

# The College Hill News

DECEMBER 2021



## What's Inside



2

Power boost for  
Skylanders' soccer  
Halloween bash



3

Halloween bash  
SCCC professor  
spotlight



4

Historic mansion  
International  
student spotlight



## Historic mansion breathes new life with hands-on learning by students

By Laura J. Marchese

College Hill Writer

After two decades of being closed, a century old historic building on campus is being renovated with plans for a bright future.

Sussex County Community College's Horton Mansion in Newton is being renovated by adjuncts and students from the construction/trade program. For the first time in more than 20 years, adjunct professors and their students are bringing life back into the Horton Mansion.

Jason Fruge, dean of Technical Occupations at SCCC, explained that after Horton Mansion was inspected and deemed a safe building, students and teachers set up shop inside, using their hands and minds to restore and renovate the building and its contents. They have been utilizing the building as a construction/trade programs lab since this past September.



The adjunct professors and students have begun "to rough in new electricity one space/room at a time," said Fruge. A nice thing is that "for the first time we have been able to walk in and turn on a light switch."

Frue, along with SCCC President Dr. Jon Connolly and SCCC Foundation Executive Director Stan Kula, shared the same vision to restore, make some minor renovations and discuss various usages for the Horton Mansion. He said there is no set budget to renovate the mansion. The equipment and materials needed to renovate the building have been funded by the Perkins Grant, which is a state funded grant for construction/technical programs.

Frue explained that there was original artwork that was painted on canvas prints which was displayed on the ceiling of the chapel. The eight hand-painted canvas prints were taken down and have been wrapped and kept for future framing. The prints are paintings of religious figures. Sherry Fitzgerald, the dean of Arts and Humanities; and associate vice president of Academic Affairs, along with members and students of the arts department will be discussing the best way to mount the paintings. When the paintings are framed they will be brought back to the mansion to be displayed.

The Horton Mansion is a historic building located on the campus of SCCC. It was built in 1858 by a man named John A. Horton, a settler from Newton. Horton became successful as an apprentice in the saddle and harness making business. He then moved back to Newton where he built his mansion. Horton passed away in November of 1858, the same year the mansion was completed.

The mansion was sold to Fr. Richard Pattini, superior of the Missionary Society of the Salesian Congregation in 1928 and later became Don Bosco College. The property was used as the main hall for educators and priests. The building consisted of a chapel, dining room, kitchen, dormitories and classrooms. The mansion was heated with a combination of steam and hot water, or oil. The Horton Mansion and the campus were sold in 1984 to the county of Sussex and became SCCC. The Horton Mansion is now being reformed and reopened for the first time this year.

Frue said the structure under the building is very sturdy "and still has a ton of life left." (continued on page 4)

## Revamped Writing Center encourages SCCC students' creativity to flourish

*Through its efforts, the Center has brought joy and growth to its students*

By Hailey Read

College Hill Writer

Through employing more writers, adding new availability and spreading the word, Sussex County Community College in Newton has found the sweet spot between work and play at the Writing Center.

The Writing Center, located in the Student Center, has been a quiet space for the past few years for student writers who are seeking feedback and guidance on their work. However, over the last summer the center has received a serious revamping with the goal of being a more interactive and engaging experience between the consultant and the student.

Olivia Maikisch, a former SCCC student, has recently been hired as the Writing Center coordinator. When she started in August, one of the first services that Maikisch did away with was one previously offered that allowed for students to send in paper and then receive written feedback from a consultant.

This change was the first that pushed students to practice self-discipline and actively attend the Writing Center.

"I really wanted to emphasize the importance of the verbal exchange that happens within a session between the writer and the consultant," Maikisch comments. "Being able to negotiate and have a lasting conversation about a writer's draft is the most critical part of any Writing Center session. That conversation is the key space where ideas are generated, explored, and further understood, and it's a fundamental component of how the Writing Center operates."

