

## Be Like Mike

by Kallie Timmons

Michael Elemae, lovingly known as Mikey, has been taking dance lessons at Cassie's Dance Academy in Galt, Illinois for the past three years, but he certainly stands out from the crowd. For this special dancer, performing in front of a crowd is a remarkable symbol of independence.

Elemae is a 40-year-old man living with Down syndrome and residing at Sterling Group Home, part of the Lutheran Social Services of Illinois organization. For the eight mentally challenged men ranging from about 35-55 years old that live there, Sterling Group Home is both a

family and a safe haven.

Elemae himself was placed in the group home after the death of his parents, but he is originally from the Chicago area where he participated in musical theatre.

In the year 2016, one of Elemae's former caretakers came up with the idea to sign him up for dance lessons and contacted the staff at Cassie's Dance Academy (CDA). The request was nothing short of unique, but Elemae quickly became a part of the CDA family where he is now known by many of the parents and dancers, both young and old.

While Elemae's mental disability is accompanied by a lack of verbal communication, he is

able to express himself through dance. Of course, there are some additional physical limitations, but he is taught dance moves that have been adapted to fit his special needs. Elemae performed in both the 2016 and 2017 CDA recitals as the grand finale of the shows with over 850 people watching. He is known by the dancers for his macarena skills and larger-than-life stage presence!

Apart from his weekly dance lessons, Elemae and the other men living in the group home work at Self Help Enterprises in Sterling, IL performing tasks like shredding paper and working with nuts and bolts.

Lonna Lira, a member

of staff at Sterling Group Home and one of the several wonderful people who accompany Elemae to his dance lessons, explained that the group home schedules weekly activities. In addition, all of the men get a turn once or twice a month to have a one-on-one day with a staff member. These special days include home visits, sporting events, monster truck shows, car rides, shopping, and eating out. Elemae's favorite combo is a trip to Walmart, followed by dinner at Burger King or McDonald's.

Elemae is not a man of many words, but his big heart and passion for life speak volumes.



Mikey Elemae smiles big as he hits the ending pose of his current dance routine.

### OPINION:

## 2018 Midterm Elections-A Trend in the Right Direction

by Cindy Skiles-Hacker

The truth is midterms are often simplified to be a referendum on the president and party in charge. They shouldn't be. Each issue or candidate should be considered for their own merit. The results of this election seem to show a trend in that direction and it appears college age students are helping that happen.

The Republicans lost control of the House, but increased their hold on the Senate by two seats. Of the Sauk Valley Community College students that responded to a survey taken prior to the election, only 30% indicated they would vote a straight-party ticket. The remainder said they would vote for candidates from more than one

party or were undecided.

College age students tend to be vocal about politics, but traditionally don't turn out to vote in large numbers. There's evidence that's changing too. Early youth voting in Illinois is up 144% since 2014. In the SVCC survey, 78% of the respondents were registered to vote and 62% of them planned to vote.

When a larger percentage votes the government can be more effectively steered to reflect the views of the citizens.

The 113 million votes cast in the 2018 midterm election set a record as the first to exceed 100 million votes and that's a trend in the right direction. Traditionally turnout for midterms has been low. Midterm elections can be just as con-

sequential as presidential elections. The high voter turnout seems to be proof voters have gotten that message.

There was an issue or candidate for everyone between the 435 House seats, state and local elections. A local sample ballot listed one congressional office, nine state offices, nineteen county and local offices, two judgeship retentions and five propositions for taxes and bonds. It's difficult to walk into a voting booth fully prepared to cast an informed vote with that many options.

One of the warnings seen prior to the election was "You can't afford to sit this one out." Fortunately, it seems more Americans, including young voters, are taking heed.

### SPORTS:

## Sauk Valley Classic tips off new basketball season



Sauk Skyhawk Sean Gringrich making a free throw during the final game of the Sauk Valley Classic

by: Caleb Plumb

With the winter season comes also basketball season which at Sauk Valley Community College (SVCC) started with the Sauk Valley Classic on November second and third.

