



FOCUS

The Official Newspaper of Friends' Central Upper School



Back At It Again: Beth Johnson Returns As Principal

By Vicky Liu '20

10-1-18

Mrs. Beth Davis Johnson '77, our Upper School Principal, is living, breathing, smiling proof that indeed, one can go home again. Friends' Central is undoubtedly "home" for Mrs. Johnson, or "Ms. Beth," as she likes to be called. Ms. Beth attended FCS from pre-K through 12th grade. Ten years after her graduation, she returned by joining Friends' Central's admission office. She later served as the Dean of Students and the Upper School Co-principal for eight years, until 2012, when she left FCS to serve the William Penn Charter School as Director of Upper and Middle School Admission. In July, Ms. Beth finally came home for good to City Avenue, and is now serving as the Upper School principal. She states with enthusiasm, "It feels great to be back on campus. It feels like home." **COTD. ON PAGE 8**



Above, Mrs. Johnson outside.
(Photo by Lydia Varcoe-Wolfson '19)

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At right and below, students enjoy the recent club fair.
(Photos by Lydia Varcoe-Wolfson '19)



Aquarius (Jan.20-Feb.18): As Mercury aligns with Jupiter, your sleep time will get shorter, and you will become increasingly tired. As a result, you won't be able to get through double block seven awake. If you happen to have Mrs. Plunkett, she'll be sure to exclaim, "wake up, sleepy teenagers!"



October Horoscopes To Haunt Your Month

By: Matt Shen '22

Pisces (Feb.19-Mar.20): On Tuesdays, you will start to have more energy and optimism in your work, possibly leading to a positive special report being sent home.



Taurus (Apr.20-May.20): One friendship may slowly deteriorate, but a lovable someone will appear, just in time to get a date for Principal's Night Out!



Gemini (May.21-Jun.20): School will become more difficult as workloads increase, and you will struggle to keep up. Making matters even worse, you will sprint into Mrs. Tomes' office, desperate for a jolly rancher, just to discover that the candy bowl is empty.



Aries (Mar.21-Apr.19): Your confidence will rise this month, and you will triumph in physical and academic opportunities. However, just as you think your month is going well, Ms. Novo will ambush you with one of her famous pop-reading quizzes. Maybe you should've done more than just "scan" those five chapters during homeroom...



Cancer (Jun.21-Jul.22): Art draws you in, and you will develop an enjoyment for music, especially that which is produced by the talented FCS chorus.



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Chinese Students Drop American Names

By: Miles Johnson '19

Part of what makes Friends' Central so special is that our community is comprised of students who come from all different backgrounds and have varied life experiences. Some of our classmates even join us from different countries! Often when students from China join us, they opt to be called by American names as opposed to their given Chinese names in order to assimilate. However, there has recently been a shift in which many Asian students are choosing to go by their given names rather than an adopted American one. What is causing this shift? Furthermore, what is the significance, and what does it mean for these students to go back their original names? I had the pleasure of interviewing Xiping Xie '19 and Zhihao Liu '20, to dig into these questions.

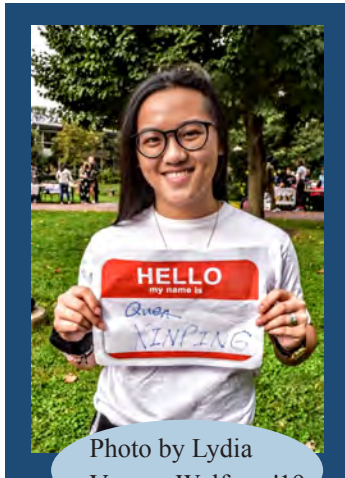


Photo by Lydia Varcoe-Wolfson '19

Xiping was born in Guangzhou, one of the biggest cities in China which is located in Southern China, close to Hong Kong. She left to go to the United States when she was 15 years old. She had to adjust to a totally different and new environment and wanted to fit in. Therefore, when she arrived at FCS, she deserted her Chinese name for a more Western-sounding name, "Quen." The reason she adopted the name "Quen" was because her English class was taught by a foreign teacher, and everyone had an English name. Yet, after her ninth grade year, she asked people to call her Xiping again, as the name reminds her of her identity, and of her home country. It gave her strength to adjust to a new environment she had not be exposed to before. I asked Xiping why she reverted back to her original name. She explained, "I changed it back to my original because I had a period of time that I was losing my identity. Every time people called me 'Quen,' I felt like it wasn't me." When being called "Quen," she felt as if "a lot of [her] characteristics and inner strength" were not being recognized. She continued, "Changing my name back to my original name was just one of the steps of me finding myself."

