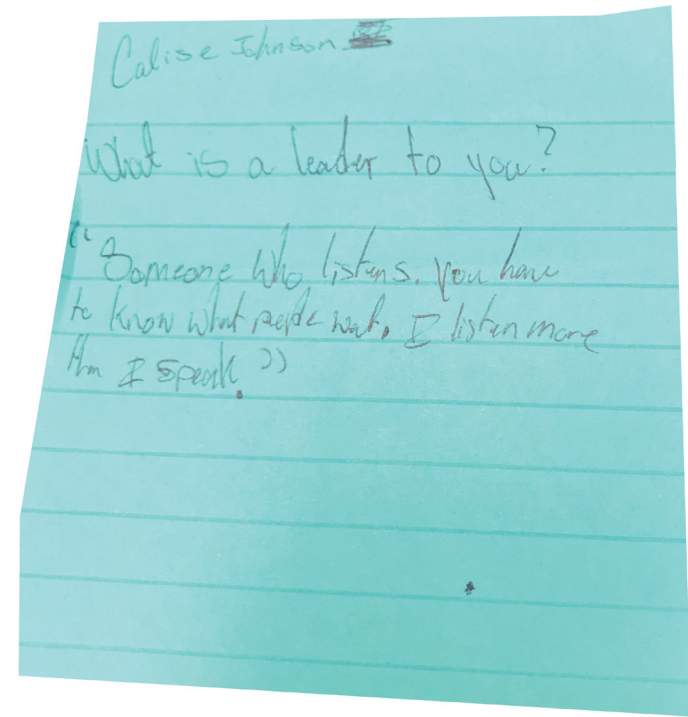
AD: "Bring social services into the school to help students inside and outside at school."

AD: "The press is important, to a free society."



Today we met Austin Davis, I enjoyed the experience, talking to a State Rep. I also liked the answers he gave to our questions. He was very open, and gave thoughtful answers. It was wonderful to see a African American male, who would ~~usually~~ usually be seen ~~in~~ in a different light, be so successful in such leadership roles. It was also great ~~to hear him say~~ to hear him say, "In order to be a good leader you have to be a good listener."

Nya O'Neal



Calise Johnson

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successful in such leadership roles. It was also great to hear him say, "In order to be a good leader, you have to be a good listener."

NO: What are your views on art education? Do you think it is as important as subjects like math and science?

AD: He thinks it is important to have art majors and thinks it is a

very good outlet for children with problems at home because there are more problems with this generation than earlier generations.

### **Dayere Newby**

My biggest takeaway from today was that you don't let anybody tell you what you can do and with you. And if you put your mind to anything, you can reach. But if you don't try to do anything, you won't make it that far.

DN: What challenges did you face?

AD: "People will always try to put you in a box where they think you fit."

DN: How do you handle stereotypes?

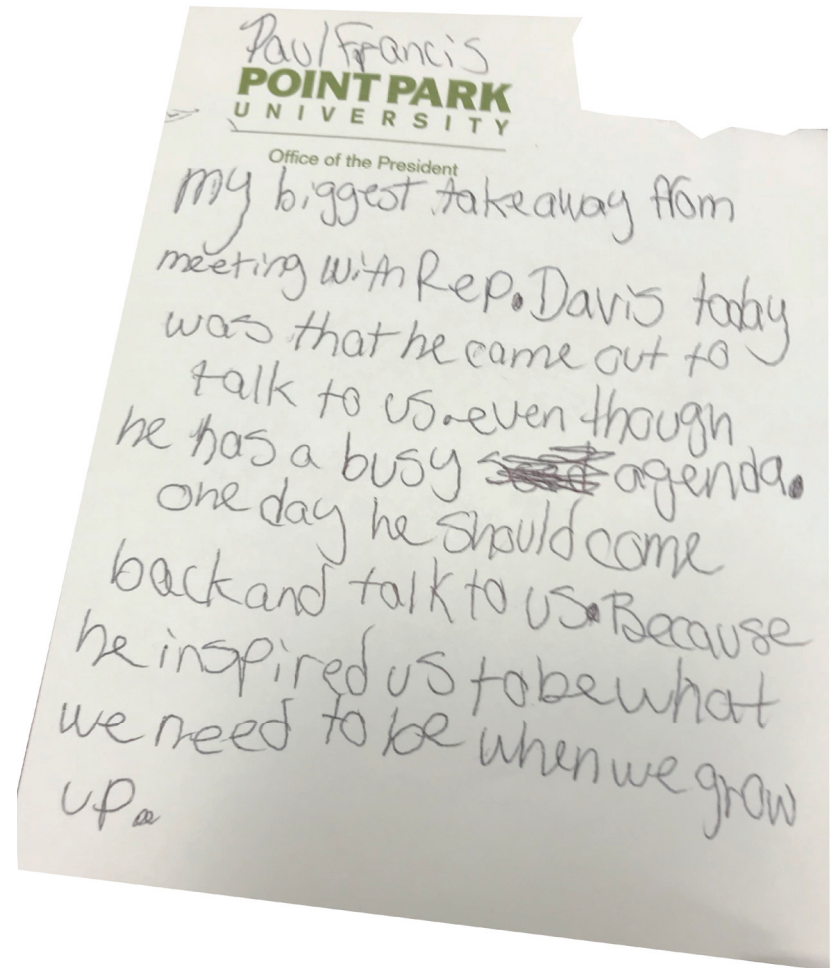
AD: "The biggest key to not believing in stereotypes is don't believe them."