The final game taking place Saturday the third was tightly played by Sauk Valley and Olive Hardy, who both showed a strong display of defense. The teams kept the game close, ensuring the other team never took too large of a lead in the first half.

Keeping within easy scoring range of each other, both teams kept a guard. The first period ended with the Skyhawks at 33 and Olive Hardy at 32.

During the second half the Sky-

hawks started to gain a small advantage over Olive Hardy, but they quickly caught back up. The final minutes were some of the tightest played, with the Skyhawks trying to hold on to their lead, and Olive Hardy continuing to make a come back.

In the end the Skyhawks were victorious, but without a strong lead. The final score was 83 Sauk, 80 Olive Hardy.

The classic is a short showcase of four local community college basketball teams before the new season starts. Participating this year was Sauk Valley, Olive Harvey, Prairie State, and Black Hawk colleges, all showing off what the new season will be like this coming year.

### OPINION:

## Comprehensive exams put students under pressure

by Mike Reed

Finals week for college students can be stressful. The bulk is this stress comes from having to take comprehensive exams. Starting early, taking the time to study

and finding the right study techniques will help students get through finals week.

The most stressful tests being comprehensive. These exams are composed of material covered throughout the

entire semester. There can be long hours of studying, which lead to long nights trying to study all the material. Starting early will help reduce the hours of studying per day.

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# Please Don't Insult my (Military) Intelligence

by Cindy Skiles-Hacker

The college instructor asked for examples of an oxymoron. Along with the classic “jumbo shrimp”, one of the students threw out “military intelligence” with a smile. It was greeted with a few chuckles, and at least one very irritated frown.

My lesser self toyed with the temptation to throw back “civilian discipline” as another oxymoron. My better self – the one largely shaped by my past military service (Sgt USMC) – suppressed that urge. I satisfied myself with a disdainful look in the student’s direction.

There’s a group of people who almost gleefully

dishonor and disrespect the United States’ military. For the most part these same people are appalled when they witness others using stereotypes to describe an entire group in a dismissive manner. They rebel against stereotypes like “weak women”, “lazy millennials”, “dumb blonde” and “redneck farmer”; and they should.

Encouraging and perpetrating the stereotype that the military is made up of overly aggressive, underachieving, less intelligent opportunists that couldn’t succeed in the civilian world is wrong. And insulting.

Maybe the reason this person, and others, have the same thoughtless atti-

tude towards the military is the same reason I didn’t snap back with an insult. It’s part of the military culture not to correct, irritate or argue with civilians. As a matter of fact, the military exists to defend you – the civilians who make up our families, friends, businesses and classmates.

There’s a military heritage of “we can take care of ourselves, thank you very much”. We don’t need advocates to defend us, and that’s not what we’re asking. We’d like your recognition of our service, your gratitude for serving our (your) country, and your appreciation of us as individuals.

By and large though, we simply want you to respect us.

## OPINION: Comprehensive exams put students under pressure

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Some instructors recommend to start studying a few weeks before the final.

Instructors encourage their students to start studying early to reduce the stress. Instructors at Sauk Valley Community College (SVCC), Dr. David Edelbach for example, like to give their students study tips for their finals. Dr. Edelbach says that for his basic chemistry courses, he gives his students a set of questions to study to help them get ready for the exam. This is a good technique that could help any student in any class study for finals.

Another instructor at SVCC gives comprehensive exams is John Nelson. Nelson teaches economics. Nelson

gives his students study tips to study for his comprehensive exams. He tells his students about these study tips at the beginning of the semester and he continues to remind his students to study throughout the semester.

Instructors want to know that their students learned something from them. That is why they prefer comprehensive exams. Some instructors do this and other don’t. It all depends on the class. Dr. Edelbach, besides basic chemistry, teaches organic chemistry and astronomy. In those classes, he doesn’t give comprehensive exams. It all depends on the instructor and the class.

The Learning Commons at SVCC is another great tool for students who need help studying for their finals.