Next, I asked Zhihao the same question. He shared, "As you know, I reverted back to my original name this semester, but actually I wanted to do that for a long time." Zhihao came to the United States in September 2014. Everyone around Zhihao who was Chinese had an "American name," so as to follow the group, he did the same. Interestingly, Zhihao picked his American name, "Connor," from his favorite video game, Assassin's Creed III, as the main character's name is "Connor Kenway." Zhihao wanted to fit in by changing his name. Yet, when he was called "Connor," he felt like a phony and that he was not true to himself. He said, "Having an American name didn't necessarily make me fit in. In America, identity is very important, and there's no reason for me to try to hide my [true Chinese] identity." Zhihao wanted to switch back to his original name in 2016, but admits he did not have enough courage to do it. After being on a New York Times student journey program over the summer, however, he finally decided to give it a shot and use Zhihao as his name full-time. To his surprise, people were very accepting. Now, when someone calls his name, he no longer feels awkward or out-of-place. Rather, he feels more confident in himself, and he feels much better with his name Zhihao!

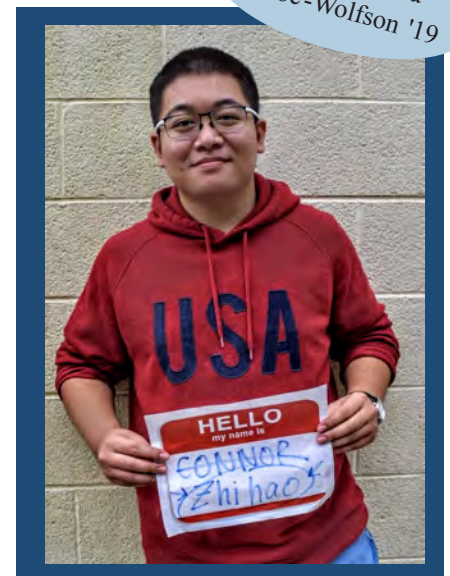


Photo by Lydia Varcoe-Wolfson '19

While being called by their given Chinese names makes Xiping and Zhihao feel affirmed in their identities, this isn't the case for many other Chinese students. For example, Zhongjiu Zhao '19, better known in the United States as "Jay," felt that sticking to "Jay" is simply easier for everyone. He maintained that going by an American name in America avoids a lot of communication difficulties for him. There are myriad reasons he chose "Jay" as his American name. Firstly, he wanted a short name, as when he was in middle school back in China, his teacher made him write his name 100 times as a punishment if he failed a test. Jay is also into the music of hip hop legend, Jay-Z, and around the time he came up with "Jay," he was watching Modern Family and he loved the grandpa character, who, of course, was named "Jay." Jay also told me that his name really fits him as a person and his identity. He said "Jay is simple, just as my presentation in school is not really a complex person, but not so if you know the 'Zhongjiu' side of me."

After conversing with my fascinating Chinese classmates, I conclude that the old expression, "what's in a name?" still holds true. Our Chinese classmates, going either by their original names or by American alias, each have a story and an identity, and chose what they want to be called based on these factors. To be most supportive, we Americans should respect their decisions, and call all of our classmates what they want to be called. Let's name names.

Love Reading Focus? Post a photo on social media of you reading THIS issue of Focus with the hashtag #fcsfocusrocks. The most creative picture will be printed in our next issue!

In July of 2018, Ms. Deirdre Murphy joined the faculty of Friends' Central as a teacher of the Introduction to Drawing art class. Joining us from Earlham College in Indiana, Ms. Murphy has studied art in various ways for years. Whether in the classroom or out, she has always been a passionate artist. Part of what Ms. Murphy loves so much is using color to dictate the mood of a painting. She explains, "Color usually gets the artistic juices flowing, there is always content to look at and admire. Whatever color I choose is how I want this painting to feel." In high school and college, Ms. Murphy was very enthusiastic about art and loved to paint, draw, and sketch.

