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The Newsletter of The Wood Honors College  
at Shippensburg University

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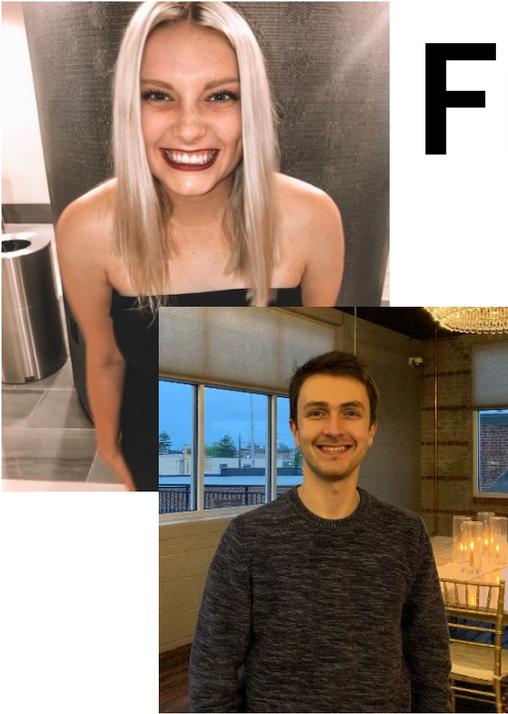
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**T**he last lap. The final movie of a four-part series—highly anticipated but much of the same. That’s pretty much where I’m at two months into my senior year. At the end of my *second-to-last* First Day of School, I realized how fast time has flown by these past four years. I’m fortunate enough to say that I’ve made my mark on the Honors College and Ship and I’m proud to leave the newsletter in such good hands (Hi, Luke). Yes, I still have a whole second semester to finish up, but by then I’ll be on the job hunt and my existential dread will set in about if I’m *really* ready to go off into the real world. So for now, I’ll keep a smile on my face and enjoy each day. I’m too excited about what the future holds to be stressed over silly things. But to all the stress I’ve endured these past four years, I say this: It’s been real, it’s been fun. It just hasn’t been *real fun*.

K.

**T**his is my favorite time of year, honestly. It makes me feel so full, so alive. I get to listen to The Beach Boys’ *Pet Sounds* every day (which, contrary to popular opinion, is a cool-weather album through and through—see my column for more). I get to mulch leaves instead of mow grass. I get to wear colorful sweaters and eat oatmeal for breakfast. I get to watch the earth die. It’s beautiful. Most people aren’t psyched about the slow but sure approach of winter. I think the crumbly, dead leaves remind us of our mortality. We should stop letting that bring us down! The truth is this: one day we will fall like the leaves in autumn. Our time on Earth is finite, so let’s let this season remind us to live life to the fullest. Step one of that is definitely to read the latest issue of *Jmrs*, so you’re on the right track.

L.



The Shoes on the Danube Bank. This memorial in Budapest, Hungary was created by Hungarian filmmaker Can Togay in 2005 to honor the Jews killed in the city during World War II.

## Finding Hope in Past Hate

By Mari Reott, Honors Junior

*Every summer, two Honors students from each of the fourteen PASSHE universities are selected to study abroad as part of the PASSHE Summer Honors Program. Each student receives a full scholarship that covers tuition, room and board, travel, and required field trips. This is Mari's story of participating in the 2019 PASSHE Summer Honors Program in Central Europe.*

During my first time traveling in Europe, I was able to experience and fall in love with some of the most culturally rich places in the world in the time frame of only three-and-a-half weeks. Even when our group would be traveling on a nine-hour bus ride, I felt like I was seeing some of the most beautiful places. The majority of our study abroad program was spent in Krakow, Poland. This town drastically changed my perspective on the world and its past. From our classes, I learned that history is not contained in just a textbook. The buildings we saw throughout the town showed that because there were examples from every architectural era. It was kind of funny that some of the "newer" buildings in Europe were built in the same period as the oldest ones in the United States. I also learned so much about Jewish culture that went far beyond the Holocaust (or the Shoah as our professor noted is a more correct name). I feel like I better understand minority groups in our society today by looking at the Jewish population throughout history, instead of just in the 1940s.