Another change implemented this semester was longer hours of availability. From Monday to Thursday, the Writing Center has been staffed with trained writing consultants who are ready to help any student with any kind of writing for any class.

Maikisch notes that by offering more hours, the center has been able to satisfy many more students, not only on an educational level but also on a personal level.

"Many students have expressed that the Writing Center has been a safe space where they've been able to ask the questions that they might have been too afraid to ask elsewhere," says Maikisch. "I think students enjoy the deeply personal connection that they can develop with the various consultants here, which helps build a trusting relationship. It's that personal bond that really allows students to be vulnerable with their writing."

The Writing Center is located in the Student Center on the SCCC campus. For information regarding the hours of operation for the Writing Center in the spring 2022 semester, check the SCCC website or contact omaikisch@sussex.edu.



# Power provides power boost for Skylanders' soccer

An interview with Skylanders men's soccer captain, Owen Power

By Oliver Lanyi  
College Hill Writer

Owen Power is the captain of the Sussex County Community College's soccer team. Who would believe he didn't even consider playing for the team at first? This student of engineering has one more semester left at SCCC and after getting his associate's degree, he plans to transfer to New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT) in Newark. In an exclusive interview with "College Hill," Power explains his journey...from center back to moving forward to his next chapter.

Before graduating high school, it seemed like Owen had it all figured out. In the end, he changed his mind. "Initially, my plan was to go to a four-year college as I felt like that is the path I wanted to take," says Power. "After, I looked at my options closely and figured the best thing to do would be to go to Sussex."

Playing college soccer was not in Power's plans. "At first, I didn't plan to play soccer at the college at all," he says. "I just wanted to do school and work. Everything changed during my orientation day here, when I met former teammate, who kept telling me: 'You should play, you should play!' He persuaded me, gave me coach's phone number. I texted coach Frank, talked to him and he convinced me to join the team."

Power does not regret his decision. "I could not have even imagined how incredible these past two seasons were," he said.

With his visage, Power is like Sergio Ramos, but he says he's the complete opposite of the former Real Madrid and Spain captain: "I'm not the quickest nor strongest, I prefer to use my head more; to be at the right place at the right time. Trying to make good decisions and simple things right, while working hard."

## Is there any opponent you enjoy and, on the other hand, don't like to play against?

"I prefer to play against big, strong guys, as I can annoy them very well!" he says. "At the other hand, I don't enjoy defending short and fast players. I just can't catch them up! I always need to give myself a few yards to begin with."

Most players enjoy being in charge of the game and eventually adding their name on the score sheet. However, Power prefers to help his team in a different way. "I've played both as a center back and right back, but my preferred position is center back, even I've spent most of the season playing on the side of the field in defense," says Powers. "It was not easy to adjust to, as I had to go forward and back as a right back, but my brain was not always letting me to! I always had that center back playing mentality. I just want to sit back and help to keep the clean sheet, if I can."

## School, soccer and work; how do you manage everything?

"Besides of studying and playing for the soccer team, I also work – every Saturday and Sunday, sometimes even Fridays," he says. "I'm a waiter at a wedding venue. During the week when I have school and soccer. I don't get up very early, as I'm not a morning person. My classes start around 9 or 10 and they are over by 3, so I wake up pretty late. As soon as my classes are finished, I have to go to my soccer practice."

Owen also admitted he is the team taxi driver: "I have to pick my teammates from the house so I need to leave early to get them, make sure they are ready, get to training," he says. "By the time I get back home from training, it's around 6-7 o'clock, so then I do my schoolwork until like 10 p.m. As soon as the clock hits this time, I give myself some free time. The start of the semester was tough at first, had to make myself a schedule. We are doing soccer six days a week, having Sundays off. Usually we have games Tuesday and Saturday and that means every other day we are training."

