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October 21, 2020

PHS Students Advance Program Proposals For Positive Change in Local Community

By Donald Gilpin

Undaunted by the limitations of youth and inexperience or a seven-month pandemic lockdown, three Princeton High School students are looking to implement their original plans to make a difference in the local community



Alice Feng

— in health care, in youth engagement, and in the relationship between police and the young people of Princeton.

Participants in the Social Pioneers Program of the NJ Youth Civics Coalition (NJYCC), formerly the Princeton Youth Program for Civic Engagement — senior Alice Feng, junior Jimmy Weinstein, and sophomore Han Li — were ready to present their proposals to community and government leaders at a pitch event in April. The event was canceled because of the pandemic, however, and the students have had to find other ways to advance their ideas.

Weinstein, whose goal is to help build the

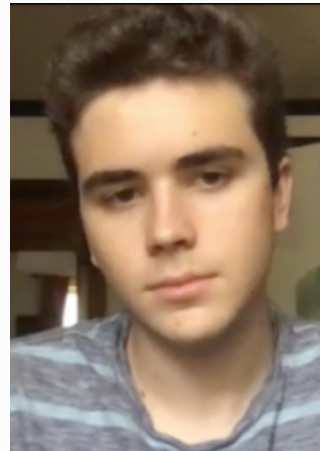
relationship between the Police Department and the young people of Princeton, explained why he got involved in the Social Pioneers Program. “I have spent too many years complaining and listening to others complain, so I figured it is time to try and fix something that is terribly important in our community,” he wrote in an email. “I am opinionated, but I never act. This issue has always been important and a bit controversial, and I thought the least I could do was find a simple solution, even if it doesn’t create world peace.”

In addressing the challenges of a relationship that Weinstein described as “rocky” and at times “severely strained,”

Weinstein’s

proposal, originally created in late 2019 before this year’s nationwide protests

over policing, calls for many events where kids and police communicate with each other “to discuss different sides and stories, for kids to learn what to do during police confrontations, for police to learn kids’ opinions on what they feel should change.”



Jimmy Weinstein

He added, “The only way to get a solution is to discuss. If our youth and our police do not know each other, what is the point? This project looks to have everyone feel safe in their town, and this is the best way to start.”

The focus of Feng’s program is Community Health Workers (CHW), an organization that helps low-income and minority populations, facilitating access to health care systems and providing psychosocial support. She noted that Princeton’s affordable housing units and low-income neighborhoods are often overlooked.

“Moreover, the language barrier and unfamiliarity with the health care system

often prevent new immigrants and vulnerable populations from seeking proper care,” she said, with CHW programs implemented only sporadically in the state. “CHWs are critical to meeting the current moment of COVID-19 in health care.”

She continued, “A local CHW initiative that addresses health education and prevention, mobilizes local talents, generates income for vulnerable populations, and promotes community ownership would undoubtedly be beneficial to the well-being of the town as a whole.”

Li’s plan is a multi-faceted one, seeking to get middle and high school students more involved in the Princeton community by helping them learn about civic engagement and find opportunities to apply what they learn.



Han Li

He looks forward to working with teachers to either create a separate class or to include education on civic engagement in existing classes. “Then I want to create and advertise a website that can be used to promote different volunteer and other civic opportunities around Princeton so that people, especially teenagers, looking for places to get involved in the community, can have one site with all the different links and descriptions,” he said.

Li emphasized the importance of the health of the community rather than just the success of individuals. “A healthy, striving community is the paragon of success, even more so than personal success in any form,” he said. “That’s also where charity comes in because a successful community is one that is giving back and working together to solve its problems.”

NJYCC has been active in the past few years working with area schools to build to build civics-related curriculum and support teachers with training and resources. Partnering with the Princeton Public Library, the Princeton Farmers Market, the Princeton Battlefield Society, the YMCA and others, NJYCC “focuses on empowering the next generation of citizens to make meaningful positive change in their communities,” according to NJYCC co-founder Neena Patil.

“These three students are wonderful and amazing, and they came at this challenge for different reasons and with very different experience,” she said. “Alice already had experience working on community projects and crowdsourcing; Jimmy is a wonderful, energetic person who really wanted to learn and be a part of conversations; and Han uses his own experience to identify needs, often starting with what was impactful for him, what helped him to shape his mindset around wanting to be a member of his community and wanting to give other students that opportunity.”