What I learned in the classroom was amazing, but our field trips to Schindler's Factory and Auschwitz will forever be priceless to me. We were able to learn about history in the place where it happened, not a thousand miles away in a classroom. I stood in the center of Birkenau where ten thousand Jews were transported by train a day, some immediately to their deaths. It was almost unfathomable to realize what atrocities went on in that place. During my trip, I had the opportunity to see how the Holocaust affected areas other than Poland. We visited Germany, the Czech Republic, and Hungary (as well as a quick trip to Slovakia where our bus broke down). I remember standing on the edge of the Danube River in Budapest, Hungary looking at the memorial of over two hundred Jews who were executed at that very spot. I never realized how far the effects extended throughout Europe. It was one of the most beneficial experiences I have ever had, and I realized that even in modern times, when things may not look so bright, people always have hope. I saw several glimpses of that when I talked to locals in each area, and it was truly uplifting.

The time I spent in Central Europe taught me about myself, too. I had the opportunity to meet students from all over Pennsylvania and see the similarities and differences among us when we were all in an area that was not so familiar to us. By learning about these students, who I can confidently call my friends, I learned more about myself and the abilities we all have to reach our dreams. I wish I could put that in a way that did not sound so vague, but the students in this group gave me so much hope in the future. Whether we live across the Atlantic or down the road from each other, we all have an experience to share or knowledge to offer that can make the world a better place.





The 2019 Reach Out team poses with the children of the Haitian batey.

## Following in Her Footsteps

By Rhiannon Leonard, Honors Senior

*Reach Out is the Honors College's service-learning project in the Dominican Republic. Each year, Honors students and faculty travel to Santo Domingo to implement new curricular materials and work with teachers and students at the Pathways of Learning School. This is Rhiannon's story of when the team visited a Haitian batey, a small sugar workers' town, in the Dominican Republic.*

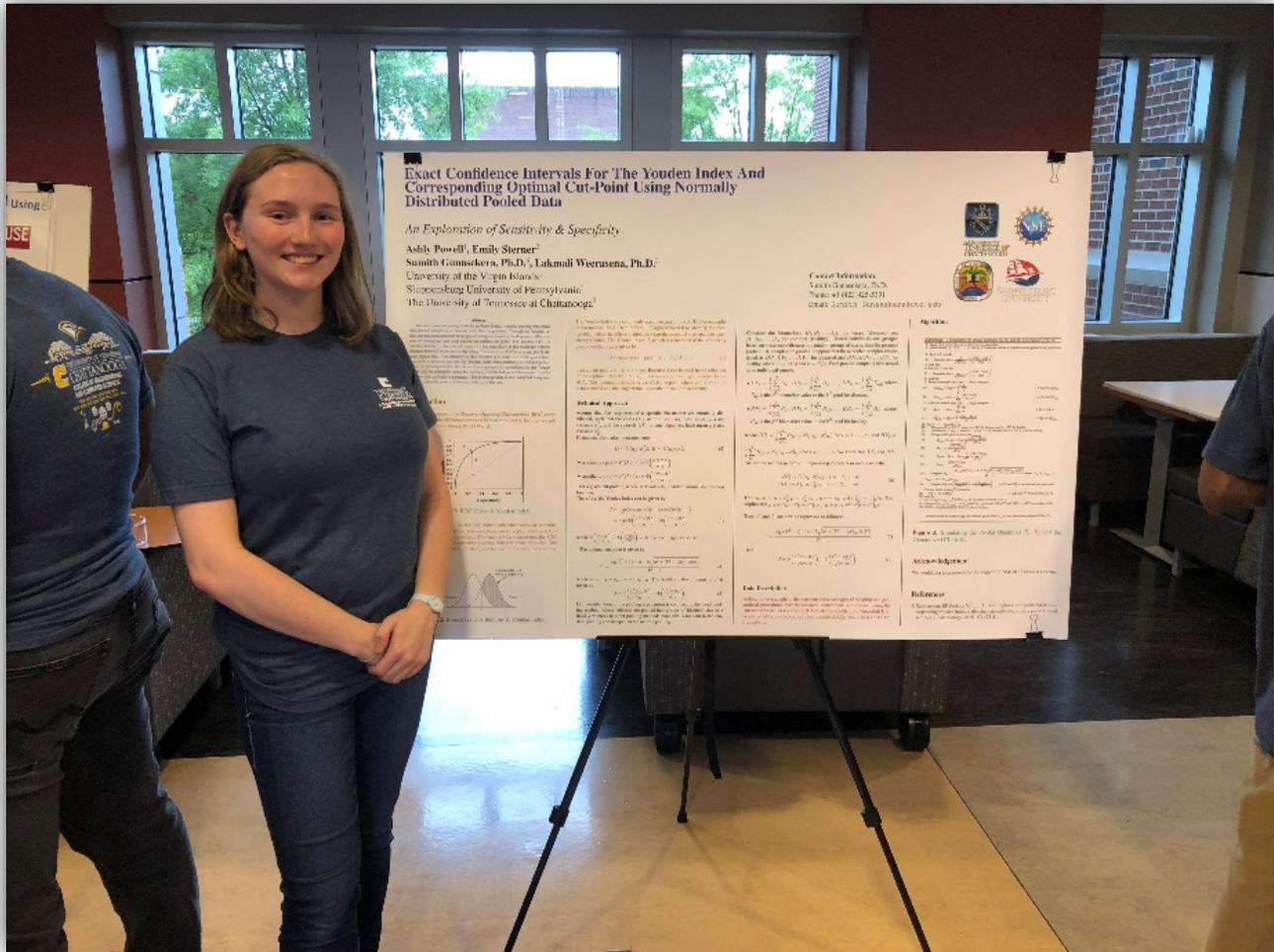
**W**e arrived at the Haitian batey around two in the afternoon. One by one we piled out of the van, eager to find the friends we had made the day before. The van that transported us was recognizable in the community, and the children of the batey came running, knowing that we'd come to play. From the moment we stepped onto the dirt road, our hands were tightly held by our new friends. Excitedly, they led us to the blacktop to play. I was all at once hit with the reality that although I loved to play, I hadn't done so in years. The grip on my hands shifted as the young girls circled me to play hand games. I desperately wanted to please them, so I played along as best as I could—a hard task when the instructions are given to you in a language you only barely speak.