She had always known that she wanted to be an artist, but her call to teach wasn't apparent until later in life: "I didn't know when I was younger that I was going to be a teacher, but teaching came so naturally and I enjoyed watching the little light bulb go off in students' heads. It's incredibly satisfying to watch them grow."

When asked about her favorite aspects about teaching, Ms. Murphy responds, "I enjoy taking my students out on field trips to art galleries and museums to show them that art isn't just in the classroom. It's everywhere When

not at school, Ms. Murphy works as a professional artist alongside her husband who is a sculptor. In her spare time, she does yoga and gardens, but admits that nothing can replace the love she has for art. "I am very passionate about art, so much so that whenever I am traveling or hanging out with my girlfriends, they usually make fun of me because I am always looking at museums or

With Ms. Deirdre Murphy, Art Comes Alive

By: Katia Campos '22



Above, Ms. Murphy in her studio. (Photo courtesy of her website.)

galleries, looking for inspiration, or just examining the beauty," she exclaims.

Ms. Murphy received an award for composing a print-based piece depicting the migration of birds going past the Schuylkill River. Every Friday, she goes to a lab, where she is hired to paint bacteria, and works with scientists that observe various diseases such as Ebola. She had also partnered with her husband and they created a beautiful piece of art that can be viewed on her website, <http://www.deirdremurphyart.com>, where it shows a blue tainted octagon with the constellations of

bacteria. Ms. Murphy encourages everyone to live authentically, saying that it is important for people to be their true selves, for one never knows where doing so may lead. This is made manifest in Ms. Murphy's life, as her authentic love of art has given her spectacular opportunities. She is looking forward to meeting students and teachers alike at FCS, and is especially excited for an upcoming art project: making anti-collision artwork for an upcoming environmental justice project.

With such an outstanding new art teacher in our midst, it sure seems like this is going to be an extremely memorable year, doesn't it?

Another Coming Out Day, Another Terrific Success

By: Audrey Blinman '22, Contributor, and Ms. Katie Dickerson

Pride month is widely-known and widely-celebrated event, observed every June in recognition of LGBTQ+ visibility and in remembrance of the Stonewall Riots of 1969. Another, lesser-known, yet equally important day has just occurred. October 11th, 2018, is National Coming Out Day. National Coming Out Day is celebrated on the anniversary of the March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights, commemorating and recognizing those who have come out and presenting an opportunity to do so for those who have not. It's an important and inspiring day for the LGBT community, and many people do feel empowered to come out. We recently celebrated National Coming Out Day in the cafeteria during both early and late lunches. It was a wonderful day filled with laughter, joy, and memories.



At left, members of the Gender and Sexual Orientation Alliance pose at their club's booth. (Photo by Lydia Varcoe-Wolfson '19)



This Month In Film

BlacKkKlansman: Most Insightful Movie of 2018

By: Jared Miller '22

Quick disclaimer: BlacKkKlansman is rated R for strong language and violence, which may prevent some of our readers from being allowed to view it.

BlacKkKlansman is about an African-American man and a Jewish man, both of them police detectives, infiltrating the Klu Klux Klan (KKK). The African-American man, named Ron Stallworth, calls the KKK and asks to be a member. He then asks the Jewish man, named Flip Zimmerman, to go to the meetings and pose as Ron.

BlacKkKlansman is an extremely entertaining movie. It has a terrific cast, a fabulous director, and a fascinating plot, which is based on a true story. *BlacKkKlansman* was directed by Spike Lee, the best-ever director of informative movies (in my opinion). He is known for directing *Malcolm X* and *She's Gotta Have it*. He also created the story for *NBA 2k16*. *BlacKkKlansman* is, in my opinion, his best movie. He was given a terrific script, and he executed the movie perfectly.