### **Paul Francis**

My biggest takeaway from meeting with Rep. Davis today was that he came out to talk to us even though he has a busy agenda. One day he should come back and talk to us because he inspired us to be what we need to be when we grow up.

### **Raniah Allen-Mitchell**

My biggest takeaway from meeting with Rep. Davis today was his thoughts on school safety. He explained how he felt giving teachers guns for safety is not a good thing to do. He expressed he wants to spend more money on officer equipment. He also said he wants to try to add more officers to the schools.



### **Ajayla Johnson**

Quotes from Rep Davis:

- "I think the best way to deal with stereotypes is not to believe them yourself."
- "We disagree without being disagreeable."

- "Kids come to school with more problems now than they ever did."



# McKeesport Fire Chief Jeffrey Tomovcsik meets the student journalists



Isaiah Johnson asks Fire Chief Jeffrey Tomovcsik a question. All fire chief interview photos by Ajayla Johnson.

McKeesport Fire Chief Jeffrey Tomovcsik visited the McKeesport Oasis student journalists in June for a group interview about his career and life outside of the fire department. He opened up about

good days and bad.

Using notes compiled by McKeesport Oasis, the students wrote about the experience.

Ajayla Johnson also took lots of photos!



Calise Johnson and others take notes.

## McKeesport Fire Chief happy to help Jeffrey Tomovcsik juggles work and school

Sontee Peterson

People look at them as superheroes, but they just see themselves as normal people making sure that you get to live another day. City of McKeesport Fire Chief Jeffrey Tomovcsik doesn't look for that recognition. Just seeing that people are okay after pulling them out of a fire is a huge relief for him.

"You don't come out of that fire and want to beat on your chest like you're some hero," Tomovcsik said in an interview. "You never get that feeling."

After 10 years of being a firefighter, Tomovcsik became the fire chief and is still hungry to learn. He attends Point Park University, going above and beyond his 3,000 hours of training.

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Tomovcsik lives in Grandview with his wife and two kids. Since he has been the chief, Tomovcsik hasn't been in fires for the past three years, but he still helps and has a lot of other duties, such as attending council meetings and being, as he puts it, like a tool box for the fire department when needed.

**"It's been a rewarding career so far."**

-Jeffrey Tomovcsik  
McKeesport Fire Chief

Tomovcsik was expected to be a police officer, considering the four generations of cops in his family. When he went to go to school to become one, he realized



Sontee Peterson takes notes during the interview of Fire Chief Jeffrey Tomovcsik.

that he had to pay to get the training for it. The free alternative for that was training to become a firefighter, so he ended up fighting fires instead of fighting crime.

"It's been a rewarding career so far," Tomovcsik said. "While I wanted to become a cop, I don't look back and think I made the wrong decision."

