Beloved Middle School Teacher Takes Leave Due to Severe Health Issues

New teacher Regan Kerr set to fill the void while he recovers

By Justin Gordon and Lily Thimsen

On Wednesday January 7, as the new semester resumed, the Jefferson Academy community was informed that it would be forced to carry on for the unforeseeable future without middle school social studies teacher Matt Truta. Truta, a valued member of the teaching team at Jefferson Academy, was to take an indefinite leave of absence due to a medical diagnosis in late 2019.

Truta, a resident of Broomfield, was to begin a series of treatments in early January that would hopefully put him on the road to recovery. The unknown diagnosis was going to keep him from his teaching duties according to sources. Unnamed sources have indicated that his treatment and health are progressing well.

In Truta’s absence, administration has hired long-term substitute Regan Kerr to fill the void. Kerr earned her degree in History from the University of Oregon and completed all coursework through Metropolitan State University of Denver according to a letter sent home to JA middle school families. Kerr is new to the profession but is said to bring a lot of passion and optimism into a situation that was difficult to come into.

“I am getting to know the students really well and they are treating me amazingly here,” said Kerr. “Mr. Clark has been helping me handle the students really well and with all the support I’ve been able to do my job outstandingly.”

- Continued on page 2

Quick Weather Snapshot

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He, She, or They?

Jefferson Academy students speak out on the importance of being aware when using a person’s pronouns. STORY Page 5

Spreading Awareness About Women’s Safety at JA

STORY Page 4

Jefferson Academy unveiled its new auxiliary gym on January 20, 2020. The gym was the final piece of improvements that substantially upgraded all arts and athletic facilities in 2019. Photo by Lily Thimsen

By Justin Gordon and Lily Thimsen
Because of the sensitivity of the subject and due to privacy concerns, Jefferson Academy administration was unable to specifically comment on the situation. However, sources indicated that the administration team was doing everything possible to help Mr.

Truta and smooth the transition for interim teacher Miss Kerr. Truta, a valued member of the JA community was last seen at the girls basketball fundraising breakfast at Applebees with his two small children prior to his sudden departure.

Some students are worrying about the changes that will happen with the coming of the new substitute teacher who took over for Mr. Truta on January 13. Eighth-grader Jonny Escalera is not sure if the substitute will be able to help him pass the class as well as having a good grade.

“I’m worried that the substitute will not be able to help me pass the class because I know Mr. Truta was a really good teacher and had a good connection with the students.”

On the other hand 8th grader Miguel Rivera thinks that Mr. Truta’s absence could make the class much easier due to the differences in style of teaching.

“I think my grade will go up a lot because the substitute accepts late work and Mr. Truta did not. And, she seems more lenient,” said Rivera.

This is the not the first time a teacher at Jefferson Academy has left due to a medical issue. Long time social studies teacher Eric Thimsen indicated that several other teachers have been forced to “sit it out” because of health issues. He said because we are all human, sometimes it is necessary to take time off from work as other teachers have done.

“We had a Spanish teacher who fell from a ladder around 2010,” said Thimsen. This essentially took him out of the profession. I think this is fairly common in the work world.”

Thimsen believes that the best way to support a fellow staff member is to give them space and let them heal.

“Everyone is different,” said Thimsen. People have to be able to have their space and take the time to get their health right.

The school is handling it well with the amount of support and preparedness. They informed the middle school community of parents and students through an email last month.

The entire school is hoping for Mr. Truta’s success in battling his diagnosis. Hopefully, the esteemed social studies teacher will make his return later this year or in the next school year. A message from his class was to “be strong, stay positive, we know you can do this!”

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Letter from administration to JA community
Dear JA Families,

As you may have heard by now, Mr. Truta has taken medical leave until the end of the 3rd quarter. In order to honor Mr. Truta and allow him the time to recover, we would like to grant his wish for privacy. Please help us by channeling all communication through the school and refraining from sending emails to his inbox. We want to avoid overflowing his inbox with our support. Over the next few weeks, we will be collecting letters and cards from those who want to wish him well and show their support. As we collect them, we will make sure to deliver them on a regular basis. We are in contact with his family and will receive updates from them as they see fit. We are grateful for your support of Mr. Truta.