The NJYCC created leadership workshops for the students, inviting community and education leaders to help the students to think about the root cause of the problems they are trying to solve and to build communication skills designed to help them to influence people through their words.

In this pandemic year of hybrid learning, when the programs of these young social pioneers seem even more important than ever before, Patil is working with PHS to find the most effective forum for Feng, Weinstein, and Li to present and then implement their ambitious programs.

“NJYCC not only provides me with information on the importance of civics, but also the opportunity to bring changes into reality,” said Feng.





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Behrend, Tuck-Ponder, Durbin Make Plans For PPS After Election Win

In what appears to be a vote of confidence in the School Board's work over the past few years, incumbents Michelle Tuck-Ponder and Beth Behrend, along with new candidate Jean Durbin, have established a commanding lead over the five other challengers in the race for three positions on the Princeton Public Schools (PPS) Board of Education (BOE).

The results will not be official and certified by the county clerk on November 23, as the Mercer County Board of Elections can continue to count the final ballots — mail-ins that arrived in the week after the November 3 Election Day and a few provisional ballots — through November 23.

At last count, Tuck-Ponder, currently BOE vice president, had won 5,279 votes (19.51 percent of the votes cast in last Tuesday's election). Behrend, BOE president, had 5,127 votes (18.85 percent), and Durbin was in third place with 4,217 votes (15.53 percent).

Among the other contenders, Adam Barman had garnered 3,004 votes (11.11 percent), Paul Johnson 2,864 votes (10.39 percent), Karen Larson 2,638 (9.75 percent), Bill Hare 2,368 (8.75 percent), and Heidi Kuehn 1,445 (5.34 percent). Each voter designated three choices for the three open BOE seats.

Also on the ballot, Mark Freda was the winner in the unrecorded race for Princeton mayor, and incumbents David Cohen and Leticia Fraga were unopposed in regaining their seats in the election for Princeton Council.

Freda will take over on January 5, 2021 from Liz Lempert, who has served as mayor of unincorporated Princeton since 2012. She did not run for re-election.

"It will be my privilege to work for all the residents of Princeton," Freda said in a press release. "Together we will address the issues and challenges before us. We will be open and transparent in our decision-making processes and in our actions. All of us are the same team — the residents, the elected officials, and the town staff — our goals should all be the same. I look forward to our future and all of us working together."

In discussing the BOE election, Behrend said she was "very pleased with the outcome that reflects the fact that the community appreciates the work that we've done in the past few years in

Holiday Travel May Exacerbate Rise in Cases

COVID-19 case numbers are rising in Princeton and in every county in the state, and New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy has tightened restrictions on restaurants, bars, and interstate youth sports.

Murphy announced Monday, November 9, that bars and restaurants must stop indoor service by 10 p.m., and ban on-site seating at bars will be banned, beginning November 12. Also, Murphy announced that all interstate games and tournaments for indoor youth sports, up to and including high school, are prohibited.

The Princeton Health Department reported on Monday that the weekly total of 16 new cases and biweekly case count of 22 are the highest weekly and biweekly totals for Princeton since early May, the height of case counts in town. There were 13 active positive cases in Princeton on Tuesday of this week.

"Princeton is officially in its next peak of cases or second surge," Princeton Press and Media Communications Director Fred Williams wrote in an email. "The governor's actions are steps in the right direction. The goal is to gain and maintain compliance with COVID-19 mitigation

Plan for Downtown Holiday Village to "Activate the Streets"

As local businesses and restaurants struggle to stay afloat during the ongoing pandemic, plans for a downtown holiday village, from the day after Thanksgiving until Christmas, are taking shape.

A joint effort of the municipality, the Princeton Merchants Association (PMA), the Arts Council of Princeton, Princeton University, and other collaborators, the plan will include four vendor chalets offering crafts, artwork, and gift wrapping.

The town's Shade Tree Commission is purchasing 25 six-foot evergreen trees to be placed along Nassau and Witherspoon streets and strung with lights. The trees will be in burlap bags and planted in public parks after the holidays. The town has



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Hopewell-Pennington Area Life

TOWN TOPICS, PRINCETON, N.J., WEDNESDAY, JULY 23, 2014 • B1

19th Annual Watershed Butterfly Festival
Visit the 2014 Watershed Butterfly Festival from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on August 3 for a day of family fun that celebrates the joys and wonders of nature.