Tomovcsik is a hard-working man willing to make sure that the

people of McKeesport are safe. He may not be fighting fires and saving people every time but he still plays a important part to help out the other firemen, Tomovcsik said. He loves the city of McKeesport and the people in it.

"I couldn't be more proud to tell people, 'I'm from McKeesport,'" Tomovcsik said.

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## Tomovcsik took a different path

*Calise Johnson*

Jeffrey Tomovcsik, 38, is the fire chief for McKeesport, but he hasn't always been. He first started out as a firefighter. Before becoming a fire fighter, he always wanted to be a police officer.

"It's been a very rewarding career so far, becoming a firefighter and becoming a fire chief. While I wanted to be a cop, I don't look back and think I made the wrong decision," Tomovcsik said. "My career path took me the way I was supposed to go."

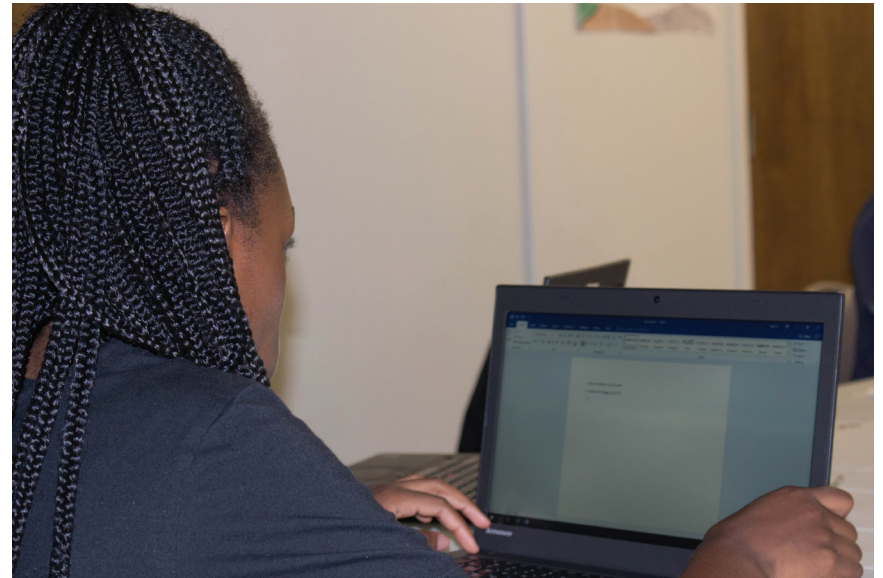
Tomovcsik balances family and work, while even attending college at Point Park University. He finishes in October and is going for a degree in Public Administration.

He was a firefighter for 10 years. The department fights about 50

fires a year, and he has pulled three people out of a burning building alive. As the chief, he hasn't fought a fire in three years and now attends council meetings and more. "Everybody calls us heroes, but when you pull someone out of a fire and you know they're doing okay, you're just relieved, and you really feel good about the whole thing," Tomovcsik said.

When we interviewed him that day the department had gotten calls for several things including two car accidents, a possible house fire, two fire alarms, and someone stuck in an elevator. This all happened within a couple hours.

"Today's not necessarily a typical day in the city, but when it gets busy, it gets busy," Tomovcsik said. "Typically, we probably only do four



*Calise Johnson takes notes during the interview.*

or five calls a day, and we did twice that within two hours this morning."

There are two fire stations in the area, with always at least five people between the two. There are 20 full-time and 12-part time employees, in addition to himself. Tomovcsik says about every firefighter in the department has PTSD to some extent.

"The good days outnumber the bad, but unfortunately, the days

are ones that really stick out in your memory," Tomovcsik said.

Tomovcsik has been a firefighter for 10 years and the fire chief for three years. He attends council meetings and works Monday through Friday.

"I never imagined myself being the chief of a career fire department," Tomovcsik said. "It's a rarity in Allegheny County."

# Jeffrey Tomovcsik has saved lives throughout fire department career

## Chief details tumultuous times on the job

Raniah Allen-Mitchell

Many people look at firefighters as heroes for the amazing things they do daily, saving people. Fire Chief Jeffrey Tomovcsik has saved 3 people out of a fire.