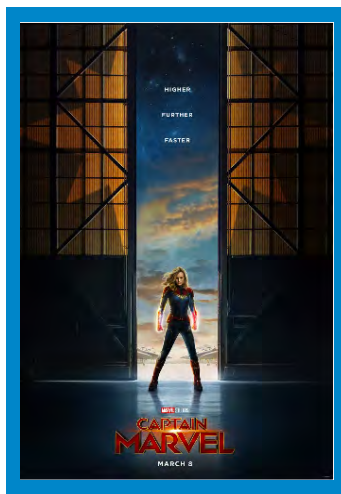
Ron Stallworth, portrayed by John David Washington, is the main character and plays it beautifully. He is the son of Denzel Washington, a well-established actor. However, unlike his father, John was essentially unheard of before this movie. He has starred in Dwayne Johnson's show, *Ballers*, but that was his only starring role. This movie jump-started his career. He has some great scenes in this movie, and I think casting an actor that was mainly unheard of was the right choice for this role. Perhaps due to his great acting in this film, his fame is sure to continue growing.

Captain Marvel Trailer Released

BY: ALEC PLANTE '22

This month, *Marvel Studios* released the trailer for the 21st movie of the *Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU)*, 2019's *Captain Marvel*, directed by Anna Boden and Ryan Fleck. The movie received its first official trailer on September 18, prompting loads of excitement from *Marvel fans*. The trailer introduces us to *Captain Marvel*, who is supposedly the most powerful hero in the *MCU*. *Captain Marvel* looks to bridge the gap between 2018's *Avengers: Infinity War* and *Avengers 4*. The movie will display the history between *Nick Fury* and *Carol Danvers* and explain the end credits scene of *Avengers: Infinity War*. The trailer features *Brie Larson* as the movie's titular character, *Carol Danvers*, who obtains superpowers and is captured by the intergalactic army of the *Kree*, a militaristic and highly advanced alien race. The movie seems to take place as *Carol* crash lands back on *Earth* in the '90s. *Carol*, or *Captain Marvel*, seems to have lost her memory throughout the trailer, and it appears like, back on *Earth*, she is remembering glimpses of her childhood and her time in the *Air Force*. The main villains of the movie are the shape-shifting aliens called the *Skrull*. Their mission is to infiltrate *S.H.I.E.L.D.*, the government organization dedicated to law enforcement, counter-terrorism, and espionage. *S.H.I.E.L.D.* was also the organization that assembled the *Avengers* in 2012's *The Avengers*.

Captain Marvel looks to blend the realism and gritty themes of previous *Captain America* movies with the god-like power of *Thor*. Personally, I am quite excited for *Captain Marvel*, as the ending of *Avengers: Infinity War* left me interested in the next *Avengers* movie, and, hopefully, *Captain Marvel* can close the gap between *Avengers 3* and *Avengers 4* and still be a great stand-alone movie. I am, however, doubtful of the directors, *Anna Boden* and *Ryan Fleck*, as these two have never directed a movie on this scale. Moreover, none of their previous work has been outstanding. This does not detract from my expectations for the movie, though, as sometimes director's most recent work is far better than their earlier films. *James Gunn*, for example, bombed with the live-action movie *Scooby Doo*, yet struck gold with 2014's hit *Guardians of the Galaxy*. *Captain Marvel* has an incredibly difficult job to do by linking the two *Avengers* films. Yet, after the trailer, many fans, including myself, are optimistic and excited for *Captain Marvel*.



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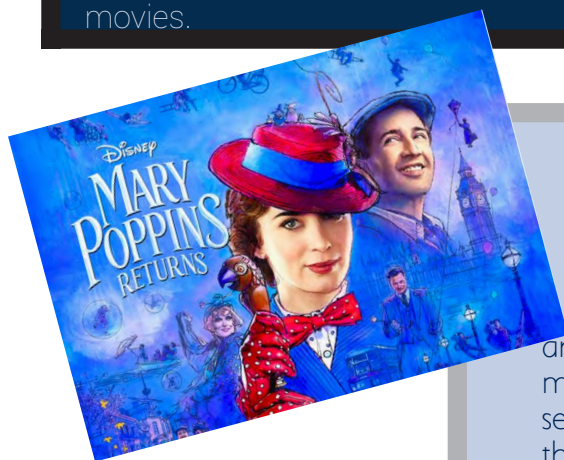
Venom: What to Expect