During the 3rd quarter and the remainder of the year, Ms. Regan Kerr has joined the JA faculty to ensure quality instruction continues in Mr. Truta’s absence. Ms. Kerr earned her degree in History from the University of Oregon and completed all coursework for teacher licensure through Metro State University. She is excited for the opportunity to inspire students to love the world of History and Social Studies. And, we are grateful to have her join the faculty. Please help me welcome Ms. Kerr to JA.

If you notice your student is struggling emotionally with the transition or displaying higher than usual levels of anxiety due to this situation, please reach out to our Student Support Services team. Ms. Adams, Ms. Parsons, or Mr. Williams are happy to meet with your student to help them understand what is happening, or how they may be feeling. Our staff is dedicated to assist our students however needed during this transition.

Thank you,
Heather Grantham
Oh, the Places She’ll Go!
Senior Amy James reminisces on her acting career as she is featured in multiple upcoming shows

By Destiny Smith

With seniors getting prepared to graduate, some are flooded with the pressure of finding their life purpose. But when it comes to senior Amy James, that does not apply. Drama and theatre is such a huge part of James’ life and it is a way for her to express herself creatively. James has the confidence it takes to become a big name.

Amy James has been attending JA for 13 years and has most definitely made her mark in the community. James’ first musical ‘Oliver’ was in eighth grade when she played the antagonist because she was the tallest person in the group, which is ironic because she does not have a mean bone in her body, but the girl has some mean acting skills.

And as James reminisces about her early show days, she adds that she was just featured in her last high school musical as Marian Paroo in The Music Man.

“It’s bittersweet that, that was my first musical when I was young and now here I am, doing my last high school musical.”

The interest that James had for music began when she was only two years old after being mesmerized by Phantom of the Opera.

“I was obsessed with it, I did my best to know all the words my entire childhood.”

James said. While growing up, she took piano lessons for 11 years and that is how she really got to know music and how to read it,

“Piano really helped me with music theory because it can be so difficult.”

The constant practice James dedicated to playing piano set her up for success for her new upcoming roles.

“All of my practice and dedication towards piano has proven very helpful for my current experience with a show called ‘Into the Woods’.” She is doing this production with another theatre company.

Last April, James got to experience a role of her dreams, but it was not easy. She has so much natural raw talent that it only took her three days to know all her music before auditions.

“My favorite role I have done so far would have to be Ellie Blake in Freaky Friday because that was the hardest show I have ever done in regards to singing, and it took a lot of practice and dedication,” said James.

The music/drama field can be very unpredictable, and any performer knows that. At the opening show for Freaky Friday, she was feeling symptoms of bronchitis/laryngitis and experienced migraines the whole time.

From this show James received the National Youth Arts award for lead in a musical. She had never felt so much love and support in one show.

Even though she has been in so many great programs, and plans to be in more, ‘Freaky Friday’ will always hold a special place in her heart. It could’ve been so easy for her to not perform that night if she was not so invested in her hobby.

“I’m a very obsessive person; like if I find something I’m interested in, I will not give up!”

The productions that James will be featured in this quarter are Addams Family, where Amy will be playing Wednesday, Dog Fight and the Frozen 1 and 2 play that She and Cody Estep scripted themselves. Senior Cody Estep shares that he and James worked really hard on the Frozen play,

“It probably took us about eight hours to perfect the script, but in the end it will feel so rewarding,” Estep said, “Especially because this is the first play written by two high school students.”

As high school is coming close to an end for seniors, James has decided to attend college in Nashville, Tennessee at Belmont University where she will follow her music/theatre dreams. Any path her life chooses to take, the light will always shine on her. Her persistence, kindness and strong faith will follow her as she leaves a memorable mark within the JA community.
Imagine leaving JA late after a school event. The parking lot, while lit, provides a dim look at an unfamiliar vehicle with an unknown person inside of it. You are alone so the sight of the man getting out of the car alarms you. As he walks toward you, you fumble for your keys.

