

## Winning Film

Miami Dade College alumna, Domenicca Botero, received five awards for her film *Silver Waters* at the Suncoast Student Production Awards on May 7.

▶ PAGE 5



## End Of The Road

The baseball team's season ended on May 15 after a 4-3 loss to the College of Central Florida in the championship game at the state tournament.

▶ PAGE 11

## Movie Marvel

*Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness* hit theaters on May 6. The film features Dr. Strange, Wanda Maximoff and America Chavez.

▶ PAGE 12

## Protect The Internet

The internet has to be considered a public utility to ensure the government protects it from the harms of monopolization.

▶ PAGE 15



# The Reporter

THE STUDENT NEWSPAPER AT MIAMI DADE COLLEGE

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THREE-TIME NATIONAL PACEMAKER AWARD WINNER

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## SCHOLARSHIP

## Five Honors College Graduates Awarded Prestigious Jack Kent Cooke Scholarship



DANNA QUINTERO / THE REPORTER

**Transfer Titans:** Five Miami Dade College graduates were awarded the Jack Kent Cooke Transfer Scholarship. Four are pictured here. From left to right: Ana Cristina Camba, Daphnie Velasquez Garcia, Stefani Davila and Alexa Bencomo.

□ The Jack Kent Cooke Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship awards up to \$55,000 annually to cover living expenses, tuition, books and other fees.

By **Juan S. Gomez**  
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Five Miami Dade College graduates—Ana Cristina Camba, Stefani Davila, Paola Troconis Infante, Daphnie Velasquez Garcia and Alexa Bencomo—were awarded the prestigious Jack Kent Cooke Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship.

The recipients will receive up to \$55,000 annually to cover living expenses, tuition, books and additional fees as they transfer to a four-year institution.

To qualify, applicants had to be sophomores or recent graduates of a two-year institution in the United States with no previous enrollment at a four-year institution. They also needed a GPA of at least 3.5, demonstrate unmet financial needs and plan to enroll full-time in a baccalaureate program during the fall.

From a pool of more than 1,200 applicants, including 332 community colleges,

one hundred winners were selected.

### Ana Cristina Camba

After witnessing deaf customers struggle to order food at the Domino's Pizza restaurant she works at, Ana Cristina Camba was encouraged to try to develop assistive technology.

"There's not a direct bridge for people with hearing impairments in our world," the 19-year-old said. "I want to establish a software that can bridge that disability with a hearing world."

Camba, who wants to become a computer engineer, also performed mathematics and programming research as an intern at the School of Science at MDC. In 2021, she co-founded the Interactive Bilingual Reading Program in Nicaragua in partnership with FNE International to help children learn English.



CAMBA

She graduated in May with a 4.0 GPA and an associate's degree in computer engineering from Eduardo J. Padrón Campus. She served as the vice president of Sigma Zeta Honors Society, layout editor at *Urbana* (the campus' literary arts magazine) and a member of Phi Theta Kappa.

Camba hopes to attend the Massachusetts Institute of Technology or Stanford in the fall.

### Stefani Davila

During 4th and 5th grade, Stefani Davila sold candy with her friends to raise funds for the Jovenes Contra el Cáncer (youth against cancer) foundation in Ecuador.

"The foundation is my second home," Davila said. "I have constantly learned new



DAVILA

## ELECTIONS

## MDC Trustee Vies For Seat On Miami-Dade County School Board

□ Roberto J. Alonso, who has more than 20 years of experience in education, has been a Miami Dade College Board of Trustee member since July of 2020.

By **Ammy Sanchez**  
ammy.sanchez001@mymdc.net

Miami Dade College Board of Trustee member Roberto J. Alonso is running for a seat on the Miami-Dade County School Board for District 4.

The seat covers Miami Lakes, Hialeah and Hialeah Gardens. It became available after Perla Tabares Hantman, who has served on the board since 1996, said in April that she would not seek reelection.

Alonso's competition is Kevin Menendez Macki, who has served as the school principal at Horeb Christian School in Hialeah for six years. He has more than 15 years of experience in education.

"We have a great community," said Alonso, who lives in Miami Lakes. "I see everybody more engaged than ever in the topic of education right now. So it's really an exciting time and I think a turning point in education, where families, parents and students are really seeing [its] importance."

Alonso, who has more than 20 years of experience in education, said his platform is centered around conservative values. That includes his support for parental rights in the school curriculum, opposing the imposition of Critical Race Theory in K-12, advocating for fair and accountable salaries for teachers and securing funding and programs for students with special needs.

"I'm excited to hear and to see him put his thoughts, his dreams and his ideas to fruition," said his sister Jessica Alonso Mendoza, who has been teaching since 1997 and is a first-grade teacher at Bob Graham Education Center.

Connecting with the community has been a huge part of Alonso's campaign. He visits 100 homes in District 4 every day during the week. On Saturdays, he is joined by his family.

"One of the things that separates [Roberto] from everyone else is his ability to understand what people are feeling," said Anthony Valenzuela, a 2021 MDC alum who is helping Alonso with his campaign. "He's not a career politician who just wants



ALONSO

TURN TO SCHOLARSHIP PAGE 4

TURN TO ELECTIONS PAGE 5

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## // BRIEFING

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**Humanitarian Aid Being Collected For Ukraine**

Miami Dade College, in collaboration with Florida for Ukraine and Jackson West Medical Center, is collecting humanitarian aid for the Ukrainian victims of the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian War.

Items being collected include large suitcases and medical supplies such as pain and fever dye-free medicine (like Motrin and Tylenol), painkillers, bandages, sedatives, analgesics, tourniquets and medical kits.

The donations are ongoing and open to the general public. Supplies can be dropped off at any MDC student life department.



ORIANA DOS SANTOS / THE REPORTER

—Veronica Romano

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**The 2022-23 Univision MAGIC Scholarship Is Accepting Applications**

Applications for the 2022-23 Univision MAGIC Scholarship are being accepted until May 30.

Eligible students must be enrolled in the Miami Animation & Gaming International Complex and be U.S. citizens or permanent residents. They must demonstrate financial need, have a minimum GPA of 3.0 and have a letter of recommendation from MAGIC faculty.

The letter must be scanned and emailed to dmedina4@mdc.edu.

Four students are chosen every academic year and receive approximately \$1,500 to cover their tuition, though the amount may vary.

Students can apply for the scholarship at [https://miamidade.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_9Tav7DDFN4ZpR42](https://miamidade.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9Tav7DDFN4ZpR42). Winners will be announced in the summer.

For more information, contact Mauricio Ferrazza at (305) 237-7852 or mferrazz@mdc.edu.

—Laurianne Apollon



TORBERT

**New Honors College Student Success Coach At Kendall Campus**

Lolisa Torbert began her role as the new Honors College student success coach at Kendall Campus on April 18.

Torbert, 33, will assist students with advisement, scholarship research, applications and social programming. She will also lead the Honors College Student Ambassador Program.

"I really enjoy knowing that my work is purposeful," Torbert said. "I think that [is] complete with the student success coach position."

Torbert started working at Miami Dade College in 2019 as a pre-admissions advisor at Kendall Campus. In March of 2020, she became the student life program coordinator at Homestead Campus.

After being crowned Mrs. Florida U.S. Continental, Torbert created and led the first Homestead Campus pageant last December as a way to encourage people to participate in the annual toy drive.

Before coming to MDC, she taught math at Felix Varela Senior High School for seven years.

Torbert earned her bachelor's degree in mathematics and journalism with a minor in sociology from the University of Miami in 2012.

"I'm excited to make connections and meet new students," Torbert said.

—Isabelle Greiner

**Bianco Selected Southern Conference Player Of The Year**

Lady Sharks third baseman Raissa Bianco was selected as the Southern Conference Player of the Year.

The sophomore had a stellar season, leading the team with 46 RBI, a .428 batting average and 21 doubles. She also had a .577 slugging percentage, 10 stolen bases and two home runs.

Bianco's strong offensive output was a major reason the Lady Sharks qualified for the State Tournament for the second season in a row. The Lady Sharks were 29-26 this season including a 15-12 record in Southern Conference play.