## The college team is known for its diversity. Have you learned something about new cultures?

"Our team is mostly made of international players," says Power. "I think there are six guys who are actually from the States. It's interesting, as it is a lot of different playing styles mixed up together, different types of players all combining a whole new, unique play. There's a diverse group of people in the team. We have guys from Spain, Portugal, England, Colombia. It's interesting to look at their habits and to learn about their routines. For example, I really like Spanish siesta! You know, just to take a little break, get yourself a little rest, rejuvenate a little bit – I think it would be nice for me."

## Is it hard to get your spot in the starting lineup?

"I have to say every player in our team is really good and there's always a competition for places," he says. "If I lost my place to one of the guys, I could see why. If someone else deserves to be playing, good for them. Everyone's good, anyone could be playing any amount of minutes."

## How important is winning to you?

"There's two teams we really want to beat," says Power. "We always want to win every game, but there's two particular games we really care about winning, one of them is Camden. There was one game this year when we won overtime and afterwards there was some yelling, talking going on," he explains. "I got injured in that game; I was on crutches and I just came to guys to tell them not to do anything silly."

## SCCC is all about family and Power sees himself as a father figure for his team.

"The whole program is all about family," he says. "In our team, I kind of see myself as a father figure, as I'm the one with a car! Taking my teammates to training, go food shopping, if they need ride somewhere, they would be texting me. I don't get paid for it, but I love doing it. It's a fun thing to do with my teammates."

## What would you tell somebody who considers SCCC?

"It's the best choice you can make," says Power. "There's so much more than just playing soccer. You have a whole family here, you are doing what you love, you are in a program that has high ambitions. You will enjoy every second. In terms of classes, I've made a couple of friends you help each other out, make yourself better on and off the field."

# SCCC Halloween Bash was a smashing, scary good time

*Games, food, and a NorthStar Production of The Tell-Tale Heart*

By Hailey Read  
College Hill Writer

The spirit of Halloween was alive and well at Sussex County Community College in Newton this year with the annual Halloween festivities being a smashing success in the community.

This year, the spooky celebration of choice was the Halloween Bash, which was hosted on the SCCC campus and featured games, food and a live performance of "The Tell-Tale Heart." With more than 75 people in attendance, the audience huddled together under the Field B pavilion to enjoy "The Tell-Tale Heart," produced in partnership with NorthStar Productions on Oct. 28 at 6 p.m.

NorthStar Productions, a local production company based in Sussex County, worked in partnership with the SCCC theater department to deliver the performance for the Halloween Bash. This is the first collaboration between the two, with SCCC students getting first-hand experience in working directly with real-world producers, directors and actors.

Allison Ognibene, SCCC Theater director and professor comments: "They're using what they're learning in the classroom and applying it directly. We wanted to have a seasoned actor so the student actors could see the professionalism. The students are taking this very seriously."

Ognibene's production class was actively taught ushering and house management from the partnership through hands-on performances this semester. Professor Jim Berkheiser, who teaches acting at SCCC, had his student actors learn valuable stage presence and techniques from this collaboration as well.

Overall, the students greatly benefited from the collaboration and were elated to actively put what they learned into practice for the audience to see. The excitement and energy of the performance completely captivated the crowd that night at the Halloween Bash. (**continued on next page**)





## SCCC Professor plays roles in theater, public relations and playwriting

By Laura J. Marchese  
College Hill Writer

Allison McCartney Ognibene of Sparta is a multi-talented person who juggles many hats.

She is an adjunct professor of theater at Sussex County Community College in Newton; public relations specialist for social media at County College of Morris in Randolph; and is the artistic director for North Star Theater Company in Ogdensburg. In her spare time, Ognibene also runs the youth group at Our Lady of the Lake in Sparta; and is working on her first playwright.

Ognibene's experience and passion for theater is the reason she is making great strides in improving and growing the theater program at SCCC.

"I'm so honored to be teaching a theater workshop next semester at SCCC," Ognibene said. "I'm really thankful that Sussex County Community College has provided us space to perform, and I thoroughly enjoy working with the students at SCCC because they really are giving of themselves. They really take this seriously and it's just a wonderful opportunity to be the heart of this growing theater program."