You know something is wrong because it is abnormally strange behavior from guys. As soon as I started to become nervous about the situation I just decided to get into my car right away.

Olivas-Herrera’s situation is not unique, according to the National Crime Victimization Survey conducted by the Department of Justice every 73 seconds a girl is sexually harassed and each year over 1000 girls in the United States are kidnapped and brought into another country. Many girls in the Broomfield/Westminster area tend to have a blind eye to kidnappings and sex trafficking because they believe the area is safe. Olivia’s-Herreras incident occurred next to the commonly visited Costco on 92nd Avenue Westminster and is still being investigated by police.

The reason that the incident that occurred over two months ago is being investigated is because the boys were demonstrating common sex-trafficker habits. “The boy that initially saw me banged on his headlight and whistled for backup,” said Olivias-Herrera. “I didn’t do sure know at the time but according to the police that is a common sex-trafficking behavior.”

Young girls tend to ignore their gut feeling and they disregard the fact that women around the world are being kidnapped for sex trafficking and even being assaulted doing minor tasks such as pumping their gas. Senior Sara Kelly believes that girls at our school aren’t as exposed to knowledge about girl safety and that they never think it can happen to them.

“We don’t think that something like that could ever happen to us,” said Kelly. “I don’t really know anything about it because we just live in a bubble.”

And this is the ultimate issue: JA girls do live in a bubble. In many ways, this ignorance about many issues from basic safety to drinking and even just general awareness of their surroundings could have disastrous consequences for their own well-being. Because of this, here are 7 helpful tips that JA girls (and all women) should use:

1: Don’t walk around or go on runs with headphones: Often times, girls will walk around with headphones in, or go on runs with them in to help them stay focused on what their task is and to motivate them. However nice this is, it puts a lot of girls in danger because they are less aware of their surroundings. They sometimes can’t hear approaching people or cars.

2: Project a powerful attitude and stop being sympathetic: It is a good thing to be a nice person but it’s a trick that some serial killers, such as Ted Bundy used to lure in women. He would walk around in crutches and ask women for help carrying something to his car. He would then knock them unconscious and abduct them. Now not all cases are this extreme, but carrying yourself in a manner that shows power can make predators less likely to approach you.

3: Hold your keys as a weapon if you need: Sometimes women walk around and feel like they are helpless to defend themselves if they don’t have pepper spray with them. Used properly, your keys can be an easy way to defend yourself. You can pinch them in between your thumb and your index finger giving a discreet way to protect yourself, while also giving you easier access to your car.

4: If someone asks for your wallet or purse toss it away: If a robber approaches you and you are alone and they ask for your purse or wallet, throw it away from you and run. More than likely if they specifically ask for your purse they want it more than you so throw it and run in the other direction.

5: As soon as you get into your car, lock the door and drive away: If you get into your car after shopping or anything do not sit there and be on your phone texting or picking music. If a predator is watching you and your doors are unlocked, it can be a perfect time for him to get into your car or grab you out of it.

6: Lock your doors while you drive: According to police, there have been multiple cases where girls are driving with their doors unlocked and they can get hijacked at a stop light. It’s a good idea to lock your doors when you get into your car.

7: Be Aware of Your Surroundings: Always be aware of your surroundings when you are walking, running, or driving alone. It is imperative that you know whos around you.

8: TRUST YOUR GUT: If something doesn’t feel right, it probably isn’t. Trust your gut because it’s better to be safe than sorry.

The world we all live in can be scary and it’s important to be informed about safety tips because who knows when you will need them. And remember to always be aware of your surroundings even if you are doing a simple task like getting gas.
It can be identified generally among students body that there is a lack of awareness and or sensitivity regarding such matters. One of the greatest examples: certain individuals believe that there is a lack of awareness involving the pronoun usage of students who are in the LGBTQ+ community.

There are a few students throughout Jefferson Academy, part of the LGBTQ+ community, who have decided to identify themselves as a gender that differs from that in which they were born with. Along with this decision, comes a change in personal pronouns, and many students who are not educated, may find them confusing.