## OPINION: A “killer queen” movie despite discrepancies

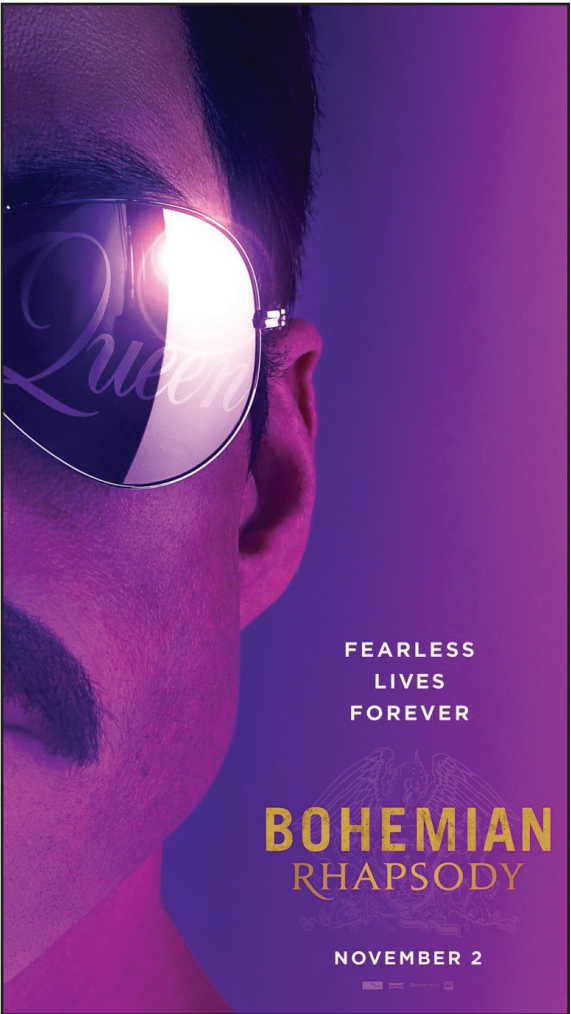
by Mike Reed

“Bohemian Rhapsody” depicted many moments in Freddie Mercury’s life and for the band “Queen”, but some of them happened to be false. “Bohemian Rhapsody” was an outstanding film in all, but some of the moments depicted may have been fabricated for performance purposes.

It all starts with how the band started. In the movie, Freddie, played by Rami Malek, went out one night and saw the band Smile, which he had been following for a while. The band was composed of drummer Roger Taylor, played by Ben Hardy, and Brian May, played by Gwilym Lee. Their lead singer, Tim Staffell, had left the band.

Freddie found Roger and Brian after the show in the back alley. Freddie made his case to become their lead singer after Brian told them that their lead singer just quit. In reality, Freddie had been friends with Tim Staffell for a while and guitarists Brian May remembered Freddie after Tim had quit and asked him if he wanted to join the band. Even though this was fabricated a little, showing how the band started this way helps give a little drama that pulls people in.

Freddie first sees Mary, the love of his life, played by Lucy Boynton, while he was looking for the band Smile after their show. They talked briefly that night. Then a few days later, Freddie goes to the clothing store Mary works at. They looked like they haven’t met each other before. Although, what actually happened was Mary dated Brian May for some time, but she didn’t come into Freddie’s world after he was with the band for some time. The movie wanted to dramatize the love story of Freddie and Mary. People love a good



love story.

There was recording executive, Ray Foster, who was played by Mike Meyers. Ray hate the song “Bohemian Rhapsody” and he refused to put it on the radio. One of his reasons was the song was too long to put on the radio. He continued to refuse to play the song and the band left in disgust. Ray Foster was actually a fictional character. The character of Ray Foster was based on Roy Featherstone, who was a chief of EMI (Electric and Musical Industries). Roy was actually a fan of the band, but he did think “Bohemian Rhapsody” was too long.

The movie ended showing the band at the Live Aid concert in 1985. Before the concert, the band wasn’t on speaking terms because Freddie left the band because he accepted a \$4 million solo deal. In the movie,

the band hadn’t talked for years. They reunited before the show and had to work hard to get back into it. The band never really broke up. In 1984, the released the album, The Works. Before Live Aid, the band was actually well-rehearsed. The movie wanted to show the Live Aid performance was reunion for the band for dramatization. It was intended to keep the audience hooked.