She explained that the class will be taking a deeper dive into incredible works and will be putting one of them on its feet.

What she loves most about working with her students at SCCC is that "each week we delve into something different," she said. "Whether we talk about what the director does, what the stage manager does, the scenic designer, the lighting designer, or the sound designer... there are so many different areas that you can work in, and we talk about the different responsibilities and roles of the theater."

Many of Ognibene's students are pleased with her class and directing.

"Working in the theater program at SCCC has been fun and a great experience," said Nick Batelli, one of Ognibene's students. "I learned a lot working with the actors and working with Allison Ognibene. I think she's a good professor and really cares about wanting to put on a show for the theater program."

Another student, Anthony Guerra from the Acting I class, said "What I like about Professor Ognibene is she gets stuff done. Even though I'm an acting student she let me go with them to all access."

Ognibene was born in Brooklyn and went to Allentown College which is now called DeSales University in Center Valley, PA where she majored in theater. She then attended Brooklyn College where she completed her graduate degree in performing arts management. When asked when she started to act, Ognibene said "since she was born;" and that she was "always a ham." She said her earliest memory of performing was when she was in nursery school in Brooklyn, when she was singing her heart out.

"My great grandmother gave me the biggest round of applause and I loved that connection," she described. "There's this connection you have with the audience, this sense of being alive, it's a transcendental experience in theater." Theater is "truly effervescent and lively and bubbles over."

After trying different things and taking chances, Ognibene said she learned what she can and cannot do. Realizing her strengths, Ognibene decided to focus more on the management side of the business. Dots started to connect for Ognibene when she was in college. That was when she discovered she was good at marketing and management; and when she learned about box office and the management of theater. She said she liked connecting things and making things work. It was those connections that led to the creation of the North Star Theater Company in Ogdensburg.

It was Ognibene, along with a group of people, that came up with the idea of starting the theater company. This idea began at a diner when this group shared its vision of a theater company that would include actors from every age group. Founders of this theater company include Professors Jim Berkheiser, Bill Fell and Deborah Gianuzzi; Jodi Halteman, a music teacher; Phil Cocilovo, theater director and retired teacher; and Donna Fell, businesswoman and former owner of Sparta Books.

Cocilovo is the director of the "Trifles" play which was scheduled to be performed at SCCC theater the first two weekends in December. It is part of the "Closer Look" three play performances. The other two performances are "21 Chump Street: The Musical" that is being directed by Alexander McCully, who graduated as a theater major from SCCC. McCully will be starring in "21 Chump Street" and will be singing in the show.



(continued from pg. 2)

"Being a part of the North Star Theater and SCCC performance in the Tell-Tale Heart was one of the best experiences that I've had," says Laura Marchese, an SCCC student who played the role of the visitor in the production. "I enjoyed developing my character and had fun working with all the other actors, professors, and all involved that helped make it a great show."

The actors involved were picked solely on a volunteer basis and were a splice of both SCCC students and North Star actors. Counting actors and crew, a total of nine people operated the act.

As the partnership between North Star and SCCC grows, this also brings with it the funds to purchase the rights of many different plays and shows, making the possibility of multiple plays a semester a plausible reality. This means more opportunities for involvement will arise for both cast and crew in the near future, Ognibene confirms.

Wendy Fullem, who is the executive assistant to the SCCC president and board and is a faculty member of the music department, was very pleased with the production, saying, "It's a true partnership. It was a great show. I'm thrilled."

The other production that was organized to take place this semester at SCCC is titled "A Closer Look," which features "21 Chump Street: The Musical" and "Trifles." For any inquiries on the production or how to get involved in the next one, please contact Ognibene at [aognibene@sussex.edu](mailto:aognibene@sussex.edu).



