Festival of Lights kicks off the holiday season, luring kids and adults alike

La Roche began hosting the festival in 1995 after partnering with UPMC Passavant’s Santa Land, which soon became a Christmas tradition. La Roche and Passavant decorated trees with festive holiday lights and hosted tree lighting ceremonies, parades, sculptors, music, and Santa visits.

Around 2008, Cumberland Road, which now divides the Motherhouse and Passavant, led to Passavant’s withdrawal from the event. But that wasn’t the end of the Christmas tradition, “We weren’t willing to walk away from it,” Colleen Ruefle, Vice President for Student Life & Dean of Students, said. Since then, La Roche, the Sisters of Divine Providence, and the Alpha School have been hosting the Festival of Lights.

Ruefle is the “point person” for the Festival of Lights has been working with the event since 1996. La Roche’s clubs and organizations participate in this event by hosting activities and crafts for children. While the wide-eyed children visit Santa and make crafts in the gym, crafters and vendors sell items such as books, jewelry, decorations, and scarves around the college square.

The Festival of Lights has something for everyone, which is why people come back year after year to celebrate the beginning of the Christmas season at La Roche. The event attracts alumni and their families, students, and other members of the La Roche College Community. “I think the College continues to host the event because we have a full crowd of alumni, friends and family every year who attended. It’s a great way for the College to give back to the community,” Butler said.

La Roche used to have another Christmas tradition: the Madrigal Dinner. The Madrigal Dinner was a medieval-themed event in the dining hall, where there would be food and entertainment. Students dressed up in costumes and served dinner. The dinner also involved a show.

See lights, Page 8

The fate of the Writers’ Center

Dr. Christine Abbott’s retirement stirs up uncertainty among tutors

All over the country, writing centers have become one of the most valued resources on a college campus. From undergraduate freshmen to grad students writing their dissertation, writing centers provide academic and communicative support to anyone open to seeking it out.

The concept of a writing center developed in the late 1940s during the implementation of the G.I. Bill, which offered a range of benefits for returning World War II veterans, commonly referred to as G.I.s. Ben-
Correction:

In our last issue, we incorrectly identified as daisies the flowers recently planted on campus. Those flowers were, in fact, daffodils. The Courier apologizes for the error.
Retiring international studies professor reflects on four decades in the classroom

BY DANIELLE DI NATALE
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Donald Orr had a dream, one unlike what most imagine their future to be. He wanted to buy a boat, and live on it for three years. During that time, he would work around the British Islands. And when he was finished, he would then take his boat and sail around the world.

Instead, he did the one thing he never wanted to do: he became a teacher.

Now that he's planning to retire, Orr reflects back on what brought him to La Roche, and all that the college has taught him.

Born in Malta, a small country made of two islands situated in the Mediterranean Sea, he graduated from St. Aloysius College at the age of 18. At 19, he taught literature for high school. He then attended the University of Pittsburgh and studied economic and social development.

He has been teaching here at La Roche for 40 years.

La Roche College is a far cry from Orr's dream of living out on the sea. In fact, he was never meant to be teaching in the first place.

"I came here through a series of mishaps," Orr said with a laugh. "It was purely an accident."

"Some students have an old wisdom. Sometimes they have different takes on something that I wouldn't have thought." - Donald Orr

International desserts spotlight diverse customs and culture

BY KRISTEN SPEZIALETTI
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

On Nov. 14, the college center was filled with Chinese almond and pineapple cakes, Vietnamese bánh khoai chiên, Saudi Arabian basbousa, and traditional desserts from 11 other countries.

This event, Global Day: A Celebration of La Roche's Many Cultures, was part of La Roche's new International Education Month.

Previously, La Roche hosted International Education Week, but devoting a whole month gave students a chance to learn more about other countries, teaching and learning about different cultures, and hosting events on campus.

"To international students, this is a home. They have good friends here," she said.

This is why November's cultural events are important to the community. "Our diversity is beautiful. We learn from each other," Sister Veronica said.

Students, faculty, and staff participated in these events by preparing and eating food, teaching and learning about different cultures, and hosting events on campus. "[International students] learn how to open their culture, their mind and their heart," Sister Veronica said.

Senior psychology major Sijal Ly Nguyen, a junior international management major from Vietnam said, "by [participating in] [Global Day], I had the opportunity not only to learn more about other countries, but also to share with others a little bit about my country."