The games evolved, but the fun never stopped. Children giggled and tried to kick each other during piggyback rides. I obtained a new awareness of my surroundings in the hopes of being saved from the strike of a stray soccer ball. My girl posse weaved its way across the crowded blacktop in a game of tag. Eventually, we even sang and danced to one song we all knew, the “Macarena.”

After a while, my fellow travelers and I tired from playing so intensely in the hot sun. We knew we'd be leaving soon, but we decided to visit the local church first to greet the community leaders before we left. Hand in hand with the children, we walked to the church together. The children who did not have a hand to hold raced by us, pulling handcrafted cars by lengths of string.

When we arrived at the church, we were asked to sit among the children so that the pastor could say a few words. The room was packed from wall to wall, and the toddler who had been quietly attached to my hand raised his arms so that I'd pick him up. With him in my lap and another young girl holding my free hand, a child across the room volunteered to say a blessing for us before the pastor could speak. This girl had known us for just over twenty-four hours. She lives in unimaginable poverty with her loved ones. And yet, she took the time to earnestly pray for the safety, well-being, and blessing of my fellow travelers and me.

This one girl is my inspiration in life. Her positively selfless actions have given me a greater appreciation of life. The power of her words has resonated in the way I conduct myself and treat others. She has made me humble. She has made me grateful. And I am convinced that she will make the world a better place. One day, I hope to do the same, following in her footsteps.



Emily stands in front of the poster detailing her research on the Youden Index at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga in summer 2019.



## The Endless Possibilities of Math

By Emily Sterner, Honors Junior

During my sophomore year as a mathematics major in the Wood Honors College, I began searching for a more enriching and educational summer experience instead of my usual summer job of scooping ice cream. I explored internships, but then I found a web page listing multiple math REUs. These REUs, which stands for Research Experience for Undergraduates, are funded by the National Science Foundation and are meant to spark interest in the world of research in college students like me. I used this list to apply to REUs at many different colleges and universities, each with different research topics.