“Bohemian Rhapsody” sure did roll in the ticket sales after it’s release on November 2nd, 2018. From the 2nd to the 11th, ticket sales were ver \$100 million. People were flocking to see and no one was disappointed. In its entirety, “Bohemian Rhapsody” was an outstanding film. Some moments were fabricated, but the dramatization of Freddie’s life and how the band got started was well done.

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# Turning the corner into competition season

by Kallie Timmons

For the athletes and teachers of Cassie’s Dance Academy, competitions come with substantially more pressure than winning one game.

Cassie’s Dance Academy of Galt, Illinois has been training for competition since August, but they will not compete for the first time until early April. The first of the year’s two competitions, Midwest Starz at the Kalahari Resort in the Wisconsin Dells, takes place over a three day weekend starting April 5th.

Cassie Foster, head teacher and owner of the studio, started Cassie’s Dance Academy (CDA) in Geneseo, Illinois in 2000 and moved to the Sterling area in 2005. Since then, she has since built a family of about 180 dancers.

CDA is home to both recreational and competitive dancers who train in various styles including ballet, tap, jazz, hip-hop, contemporary, and lyrical. Recreational dancers start out as young as two and a half and can begin auditioning for the competitive team around age five depending on the individual.

Every year, eager dancers attend CDA’s summer workshop where they learn short combinations from dances that will be a part of the upcoming competition season. Foster evaluates the dancers throughout

the week, and all of those selected to join the team receive a letter in the mail with the dances they have been chosen for.

The season officially starts in August, and from then on, competition students attend classes a minimum of two days a week for up to five hours a day. All members of the competition team take two required technique classes a week in addition to their regular class time. Technique includes ballet basics, stretching, turns, and jumps. In January, competitive schedules change to allow more class time for critiquing and preparing each routine.

Unlike the conventional sporting event, a dance competition takes weeks to prepare for, and that does not even include the actual dancing. Every CDA dancer and their family packs up to eight different costumes with the matching hair pieces, shoes, and undergarments, specific hair and makeup products, and all of the medical supplies needed to get a dancer’s body through the weekend.

Midwest Starz Dance Competition at the Kalahari Resort will include two nights in a hotel for most of the dancer’s families, and the dancers themselves will usually perform throughout Saturday and Sunday. Routines start on the stage at 9:00 am, and the last awards ceremony of the

day usually lasts until after 10:00 pm.

Every routine is placed in a specific category by age group, group size, ability level, and dance style, which also means that there are several award ceremonies throughout each day of the competition. Dancers are given a ranking of either gold, high gold, or platinum for each dance, with platinum being the highest. From there, the several highest scoring dances in each category win overall awards. Midwest Starz also gives out judges awards and overall trophies like best dance of the day.

11-year-old Ellie Kested of Sterling, IL has been dancing at CDA for eight and a half years, and she joined the competition team at just five years old. In the 2018-19 competition season, Kested will perform in eight routines alongside her fellow dancers.

Although Kested is outspoken about her love for dance and for her team, she admits that there is a lot of pressure for dancers to get a good score at competition, especially when the dances hold significance or are more meaningful.

Kested predicts that the upcoming season will be outstanding for the team because the choreography, music, and costumes tie together so well, and the girls have been working so hard to constantly improve.

# OPINION: Woodlawn Arts Academy dreams big



Anthony Selmi, the young actor who played Prince Phillip, showed both his experience and confidence on stage during the performance.

by Kallie Timmons

Once upon a dream, Woodlawn Arts Academy’s finest young princes and princesses presented their fall 2018 musical theater production of “Sleeping Beauty”.

Woodlawn’s “Sleeping Beauty” was certainly an excellent stepping stone for any children interested in the world of theater. Performing encourages bravery, confidence, and teamwork, just a handful of the many qualities that these

young actors possessed on stage.

The show was performed to four sold out audiences at Sauk Valley Community College between Friday, October 19th and Sunday, October 21st.

