



GABBI MORTELLARO

Photojournalist of the Year candidate - Wando High School Yearbook

Sitting on a desk watching the intro to high school extracurricular video in 8th grade I couldn't even begin to fathom the doors that were opening right in front of my eyes. That door... Wando High School's yearbook staff the *Legend*. Little did I know that door would undeniably never produce a closing.

Being a part of Wando High School's yearbook staff has been a more than exhilarating experience. It has taught me so much and helped me grow in ways I never imagined I could. First and most importantly it has deepened my love for photography. For as long as I can remember I've had a camera in my hands, whether it was videoing moments of my childhood, taking pictures on vacation, or even being the designated photographer now with my friends. Photography has always been something that has given me more than an interest and now opportunities to expand my horizons with my future. Being a photographer has also taught me how to see the world through a different lens and capture moments that tell powerful stories of the life around us. It never ceases to amaze me how much a single photograph can evoke so much emotion and preserve a memory forever.

Working day in and day out in our photo lab at school has also taught me the importance of attention to detail. From setting up the perfect shot to editing and retouching images, and going through thousands of photos to only use eight to ten of them. I've learned that every detail matters and to pay close attention to lighting composition and timing to capture the perfect story of a moment. Learning these things has not only improved my photography but also carries over to other aspects of my life like being more observant and detail-oriented surrounding my day-to-day routine.

A lot of good photography is luck. Right place, right time, right click of a button. First and foremost having a genuine love for photography is essential. When you're passionate about something it drives you to continuously learn and improve your skills. It's the passion that you have for something that will push you to go the extra mile to capture unique and compelling shots that determine the difference from good to extraordinary in a judge's eyes.

This past fall, we traveled to Boston for the NSPA conference. That night I was expecting to cheer on my fellow *Legend* family members and hopefully see some amazing inspiration of winners for my next photo quests to help me become better at what I love to do. Much to my astonishment my name was called more than the average. I had won four national awards for my photography, one of them being first place Best of Show. This is something that I honestly couldn't think that I would ever get over. This past spring *Legend* was taken to the Southern Interscholastic Press Association conference in March. This time I had walked away with nine photography awards (more than anyone at the conference and a school record) and was asked to stand and be recognized by the director of SIPA. Setting the record for most photography awards by one Wando student was unimaginable. I couldn't wrap my head around it. Nothing could have prepared me for this and I am forever thankful to my *Legend* family.

Next year, I will be the editor in chief of our new Photography department—my adviser broke us away into our entity so that we may service Yearbook, Newspaper, and the new Sports Marketing Department. Using everything that I've learned the past two years on yearbook staff, I now lead 14 editors and photographers to do more than extraordinary things. I honestly could have never been able to take this position upon myself to lead without the leaders and material I have been taught through others and experiences these past two years on staff and I'm forever grateful.

Being a part of this family has given me a platform to express my creativity and share my unique perspective. It has pushed me to think outside the box, experiment with different techniques, and take risks. I've learned that creativity knows no boundaries and that there are endless possibilities when it comes to capturing a moment through a lens. It's a journey of self-discovery and growth that I am overwhelmed with gratitude to Wando High School's yearbook staff and it has been a one-of-a-kind enriching experience that has taught me valuable skills, helped me grow as an individual, and allowed me to contribute to capturing the memories of our school and community through a lens.



Addie Smith, 12, skies to send home a spike in a match vs. West Ashley. This photo won 1st place Sports Photo Best in Show at the NSPA conference in Boston in 2023. Published on May 21 in 2024 *Legend* yearbook.



Lacrosse standout Maggie Parkin, 12, lets opponents know this her field in a shot following a match vs. Bishop England. This photo won 4th place Sports Photo Best in Show at the NSPA conference in Boston in 2023. Published on May 21 in 2024 *Legend* yearbook.



Senior members of the ChopHouse go wild as the Wando football team storms the field for the start of the home game vs. Stall High. This photo won 5th Place Feature Photo Best of Show at NSPA Boston in 2023. Published on May 21 in 2024 *Legend* yearbook; this photo is also now a giant wall mural in our school store.



Senior Brendan Breen reacts to the announcement crowning him the Prom King. Published on May 21 in 2024 *Legend* yearbook.



Junior Izzy Simons inspiration--and hair--come alive in the comforting realm of her cosmetology class. Published on May 21 in 2024 *Legend* yearbook. Lighting effects were used to achieve look inside cosmetology salon.