By Riley Roche '22

Spider-Man is a staple of American superhero pop culture. With *Spider-Man* being so popular, the characters associated with him are as well. Enter *Sony*. After witnessing the success of 2017's *Spider-Man: Homecoming*, which was directed by Jon Watts, the people at Sony believe they can create a *Spider-Man* universe without *Spider-Man*. The first movie to test the water of this film universe is *Venom*, which was just released on October 5. *Venom* is directed by Ruben Fleischer, who is most well-known for directing 2013's *Gangster Squad*. This is Fleischer's first high-budget movie and could be a great launching point for his career.

Unfortunately for Fleischer, the odds are stacked against this movie. The first teaser trailer for *Venom*, released in February of 2018, was met with mixed reviews due to the absence of *Spider-Man*, but most, including myself, were looking forward to what this movie could offer. Now, two trailers and an official poster later, most have written this movie off as dead on arrival. Personally, I think taking a character who's whole origin and motivation is based around *Spider-Man* and having to create a new origin where Spidey is not featured is an incredibly daunting task for the screenwriters.

Overall, do I think making a universe of *Spider-Man* villains without *Spider-Man* is a good idea? No. Yet, I think a *Venom* movie is worth a try. Sony could have found a diamond in the rough with Fleischer, and Tom Hardy is an incredible actor with experience playing a comic villain in 2012's *The Dark Knight Rises*. Additionally, he has experience playing a conflicted protagonist in various movies, such as 2015's *Mad Max: Fury Road*. *Venom* could turn out to be a gritty and interesting new take on superhero movies, but I suggest not setting your hopes sky high due to *Sony's* previously poor record with superhero movies.



Disney To Create Mary Poppins Sequel

By Jared Miller '22

Disney has been producing new movies every year, and they don't seem to be stopping anytime soon. At least once per year, dating back to 2013, they have made one movie or more that is either a remake or a sequel to an original classic. In 2018, one such movie is the sequel to the beloved kid's movie, *Mary Poppins*. The spin-off is titled, *Mary Poppins Returns*. In the sequel, Mary Poppins comes back to visit Michael Banks and his sister Jane and to care for Michael's children. *Mary Poppins Returns* is directed by Rob Marshall. He has directed movies such as 2002's *Chicago* and 2014's *Into the Woods*. Therefore, he knows how to make great movie musicals.

There are a few reprised roles from the original movie, such as Mary Poppins, Michael and Jane Banks, and Mr. Dawes, Jr., but most of the characters are new. Many of these new characters seem quite exciting. The new character which is getting the most buzz is Lin Manuel Miranda's character, Jack. Jack will most likely be similar to Bert's character in the original, hanging out with Mary and the kids, being energetic and outgoing, and "going with the flow." Also, considering Lin Manuel Miranda is a Broadway star, I would not be surprised if he breaks into song once or twice. Another new character is Meryl Streep's Topsy. We don't know much about her character, but we do know she is going to perform an original song that will shift kids' perspectives on the world. The last time Meryl Streep partnered with Rob Marshall was for *Into the Woods*, which was a tremendous success. All in all, this movie seems to have a lot of potential, and is mixing in some of the old with some of the new.

Have News To Share?

Suggest story ideas about school news, features on students, or topics of general interest at fcsfocus.org/submit. Perhaps your idea will get published in the next issue!

The White Snake To Take Center Stage

By: Julian Duvivier '22

On Friday, October 26th and Saturday, October 27th, the Friends' Central Upper School drama program will present Mary Zimmerman's adaptation of *The White Snake*, one of the four great folktales of ancient China. It is a story of good and evil, an epic telling of the shapeshifting White Snake (Lady Bai Suzhen), her love Xu Xian, her companion Green Snake (Greenie), and the spiteful and jealous Fa Hai. Zimmerman's adaptations are known for being both faithful to earlier editions of the stories, as well as for bringing to the tales a unique flair and humor, enticing the audience with brilliant wit and magical spectacle. *The White Snake*, however, is unique among such tales. Like many ancient dramas, *The White Snake* has been passed down orally and through the written word. The story has been told in numerous forms, each offering great variation in story and characters, allowing the creative freedom to make a remarkable story that borrows ideas from the myriad of written, spoken, and theatrical editions.