Ognibene said that the SCCC theater department wanted to showcase the student actors from SCCC theater classes, for their roles in "Trifles" and in their past performances in "The Tell-Tale Heart" that was performed this past October. She explained that part of North Star's mission statement is to showcase and foster new talent and give people opportunities.

McCully is very talented and North Star wanted to showcase his directing talents, Ognibene said. The third performance is performed by the SCCC members of the chorus and directed by Phillip Lid, voice professor at SCCC. "One of the great things about SCCC theater program is their relationship with Centenary University theater program in Hackettstown," said Ognibene. "How fortunate it is for students at SCCC to be able to work with a four-year university that has a great reputation in the theater community."

Centenary University has an equity house on its campus; acting students can work and be around professional carpenters, actors and scenic designers, said Ognibene. She said she feels that it's a great experience for anybody. Some of the shows at Centenary College have auditions and SCCC theater students are encouraged to audition!

She is so excited to see the relationship develop and flourish between SCCC and Centenary University.

"Bravo to Dean Sherry Fitzgerald, associate vice president of Academic Affairs and dean of Arts and Humanities, and the President of the College Dr. Jon Connolly, Ph. D and the administration that has made this articulation agreement happen," said Ognibene.

## (Historic mansion breathes new life... continued from page 1)

The doors are made of solid wood, and despite needing to replace a panel or two, the stained-glass windows are still intact. The mansion was built with cut stone and is considered a Gothic revival architectural building. The mansion was not built with outside shutters on the windows because this feature is not considered part of Gothic architecture. The mansion was built with pointed arch windows, a rock-faced limestone exterior, and a wrap-around veranda. The building has some original light fixtures, and any original parts of the mansion will not be touched, according to Fruge.

SCCC's Construction/Technical program consists of Fruge, Adjunct Professors John Mackay, Damian Sabba and Stephen Brunner. All adjunct staff are licensed general contractors.

"It would be nice to have the first floor fixed up for prospective students to be shown firsthand what projects the students are working on, and what projects they have completed in the mansion," Fruge said, "This would be a great showcase for that."

# International student shares "win win" experience as SCCC midfielder

An interview with Skylanders women's soccer player, Paula Herold

By Oliver Lanyi  
College Hill Writer



Leaving her country, living without her family in a foreign country and adjusting to a whole new culture – both off and on the field – was a struggle for this midfielder, but it did not infringe upon her success and growth as a student athlete.

Paula Herold is a 20-year-old international student from Bielefeld, Germany, who joined the Sussex County Community College team in Newton two years ago. She started playing soccer with boys in her hometown, then she transferred to Arminia Bielefeld, a team which currently performs in Bundesliga (Germany's soccer top flight).

In this interview with "College Hill," Herold shares her experiences and feelings about being in the United States and playing for SCCC.

### Moving to a different country is a huge step in life and requires a lot of growth. How would you evaluate your stay here so far?

"Due to causes of pandemic, my first year here was all secluded," says Herold. "It was kind of like living in a bubble. Ultimately, it helped our team, as we live in apartments with all the international players. We had a chance to connect with each other and became a family. During these times we had a lot of time to spend with each other and build friendships which will last for a lifetime."

### How is it to live without your family in a foreign country?

"I experienced lot, lot of growth," says Herold. "Ever since I am here, every day is a new experience, especially in the beginning. I would say I grew a lot as a person and a student. I am happy to say I also grew as an athlete, as the coaches pay a lot of attention to our athletic needs and we must improve to become a better player. However, I do not want to pinpoint just one thing, as I realized there is so many small things I improved and grew with after coming here."

**Herold explained how the college program here is different to ones in her home country and highlighted the quality of SCCC agenda.**

"It is an interesting combination of studies and sports," she says. "You can also be an athlete and student in Germany, but here in the United States is a bigger focus on sports and teams. For us international players, it is a fantastic opportunity to come here to study and be able to pursue our sport dream at the same time."