Miami Dade College starts State Tournament play on May 6 at 1 p.m. versus Pensacola State College in Longwood, Florida. The game will be live-streamed on Florida College System Athletics Association Digital Network.

—Juan S. Gomez



BIANCO

**Rising Black Scholars Can Qualify For A Free Passport**

Miami Dade College was selected to participate in the Institute of International Education American Passport Project.

The program, which will take place through December, will cover the cost for 25 Rising Black Scholars to receive a passport. Miami Dade College, the only higher-education institution in Florida selected to participate in the project, will assist students with the application process.

To qualify, students must be at least 18 years old, United States citizens, first-year students with Pell Grant eligibility and be requesting a passport for the first time. For more information, go to <https://bit.ly/3NujQ2F>.

"Being selected to participate in the IIE American Passport Project solidifies MDC's commitment to bringing the access gap to international education for its most underrepresented students," said Michaela Tomova, the vice provost of Academic Affairs who oversees the Office of International Education at MDC.

—Nicole Molina

**North Campus Selects Brandy Parker As New Director Of Advisement And Career Services**

PARKER

Brandy Parker was selected as the new director of advisement and career services at North Campus. She began her role on April 25.

Parker, 41, will assist students in creating academic plans while discussing their goals, as well as helping students transition from high school to college.

"I am so happy that Miami Dade College chose me to be a part of this fundamental step in a student's journey," Parker said.

Parker worked at the City Colleges of Chicago for 16 years in student services, admissions, continuing education of distance learning, student activities and advisement.

She received her bachelor's of science degree in textile apparel merchandising from Northern Illinois University in 2003. Eight years later, Parker obtained a master's degree in business administration with a focus on human resources from Robert Morris University.

—Nicole Molina

**Head Baseball Coach Morales Selected As Southern Conference Coach Of The Year**

Miami Dade College Head Baseball Coach, Adrian Morales, was selected as the Southern Conference Coach of The Year.

The Sharks finished the season with a 39-19-1 mark including a 16-5 record in Southern Conference play. They were the runner-ups at the State Tournament in Lakeland, Florida, which took place from May 12-15.

Morales became the Sharks head coach during the 2019-20 season. He has an 92-44-1 mark in three seasons at his alma mater. Morales played at MDC during the 2008 and 2009 seasons, earning First Team All-Southern Conference and First Team All-State honors.

He helped those teams win back-to-back Southern Conference Championships.

—Juan S. Gomez



MORALES



TIBAQUIRÁ

**Padrón Campus Professor Selected As 2022 Outstanding Community College Professional**

Diego Tibaquirá, a computer science professor at Eduardo J. Padrón Campus, was selected as the Region III 2022 Outstanding Community College Professional by the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators on April 19.

"[I'm] thankful to Miami Dade College and Padrón Campus for providing the opportunity and support to do what I do on a daily basis to help change lives," Tibaquirá said. "I want to empower people."

Tibaquirá has taught computer science with an emphasis on cybersecurity at Padrón Campus for 18 years. Additionally, he serves as a lead faculty for the Honors College and advisor of Phi Theta Kappa Honors Society.

In 2017 and 2021, he was named an Endowed Teaching Chair. Tibaquirá was also selected as a Fullbright Specialist at MDC for a tenure of four years in 2021 and was nominated to the 2021 Ethical Hacker Hall of Fame.

Before MDC, he worked as a data analyst at PepsiCo for two years and as an information security specialist at Naval Sea Systems Command for a year and a half. Tibaquirá has served in the United States Marine Corps for four years.

He has an associate's of science degree in computer systems and networking and telecommunications from Craven Community College, a bachelor's of science degree in computer science from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, a master's of science degree in computer science from the North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University and a doctor of education degree in instructional technology and distance education from Nova Southeastern University.

—Laurianne Apollon

PHOTO BRIEFING

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2

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- 1 **A Good Run:** A runner jubilantly crosses the finish line at the 2022 Mercedes-Benz Corporate Run, which took place April 28 at Bayfront Park.
- 2 **Strumming Along:** Singer and guitarist Will Thomas from the band Tall Boys performs at The Barnacle Historic State Park on May 1.
- 3 **Applauding:** Linda Alvarado Stermer, Director of the Vocal Jazz/Pop Ensemble, introduces the group during the "Songs of Home and Healing" event on April 19 at Kendall Campus' McCarthy Auditorium.
- 4 **All Together Now:** Vocal Fusion singers harmonizing *Can't Help Falling in Love With You* on April 13 at Miami Dade College Kendall Campus' Finn's Bistro.



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NICOLE MOLINA / THE REPORTER



4

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## // NEWS

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JOURNALISM SPEAKER SERIES

## Tune Into Instagram Live For This Year's MDC Journalism Speaker Series

□ This year's series will feature journalists who have worked at *The New York Times*, *Rolling Stone*, the *Miami Herald*, Politico, CNN and WLRN. Three of them have Miami Dade College ties.

By **Ammy Sanchez**  
ammy.sanchez001@mymdc.net

The *Miami Dade College Journalism Speaker Series* is back.

This year's episodes will broadcast on Instagram Live—@mdcthereporter—and highlight five journalists whose work has been featured in *The New York Times*, *Rolling Stone*, the *Miami Herald*, Politico, CNN and WLRN. Three of them have ties to Miami Dade College.

"We are delighted to have such a decorated lineup of journalists sharing their knowledge with our students," said Manolo Barco, who serves as the media adviser to *The Reporter*.

Gregg Birnbaum, a former editor at the *Miami Herald*, Politico, CNN and NBC News, kicked-off this year's series on **May 13**.

*Miami Herald/El Nuevo Herald* photojournalist and *Reporter* alum Matias J. Ocnor, who played an integral role in the paper's coverage of the Surfside condo collapse that won the publication a 2022 Pulitzer Prize in the Breaking News Reporting category, appeared on **May 20**.

The program's next guest will be Sherrilyn Cabrera, a WLRN PM newscast and digital producer. She will appear on **May 27** at noon. Cabrera got her start in journalism as a 2019 spring and summer intern at WLRN. After her internship, she continued to report, anchor and produce for the station as a freelancer.

A year later, she covered the 2020 election as a reporting fellow for TCPalm writing



**Guess Who's Back:** The *Miami Dade College Journalism Speaker Series* is back this year on Instagram Live @mdcthereporter. Three of this year's guest have MDC ties.

stories about the election's impact on communities along the Treasure Coast. The following year she worked at WBUR—a Boston NPR member station—as an associate producer for newscasts and in the newsroom's digital team.

Cabrera has an associate's degree in mass communications and media studies from MDC and a bachelor's degree in journalism from FIU.

Angie Martoccio, who is the associate managing editor at *Rolling Stone*, will be the guest on **June 10** at noon. She has

interviewed celebrities such as Olivia Rodrigo, Neil Young, Phoebe Bridgers, Marisa Tomei and Joan Jett.

Martoccio, who served as an arts & entertainment writer for *The Reporter* during the 2013-14 school year, has an associate's degree from MDC and a bachelor's degree in journalism and creative writing from Baruch College.

The final guest of this year's series will be *New York Times* tech reporter Kashmir Hill. The details about when she will appear have not been finalized yet.

The Journalism Speaker Series was launched in February of 2008 to provide students with an opportunity to meet working journalists. To date, more than 71 journalists have participated in the series.

Interviews are in 25-30-minute intervals and viewers can interact with guests at the end of each presentation during a 15-minute Q&A session.

For more information, contact Manolo Barco at (305) 237-1255.

## Another Year Of Jack Kent Cooke Scholarship Recipients At MDC

FROM SCHOLARSHIP, FRONT

ways to feel, experience, value and live my life through the stories of patients and service to those who need it most."

Jóvenes Contra el Cáncer, established by her brother, Alex Davila, before he passed away in 2006 from Osteosarcoma, focuses on raising cancer awareness and helping patients cope with their diagnosis and recovery.

In 2019, Davila founded the Meraki Youth Organization to promote community service, education and climate change awareness. She also volunteered as a photographer for immigrant advocacy organizations such as United We Dream and Florida Immigrant Coalition.