For those few individuals not familiar with the classic story of Disney’s “Sleeping Beauty”, the fairy tale follows the life of Princess

Aurora who is cursed at birth by the evil Maleficent. She is hidden away by her fairy godmothers until her 16th birthday when the curse will be broken, but Aurora’s love for Prince Phillip complicates this plan. All ends happily ever after when the spell cast on Aurora is broken with true love’s kiss.

The plot of the story made it a perfect choice for the young actors who performed it on stage. It certainly teaches that

good can prevail over evil when we work hard together.

Directed by Faith Morrison and music directed by Mardi Huffstutler, this adorable cast of first through fifth graders entertained audiences with their heartfelt voices and commitment to their magical characters.

Leading the show were Jocelyn Pink as Princess Aurora and Anthony Selmi as Prince Phillip. The three fairy godmothers tasked with protecting the princess, Flora, Fauna, and Merryweather, were played by Sarah Wetzell, Morelia Vargas, and Hannah Britt. Finally, Kathleen Keesey brought to life the fierce villain Maleficent.

“Sleeping Beauty” is a story that has been inspiring the world for years, and it continued to inspire these local youth. As the Woodlawn directors put it, “It’s important to remember that even in the darkest times there is a light at the end of the tunnel. We just have to hold on to those who love us. We hope that this show reminds you not only to hold on, but how important it is to be someone who will fight when someone else’s light is too dim”.

# 2019 state funding falls flat

by Nicole Arduini

Despite the plans for more higher education funding in the 2019 Illinois state budget, Sauk Valley Community College will reap little reward of their funding drought from the last five years.

In June of 2018, Governor Bruce Rauner signed his first complete budget since his election in 2015. This budget, which will be taken into effect in the 2019 fiscal year, is as Rauner says “is a compromise. It is not perfect, but it is a good step in the right direction,” according to Amanda Vinicky from wttw.com.

In 2018, our state is running on an unbalanced budget that was passed over the governor’s veto. This Summer marks the first time Illinois has seen a passed budget since 2015.

Spending with no budget in the state has

lead to Illinois’s current situation.

For the past years, Illinois was unable to give means to state funded organizations and businesses resulting in job loss statewide. According to IllinoisPolicy.org, while the rest of our nation has experienced the job market increasing, Illinois has seen a significant decrease. In 2018, IllinoisPolicy.org says the largest loss in jobs are “After leisure and hospitality, the next largest losses came from the education and health sector, which lost 1,300 jobs, and the construction sector, which lost 1,200 jobs.”

The new 2019 budget has plans to add “\$350 million to a new K-12 school funding formula enacted last year, increases higher education spending by 2 percent” according to Karen Pierog from Reuters.com.

The state funding will

stay the same for Sauk in 2019 and hopes to see that the so called compromise budget is truly a step in the right direction for turning around years of decreased funding for Sauk Valley Community College.

As for Sauk Valley Community College (Sauk), “over the past 5 years, our state funding has decreased by 37%” stated Sauk’s Vice President of Business and Facilities, Melissa Dye. Sauk has seen a decrease in state funding, the lowest being in 2016, where Sauk was forced to dip into its reserves in order to make ends meet. As far as 2019 is concerned Dye says in “2019 the state budget shows our funding as being almost flat compared to what we received in 2018. As long as we get all the funding that was budgeted for 2019 we should be in good shape.”



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# Marching Rockets finish season on a high note

By Nicole Arduini

The Rock Falls Rocket Marching band marched out on the Field Saturday night for their last competition of the season. The Rockets returned Western’s field but this time the stakes, and the class was raised. Band Teacher Patrick Anderson said, “While in the past the Rockets haven’t had much success in the past at Western this didn’t deter the band.” For this competition, the Rockets were moved up from their usual 2A class to class 3A, which is considered “Large division bands” as identified by Western’s guidelines for classification. Amongst the big dogs this year, the marching Rocket’s were in competition with Mattoon, Jacksonville, Waterloo, and Geneseo High School. With the marching Rocket’s first on the field, they set the bar for the competing high schools to follow.