I was offered a position in one of these REUs at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. For ten weeks this past summer, I participated as an undergraduate student researcher in a program called ICompBio, which stands for Interdisciplinary Computer Science and Biology. The University provided me with housing, a meal plan, and a stipend.

As a math major, the REU taught me about the possibilities of math research. I learned about concepts that had not yet been discussed in my classes, such as the Youden Index, which is a way to test the accuracy of diagnostic tests. I also learned more math and statistics-oriented ways to code using the computer programming languages Python and R. As well as learning new skills, I had the chance to apply the skills I have gained through my years of math classes.

During the ten weeks, my research mentor and I worked together on our research project about the Youden Index. Not only did he instruct me on the subject of our research, but he also advised me on properly writing a mathematical research paper. With his guidance, I wrote sections of the paper and calculated the Youden Index. The paper we wrote will even be published!

As an Honors student, attending the ICompBio REU let me connect with other students passionate about STEM. These other students came from colleges all over the United States, with some coming from as far away as the University of the Virgin Islands. Surprisingly, out of all of the other students, I attend the school that is the furthest north. It was a very diverse group, and everyone had different life experiences. Though I did not know anyone when I started, I left having made a group of great new friends.

REUs are extremely competitive and being a member of the Wood Honors College made my application stand out among so many other students. Because of the opportunity to be a part of ICompBio, I have a better understanding of the many interdisciplinary uses of mathematical research. I will be able to use the skills I learned, both technical and professional, in my career at college and in the workforce. I was in a new city, hundreds of miles from home, and it gave me a chance to begin my journey as an adult.





LUKE vs. the WORLD!



## Read This When You Have Thirty-Eight Minutes to Spare

By Luke Hershey, Honors Junior

I was eleven years old when G-Mom—that’s what my hip grandmother likes to be called—introduced me to her vinyl record collection. She had hundreds of those mysterious cardboard squares piled in the top corner of a closet in her bedroom. At the time, I was the world’s biggest Green Day fan and in the middle of transforming my physical looks to match those of the dudes in the band. I had let my hair grow down to my shoulders. I painted my fingernails black. I prayed every night and begged God to forgive me for listening to songs that featured the f-word. You know, typical punk stuff.

As you can imagine, I was mostly unimpressed by the titles G-Mom had in her set. Johnny Mathis’s *In the Still of the Night*. The Jackson 5’s *Triumph*. Charley Pride’s *Songs of Love*. Maybe they’re good albums, but they were way too soft for me. I was on the hunt for something sinister, something with darkness on the cover. (I’m pretty sure my grandparents thought Black Sabbath worshipped Satan, so they didn’t have what I was looking for.)

I was sifting through the records so fast that I almost passed right over the cussing Holy Grail. G-Mom grabbed my arm like she’d spotted a long-lost friend. “I can’t let you miss this one, Luke.” She picked up a slip with cracked edges and a faded cover. It was shamelessly well-used. The image on the front featured four college-aged guys in sweaters feeding a family of goats. In the top right corner in a cartoonish font: The Beach Boys *Pet Sounds*. I sighed. Surfer rock—seriously, G-Mom? I determined instantly that listening to that music would seriously damage my newly-developed persona. G-Mom could see into my skull. “I’m sure it’s not like what you usually listen to, but it’s one of my favorite albums of all-time. It might change your life—if you listen to it. It’ll only take thirty-eight minutes.”

I was starving. G-Mom was going to cook my dinner. I did a quick calculation and surmised that I’d get to eat sooner if I blanked out for forty minutes while the album played. I didn’t protest when she dropped the record on the turntable and let the thing spin. I slumped down on the couch beside my grandmother, and within seconds, I entered the fourth dimension.

G-Mom was right—*Pet Sounds* changed eleven-year-old Luke Hershey’s life, and it has changed my life at least five times since it first graced my ears.<sup>1</sup> The music is transcendental. It has arrangements and song structures that still puzzle professional jazz scholars. It has those trademark harmonies that sound like melted gold. And I can’t forget about Brian Wilson’s falsetto—his voice could bring world peace.<sup>2</sup> *Pet Sounds* is as much a philosophical marvel as it is a sonic marvel. It changed the way I think about love. It changed the way I think about adolescence. (I could probably write a book about the last two sentences alone.)