Davila graduated with a 3.85 GPA and an associate's degree in business administration from the Padrón Campus. She served as the co-editor-in-chief of *Urbana* and the president of Hermione's Army.

The 18-year-old is considering attending Emerson College and UNC.

**Paola Troconis Infante**

Following her father's election as a magistrate in 2017, Paola Troconis Infante fled political persecution in Venezuela and came to the United States.

Inspired by her uncle's career as a surgeon, Troconis hopes to pursue her childhood dream of becoming a prosthetic

surgeon.

"Winning the scholarship has been a unique experience," Troconis said. "It was not only a surprise for me but a motivation that everything I propose with effort I will be able to achieve it."

In 2016, Troconis and her mother, Isabel Infante, co-founded the Casa Hogar Project—a nonprofit dedicated to providing low-income children with food, clothing and other necessities—in Venezuela. She wants to implement the same efforts in the U.S.

Troconis, 20, graduated with a 3.9 GPA and an associate's degree in biomedical engineering from Kendall Campus in May. She served as the secretary of She The People, a club geared toward women empowerment, the treasurer of the Nurse Club and a Student Government Association senator.

She said she will likely enroll at the Georgia Institute of Technology.

**Daphnie Velasquez Garcia**

Daphnie Velasquez Garcia has dreamt about becoming a physician since she was four when her grandmother, Maybell Curtis, passed away from Leukemia.



TROCONIS

Her commitment to medicine grew last year when her mother was diagnosed with stage three breast cancer.

"I want to definitely go into oncology research, but at the same time treat the patients because I know that that relationship between the physician and the patient helps a lot," Velasquez said.

Velasquez, 20, interned at the University of Florida last summer to complete research on how pesticide was affecting avocado plants. She won the Microbiology and Cell Sciences Research Poster Award at the Cell Science Summer Research Experience Symposium.

Velasquez graduated from the Padrón Campus with a 3.84 GPA and an associate's degree in biology following the pre-med track. She was the Beta Beta Beta Honors society president, SGA senator, PTK member and a webmaster for *Urbana*.

She will enroll at UNC this fall with a full-ride scholarship.

**Alexa Bencomo**

During her trips to Cuba, Alexa Bencomo became aware of the health crisis taking

place in her parent's homeland. Since then, she has focused her career on global health.

"I wanted to alleviate the health crisis that I saw in Cuba and many developing countries," Bencomo said. "I would like to work with the Red Cross and visit countries where aid is needed."

At North Campus, Bencomo served as secretary for SGA and PTK, vice president of the campus' Global Medical Brigades chapter and founded the Aquaponics Club to promote environmental sustainability.

Last summer, the 20-year-old interned at St. Thomas University to research the effects of medicinal plants on the migration of breast cancer cells. She also became a certified clinical medical assistant.

Bencomo, who aspires to become a dermatologist and conduct cancer research, graduated with a 4.0 GPA and an associate's degree in biology from North Campus in May.

She is considering attending Johns Hopkins University or Princeton University.



BENCOMO

The photo of Paola Troconis Infante used in this story is courtesy of Cynthia Okoe.

## ALUMNA SPOTLIGHT

# SEDT Alumna Wins Five National Academy Of Television Arts & Sciences Awards

□ Domenicca Botero's short film, *Silver Waters*, was honored five times at the Suncoast Student Production Awards on May 7. The film highlights the grief associated with losing a loved one.

By **Andrea Charur**  
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When Domenicca Botero's 88-year-old grandfather—Merdardo Alberto Cevallos Balda—passed away in March of 2020, she struggled to accept his loss.

"During the time that he passed away up until the funeral, I was convinced that it was a mistake," Botero said.

Fueled by those raw emotions, Botero—who earned a bachelor's degree in film production from the School of Entertainment & Design Technology in 2021—wrote *Silver Waters*, a 13-minute film about an elderly woman named Marisol who is in denial about her husband's death.

The film resonated with audiences.

On May 6, *Silver Waters* won a \$2,000 prize for capturing first place at The Palm Beaches Student Showcase of Films in the College Feature/Short Awards category, the largest student film competition in Florida.

The following day, the film won five production awards—Best Long Form Fiction, Best



DANNA QUINTERO / THE REPORTER

**SEDT Pride:** Domenicca Botero won five awards at the Suncoast Student Production Awards for her film *Silver Waters*. The film tells the story of an elderly woman struggling to deal with her husband's death.

Photography, Best Editing, Best Audio and Best Writing—at the Suncoast Student Production Awards sponsored by the National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences, the same organization that hands out Emmys.

"It's emotional, it's a good story

and she did it in a very interesting way," said Barry Gordon, the SEDT chairperson.

Botero wrote *Silver Waters* in the summer of 2020 with her friend, Daniel Bellot, for their film workshop course at North Campus. In the spring of 2021, she assembled a

crew of film students, alumni and industry professionals.

She served as the film's director and producer.

"Nobody knows the story better than her and nobody knows the footage better than I do," said Samuel Romero, who served as the

film's cinematographer and was the co-winner of the Best Editing and Best Photography awards for *Silver Waters* at the Suncoast Awards.

The short film was shot in three locations—Botero's home in Miami Shores, Coral Gables Congregational Church and Virginia Key Beach. It was finalized in November of 2021. The beach was a key element of the film, serving as an homage to Botero's grandparents who honeymooned at a beach in Veracruz, Mexico.

When choosing a name for the film, she merged the idea of seawater and the silver color of an elderly person's hair. That led her to *Silver Waters*.

Now she is on to her next project.

Botero, who is currently working in the art department for an Apple TV show based on the book *Bad Monkey*, plans to use the Palm Beach award money for her next film *Playing Pretend*. It follows a little boy trying to understand death. She hopes to finish the film by the end of the year.

But despite her busy schedule, Botero has been able to reflect on the impact *Silver Waters* has had on her career.

"It means a lot to me [to win these awards] because everyone worked really hard for it and I'm glad everyone is reaping what they sowed," Botero said.

## MDC Trustee Wants To Be A Changemaker On Miami-Dade County School Board

FROM ELECTIONS, FRONT

to run for his own benefit...he actually takes the time and asks people what they would like to see changed."

Alonso has also been active on his Instagram account—@robertoalonsofi—where he posts information and videos about his campaign.

He has received nearly \$50,000 in contributions from individuals and businesses in the community, according to his campaign treasurer's report.

Alonso is the founder and vice president of business development at Always At Your Side Adult Day Care, a realtor at Costa Realtors Corporation, and co-founder

of Miami Lakes Cars for a Cure, a car show in Miami Lakes that creates awareness and raises funds for cancer research.

He also co-founded HeroK12—a software company that automates the daily tasks of administrators in schools—and was the organization's director of business development until 2019. Additionally, Alonso served as the chair of the public safety committee for the town of Miami Lakes from 2013 to 2016.

The 42-year-old earned an associate's degree in computer and information sciences and support services from MDC in 2000.

Three years later, Alonso received a bachelor's degree in management information

systems from Florida International University.

Primary elections will take place on Aug. 23 and general elections are on Nov. 8. If Alonso is elected, his four-year term would start on Nov. 22.

"He is a person of great character, someone that is doing this because they care about their community, not because they need a title [or] job," said Alex Rizo, a Florida state representative for District 110. "This is someone that really wants to make a difference."

For more information about his campaign, go to <https://robertoalonso.com/>.

**Hialeah Love:** Roberto J. Alonso is running for a seat on the Miami-Dade County School Board District 4. Primary elections take place on Aug. 23.



DANNA QUINTERO / THE REPORTER



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## IN MEMORY

## Three Miami Dade College Students Posthumously Honored During Graduation

□ Daniela Marchan Hidalgo, John Christopher E. Pangilinan and Mahmood Habbaba were remembered during the College's commencement ceremonies on April 23 at loanDepot Park.

By **Juan S. Gomez**  
juan.gomez070@mymdc.net

Daniela Marchan Hidalgo's family somberly walked to the stage at loanDepot Park on April 23 to receive their daughter's posthumous associate's degree in culinary arts management.