There are several different pronouns people may use in order to identify themselves. When one uses pronouns to identify as female, they may use specific pronouns (she, her, hers), as if someone chose to identify as a male (he, him, his).

However, the next category is referred to as ‘non-binary,’ which is a spectrum of gender identities that are not exclusively masculine or feminine. One student who feels as though it is particularly important to address students purposefully and by their correct pronouns, is Senior Nina Paul.

Paul has made a personal transition, in that they have changed their pronouns to match with their personality (they, them, theirs). In regards to this, they have taken steps in order to allow people surrounding them to be aware of the new change in pronouns.

It is apparent that they are prouder in how they identify and want their pride to be shown. “I think if it is really important to you, then you need to address what your pronouns are,” said Paul. “A small change I have made is like signing my emails with it so that people are aware, and then telling students and teachers that it is something that is important to me.”

A critical part of this is attempting to spread awareness along with the transition. However, Paul feels as though ‘forgetting’ and intentionally neglecting to use pronouns is a part of the problem they feel is at hand. Sometimes, an apology or a quick acknowledgment can go a long way. “Forgetting and making the decision to neglect the identification of someone are two different things,” said Paul. “It means a lot to me when people do make an effort and apologize when they make a mistake.”

One individual in particular is all for the support of his students and making a difference in the community that surrounds him. English teacher Thomas Hartmann has opened his doors to the students of Jefferson Academy, including those who identify as LGBTQ+.

“I believe it would be a huge disservice to the students if I didn’t keep my doors open to these students,” said Hartmann. “It is so important that nobody feels alone when they make a transition such as changing their pronouns.”

Along with this, Hartmann is a firm believer in giving his best attempt when being aware of a change in pronouns amongst his students and challenging himself to be better. “I have slipped up a couple of times when using the correct pronouns,” said Hartmann. “When I do mess up, I apologize on the spot and make that vow to be better.”

There are students alike to Hartmann, in that they are willing to make a valiant effort in using the proper pronouns and becoming educated in order to respect their peers. Senior Drew Narum does not reject the idea of using pronouns that allow an individual to feel like themselves. She believes it is a conversation that she would value with any growing relationship with whom she is speaking. “I think you just have to be open-minded to the situation that they are in,” said Narum. “I would be okay asking, because I would rather know up front instead of unintentionally offending them.”

On the other hand, there are some students who are unaware or feel uneducated regarding the preferences of their peers. Senior Trevor Wahl is confused as to how certain pronouns work. “It just doesn’t make sense. How could you call someone ‘they’ if it is only one person,” said Wahl. “How can one person be multiple people?”

While Wahl will respect the preferences of his peers, he believes that not all else will and it is important for everyone to be aware of that. “Speak up about it if you do think it’s a problem,” said Wahl. “I think it’s important to know that not everyone is going to accept it and go along with it.”

It is important for students to acknowledge the differences of one another and respect their peers despite these differences. There is a massive difference between attempting to build a bridge despite differences, and intentionally avoiding those around you because they are different.

“Respecting those who feel ‘different’ can make them feel more included, regardless of what sets them apart,” said Narum.
More than meets the eye

Jefferson Academy has a whole umbrella of campuses that most students and parents did not know about.

By Makala King

Back in the 90’s when JA was one of the original charter schools, there was only one campus. Fast forward to 2020 and much has changed in 25 years.

These changes include, a high school that is no longer a next door neighbor to the elementary, a home-school program (Summit Academy), which is now a part of Jefferson Academy campuses, and just last year, JA started sponsoring multiple teen moms and new moms through an organization in Arvada called the Hope House.

JA’s Elementary and Secondary schools used to share the same small campus. There were fewer students and families within the JA community. Many seniors recall back when there were high schoolers on the playground. Among them are senior Bella Burke.

“We would always see schoolers hanging out on the black-top near the playground,” said Burke, a student at JA for 13 years.