*"The focus on sports is much bigger here than in Germany" -Paula Herold*

### Being a student athlete might be wearisome – but is that what you came for?

"In Germany, we also have university teams, but they are generally small, with not a lot of practice and it is not at the same level as it is here in the United States," explains Herold. "Here, we practice five times a week and we also have a matchday. During our preseason, it is even harder, as we practice twice a day. Sometimes we have two to three games a week, so the schedule changes accordingly, and training sessions are cut down a little bit, but usually, we are on the field at least five times a week."

**Handling school and being a part of the college soccer team is not an easy task. It takes a lot of determination, focus and discipline and Herold is a bright example that one can succeed on both fronts, if he or she takes the initiative.**

"It can be stressful, especially before the start of the season!" she admits. "You just need to find your rhythm. What helps me are study hall hours which I attend from time to time and in general what helped me, personally, was to make a schedule for myself where I plan what I am going to do for the next two to three weeks. I'll check all my assignments and stuff I have to do and I'm trying to do it in advance, so I'm less stressed." The study hall hours are being provided by the coaches Frank Vernacchio and Mike Rath, intending to get their player's exceptional care and attention.

### What led you to join SCCC and become a Skylander?

"An agency helped me with my decision," says Herold. "They uploaded a video of me with my soccer highlights, so the coaches could see me and contact me. Right in the beginning when I got in touch with coaches Mike and Frank, I really liked the way they presented the program and not only that. What really resonated with me were the core values, talking about the team as a family. Even our first contact was just a phone call, you could tell these guys are bleeding for Sussex and truly love the game. That's how I am as a player – I love it, so I wanted to be coached by someone who loves the game just as much as I do. That is when I knew this college is going to be the right fit for me."

*"The values of the college resonated with me" -Paula Herold*

### Every player has her strengths and Herold's answer was surprising.

"My greatest strength is my natural confidence both on and off the field, which helps me to perform in games with a lot of pressure," she says. "This aspect helps not to surrender, stress just won't affect me. I would even say I perform better under pressure. Being this way, it also helps my team to play better, as thanks to my confidence, my teammates can just pass me the ball and trust me I won't panic and lose it."

**There are a lot of players outside who inspire the masses with their display, but it is also important to stay true to oneself and try to highlight one's own abilities.**

"I must admit I do not necessarily have a player I look up to," says Herold. "There are a few players who I enjoy their playing style and attitude both on and off the field – big names like Cristiano Ronaldo, Kevin De Bruyne or Joshua Kimmich, who plays the same position as I do. Anyway, I have to say I am trying to create my own personality and playing style and not just to "copy" some star name."

**Healthy rivalry is a good thing but, in the end, it is all about team.**

"We have a lot of competition in our team, but not in a negative way," she says. "We are trying to push each other to become better. If one player starts instead of another, there are no harsh feelings. We are genuinely happy for everyone who plays. In the end, whoever is better and helps the team to benefit the most should get the minutes."

**Coming from a country which achieved remarkable things internationally, Herold compared the game in Germany and here.**

"The main difference is that soccer in the United States is mostly focused on athleticism and fitness, while in Germany it's more about technical aspects of the game," says Herold. "There is a stereotype that soccer here it is just "kick and run," but the system we play in our team is close to ones being used in Europe – to play from the back, hold the ball, control the game, switch the point from left to right, and always push forward."

*"Soccer here is not just kick and run!" -Paula Herold*

### What would you tell a student/player who is considering to join the team at SCCC?

"I would definitely recommend joining Sussex!" she says. "It is a wonderful team with a family environment, you have everything needed, all the tools to become a better player and student. You can persuade both, your athletic and academic careers and at the same time you grow as a player and a team. The support you get is just incredible – not only from the coaches but also from players. I have to say I am grateful to past players who already graduated at Sussex," concludes Herold. "They wrote and left us a letter to encourage us and the support we got through social media was also incredible. It's definitely an experience you won't find in any other program."