"After we received her diploma and walked down the stage we broke down in tears," said Juan Carlos Cevallos, Hidalgo's father. "We felt proud of our daughter and surrounded by love, but at the same time we could not believe she was not there to enjoy that moment."

Hidalgo was one of three students posthumously honored during Miami Dade College's commencement ceremonies on April 23. Here are their stories:

### Daniela Marchan Hidalgo

Daniela Marchan Hidalgo was a 23-year-old culinary arts student at the Miami Culinary Institute. She passed away on November 12 from an aneurysm due to an aortic rupture.

A butterfly garden was created

**“We felt proud of our daughter and surrounded by love, but at the same time we could not believe she was not there to enjoy that moment.”**

**Carlos Cevallos**, father of Daniela Marchan Hidalgo

in her memory on April 12 at the MCI garden, 500 N.E. 2nd Ave., behind building 7. It features various flowers including lavenders and a star fruit tree because "she was a star like a star fruit," Cevallos said.

Inspired by her mom and grandmother's family restaurant in Ecuador that focused on seafood dishes but also prepared pastries, Hidalgo knew she wanted to be a pastry chef since she was a kid.

Following her lifelong dream, she enrolled at MDC in 2019. While studying, she made pastries at Dragonfly Izakaya & Fish Market, a contemporary Japanese pub. Hidalgo also created an Instagram account to display the pastries she made—@Danielasbakery.

"She always told us about her wonderful chef teachers and classmates. She was truly happy there," Cevallos said. "It was such



DANNA QUINTERO / THE REPORTER

**Remembered:** The family of Daniela Marchan Hidalgo, who passed away on November 12 from an aneurysm due to an aortic rupture, receives her posthumous degree on April 23 at loanDepot Park.

a special part of her life and passion that we decided to place her MCI name tag along with her urn."

Besides cooking, her other hobbies were calligraphy, photography and creating bracelets out of beads. She also loved to play with and care for her Australian Shepherd dog named Blue.

Hidalgo dedicated her life to spreading kindness by baking pastries for those who she loved. Despite suffering from Loey's-Dietz Syndrome, a genetic disorder that affects the body's connective tissue, family and friends described her as a sweet and vibrant soul whose smile and zest brightened up everyone's day.

"She was very sensitive. She would cry when knowing of any tragedy, but she [would] also cry of joy when told that any relative was expecting a child," Cevallos said. "She taught us to really live, to enjoy life at its fullest."

### Mahmood Habbaba

Mahmood Habbaba was a mechanical engineering student at Kendall Campus. He passed away



PHOTO OF MAHMOOD HABBABA COURTESY OF AISHA SHANAN

after a motorcycle accident on March 29.

Although Habbaba's family did not attend the graduation, they watched the live-stream of the posthumous commemoration and heard the eulogy Kendall Campus president Anthony Cruz delivered.

"Mahmood was known for his warm inclusivity, kindness and straightforward honesty that touched the hearts of everyone he met," Cruz said. "On behalf of the family, we ask you to hold your loved ones close and remind them you love them."

Habbaba began to pursue an associate's degree in mechanical engineering in 2018 to quench his understanding of how things like cars and appliances worked. After taking a short break from his studies to work in his family's business, Mahmood promised his parents he would return this year to graduate.

"He fulfilled his promise," said Aisha Shanana, Habbaba's aunt.

The 22-year-old devoted Muslim attended Masjid Al-Ihsaan, a mosque in West Perrine. He was a volunteer during iftar ceremonies—one of the religious observances of Ramadan—and participated in youth group meetings.

Habbaba also worked with Project Downtown to feed homeless people in Downtown Miami.

"He represented his religion

based on his character," Shanana said. "He always wanted to be that person who was remembered as someone who wanted to change the world."

In his spare time, Habbaba loved to fish, camp, play basketball, volleyball and football. His favorite place to fish was Bahia Honda State Park in the Florida Keys and one of his favorite camping sites was the Larry and Penny Thompson Memorial Park in Southwest Miami-Dade.

Following Habbaba's passing, a fundraising page was set up. It collected \$60,000 before closing on May 3. The money will be used to build water wells and a mosque in Mali, a country in West Africa.

### John Christopher E. Pangilinan

John Christopher E. Pangilinan, 23, was a health services administration student at Homestead Campus.

During graduation, Pangilinan's mom, Phoebe Enriquez, was visibly emotional as she raised her son's posthumous associate's degree with her family and MDC President Madeline Pumariega by her side. She then bowed to the crowd, who responded with a thunderous applause.

The family could not be reached for this story.



PHOTO OF DANIELA MARCHAN HIDALGO COURTESY OF JUAN CEVALLOS



DANNA QUINTERO / THE REPORTER

**In His Honor:** The family of John Christopher E. Pangilinan, who passed away in April, receives his posthumous degree.

# Graduates Reach The Finish Line At LoanDepot Park

□ After two years of dealing with the coronavirus pandemic, thousands of graduates from Miami Dade College's Class of 2022 participated in three graduation ceremonies.

By **Juan S. Gomez**  
juan.gomez070@mymdc.net

After more than thirty years of waiting, Desiree Blandon has graduated from college.

When Blandon arrived in Miami from Nicaragua in 1987, she put her education on the back burner. For three decades, she worked for Swissport (a ground handling company) to support her two daughters.

But when the pandemic hit in 2020, Blandon was laid off. Unemployed, she pivoted to achieve her lifelong dream of attaining an education.

On April 23, the 60-year-old was one of the more than 14,000 graduates—not all of them walked—Miami Dade College celebrated during three commencement ceremonies at loanDepot Park, home of the Miami Marlins.

"It's a personal goal I always wanted to achieve since I was a teenager," said Blandon, who earned her associate's degree in business administration. "It's never too late to learn."

Prior to the ceremonies, DJs from local radio stations fired up the crowd while the stadium lights flickered to the vibrant tempo of the music.

Graduates matched the atmosphere, gleefully waving blue and white pom poms, snapping selfies and posting messages on social media.

Some students stepped up their graduation game with decorated graduation caps

adorned with roses, daisies, and lots of glitter.

The graduation stage was set up in center field. It featured college administrators such as student deans and campus presidents, members of the College's Board of Trustees, Student Government Association presidents and the College's executive leadership—Provost Malou C. Harrison and President Madeline Pumariega.

"In a year marked by uncertainty, unrest and loss we have collectively endured the test of time," Pumariega said during the Wolfson, Medical and Homestead campuses' commencement ceremony. "Colleges are custodians of the enduring tradition of learning."

Keynote speakers included Pro Football Hall of Famer Jason Taylor, (North, Eduardo J. Padrón and West ceremony), Florida Lieutenant Governor Jeannette Nuñez (Kendall and Hialeah ceremony) and United States Surgeon General Vivek Murthy (Wolfson, Medical and Homestead ceremony).

Murthy warned graduates to not let their work life overtake their quest to build meaningful personal connections.

"What I wish you in the years more than anything else is rich, vibrant relationships," Murthy said. "Your ability to give and receive love is your greatest gift and your greatest power."

Upon entering the stadium, graduates sat side-by-side in front of the stage. It marked the first time since 2019 that social distancing was not practiced at the event. Masks were not required.

The graduates' guests were seated on the lower deck of the stadium. For those who couldn't attend, the ceremony was live-streamed and recorded.

"It was a great experience," said



DANNA QUINTERO / THE REPORTER

**Commencement Ceremonies:** The class of 2022 was celebrated at three graduation ceremonies on April 23 at loanDepot Park in Little Havana.

23-year-old Daniel Castro, who fought through muscular dystrophy to earn a bachelor's degree in film from the School of Entertainment & Design Technology at North Campus. "I met a lot of good professors, a lot of great classmates and fellow filmmakers."

The ceremony was filled with success stories like Castro's and students like 20-year-old Dana Moreno, a first-generation college graduate, who earned an associate's degree in electrical engineering on April 23.

"I feel like I'm always running," said Moreno, who was awarded the Homestead Campus BOT Scholarship, a \$5,000 prize.

"I feel like I always break one [barrier] so I [can] break another."

Isabella Cunningham, the SGA president at Wolfson Campus, praised her peers for their zest to make it to the finish line—graduation day.