I wish I could whip up some big, intelligent metaphor about how this applies to you, but really, the sole purpose of this column is to get you to check out *Pet Sounds*. I’m sure it’s not like what you usually listen to, but it’s my favorite album of all-time. It might change your life—if you listen to it. It’ll only take thirty-eight minutes.

<sup>1</sup> SOAPBOX SPEECH #1: The Beach Boys are far from just being a surfer rock group. Pop culture has done The Boys dirty by perpetuating this untruth. Honestly, The Beach Boys are one of the most experimental and innovative bands in the history of American music. Call me crazy, but I would even go as far to say that their influence is greater than that of The Beatles.

<sup>2</sup> A CHALLENGE: Brian Wilson was twenty-three when he wrote, arranged, and produced *Pet Sounds*. I’m twenty-one right now, and I’ve... graduated from high school. Is that impressive? Maybe. It doesn’t feel very impressive when I listen to *Pet Sounds*. I hope Brian’s story inspires you to do something great sooner rather than later.

# //The Artists' Bookend//

"The Ladder Builder"

by Andrea Kling, Honors Junior

*inspired by Robert Frost's "After Apple Picking"*

I build my long, two-pointed ladder higher  
always reaching towards the top.  
There are piles of leaves below me,  
the kind you would dive into as a kid—  
I know they will not catch me soft,  
so I climb down,  
I am done with ladder building now.  
I am going to find company  
that will help me forget my aching shoulders  
and the roughness built into my hands.

The evening will fall early,  
but I know that this shared laughter will not,  
love flying around in all directions  
over empty apple-cider mugs.  
The weight of the thought  
of the next day's work  
pushes me to bed.  
There are ten thousand rungs to be built,  
so many that repetition repeats itself.

I go to sleep knowing the next day  
will bring the same feeling of never being able  
to reach the top, reach the end,  
but also the same crisp air,  
the same love flying around evening tables,  
the same beautiful leaves  
falling beside me as I climb  
my endless ladder towards the skies.



“The First of the Last Quesos”  
by Art Vandelay, Honors Janitor

Denis and Reina tied the knot in her parents’ backyard on the same day Usain Bolt won his first gold, and by the time the next-door neighbors hung Christmas lights, they were the proud owners of a hole-in-the-wall Mexican restaurant with a big red sign out front that read “ALWAYS OPEN.” He had worked extra hours at the shipyard and she sold movie tickets on Thanksgiving just to scrape up enough cash for the down payment. It was their dream, their magnum opus, their baby, and they poured every drop of their humanity into making that building sparkle. The churros tasted like their abuelitas’.

On the tenth anniversary of the restaurant’s opening, some lady found, buried in her queso dip, a cherry tomato-sized clump of black hair. Denis whisked away the dish, apologized six or seven times, and promised complimentary entrées before snaking across the crowded room toward the kitchen.

When he kicked open the door, Reina was hunched over the grill, intently flipping chicken breasts and monitoring the browning of the fried rice. To him, she looked like God standing over all that half-cooked food.

“Hey,” he called.

She dragged her head out of her work, looked in his direction, and raised her eyebrows.

“Ven aquí,” he said, motioning with his free hand. His voice was small.

Reina flipped another chunk of chicken and turned the temperature gauge on the grill to six o’clock. She was still holding a spatula as she peered into the dish of queso. “Looks like I left someone a little surprise.”

She touched the hair held captive behind her ear and a thin strand fell to the floor. They both studied the group of homeless spindles for a few seconds. They were instantly reminded of the night earlier that week when Reina had called Denis into the bathroom after her shower. The drain was clogged with dark locks, and there were five inches of water in the bottom of the tub.

Denis sighed and dumped the queso into a trash can. “Maybe you should take over the host stand tonight? Don’t think I don’t remember how to whip up an enchilada.”

They locked eyes, and Reina forced a teeny-tiny smile. As she held the spatula out to be taken, her arm shook like a busted dishwasher. He knew instantly that the handoff would require a little prying.

Eleven months later, the “ALWAYS OPEN” sign by the road was contrasted by a much smaller handwritten notice in the window that said, “closed indefinitely.”



“Your time is limited, so don’t waste it living  
someone else’s life.” - Steve Jobs