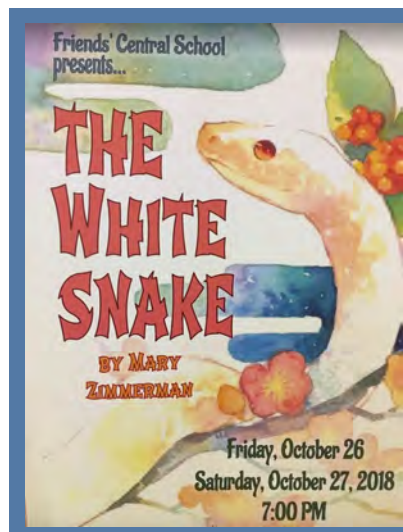
The key changes are clever spins on the original story that alter both its tone and narrative arc in ways that make it unique among other tellings. For anyone who has read or seen some version of the story, there are surprising changes that diverge from the other stories. As is typical of this tale, many elements of both story and character are unique and greatly differ from the particulars of the other renditions.

All of this information leads one to ponder, "so what has the upper school theatre made of this?" Well, after speaking with drama and english teacher Terry Guerin, who is directing the play, what will be done in this production is pretty clear. The play will bring the wonder of its ancient fable and the majesty of modern theatre. It will feature puppets, music, and dancing with choreography similar to Zimmerman's production. Mrs. Guerin also comments on the how the work has been going so far, reflecting, "I have enjoyed so far the work on it because everyone is really committed."

Additionally, I talked with Veronica Wang '20, Xinping Xie '19, and Zhihao Liu '20, who are taking on the roles of White Snake, Greenie, and Fa Hai, respectively. I began our discussion by inquiring about their roles in the production, starting with White Snake herself, played by Veronica. "White Snake, the main character of the folktale, is a pure and goddess-like woman who believes in true love. She has been cultivating the way for years and wishes to become immortal." Veronica said the following about White Snake's morals: "White Snake values integrity and believes in true love. She doesn't want to leave Xu Xian, even though she is not a human being."

After talking with Veronica, I asked Xinping about her character, Green Snake (Greenie). Xinping explained, "I'm her sidekick." She elaborated, saying "[White Snake] is the main character, but I drive the plot." In Xinping's eyes, Greenie is the centerpiece to the play. She guides the action, the humor, and the plot, enhancing the play with her dynamic personality, described by Xinping as "funny, straightforward with a temper."

The character who most steers the narrative, however, is clearly the play's villain, Fa Hai. In some tellings of the play, he is vengeful; in others, he is jealous; and in others, he is a sympathetic antagonist. Zhihao described Zimmerman's interpretation of Fa Hai as a "purely evil character [who is] there to create the conflict of the play." In the play, Fa Hai's motives are not framed as righteous in any sense, though as Zhihao pointed out, "A human shouldn't marry a snake spirit." Zhihao also acknowledged that parts of the story have evolved to be more suitable for a Western audience and feels that "It's a new creation with both American and Chinese values in it." Zhihao encouraged readers and the audience to widen their understanding of Chinese culture and feels the play may spark many people's interest.



"Horoscope" COTD. From Page 1

Leo (Jul.23-Aug.22): Fierce fights with people you don't like will result in loss and suffering this month. Plus, you'll misplace your I.D. fob, and will have to order a new one on Veracross.



Virgo (Aug.23-Sept.22): At least seven times this month, lunch lines will not go in your favor, and you will spend the first half of your lunch waiting.



Libra (Sept.23-Oct.22): Happy birthday to all of you Libras! Your friends will treat you kindly and look out for you when you are together. Unfortunately, however, your name will be misspelled on the birthday announcements.



Scorpio (Oct.23-Nov.21): School will start to go your way, and homework shall be finished easily. Yet, you will get scolded by Mr. Kennedy at least twice for improper headphone use on campus.