This annual event has celebrated family and fun for 19 years, and has grown to be a major regional event, attracting more than 2,000 visitors. Proceeds from this event sustain The Watershed Institute's work in environmental conservation, advocacy, science, and education.

enjoy a train ride, animal show, an insect zoo, solar music, arts and crafts, and other entertainment, both on the grounds and inside of the Watershed Center.

The Ballcastle Band, a local Irish music group, will play music in the morning, and in the afternoon the Cosmic Jerry Band will play favorites from the Grateful Dead. Visitors can enjoy delicious offerings from Jammin' Crepes, Empressa Monster Gyros to Go, and other food vendors.

Local arts and crafts vendors include Krystal Fairy Creations fairy items, custom lockets by Orpami Out Living Lockets, Crystals in Copper Jewelry, Shiny Sewz dog bandanas, and more.

There also will be an Eyes of the Wild exotic animal show, a Butterfly and Bug Parade, hay rides, and family walks with a Watershed naturalist.

New this year — Watershed members get in free. Family memberships can claim a free carload entry (up to six people) when they register online. Students, seniors, and individual members can claim single entry tickets. The discount will apply automatically to your cart at checkout, and you can show us the email receipt for easy entry on August 3.

The Watershed Institute is a member-supported non-profit organization dedicated to protecting and restoring clean water and healthy environments in central New Jersey. More information is available at thewatershed.org/butterfly-festival or call (609) 737-3725.

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Dr. Peter D. Murr
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The St. Francis team includes, from left, Daniel P. Moon, president and CEO; Charles Kozloski, MD, neurologist; C. James Romano, MD, chief medical officer; and Eric Yuscavage, director of Quality and Performance Improvement. Not pictured is Rebecca Patrucelli, sepsis/stroke coordinator.

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Good Grief
Grief is a public health issue. According to Dr. Robert Block, past president of the American Academy of Pediatrics, "Adverse Childhood Experiences are the single greatest unaddressed public health threat facing our nation today." Childhood bereavement is not a public health outlier; it is a consistently unaddressed public health threat.

According to the JAG Institute, one out of seven children experience the death of a parent or sibling before the age of 25 in New Jersey. The lack of attention childhood bereavement receives is, in part, the result of this public health threat falling victim to a culture that is uncomfortable with its mortality. This discomfort comes at an extraordinary cost to children, who find themselves in a world in which adults and institutions do not know how to address the emotional, physical, and intellectual needs of their grief.

*Childhood bereavement

is a public health threat because on the other side of death awaits diseases of despair and toxic stress for those children who are not in responsive environments that provide support, empathy, and resources," said Joe Primo, Good Grief CEO. "While grief is a normal part of the human situation, our culture's lack of resources and responsiveness made available to children facing this diversity put them at risk."

Every month, Good Grief supports more than 750 participants at its Morristown, Princeton, Newark, and Jersey City locations. They support children in classrooms and at summer camp, educate their parents, and advocate for children through thought leadership and national partnerships like Oritan B and the Funeral Service Foundation. While there is a wellspring across the nation with programs in many communities, there still is not nearly enough.

There is no quick fix to childhood bereavement.

Childhood bereavement requires all of us to think differently, respond empathically, and change how we care for and educate children. It starts with opening a dialogue about this difficult topic so that our discomfort is lessened and we can be the present to our children, who will soon be the healthy adults we need them to become.

For more information on Good Grief's programs, to volunteer, make a gift, or help spread the word, visit www.good-grief.org/expansion or contact info@good-grief.org.