“You’re relieved. When you see them on the stretcher going to the back of the ambulance and they’re talking and they’re conscious, you’re relieved, for sure,” Tomovcsik said.

Tomovcsik, 38, who has been a proud firefighter for 10 years, has been married for 14 years and is now a fire chief. He loves camping with his kids and has experienced many sad things on the job.

Tomovcsik works Monday to Friday as a

fire chief. His department goes through about 50 fires a year. While being a fire chief he also attends Point Park University online, going for a bachelor’s degree in Public Administration.

## “The bad days are the ones that really stick out in your mind.”

-Jeffrey Tomovcsik  
McKeesport Fire Chief

“Today’s not necessarily a typical day in the city, but when it gets busy, it gets busy,”



Isaiah Johnson takes hold of a fire extinguisher from Fire Chief Jeffrey Tomovcsik.

Tomovcsik said. On the job, Tomovcsik had to help someone out an elevator, two bad car accidents and two fire alarms. “The good days outnumber the bad, but unfortunately, the bad days are the ones that really stick out in your memory,” Tomovcsik said. Most of the firefighters in the department have PTSD to some type of extent because of things they have gone through.

Everybody has to wear 25 pounds of protection gear before attending a call.

Although Tomovcsik is a firefighter, he has four generations of police in his family. He never thought he would have been a firefighter. “While I wanted to be a cop, I don’t look back and think I made the wrong decision. My career path took me the way I was supposed to go,” Tomovcsik said.

# Spotlight on the student journalists' photography from summer 2018



Photo by Martha Rial.

# Martha Rial, Pulitzer Prize-award winner, helped teach photography to the student journalists Martha Rial

## Photography Consultant

I thought I knew McKeesport, but after viewing images made by the YouthCAST students participating in the Media Oasis Workshop, I realized I have a lot to learn about this historic Mon Valley town. Their photographs portray a community made up of hardworking individuals and tight-knit families determined to thrive.

Their enthusiasm for wanting to understand and engage with their community in a deeper way is evident in every moment.

There is no better way to study a community than walking its streets and talking with its residents. On our treks around town (sometimes in the damp cold, other times in unforgiving heat) the teenagers asked questions and documented the faces and places they encountered with an open mind and lots of heart. The results of their hard work call attention to why it is important for everyone to have the opportunity to be heard and seen.



Fisherman Jenkins Quiency hangs out on a bench one afternoon.  
Photo by Nya O'Neal.



Storytime at Pop Up and Play. Photo by Calise Johnson.



Isaiah Johnson, cheering for the camera.  
Photo by Calise Johnson.



Paul Francis tries out an outfit at the McKeesport Fire Hall.  
Photo by James Fulmore.



McKeesport residents check out an emergency vehicle during a Pop Up and Play event. Photo by Nya O'Neal.



A tree creates some shade in McKeesport. Photo by Zekiel Palmer.



James Fulmore interviews Police Sgt. Francis Angert. Photo by Paul Francis.



Skylar Palmer takes a selfie in a hair store. Photo by Skylar Palmer.



Zekiel Palmer captures the inside of a hair store.  
Photo by Zekiel Palmer



Ducks swim together in McKeesport. Photo by Nya O'Neal



James Fulmore and Paul Francis goof around at a Pop Up and Play.  
Photo by Calise Johnson



Boats rest by a pier in McKeesport.  
Photo by James Fulmore.





Sirinity Moorefield and Sontee Peterson smile while on assignment.



Paul Francis takes notes during interview of McKeesport resident.



Isaiah Johnson and Dajere Newby pose with interview subject Shirley Felton.

Photos by

**Martha Rial**  
Photography Consultant  
McKeesport Media Oasis

**Stories**

**and**

**Perspectives**

**From the  
Students**

## Body image struggles highlighted *Sirinity explains importance of self-care*

by Sirinity Moorefield

When I was 10, I was going through a rough time that triggered the way I am now. Years on, 12 years old, I was going through depression.

I was upset about my body. I always thought I was fat and ugly. I would get picked on. The kids would call me names. I tried to ignore them but I couldn't. My mom told me, "If you know it's not true, don't believe them," but I thought it was

true. I thought I was ugly and fat. So I was depressed. I remember when Christmas came, I was thinking about pills to make me lose weight; meanwhile other kids would be thinking about the latest toys and shoes.