Sagittarius (Nov.22-Dec.21): The chill of the autumn will start to bother you, and even with a jacket, you will be freezing in class...especially in the FCC.



Capricorn (Dec.22-Jan.19): The turn of the month will result in bad luck with the Language Building Printer...a tad inconvenient when you're trying to print a paper two minutes before it's due.



Return Of The Wentz Wagon

By: Max Marnelli '22

As week three of the 2018 NFL Season approaches, Eagles fans hopes are high as Carson Wentz looks to return against the 1-1 Indianapolis Colts. The MVP front runner tore his ACL and LCL in week 13 last year against the Rams. Carson was hit hard in the knee while diving into the endzone when he was sandwiched between Mark Barron and Morgan Fox. Wentz went on to cap off the drive with a touchdown pass breaking the franchise touchdown record in a single season with 33 before leaving the field for what would be over 9 months. What should Eagles Fans expect from him, and what can he do this season? We believe he will start off slowly, staying in the pocket a lot more than he did last year. The Colts are coming off a crucial win against the Eagles' division rival Redskins, while the Eagles suffered a crushing loss to "FitzMAGIC" and the Buccaneers. The Eagles are hungry for a win and with Wentz back the O-line, you can be sure they will be playing their absolute hardest to protect their young quarterback. Perhaps later in the season, he will be comfortable enough to start moving out of the pocket more and make some of the amazing running and juking plays we know and love.

After watching Sunday's game, our prediction did not exactly hold true. Wentz tried to stay in the pocket but showed his usual confidence on the run and under pressure. In one play alone, he shrugged off two of the Colts defensive linemen in seconds. Wentz played alright but not spectacularly compared to what we witnessed in his MVP performance of 13 games last season. Wentz's number one receiver, Alshon Jeffery, was out that week still recovering from a rotator cuff surgery after playing through it for a majority of last season. The Eagles, short on a wide receiver, decide to pick up former Eagles draft pick, FreeAgent Jordan Mathews. Mathews never made a huge impact in the past and as a skeptical Eagles fan, so I don't see him making much impact in the future. Wentz's most successful drive was the first of the game, a beautifully-constructed one in which he used his TE's like a true veteran to cut through the Colts defense for a TD like a hot knife through butter. This got Eagles fans excited early just to see nothing even resembling this drive for the rest of the game. In fact, the rest of the game was quite ugly on both sides, transforming into a defensive grudge match in which the Eagles went on to stop the Colts on their final drive in the red zone with a minute left, holding on to win a close ugly one 20-16. Although Wentz completed passes to seven different targets in the first half, wide receivers made little to no impact in the game and Wentz was not protected very well by his offensive lineman, a disappointment as they should have been playing harder and better than ever to protect their young quarterback just coming off a season ending injury.

On the brightside, Clement and Smallwood both stepped up running back after Ajayi was listed inactive. Since Ajayi's future looks like it will never be the same, we will be seeing more of Clement and Smallwood. Sadly Clement was injured and will not start in next week's game at Tennessee. Ertz was still not able to get in done in the game or put up big numbers in my fantasy league. This is not the biggest concern, though, as Wentz's performance was still a downgrade from last year and the secondary has been playing terribly, seemingly leading the league in Pass Interference. The Eagles are debating trading Foles to teams like the quarterback-desperate 49ers. Yet, I believe we need to keep Foles until Wentz proves himself.



White Snake
(COTD. From Page 6)

This notion that the play encourages the exploration of the culture of China and other Eastern Countries is maintained by Veronica and Xiping. Xiping shared, "We use Chinese music, Chinese architecture in our set, Chinese names. We also have a Chinese dance teacher coming in. She worked in a university in Beijing and at UPenn and taught us the basics of Chinese dance." Zhihao added, "There is going to be a lot of Chinese theatre art in the play. This is where the Chinese art culture is shown." Veronica stated, "The best part [of putting on this play] is to represent Asian culture in this school. It is an opportunity to present Asian culture to people through a less stereotypical lens."