See Desserts, Page 9

Sister followed a singular path to religious life

BY JULIA FELTON
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Sister Donna Tracy, a member of the Sisters of Divine Providence Congregation, was 19 years old, when she decided to dedicate her life to God as a religious sister. Her decision to join a religious community, however, came in an unconventional manner.

Tracy said that when she was in elementary school or high school, she would have denied the call to become a sister. The reason she became a nun was actually thanks to her sister. Tracy recalled that one day, she found her sister writing a letter to the Mother Provincial at the Sisters of Divine Providence congregation, inquiring about joining the community. She told her sister to add her own name to the letter.

"It was like wearing an overcoat," Orr said. "When I entered the classroom, I could take the overcoat off."

The college itself is a place that Orr commends for its atmosphere. The La Roche community describes itself as a place that is accepting of all backgrounds and beliefs. To Orr, the college holds up to that mission. He said that La Roche is a place of value.

"People here really try to do the right thing," he added.

Since starting here in 1978, Orr has witnessed the college go through many changes. Overall, he said that the college has changed for the better, especially due to the international program. He added that he thinks the college is a place of value.

For Orr, teaching was what he needed, and the classroom, he added, was an oasis. At the time he started, he was depressed. But being in the classroom brought him relief.

"It was like wearing an overcoat," Orr said. "When I entered the classroom, I could take the overcoat off."

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IT students earn chapter recognition

By Jess Lee
Entertainment Editor

CompTIA Association of IT Professionals (AITP) awarded La Roche College’s AITP chapter with the Student Chapter Outstanding Performance Award (SCO-PA) along with awards in two other categories.

According to current President of the AITP, Jigar Prajapati, to qualify for the SCO-PA award, the chapter had to submit an excel sheet of the AITP events that were held and participated in. The leaders of the conference analyzed everything and gave points for each event.

The criteria for the SCO-PA award give points in the following categories: education, membership, public relations, meetings and association participation. The La Roche chapter exceeded in three of the five categories, the primary faculty advisor of the chapter Michaela Noakes said.

Prajapati said, “Winning this award means we will get more members. We try to set an objective each year and we want people to come to our events. We focus on giving students IT exposure. Computers are a basic skill everyone should know so our club is open to everyone, in any major.”

The previous AITP president, Joe Malachosky, and the current Vice President, Johnny Nicholson, put the report together.

The two additional awards won by the chapter were in programming and networking, according to Prajapati. In the Programming Competition, the participants were Prajapati, Antonio Munoz, and Hemang Sharma. The participants in the Networking Competition were Angela Cisneros, Mohammad Sohail, and Kenneth Swegman.

“I don’t want to forget the team behind the club’s success, such as our faculty advisors,” Prajapati added. “I want to thank all the student members that are continuously supporting us. I also appreciate the entire La Roche College community for supporting us.”

(From left to right) Dr. Christina Bahm, Angela Cisneros, Hemang Sharma, Mohammad Sohail, Jigar Prajapati, Antonio Munoz, and Kenneth Swegman. La Roche’s AITP club qualified for an award

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Entertainment Editor Jess Lee asked students: “What would you name your autobiography?”

Name: Suron Tomlin  
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Major: Neuroscience  
Quote: “Chronicles of Ron.”

Name: Kailee Burfield  
Year: Freshman  
Major: Child and Family Studies  
Quote: “The Short Chronicles.”

Name: Sam Terry  
Year: Junior  
Major: Computer Science  
Quote: “Journey of a Soccer Player.”

Name: Morgan Zubasic  
Year: Junior  
Major: Professional Writing and Journalism  
Quote: “The Complete Series of Morgan Zubasic’s Failures.”

Name: Derrick Izumi  
Year: Sophomore  
Major: Performing Arts and Dance  
Quote: “Bold and Brash.”

Name: Ashley Waltz  
Year: Junior  
Major: International Affairs  

Interested in joining our staff?  
The Courier is always looking for new writers and photographers.

Contact either Lauren Villella or Heather Radick for more information on writing for the Courier.

Lauren.Villella@stu.laroche.edu  
Heather.Radick@stu.laroche.edu
NaNoWriMo members share month-long project’s challenges and insights

By Lauren Villella
Editor-in-Chief

During the month of November, speedwriting takes on a whole new meaning as NaNoWriMo, a project that challenges participants to write a novel in 30 days.