I looked up videos of workouts I could do. It looked easier just watching it, but when you do it, it's different. My first day doing it was hard; I would be sore the next day. I stopped because I didn't like being sore.



Sirinity Moorefield.

Now 14, I look back to how I was. I get emotional even though it was three years ago. Many things can change in three years. I'm proud of myself, making it through tough times at a young age. I am stronger than ever, and more importantly, I feel confident in my

own skin. Now I am more open to people, so anyone dealing with the same issue I was, I can talk to them. I am all about empowerment. Encouraging and completing people. Because you never know just saying one nice word can change their life.

**“I’m proud of myself for making it through tough times at a young age. I am stronger than ever, and more importantly I feel confident in my own skin.”**

# OPINION: Antwon Rose shooting wrong, unwarranted, discomfoting

by Nya O'Neil

Once again a path that is taken too often has led to the death of another one of our people, another person, the forced moving on of another human soul. This time it was Antwon Rose Jr., on June 19th, 2018, which is so far the cruelest year I have experienced.

Many people already fear or just do not trust the police. Before this I was always nervous around police officers, but now because of all the actions and events that have taken place in recent years, I fear police officers. And I do realize that not all law enforcers are "crooked" but it is always hard to look at the good when all that is shown to me is the bad. Maybe this mentality that has me stuck on fear is the same mindset Antwon had in that moment he started to run. Maybe it is that fear that can lead to such destructive paths.

Another thing fear can cause you to do is jump to

conclusions. In American stereotypes, women are born to jump to conclusions, but we are not the only ones. Humankind tends to jump to conclusions, especially those living in fear. Maybe Michael Rosfeld, the officer who shot and killed Rose, concluded that Rose was dangerous, or maybe he concluded that Rose was most definitely involved in the shooting that had happened before and was armed.

**"Because of all of the actions and events that have taken place in recent years, I fear police officers."**

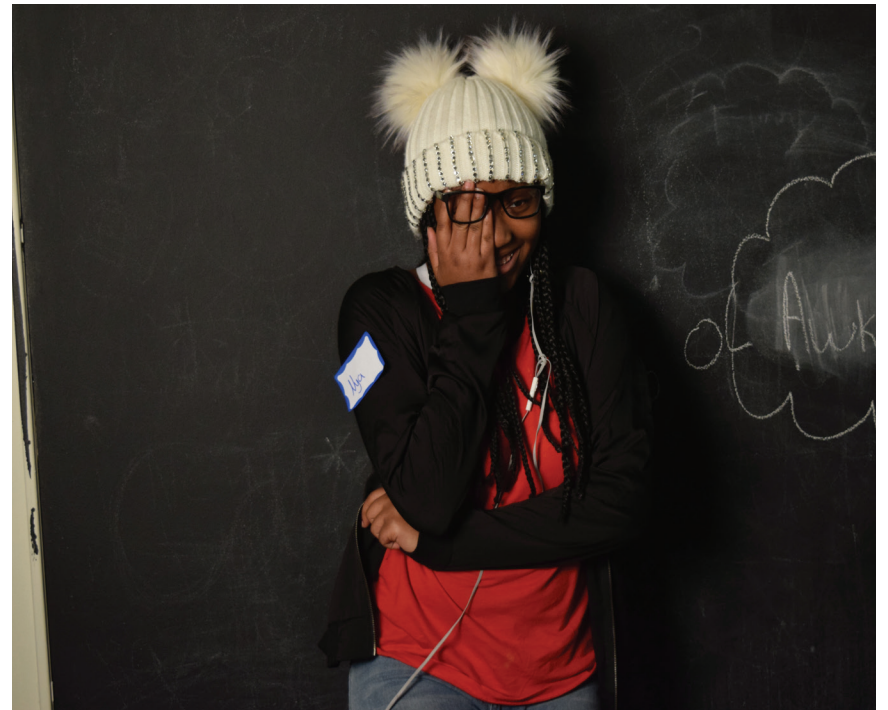
An article from ABC News on July 7th, 2016, included the perspective of David Klinger, a professor of Criminology and Criminal Justice at the University of Missouri St. Louis.