The upper school's 7:00 pm performances of *The White Snake* at Shallcross Hall Friday, October 26 and Saturday, October 27th are building up to be a marvelous tale, told so as to take us back into the ancient time when it was written, while simultaneously being a brilliantly devised piece of modern theatre. It will engage us in this classic, ancient, and wonderful story and give a performance unique among other school plays. A preview of the play will be performed, October 25th at 7:00 pm, so come and lose yourself in this illustrious tale.



Welcome, Mr. Pearson!

MR. ALEX PEARSON, PICTURED AT RIGHT, RECENTLY JOINED OUR FACULTY AS A LATIN TEACHER. IN ADDITION, HE WILL BE SUPPORTING OUR TECHNOLOGY DEPARTMENT. WE'RE THRILLED TO HAVE YOU ON BOARD, MR. PEARSON!

~THE FOCUS STAFF (PHOTO BY LYDIA VARCOE-WOLFSON '19)

Beth Johnson Returns *COTD. From Page 1*

Ms. Beth recalls why she made the decision to go to Penn Charter in the first place: “After being here for so many years, I thought that I was ever going to work anywhere else, I’d better think about it and do it at that time. I knew I would work in a Quaker school, and I knew a number of people at Penn Charter, so it felt like the right move.” However, while Ms. Beth certainly spent the better part of the past decade away from Friends’ Central, her love of the school never left her heart. She confesses, “It didn’t take a full year [away from the school before I started to] miss all the students here. The idea of coming back to work with [FCS] students again started to feel like a bigger and bigger draw to my heart.” She adds, “The more time went by, the more I was reconciling with myself that I was going to need to work with students [here] again. As I was getting to this realization, the opportunity of working at Friends’ Central became a possibility. So it was the perfect timing.”

Having now been reunited with her Friends’ Central family for just over two months, Ms. Beth is quick to compliment all of the aspects of Friends’ Central which made her want to return. Firstly, she appreciates how the school hears and values every voice. She elaborates, “I love the sense of community. I love that there is kindness. I love that we’re always trying to make sure that everyone are not only welcomed and valued but also feels that the school is theirs.” Secondly, Ms. Beth mentions, “We all take the work, whether it’s jobs or studying, more seriously than we take ourselves.” In fact, she herself possesses this quality. She constantly is setting goals, looking at the big picture of the school, and encouraging the faculty to do the same, all in the effort to make the FCS experience as remarkable as possible for every student who sets foot on campus. She meets with students by advisory and pays attention to their experiences, thus allowing her to be more supportive and helpful.

However, in the midst of her hectic schedule, filled with serious tasks, having fun is one of Ms. Beth’s main priorities. She states, “That’s why I instituted Principal’s Night Out, which is an opportunity for us to hang out, do fun things, have great food and just have fun.” She also shares that working with other Upper School administrators everyday is simply a joy.

Mrs. Johnson admits that some changes have occurred on campus over the course of her absence. As an example, she notes, “There is more diversity represented in the student body and in the faculty. To me, it’s all about the people.” She continues by discussing our invariable school spirit: “Whether on purpose or not, there is a kindness that comes through whether we are talking about areas of our curriculum, sports, arts, or Peace Day, which I think has something to do with being a Quaker School. There is a wonderful spirit of collaboration, which I interpret as people being open to learning, continuing new revelation, the voices of others, the experience of others, and to take all of those things to make meaning for ourselves.” Overall, she views Friends’ Central as a highly-academic, diverse, caring, and kind Quaker school with incredible faculty, staff, and students. She adds with confidence, “I think we should be the school of choice in the area.”

In addition to the school’s existing excellence, Ms. Beth hopes to bring new elements into the community such as helping with our school’s new teaching kitchen-food lab and being involved with Justice Core Team. She looks forward to being a catalyst in helping the school and the community grow and get even better. During the interview, she pointed towards the door to her office: “This door, for so many people, was a wall, because it was usually closed.” Therefore, starting at the beginning of this school year, Ms. Beth has chosen to keep the door open as much as possible. She explains, “What I want to project by having the door open is not just to show that my office is open but that I am open.” Ms. Beth wants students to think of her more as a person who advocates for, supports, and listens to them, and less as a disciplinarian. She wants the principal’s office to be a place of growth, change, and vision.

Ms. Beth, welcome home. We're so glad to have you where you belong. -The Focus Staff

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