The Marching Rocket’s 2018 show was titled Words by Randall Standridge. Drum majors Katie Carlson and Philip Arduini direct the Rock-

ets through the five set piece.

The show opens with a soft bells medley into an announcer’s voice that kicks off the theme of “Words” in the opener titled “Intro”. Clarinet Luis Guerrero and Snare player Josh Lilpop stand center field in a duet to accompany the announcer. The soft duet gradually crescendos into a band wide wave of melody that sets the tone for the rest of the show.

The second set of the show is titled Opposites. The announcer starts with words “describe the difference between two ideas” The band acts out the opposites like fast as they race past each other, and slow as their steps and sound take double time. The band acts out the announcer’s commands such as high and low, left and right, and up and down. Before Opposites comes to an end the announcer says “Let’s not forget numbers” The Rocket’s march out counting 1 through 4 and in one swift hip switch, reverse it ending in a grand dance break.

“Welcome ladies and

gentlemen to the Rocket Lounge.” This is the beginning of the third set titled “Poetry” opening with a jazz poem by Kairi Hendryx-Perris that brings the band to a cool Jazzy tempo when they join in to accompany the poem. The song in a slow sultry style was complete with snaps, swing and jazz hands from the color guard to wrap up the Jazz piece up with a bow on top.

The tempo picks back up for the fourth set titled, Hurt. “Hey look at four eyes, gosh your so stupid, ugly, loser.” voices shout these insulting words as the band ravenously plays with quick pace. The announcer steps in and says “Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me” This settles the band into a cymbal roll followed by the soft flute solo by Brace Stahr. The band joins Stahr in unity before they gracefully fall out of the melody, bend a knee and reach out toward the soloist for the last notes of her solo.

A cowbell click takes the band out of their



trance into the finale. The announcer elaborates on verbs as the band acts out each such as run, skip, wave and dance, resulting in a full blown dance party in the field. Straightening up back into marching, the announcer elaborates, “Words describe the world around us but sometimes words just simply run out. where words end, music begins.” leaving the band in a slow forward march to the triumphant tune of Beethoven’s Ode to Joy.

Finally, we see the show placing the book-end to the beautiful story as the opening duet by Guerro and Lilpop breaks through the melody and takes back over the field. The two stroll once again through the band as they make their way back to center field while the rest of the Rockets lay down in the field spelling out the final word, The End.

The Rockets took home 3rd place in class 3A at the Western Marching Band Classic. This was the “best finish in the history of competition at Western Illinois.” says Anderson. Western’s competition marks the last performance of this season form the Marching Rockets. The unique show set the Marching Rockets out from the rest of the competition, and it paid off for them in a very successful competition season.

## OPINION:

# Global warming racing along at an alarming rate

by Caleb Plumb

The time that humans have left on Earth is slowly dwindling away. A new study from the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) states that “by the year 2030 the temperature on the planet will go 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 Fahrenheit) above the pre-industrial level,” meaning that the planet will become harder and harder to live on.

The pre-industrial level refers to the temperature that was held in the age that took place before the industrial. The current temperature is right around one Celsius, but once it raises up to the 1.5 threshold it could lead to many different environmental disasters

including both droughts and wildfires all over the globe.

Even now the general population needs to start finding new ways to help the Earth, it could be simple things like cutting down on unnecessary energy or even larger items such as purchasing an electric car. The winter time in particular is a rough one for the planet due to cars being run extra before being used on the road due to the cold weather and frosting over.


The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) states that “car pollution accounts for upwards of 27% of greenhouse gas emissions.” If more people started finding alternate ways to get places such as biking or walking

we could start to get that number down.

Some car usage is still understandable, but even then there are some alternatives. Carpooling is a great idea, if instead of multiple cars all going to the same place, ride with a friend or coworker to help cut down on the emissions.

In order for the current generation to stop, or at least slow down, the progress of the global warming would take a large number of changes. The entirety of the planet would need to work together, radically changing the usage of energy and the entire industrial aspect behind most countries. The future of the planet is at stake and humanity can not live without it.








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