"We have demonstrated that we are resilient and have the extraordinary capacity to positively impact our communities, our nation and the world," Cunningham said. "We are all changemakers."

Staff writers Ammy Sanchez and Emily Paz contributed to this story.

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# 2022 MDC Graduation



DANNA QUINTERO / THE REPORTER

**Graduation Day:** Commencement speaker Jason Taylor (pictured at center) stands with President Madeline Pumariega (in red) and Provost Malou C. Harrison (far right) on April 23 shortly before going onto the graduation stage.



DANNA QUINTERO / THE REPORTER

**Parting Words:** Wolfson Campus Student Government Association President, Isabella Cunningham, speaks to graduates on April 23 at loanDepot Park.



DANNA QUINTERO / THE REPORTER

**All Smiles:** Students pose for the camera as they wait during the graduation ceremony at loanDepot Park on April 23.



DANNA QUINTERO / THE REPORTER

**Because I'm Happy:** Ammy Sanchez, editor-in-chief of *The Reporter*, joyfully walks across the stage at graduation on April 23 at loanDepot Park. Sanchez was the recipient of the Board of Trustees Scholarship for North Campus.



DANNA QUINTERO / THE REPORTER

**With Honors:** Honors College students look intently toward the stage at loanDepot Park on April 23.



DANNA QUINTERO / THE REPORTER

**No Cap:** For many students, graduation was a great opportunity to showcase their creativity on their caps.

## BASEBALL

# Despite Wrist Injury, Shin Powered Sharks Offense This Season

□ Sharks right fielder Wooyeoul Shin had a team-leading 10 home runs and a .551 slugging percentage this season despite missing 20 games due to an injury to his right wrist.

By **Juan S. Gomez**  
juan.gomez070@mymdc.net

When a reporter recently asked Wooyeoul Shin about his offensive statistics, the Sharks right fielder quickly retorted: "I don't really care about my stats."

But there is no denying that the South Korean-born outfielder who transitioned from the infield this season had a banner year.

The 20-year-old led the Miami Dade College baseball team with 10 home runs and a .551 slugging percentage. He also has a .316 batting average and 36 RBI despite missing 20 games this season after suffering a ligament displacement in his right wrist in the season opener versus the State College of Florida, Manatee-Sarasota on Jan. 28.

"Woo is gritty," said Sharks pitcher Tyler Monzon. "He is what [junior college baseball] is all about. He works hard. He plays hard. He wants to win. You can see it. You can see that he loves playing baseball. He loves to win. It's the only thing he wants to do. There is nothing else on his mind other than baseball."

His toughness was on full display this season. Despite injuring himself in the outfield on Jan. 28, Shin stayed in the game and hit a



NICOLE MOLINA / THE REPORTER

**Big Bat:** Despite missing 20 games this season due to an injury to his right wrist, right fielder Wooyeoul Shin led the Sharks with 10 homeruns and a .551 slugging percentage this season.

walk-off game-winning home run in the Sharks 2-1 win versus the Manatees. He also homered the following day versus Gulf Coast State College.

However, the pain in his wrist became too much to bear. He missed the next 18 games. Despite being told by doctors that the injury would force him to miss 12-16 weeks, he returned three weeks

later. The Sharks were a lackluster 9-8-1 when he was out of the lineup.

When he returned to action on Feb. 24 versus SCF, he homered again.

#### Passion For Baseball Begins

Shin became enthralled with baseball in 2008 during the Olympics in Beijing. That year, South

Koreans watched their team win the gold medal versus Cuba.

"A lot of kids started to play baseball after [those] Olympics," Shin said.

But his parents didn't allow him to start playing until he was 10 years old. They wanted him to concentrate on his studies. However, by high school, Shin was intent on being a professional baseball

player.

At Paichai High School in Seoul, South Korea he was an infielder until his senior year when his coach asked him to switch to center field after another player was injured. That year, Shin had a robust .420 batting average and four homeruns.

#### Coming To MDC

After the season, an international scout told MDC about Shin. He tried out for the team in November of 2019 but his arrival was delayed until January of 2020 because of COVID.

After a few players had GPA issues, Shin made the team. In his first year, he boasted a .284 batting average, 34 RBI, 25 runs and four homeruns in 34 games and was instrumental in the Sharks winning a state championship.

"He's a perfectionist," said Sharks Head Coach Adrian Morales. "He can have a bad round of batting practice and he's going to get into the [batting] cage until 8 or 9 o'clock at night and try to correct himself. He's a competitor and he wants to win. When you put winning first, good things happen and he does that."

That unselfish attitude is applauded by his teammates. They say that even when he is lifted for a pinch hitter, he is always the first to shake the hand of the guy who is replacing him.

"He's about winning," Morales said. "He's about the name on the front, not the name on the back [of the jersey]."

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## // SPORTS

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## BASEBALL

# Sharks Fall One Win Short Of National Tournament

□ The Miami Dade College baseball team was eliminated from postseason play on May 15 after losing, 4-3, to the College of Central Florida in the state tournament championship game.

By **Juan S. Gomez**  
juan.gomez070@mymdc.net

The Miami Dade College baseball team's season ended on May 15 at the state tournament in Lakeland, one victory short of qualifying for nationals.

In the championship game—one of five games the team played in four days—MDC lost to the College of Central Florida, 4-3.

The Sharks jumped out to a 3-0 lead after scoring two runs in the first inning. They tacked on an additional run in the third, but the Patriots got within one after they scored two runs in the sixth inning before adding two more runs in the eighth inning to secure the win.

"I'm really proud of everybody," said Sharks' right fielder Wooyeoul Shin. "The players, coaches, trainers, whoever is part of the team. I'm not gonna forget about this team."

Miami Dade College faced an uphill battle at the tournament after they lost their first game, 9-1, on May 12 versus Indian River State College. The loss put them on the brink of elimination the following day and forced them to face Chipola College, which was the No. 2 ranked team in the nation at the time.

The Sharks responded by defeating CC, 7-2. Catcher Loidel Rodriguez-Peralta and Shin led MDC's offense with three hits each. Right-hander Andy Rodriguez collected the win, striking out nine in six innings.

On May 14, the Sharks' offense was in full display as they scored 25 runs in two wins to qualify for the championship game. In the first game, MDC avenged their loss earlier in the week by defeating Indian River State College, 10-4. In the second game, the Sharks beat the College of Central Florida, 15-9, on the strength of home runs by second baseman Joseph Zamora, Shin and center fielder Jose Hernandez, who had five RBI in the game.



CRISTIAN LAZZARI / KENDALL CAMPUS MEDIA SERVICES

**Tough Loss:** For the second year in a row, the Miami Dade College baseball team played in the championship game at the state tournament in Lakeland. But unlike last year when they won and advanced to the national tournament in Grand Junction, Colorado, this season MDC lost, 4-3, to the College of Central Florida.

Three of the teams that played in the state tournament finished in the top-20 rankings in the national polls. The College of Central Florida currently has a No. 2 ranking, Chipola College is ranked 12th and MDC finished at No. 20.

"I'm just very proud about what these kids did. They lost game one in the state tournament and they battled their tails off. They eliminated Chipola, the No. 2 ranked team in the nation at the time, they eliminated our rival Indian River and we were very

close to eliminating Central Florida and winning it all," Morales said. "It's a tribute to those players. You know us coaches, we can put them in position, we write lineups, we prepare them but at the end of the day, the players play and we are just very proud of what they did."

Despite the loss in the championship game, the Sharks had a strong season. They were 39-19-1 and 16-5 in Southern Conference play.

Head coach Adrian Morales was named

the conference Coach of the Year and Rodriguez had a breakout season striking out 121 batters in 95.2 innings while posting a 2.45 earned run average and a 10-3 record.

Shin and Hernandez led the team with nine home runs each, Rodriguez-Peralta had a team-leading 45 RBI and Zamora led all hitters with a .369 batting average.

"It was a grind. It was mentally tiring and physically tiring but we never gave up" said Sharks' first baseman Matthew Krtausch. "We showed heart."