Over the years, the elementary has been expanding and now has around 750 students. Each grade level now has four homes as well as a full day kindergarten. JA is one of the only charter schools in Colorado still offering half-day kindergarten for the parents that are not yet ready to put their children in a full day program.

Each campus has a different amount of students attending, however, they are all a whole and are all considered a part of the JA community.

“JA secondary has about 650 students, 650 students at the North Summit Academy campus, 150 students at the South Summit campus, and around 15 teen moms that we work with at [the Hope House],” Executive Director Tim Matlick.

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Every building has its own principal and this is only the second year that JA has had an executive director, so nobody was looking at JA from the whole [perspective],” Matlick said. Before there was an executive director, each campus was lead by a principal and no one was overlooking what they were doing.

When the campuses had just their own principals and now has around 650 students at the North Summit Academy, 150 students at the South Summit campus, and just last year, JA started sponsoring multiple teen moms and new moms through an organization in Arvada called the Hope House.

The Campuses at JA: A Closer Look

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As the talk about the new building opening starts to die down the students of Jefferson Academy are wondering what is coming next. Although the chatter of the new gym is now starting to die down, athletes at JA seem to be getting their chance to have something new and nice to talk about and show off. Many students are excited to see where these new features lead them. Soon the air will be filled with the idea of making the ½ track a full length track at the end of the school year. Jefferson Academy administration is starting to take a step in the direction to improve sports and teams we have at the school. The new auxiliary gym is going to provide the basketball team with more space to practice. The gym is going to allow the gym classes to be separated from high school and middle school where as before in the winter the two classes were in one gym together. The auxiliary gym will also allow sports teams like the soccer team or track team to practice indoors when it is too cold to be outside.

Senior Elian Soto believes that the new gym is going to allow the basketball team to grow not only as a team but also in rank. He is excited to get more time in the gym and time practicing. With the new gym Soto thinks that it will help the girls and boys team improve because they will have more area to use and practice.

“I think that the basketball team is going to be able to improve because the boys and girls team will be able to get more hands on time in the gym and get a chance to get more shots put up” said Soto. “We will also have more room to use and will have more time to get time working on improving our scores and our form.”

Along with the new gym the school just poured new throwing pads and we are building a cage for them as well.

The pads will allow the throwers to improve their technique and form quickly, which could allow some of them to have a better chance at state. The throwing pads are going to allow the throwing students more time to practice and a safer area to practice area. With the cage going in the throwers will also be able to have an area that they do not have to worry about losing discs in the field.

Senior Laura Riley thinks that the pads and cage going in for the throwers is a huge improvement that will help the team out a lot. Riley believes that with the new pads and a cage the throwers will really be able to improve not only their form but also their scores at meets. They will allow the team to improve as well in having more usable time.

“The pads are going to let us have more time to practice one on one, before we had to wait turns to throw and using our practice time to the best of our abilities was not working. There was a lot of time we lost with how much we had to wait for our turn. I think that with the pads and cage it will let us get proper form down and really improve our throwing distances which in turn will allow us to place higher in meets” said Riley. “Some of our stronger throwers should have a much higher chance of going to state. I am really excited about the cage because it means we will not have to worry as much about losing anything.

The final addition this year the school is making for sports is they are going to be finishing the loop on the track to make it a full length track. The track will not be started until sometime around May which means it will not be helping our track team out too much this year. The completed track will allow our future track athletes to have better seasons and cause less injuries. Having a full length track will also allow first year track athletes to get more of a feel of what running in a meet will look like. The track will not be a composite track like most high schools and like at meets, they will be finishing it with the cinder that is on the rest of the track currently.

Hurdle coach Brad Hershman is very excited about the track getting finished because it will allow him to work his athletes better and he will be able to push his athletes harder. He is excited about the new track because he thinks that it will really improve the track team as a whole.

“The track getting finished is going to greatly improve the team because we will have our athletes knowing what it feels like to run a 400 on a track and the individual teams to have more space to practice” said Hershman. “I feel like they have put off finishing the track for a very long time and I am glad that they decided to finally finish it.”