"Shooting to injure or maim someone wouldn't stop an aggressive subject, Klinger said, and officers are trying to stop the threat to their life, or the life of their partner or a citizen," wrote Julia Jacobo for ABC News.

This shows us that our police units are trained to use deadly force only when someone's life is in danger. In my view, no violent or murderous nature was directed toward Rosfeld, yet he chose to use this deadly force anyway.

I don't know why Rose was in that car, and I don't know if he was part of finding the victim who was shot. But I know his life shouldn't have been ended so early and in such a way. One thing remains:

Antwon Rose was still killed, unarmed and probably afraid.



Nya O'Neil.

## Memories of sweet, sweet victory

By Paul Francis

It was an early morning, and I had a basketball. We got up and ate some bacon, eggs, orange juice and toast. After we got done eating, we went back upstairs so we could get dressed. When I got in my room, I looked in the mirror and said, “I am the best basketball player in the world.”

Then my mom yelled, “No, you’re not.”

And then I said “Okay, bet. How much do you want to bet that I put the most points up on my team?”

She said, “Okay, we will see.”

So I put my clothes on and put my shoes on and waited down stairs for my dad. When he came down, we went to the basketball court so I can get some more practice.

We worked on a lot of drills so I would be the best I could be at my game. We worked on dribbling

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through cones. We practiced free throws. Three pointers every time I would miss, so I would have to restart. I had to work on a lot of right hand layups because it is hard for me to make them because I am left-handed but I’m getting the hang of it. An hour later I had to go to the game. And I was already for the game. Then we had to warm up with the team, but I was tired of practicing. Still, I had to fight through it.

**“The fans went wild and I was so proud of myself.”**

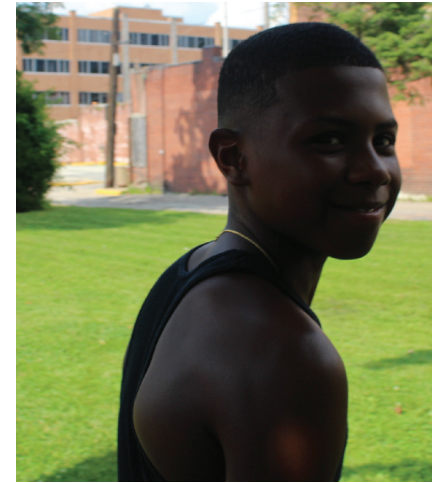
Then it was the first quarter and I was playing super well. I had 5 points in the first. Then the second I had to turn up and when I went up for a layup I got fouled and I twisted my ankle. I made it, but my ankle hurt a lot. The fans went wild and I was so proud of myself.

At the halftime break

I had to get my ankle wrapped up so it wouldn’t hurt me. After that, we were down by 12 and in the third quarter, I sat out the first five minutes. Then, when I got back in, I brought up the ball and just pulled up at the top of the key and shot the three-pointer.

Then we were down by seven and I was just getting mad because everyone was missing their shots so they pulled me out because I was too mad. Then the fourth quarter came, I was starting and calmed down a little. It felt as if I was the whole team because nobody was doing anything to help me out. I was tired, stressed out, and just not in a good mood. It was three min left in the game and we were down by nine now because they took me out. But now I’m in, and I said to myself, “It’s time to shine.”

So I had to carry them. I brought the ball up again and shot a three and got fouled and I made it. I was so happy. We were down



Paul Francis. Photo by Sontee Peterson

by four now and my friend made a two-pointer and we were down by two. There were six seconds on the clock, and my friend brought up the ball. He passed me the ball with one second on the clock, and I made the three.

Everyone jumped out of their seat and came to pick me up, and I was super happy. That was the best thing that has ever happened to me in basketball history. After that we went to get ice cream and I went to my friend’s house.

That was the best.

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# Making a new, furry friend

by Raniah Allen-Mitchell

One memory I have in McKeesport is when I was 5 and I helped my grandma get her dog. She had a German shepherd that she had to put down because he had hip problems. She contacted a breeder that just had a litter of Shih Tzu's to meet up and buy one.