# RICH.



## The Reporter

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MARVEL

## Doctor Strange In The Multiverse Of Madness: A Miscalculation In Marvel's Trajectory

□ *Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness* was released on May 6 and features a new Marvel character, America Chavez, as she is followed by Wanda Maximoff through different universes.

By **Christian Rodriguez**  
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The release of *Iron Man* in 2008 launched the Marvel Cinematic Universe into decades of success.

Fourteen years later, we entered a new era for Marvel with the release of *Doctor Strange in the Multiverse Of Madness*, which hit theaters on May 6.

We are no longer in the Marvel Cinematic Universe but rather the Marvel Cinematic Universes.

The film centers around Dr. Strange (Benedict Cumberbatch), Wanda Maximoff (Elizabeth Olsen) and America Chavez (Xochitl Gomez).

America, a girl with universe-hopping superpowers, seeks Strange's protection as she is followed by Wanda who wants to use Chavez's powers to travel to a universe in which she can be with her kids that she sacrificed in the mini-series *WandaVision*.

Though the last Marvel film release, *Spider-Man: No Way Home*, dipped its toes in the concept of the Multiverse through the interaction of characters from previous Spider-Man franchises, it still very much took place in our world where Peter Parker was the main attraction.

In *Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness*, it is not Dr. Strange nor Wanda that take center stage but rather the multiverse itself.



PHOTO COURTESY OF MARVEL STUDIOS

**A Marvel:** *Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness* was released on May 6. The movie features Dr. Strange, Wanda Maximoff and America Chavez.

Therein lies the strengths and failings of this installment.

On a positive note, the introduction of the multiverse does manage to bring excitement and novelty to the MCU even after more than 10 years of releases.

This is particularly true when our familiar superheroes visit a reality named Earth-838.

There we are met with Captain Carter (Hayley Atwell), a female version of Captain America, and Dr. Reed Richards (John Krasinski), a popular member of the Fantastic Four, who are part of a group of superheroes previously not introduced to the MCU.

We also have an appearance of the fan-favorite Dr. X played by Patrick Stewart from the *X-Men* movies.

While it is an interesting part of the movie, it is very brief and underdeveloped.

A similar issue is present with other elements of the movie such as the introduction of the new universe-hopping character America Chavez.

While she plays an integral role in the plot, we barely have any emotional attachment to her by the end of the film.

The underdevelopment might be because this film only serves as

a setup for future movies further exploring these characters. However, the quality of the current production should never be sacrificed for future films.

Instead of exploring these new worlds or characters, too much time is spent going through excessively CGI'd interdimensional limbo as a quest for a magical book that will help them defeat all evil. Not only is this a lazy plot point but it also gets dropped as the film aims to go for a magical pep talk instead.

Throughout the film, America Chavez cannot control her powers which only manifest in moments

of extreme fear. In the end, she is the only one left to defeat Wanda.

Achieving control of her powers could have been a deeply personal and emotional moment but instead it boils down to Dr. Strange telling her "You can do it!" and solving all their problems.

The film feels like it is stuck between being an ambitious science-fiction installment and a character study of the three main characters and ends up doing both in a mediocre manner.

However, the most disappointing moments are the ones that had squandered potential.

Wanda as a villain is a compelling character choice and Elizabeth Olsen plays it well. Yet, it does not follow the character development that she went through in *WandaVision* (2021).

By the end of that series, she had repented after enslaving a whole town in a hex of her creation to keep her family. She also gave up her husband and kids to free a single town.

How do you then expect us to believe that she is now willing to sacrifice a young girl and potential whole universes to get her kids back? She would have simply kept her previous hex.

*Doctor Strange in the Multiverse Of Madness* has elements that could create a good movie but fails to effectively utilize them.

Dr. Strange also feels superfluous to the story and undergoes no personal development.

The film feels like an installment that sacrificed its quality to set up future Marvel stories.

We can only hope that the sacrifice is worthwhile.

YOUTUBE

## The Downfall Of Mainstream Youtube

□ After its heyday in the 2010s, the streaming platform has slowly gone downhill. Now YouTube is adjusting in hopes of regaining its footing with content creators.

By **Veronica Romano**  
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When content creators like Zoella and Jenna Marbles took the internet by storm, the 2010s felt like a golden period for the video streaming platform Youtube.

YouTube provided everyone a platform, allowing creators to make content that was unlike anything else on the internet. It was created to allow anyone to publish whatever they wanted.

Unboxing, shopping hauls and morning routine videos were all made possible by the platform.

YouTube has been one of Gen Z's favorite diversions since the early 2010s, but many of the top creators have already shut down their channels.

The video streaming platform was founded on February 14, 2005, and some of its most popular, meme-inspiring videos, such as "Charlie Bit My Finger" and "Friday" were uploaded in the early years.

Rebecca Black, the creator of the song *Friday*, was one of the most Googled names in 2011 and

she returned to music in 2021 with a remix of the song.

Even today's most popular artists, such as Shawn Mendes, Alesia Cara and Justin Bieber, got their start on YouTube.

Although YouTube used to support popular creators, it appears that the platform has abandoned them.

In 2011, YouTube's initial, creator-centric motto "Broadcast yourself" was removed from the website and the site began to shift in a different, less creator-centric direction.

Many popular YouTubers like Joey Graceffa, Tyler Oakley and Alfie Deyes left the platform for various reasons.

They said the company's general lack of communication left them feeling furious, forgotten and confused.

When creators put in a lot of effort to make videos that don't do well, the experience can be detrimental to their mental health.

The platform did not allow for breaks and instead expected consistency in upload schedules.

Furthermore, the content creators were not designed to engage with thousands of people every day, instead they were heavily affected by the huge volume of feedback they received.

In 2017, we saw Viners that had preexisting fanbases join Youtube



PHOTO COURTESY OF NORDWOOD THEMES

**Downfall:** After the 2010s served as the golden age for Youtube thanks to creators like Zoella and Jenna Marbles, the streaming platform has gone downhill.

soon after the app was shut down. Their content was problematic.

Logan Paul filmed some terrible footage in Japan's Aokigahara forest. It showed the body of a man who had committed suicide.

Youtuber PewDiePie produced a reaction video with an anti-Semitic remark, as well as an influx of terrorist recruitment films.

It wasn't until 2020 that YouTubers were held accountable for their inappropriate behavior.

Shane Dawson and Jeffree Star

are two examples.

Another factor contributing to the decline in YouTube interest is TikTok.

Although TikTok was founded in 2016, it grew rapidly during the COVID-19 outbreak. The app, which has been downloaded 2.6 billion times and has 1 billion users worldwide as of September 2021, contains content that ranges in length from a few seconds to three minutes.

TikTok caters to Generation Z's

short attention span and penchant for short-form material.

Ultimately, YouTube isn't dead, it's simply switched gears.

Content watchers like material that either does not take hours to consume or truly makes them chuckle.

We'll hunt for original and innovative stuff elsewhere if YouTube doesn't produce it.

We're not on social media for daily vlogs anymore, we're on it for fast humor.

## // A&amp;E

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## TV SHOW

Netflix's *Heartstopper* Is The Optimism We All Need

☐ *Heartstopper* follows Charlie Spring and Nick Nelson along their unlikely friendship that becomes something more as they navigate school and young love.

By **Emily Schraer**  
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There are a plethora of TV shows that depict teen life. Most show the ugly parts of being a teenager such as dealing with mental illness, substance abuse and self image issues.

Yet, every once in a while we get TV shows that are so beautiful and wonderful that just thinking about them makes you grin.

One of these shows is Netflix's *Heartstopper*.

The TV series was released on April 22 and is based on the graphic novel series, *Heartstopper*, by Alice Oseman, written in 2018. The show captures the humor and sincerity that made her graphic novels so popular.

It follows the heart-warming love story between two teen boys, Charlie Spring (Joe Locke) and Nick Nelson (Kit Connor).

Charlie is his school's only openly gay kid at the start of *Heartstopper*. He has poor self-esteem and even lower self-worth.