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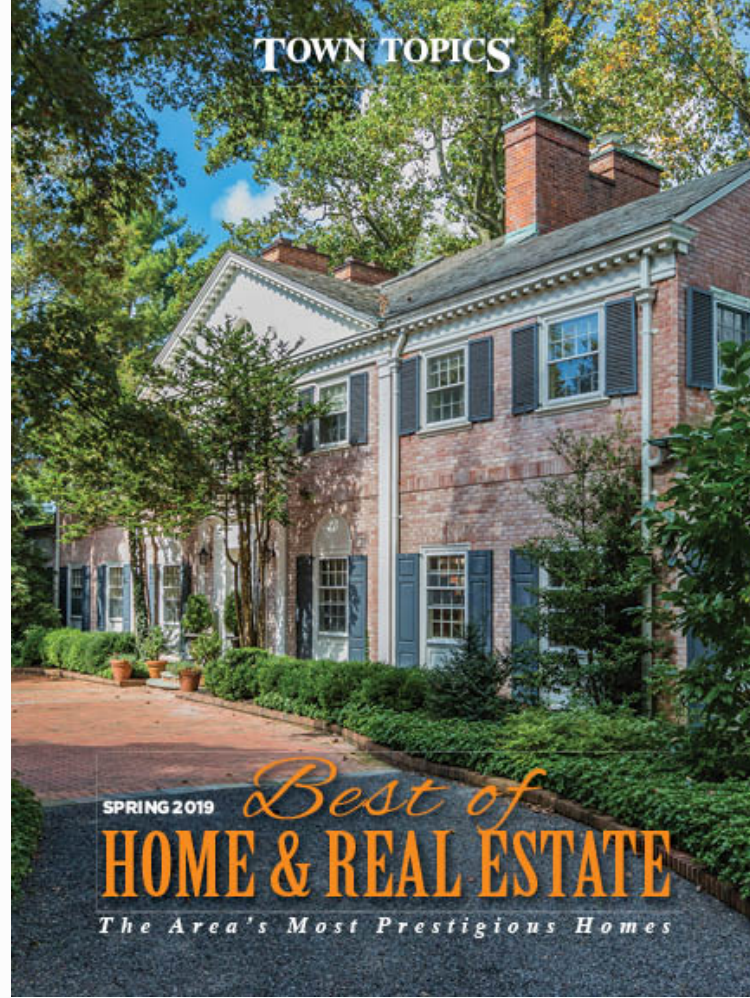


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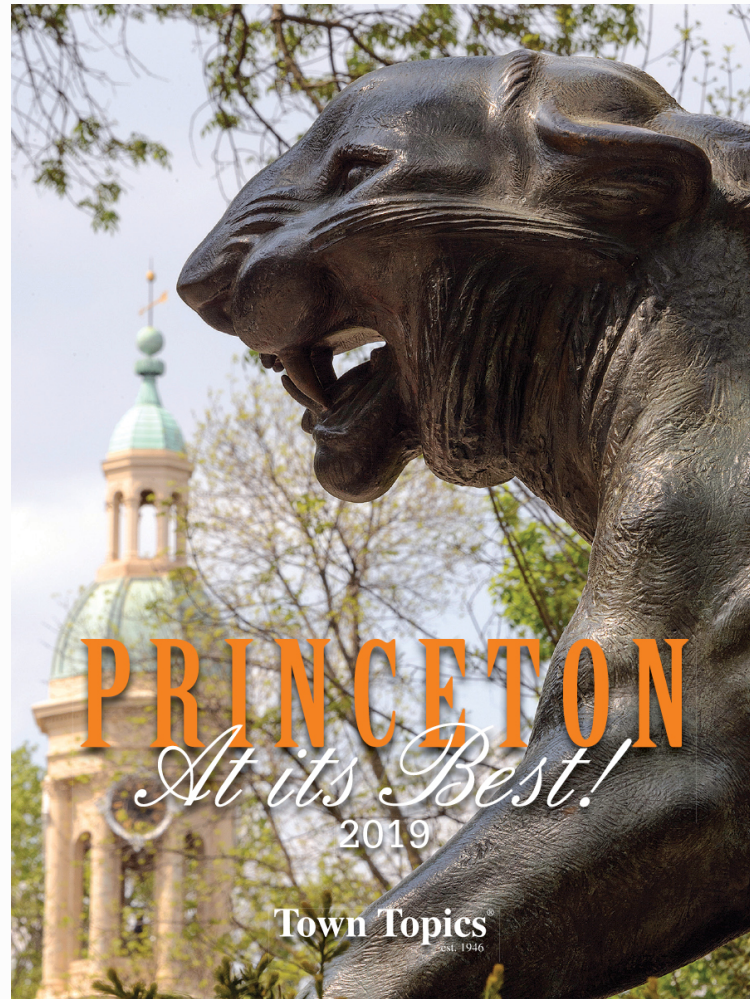
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