My cousin and I rode an hour away with my grandma to meet the dog lady. When we got there, the lady had a box of puppies, some were all black and some were all white, but there was one that was black-and-white that was jumping at the box towards me. When I picked up the black-and-white puppy, it was licking me all over my face and it looked like it was smiling at me. The lady told us that he was her last boy. I was kind of sad because I wanted a girl dog but he was too cute to pass up.

My grandma bought the dog and the whole ride home we were picking out names for the dog. I wanted to name him Oreo because he

was black and white and my cousin wanted to name him Spot. While we were driving, we drove past a car wash called Bobo's car wash and we all liked the name Bobo, so that's what we named him.

**“Sometimes I think Bobo is my twin because we are both Virgos, and Virgos are fussy.”**

After the hour drive back, we got to my gram's house and I wanted to be the one to show my grandad the new dog we got. I picked up Bobo and took him upstairs to see my grandad. When we got in his room, Bobo got happy and fell out my hands and fell on his head. That's where their bond began: Bobo would sleep in my grandad's bed with him and only would want to be around him.

Bobo is now 10. When he was younger, I would play this game with him I called the cover game. I would put a cover over his face and



Raniah Allen-Mitchell. Photo by Calise Johnson

poke him to make him mad and follow me all around the house. There's another game we played: Like hide-and-seek, I would hide his treats between things and under things and make him smell out the treats.

Sometimes I think Bobo is my twin because we are both Virgos, and Virgos are fussy. I can always sense when he's in a bad mood and he senses when I'm in a bad mood. Since he's getting older, he doesn't really like to play anymore and do things, so sometimes at night I try to take him for little walks. He loves to eat a lot so he is

supper chubby, so he can't walk for that long because he starts to lose his breath.

Bobo really means a lot to me because he's like my first-ever pet and I feel close to him because I was the first one to hold him. Every time I see Bobo, I get really happy because I can just remember when he was a tiny puppy and now he's so big and grumpy like a grandpa, which is now his new nickname. I get really sad when I think of him passing away because I know he's getting old and it will happen soon.

When we got Bobo, I was very happy to have him in my life, and still to this day, he makes me very happy. I felt like it was a sign that he was hopping out of the box towards me when I first saw him. I wouldn't pick any better pet to have. When he looks at me and he looks like he's smiling, it makes my heart warm.

# Trying something new

by Calise Johnson

I went to a Kennywood picnic on June 7. It was really hot out with clouds in the sky and no shade at all. I wished it would rain just a little, but I still had fun with friends, anyway. I only rode the main rides that I would normally ride. I had never ridden the Swing Shot or the Phantom.

I was with a friend who said she wanted to ride the Swing Shot, but I didn't because I was scared. She convinced me to ride it. "If you ride it at least you can say you did it," she said.

So, I rode it.

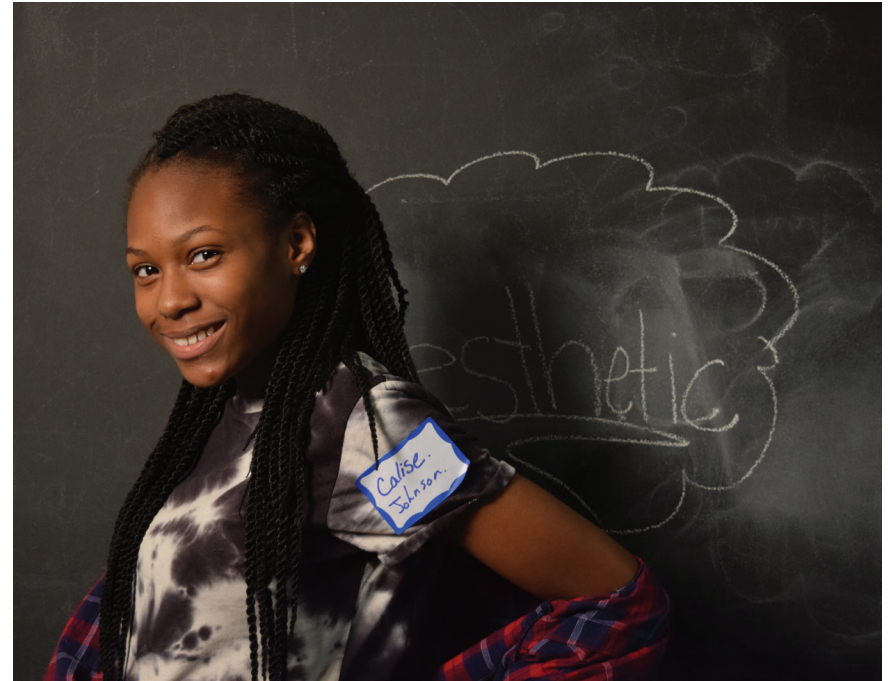
I felt like I was flying, but it wasn't fun at all. I felt like I was going to fly out of my seat. I started crying, and I squeezed her hand really hard. I thought I almost broke it because her hand was hurting after. It wasn't my favorite ride and it certainly wouldn't be my first choice of a ride, but I wouldn't mind riding it again.