The sports improvements around the schools have become the talk in the halls. Everyone is talking about how much the auxiliary gym is going to be an improvement for the school. The throwers and track team are talking about the throwers pads and the cage. Students throughout the school are talking about all the new improvements and their opinions on them. They seem to have a good impact on the teams.
THE JagWire

February 20, 2020

Editorials

Why High-Level Educational Institutions Should Not Lower Their Standards

By Abby McAnally

From a young age, most children are taught the values of hard work and the importance of applying oneself in ordinary instances. Whether it is in school, on a sports field, or up on a stage, children are always encouraged to be their best. However, not all students are equal in this manner, as many do not truly apply themselves or work to be their best.

The work ethic and success of any given student can typically translate directly to their college life. Whether or not that work or lack thereof does not give students the right to attend any college or their college of their picking, regardless of the requirements. To say “college admission is too competitive,” is to go against everything they have worked their very hardest to attend an elite school, or have barely studied to attend a community college, these students are not equal. This is not to say that all individuals are not equal in general, because they are. I am saying that the hard work or lack thereof does not give students the right to attend any college of their choosing.

The incoming ninth graders (excluding seniors) pile into ICAP. Students then are sent the same lecture about college options for three years of their high school years, students are equal in this manner, because they are. I am saying that the hard work or lack thereof does not give students the right to attend any college of their choosing. Whether or not that work or lack thereof does not give students the right to attend any college of their choosing.

However, the ICAP is still far more confusing and inefficient than it could otherwise be. The fix is simple, and requires only a small amount of effort from the administration for a much larger timesave. Instead of giving freshmen students a blank ICAP, create a few templates with a few classes filled out already, each one geared towards a different career path. Students would then fill in the gaps with electives.

For example, I want to pursue a field in engineering. Suppose there was an engineering template that was preloaded with math, science, and engineering electives. I if I were given this as a freshman, I would simply fill in electives and then turn the ICAP in. Simple.

This also remedies two other problems. Students not completing the ICAP, and students not understanding how to fill it out. Students often don’t complete things they don’t start, by starting it for them, by making the first step as easy as possible, they will be more inclined to complete their work. Another roadblock to the ICAP being completed by students is a misunderstanding of how the ICAP is supposed to be filled in. Despite the assembly’s instruction, some still might not understand. By using a template form, students are also given an example of how the form is filled out, fixing this issue.

If the office wants to put more effort into making the ICAP easier for students, adding a data validation to each section would make the form even easier. Data validation makes a certain spreadsheet block have a dropdown menu with options to choose from. The JagWire reserves the right to edit any letter for grammatical errors, libelous content or space limitations — or not to print letters.

THE JagWire

EDITORIAL POLICIES

The goals of the JagWire, the monthly student newspaper of Jefferson Academy High School, are to inform, educate and entertain its readers; to provide a forum for the J.A. community to express attitudes and opinions; and to provide an educational opportunity for both the students who produce the paper and those who read it; and to provide a medium for commercial messages. The paper will strive to present information in a fair, impartial and accurate manner. It is a professional publication that reflects the mission of Jeff erson Academy K-12 Charter schools. The newspaper will function in accord with all applicable laws, both in regards to the rights and restrictions of journalism. The statement of principles of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, serves as the basis for the publication’s ethical standards. The basis for the publication’s legal positions include the Colorado Rev. Stat. 22-1-120, student ethical standards.

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Letters to the Editor

Any person with an interest in the J.A. community who has an opinion to be voiced is encouraged to submit letters to the editor. It will be granted only if deemed necessary by the Editorial Board. Each request will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Letters may be submitted to the adviser’s mailbox in the school office, brought to room 241 during class time, mailed to J.A. in care of the Jag Wire, or e-mailed to thejagwire@jjags.com. All signatures will be verified through a phone call or personal interview. Letters should be fewer than 300 words in length. If excessive editing is needed, the letter will be returned to the author for corrections. It is preferred that letters be typed, although handwritten copies will be accepted, if legible. The JagWire reserves the right to edit any letter for grammatical errors, libelous content or space limitations — or not to print letters.

Students were asked to draw how ICAP makes them feel...