He quickly falls in love with his new homeroom seat mate, Nick, a straight, popular rugby team member with whom he



PHOTO COURTESY OF NETFLIX

**Queer Love:** Netflix's latest TV series, *Heartstopper*, was released on April 22. The show follows Charlie and Nick as they discover that their unlikely friendship becomes something more as they navigate school and young love.

seemingly has nothing in common.

As Nick discovers he's bisexual, what begins as an unrequited crush quickly grows into friendship and affection.

It also has sad and unpleasant moments. Charlie is bullied and his mental health suffers as a result. Nick's sexuality is a difficult issue for him to deal with.

However, *Heartstopper* is not a gay romantic tragedy.

One of the most important aspects of the show is the fact that the characters are realistic. They are teenagers you'd want to hang out with in real life. While they are dealing with difficulties, they are still enjoying their youth.

Characters who identify as being part of the LGBTQIA+ community have been incredibly underrepresented in mainstream media.

*Heartstopper's* primary focus is being queer and having a healthy loving relationship. It is celebrated and not built around traumatic experiences.

That comes from an understanding of how queerness is depicted because of the emotions and experiences the characters have and go through.

*Heartstopper* is one of the first shows that depicts queer love as nothing but a beautiful thing.

If you're looking for optimism and joy, then look no further than *Heartstopper*.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

## The Era Of Casual Instagram Takes The App Back To Its Roots

☐ Casual Instagram has taken over feeds on the app. The aesthetic includes users taking photos of everyday moments or habits in their life.

By **Carolina Soto**  
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Like so many other things in my adolescent years, I started my Instagram account in 2014 entirely because of the British boy band, One Direction.

I would take a few selfies and immediately select the one I liked best before posting it to Instagram.

If I was doing homework, I'd take a picture of it and make sure the caption expressed how stressful it was. If I had gone out with my family, I'd rearrange a collage full of photos and add a white border to it.

I wasn't aware of the anxiety that comes with posting on social media at the time, nor of the "casual Instagram" look that has recently taken over the app.

No one cared about pretty pictures.

But if there's one thing I've learned, it's that Instagram has changed the way we portray ourselves to the public throughout the years.

According to Business of Apps, there are about 1.4 billion Instagram users in the world.

Instagram Business Statistics states the app has about 200

million business profiles and 500,000 active influencers, many of whom are noted for having well-curated, visually beautiful feeds in their profile.

Throughout the years, many users have worked extensively to preserve a certain "feel" on Instagram by using intentional editing and beauty filters.

Instagram evolved from a simple photo-sharing software to a popularity contest based on approval.

The possibility of profiting from Instagram sponsorships reinforced the desire to exclusively broadcast the picture-perfect aspects of one's life.

There's nothing wrong with

presenting your best self or using filters to enhance things, but instead of propagating insane beauty standards, be transparent about it.

However, there has been a shift in how Instagram is used by influencers.

Many users are choosing mismatched photo dumps, amusing

"sh\*tposts," and unplanned shots of daily stuff instead of having carefully curated, unified feeds.

But now it appears that "casual Instagram" has arrived, with its sloppy and mismatched vibe.

Instead of solely uploading glam images and immaculate selfies, you can share photos of everyday moments in your life, such as a selfie of you in your sweatpants or your not-so-photogenic meal.

The casual look is meant to be a more laid-back approach to social media—possibly a reaction to the well-manicured feeds that have overtaken the app.

We are even seeing this type of feed on celebrities' pages.

Timothée Chalamet randomly posts his Cup Noodles meal, and Charli D'Amelio posts her messy kitchen and unedited photos with her dog.

At the end of the day, it's up to you whether you want to go for a casual or a more curated look. You may even commit to a certain overall aesthetic while throwing a casual post or photo dump on your page every now and then.

Whether your feed is considered casual or not, Instagram can still be a pleasant, enjoyable experience. It's all about how you approach the app, not necessarily how your photos look.

We are our harshest critics and the things we over-analyze about ourselves are probably not even on the minds of others.



PHOTO COURTESY OF CLAUDIO SCHWARZ

**Authentic:** Casual Instagram is taking over feeds throughout the app. The aesthetic showcases photos that are everyday moments in life that are not so well-manicured.

To write for the a&e section, contact: Carolina Soto at (305) 237-7657 or carolina.soto005@mymdc.net

## HUMILITY

# Humility Is The Key To Self-Love

□ Embracing humility enables us to develop the self-compassion necessary to develop a healthy and loving relationship with ourselves.



By **Juan S. Gomez**  
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For a prolonged period of my life, there was nothing I loathed more than making a mistake. It could have been a mistake in anything. Whether it was school, my personal life or even a video game, I always boiled in frustration.

My time in middle school was deeply troublesome. Due to the volatile effects of puberty, a dysfunctional household, poor friendship choices and my own immaturity, I was someone who I would consider “toxic” today. In seventh grade, my toxicity peaked. For three months, I teased



JESSICA SOTO / THE REPORTER

one of my friends due to the pungent odor of his lunchbox. The teasing eventually evolved to bullying as me and my friends made it a habit to belittle him.

It wasn't until he cried one time that I stopped to think about what I was doing. I felt a great deal of

shame when I realized that my actions were bringing sadness to someone else.

I immediately stopped teasing him and apologized. My friend forgave me for my mistake.

Despite his forgiveness, I found it hard to move on from the

incident. I felt like I should have received a punishment to “balance” things out. Additionally, I grew increasingly frustrated at the fact that I had bullied someone.

At one point I realized that my perfectionism was affecting how I perceived myself. Instead of

forgiving myself for making a mistake, I fixated on it and used it as ammunition to see myself as unworthy and incapable of change.

Eventually, I figured out that my perfectionism stemmed from a sense of pride rooted in insecurity and a lack of self-love. The only reason I wanted to be perfect was to see value in myself.

But now I understand that humility does not mean you underestimate or undervalue your worth or potential. Rather, it means acknowledging that you are human and that we always have something to improve upon. Embracing this gives you the patience and encouragement to develop into a better person. Instead of staining your view of yourself based on a mistake, you will instead see failures as lessons. You will also develop a broader sense of compassion not only for yourself but for others as well.

Six years after the incident with my friend, I can now acknowledge my mistake and what factors caused it. Acknowledging my shortcomings and forgiving myself is what enabled me to ensure I now spread positivity instead of negativity.

The moment we embrace self-compassion through humility is the moment we take accountability, forgive ourselves and continue progressing to become better people.

## OILS

## Take A Stand Against Processed Oils And Fats

□ Natural oils and fats, such as virgin olive oil, butter and lard, serve as a traditional and healthier alternative to the processed oils and fats offered by the food industry.



By **Sim Sitzer**  
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Refined seed oils and vegetable oils such as canola oil are in everything. That's a problem because they are extremely unhealthy.

We need to return to the animal fats and virgin oils our ancestors have cherished and enjoyed for thousands of years.

Almost every processed food product in the supermarket has one or more of the following oils listed in their ingredients: canola, soybean, vegetable, palm, sunflower and safflower oils coupled with margarine or vegetable shortening.

The toxic extraction and refining processes that these oils go through make them very unhealthy.

You may be surprised to learn that canola oil is actually made from crossbred and genetically

modified rapeseeds. The name canola stands for “Canadian Oil, Low Acid” referring to its low-erucic acid.

Regular consumption of refined oils can lead to health problems such as cancer, heart disease, obesity, Alzheimer's, inflammation, atherosclerosis, diabetes, gastrointestinal diseases, reproductive issues and immune dysfunction.