A few weeks later I went with another friend. It was

really hot, but there was enough shade. She wanted to ride the Phantom, but I didn't. However, she convinced me to ride it. On the ride, I felt really scared at first, but after the first hill it wasn't scary anymore. I only looked up at certain times on the ride, but I always look up for the picture and always get it. I actually love the Phantom now and I rode it four times in a row, then 3 times the next time I went.

**“Things are scary sometimes, but, sometimes, you just have to do it.”**

After riding both of the rides I felt better. I felt more proud of myself too, because



Calise Johnson.

I did something I always said I wouldn't do. I feel like I can do anything now. Things are scary sometimes, but, sometimes, you just have to do it.

Case in point:

I went to camp last year and they were doing ziplining off the rock wall and over the pond. The first day I couldn't do it because I was too scared. I was really scared to go down it so I promised myself I would do it before camp was over. A few days later they did it again, so I did it even though I was really scared. Climbing up the wall

was fine but going down the zip line was somewhat scary. When I first let go of the pole I screamed because it was a sudden drop. Then it went over the pond, and the view was so pretty, I waved to everybody and people were cheering when I crossed the pond.

When they got me off the zipline, I was so happy that I did it. I was shocked for the rest of day I couldn't even sleep that night. I was so proud of myself for doing it.

# Talking with McKeesport residents Isaiah Johnson checks in with some grandmothers, a cop and more!

by Isaiah Johnson

Danielle Ratleff, resident of high view, has an amazing personality. The 45 year-old is dedicated to McKeesport and said, "I will never leave." Danielle takes her 9 grand-children to parks often but thinks the community needs to "get the right people in office and the community needs to come together to clean the park."



Danielle Ratleff with her daughter.  
Photo by Calise Johnson.

Donna George loves to spend time with her nephew in McKeesport. The 52-year-old works at the Department of Veterans Affairs hospital and enjoys coming to Pop Up and Plays because she

thinks they are very nice, and it "keeps her 3-year-old nephew occupied."



Donna George. Photo by Raniah Allen-Mitchell.

When I interviewed Officer Julian Thomas, it was an amazing experience. The 32-year old police officer likes the parks in McKeesport but said, "They need to be updated." One thing that makes this officer feel good is when he sees children growing up and going to college. After every rough day, he said, he goes back to his home in Peterson Plan and wakes rested and ready for another day of helping people in the McKeesport area.



Police Officer Julian Thomas.  
Photo by Raniah Allen-Mitchell.

Retired 66-year-old Karen Elkins has lived in McKeesport for all her life and has formed many opinions about McKeesport. One of her opinions is that McKeesport's parks are scarce and that they are not well cared for. Karen loves McKeesport but she said, "McKeesport needs more communication to move it forward."



Karen Elkins. Photo by Raniah Allen-Mitchell

When Jill Simonetta was a teen she worked for a group called Manpower which paid teens to fix their neighborhoods. Jill is a server at Red Lobster and loves to garden in her spare time. Jill likes the parks in McKeesport and likes the Pop Up and Plays. The 56-year old lives in Peterson Plan.



Jill Simonetta. Photo by Raniah Allen-Mitchell.



Isaiah Johnson.





*Martha Rial shows Skylar Palmer some camera tricks.  
Photo by Andrew Conte*