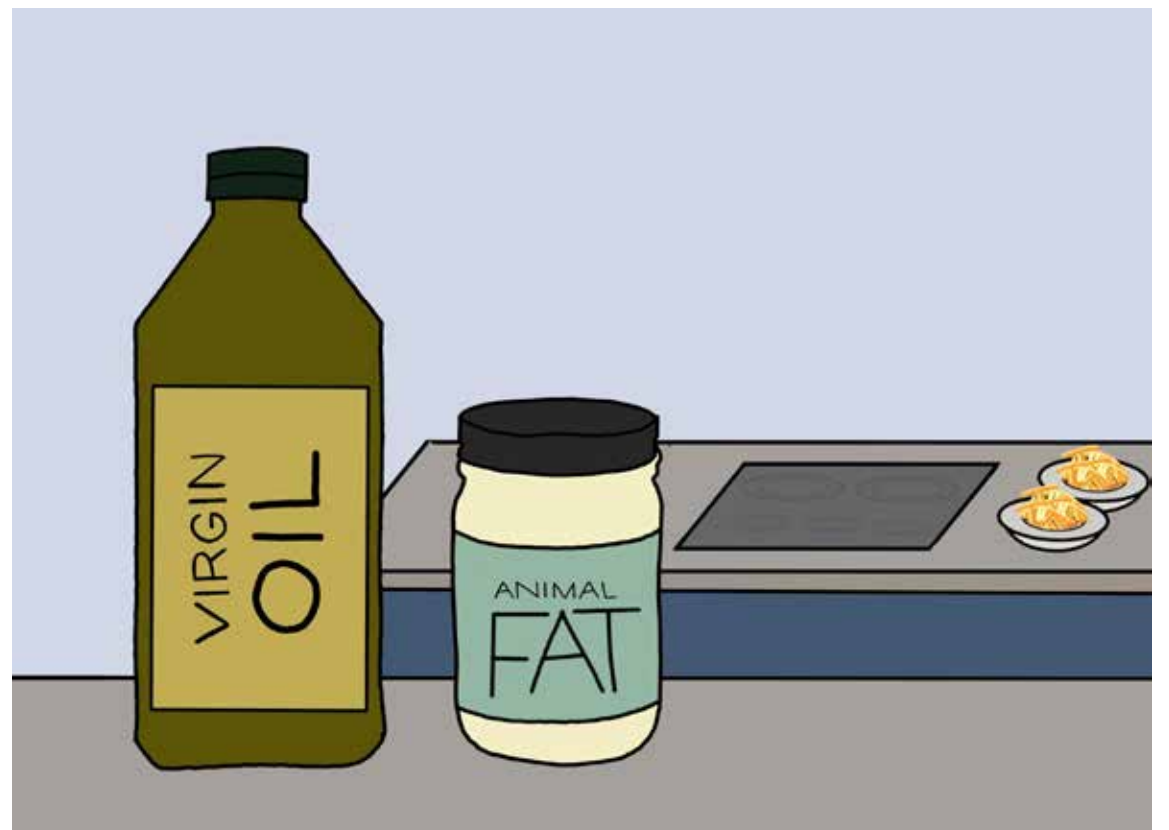
This all started with Procter & Gamble in the early 1900s. Having tons of cottonseeds from cotton production, they discovered a way to industrially expel oil from the cottonseeds, refine it and then hydrogenize it by forcing hydrogen gas into the oil to thicken it to create a substance reminiscent of butter or lard.

They called their product Crisco.

Crisco launched a massive marketing campaign in the U.S. to get people to replace traditional fats with their products. Decades later, the rate of health problems increased since everyone was eating the hydrogenated industrial waste product.

Unfortunately, doctors and health agencies such as the FDA and the World Health Organization only recognized hydrogenated fats such as margarine and shortening as unhealthy but still insist that refined oils such as canola are healthy.

The fats that are optimal for human health are traditional animal fats such as butter (particularly raw butter), tallow and lard. Tallow and lard are



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rendered simply by simmering raw animal fat such as beef suet at low heat and then straining it. When the process is complete, you have healthy, versatile and tasty fat.

Animal fats are a staple in almost every traditional cultural cuisine. The saturated fat and cholesterol contained in them are healthy and essential nutrients, contrary to the mainstream

nutritional opinion and corporate-funded studies.

Extra virgin olive oil and virgin coconut oil are healthy natural oil options, although extra virgin olive oil isn't good for high heat cooking. What's important in any oil is that it's oil, unrefined, preferably organic and cold-pressed, not expeller-pressed.

These recommendations are in accordance with the Weston

A. Price Foundation. They are a non-profit organization that advocates for traditional foodways by promoting foods such as pasture-raised or hunted meat, raw dairy products, time-honored fats and sourdough bread.

Start embracing ancestral fats by choosing butter. And making sure that your food is not cooked in cheaply processed oils that are harmful to you.

# // FORUM

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PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

## Miami Needs Better Public Transportation

□ Miami's burgeoning population and its overdependence on automobiles is a call to action for the city to improve its public transportation infrastructure.



By **Carolina Soto**  
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The only reliable way to get around Miami is with a car.

With more people moving in, our streets are jam-packed with automobiles while the city neglects public transportation to help pedestrians.

If we continue to construct more road infrastructure, we will be trapped in our automobile dependence indefinitely.

Instead of expanding road infrastructure endlessly to meet an insatiable demand for cars, South Florida should strive to improve its public transportation system.

Buses run every 30 minutes to an hour on average. For some people, the waiting time for public transportation to arrive is equivalent to



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the time it takes them to get to a destination using a car.

Taking the bus every day for work, school, appointments and errands is unrealistic and unreliable for people who don't have a car.

My niece has to rely on the bus every week for her commute. No matter how early she gets to the bus stop, she always ends up running late.

There was one occurrence where the bus she was waiting for never showed up.

Due to the unreliability of Miami's public transportation, she

is forced to use Uber a few days a week. However, this is unsustainable because she spends what she earns on Uber alone, which often costs around \$150 a week.

Some people get stressed and irritated when faced with traffic and angry drivers. As an alternative, they take the bus, the Metromover or Metrorail. Unfortunately, those options are limited and only useful to a very specific area of Miami. The rest of the city is left on its own or faces the same unreliable options my niece does.

The increased traffic has made

road rage prominent in Miami. People honk at you, flick you off, or scream at you out of frustration while driving.

The more angry drivers and cars we have on the road, the more chances we will see an increase in car accidents and rise in insurance prices.

Something has to be done about Miami's public transportation to accommodate its growing population.

If not, our dependence on cars will exacerbate the already crippling issues connected with traffic and road rage.

INTERNET

## The Internet Needs To Be A Public Utility

□ It should be considered a public utility to ensure that sufficient governmental regulation takes place to counter the harms posed by its monopolization.



By **Christian Rodriguez**  
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Water, electricity, internet. What do these three things have in common? They are all necessities in our modern society.

But not all three are viewed that way; only water and electricity are considered public utilities.

A service acquiring the status of public utility in the United States must be an essential service that is under government regulation. That is often deemed necessary with industries that tilt toward "natural monopolies."



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Installing cable systems in cities is a big undertaking that was originally less expensive. Older telecommunications companies wired up cities and thus ensured a lasting monopoly through the service provider.

It is very difficult to enter the market as a competitor in an industry with such expensive and complicated entry barriers of infrastructure.

In 2017, the monthly cost of broadband in the United States was a whopping \$66.17. A figure significantly higher than nations such as France at \$38.10, Germany at \$35.71 and South Korea at \$29.90.

These astronomical prices could be reduced through government

regulation; which is what happened in France. There, the dominating internet providers were compelled to lease out part of their cable systems to incumbent carriers to create a fair chance of entering the market.

Such regulation on internet providers would be possible if they were deemed public utilities. Other drawbacks to unregulated service providers include the fight for net neutrality and the exclusion of certain communities.

Net neutrality is the idea that internet service providers shouldn't block or impose limits on a user's access to content.

The equalizing and democratic aspect of the origins of the internet enabled it to become a vehicle for

social movements.

However, since 2017, the Federal Communications Commission has rolled back most Net Neutrality protection laws. That allows internet service providers to provide faster internet speeds if you are on specific sites like Facebook as opposed to a smaller social media competitor that may lack the funds to pay for equal broadband.

The throttling of internet speeds serves to further perpetuate the market control of huge companies like Facebook while stifling competition. Under public control, this behavior wouldn't be allowed.

The current system exacerbates the lack of internet access in rural and less affluent communities since the infrastructure isn't updated for communities with lower potential subscriber numbers because unregulated service providers don't see the capital investment required as worthwhile.

These practices only serve to perpetuate and expand the existing social divides.

Internet service is not a luxury, it is necessary for schoolwork, jobs and access to general information and education. Internet access must become a public utility to ensure it is accessible and affordable to all.



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