Since 2014, La Roche College has hosted a National Novel Writing Month Club. Dr. Joshua Bellin, Ph.D., founded the club the same year Simon & Schuster published his debut novel, “Survival Colony 9.”

This year, Dr. Bellin said the club has 15 members, which includes himself, students, alumni, a faculty member and a staff member. Dr. Bellin noted this number of participants is an all-time high for the club.

Sade Valderrama, a junior communications major, said this is her first time participating in NaNoWriMo. She said the experience has thus far been positive and described the project as a riveting challenge.

“As an RA, we learn a lot about self-care and they tell you you should always have something, like a hobby, that when you’re feeling stressed you can do,” Valderrama said. “I used to write in high school and I kind of fell out of it.”

Writing can have therapeutic benefits, Valderrama added, because it requires a person to focus on one task.

“During the day you’ve got thoughts in your head, people are telling you things, you’re thinking about deadlines,” Valderrama said. “When I’m writing I can just sit down and focus on this one point, or this one character, and then when it’s done I feel like, ‘I’m back to reality now.’ But at least I got that time to myself.”

For NaNoWriMo, Valderrama noted, “It’s your job to find it.”

Kathleen Kenna, a freshman literature major, is also participating in NaNoWriMo for the first time.

“I really like to write,” Kenna said. “I’ve had a few ideas in my brain and I thought this was a good way to really buckle down and get to work.”

Kenna noted she aspires to be a writer or professor and views NaNoWriMo as an opportunity to improve her writing.

Valderrama said she has always enjoyed writing as a hobby. She noted she is a resident assistant and decided to re-introduce writing into her life during self-care training.

“The writing can have therapeutic benefits,” Valderrama added, because it requires a person to focus on one task.

“During the day you’ve got thoughts in your head, people are telling you things, you’re thinking about deadlines,” Valderrama said. “When I’m writing I can just sit down and focus on this one point, or this one character, and then when it’s done I feel like, ‘I’m back to reality now.’ But at least I got that time to myself.”

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Veteran journalist encourages students to unleash, foster their inner storyteller

By Sarah Hefferin
Contributing Writer

Gardens always want to share their secrets.

Doug Oster is currently the home and garden editor for the Tribune Review. He came to share his secrets with a group of journalism students at La Roche College on Nov. 9.

“Gardeners always want to share their secrets,” Oster said, “fishermen never do.”

Oster used his life so far to show students how to become better writers. He shared the secret that everyone has a story, and every story is special.

Oster’s resume is long, beginning with an interest in photography and an education at Kent State University. “I fell in love with photography very young,” Oster said. “I had a great science teacher; she let me have the whole science lab to myself.”

Oster said that his workload doubled. “I all of a sudden became a photographer for five papers, which meant I didn’t get any days off. After two years of that, Oster said, “I asked for two days off a week and they declined. They gave me one day.”

Oster moved from paper to paper, because he said he could never get enough of it. In 1998, he said he moved to Pittsburgh where he became Picture Editor for the Post Gazette, where he managed a team of photographers.

Along with photography, Oster’s passion for gardening grew. He recalled spending his spare time writing about gardening, which was a topic that he explained he enjoyed from the very beginning.

Oster said, “I had always gardened with my mother. My oldest memory is of my grandmother taking care of her tomato plants.”

Oster said his passion for gardening took over, as he began to write more and more about it. Oster started his own radio show, and his articles on gardening exploded with popularity at the Post Gazette. They had to move him from the photography desk to something bigger.

Gardening was his new, full-time job.

Oster spoke of his experiences on TV along with the radio and his documentary titled “The Gardens of Pennsylvania,” which won an Emmy Award.

But, as a garden writer, Oster came to speak in front of the students to share his secrets with aspiring journalists.

“Journalism is not for everyone. Oster stressed that to love journalism, one must like working with people, because they are what give the journalist their stories. The secret to becoming a great journalist is loving the job, Oster said.

“You should be doing this (writing) because you enjoy it,” Oster said.

“I’ve been doing this since 1979 and I really love what I do.”

Student journalists may feel limited because of their confinement to campus; however, stories exist everywhere. Oster said to never miss an opportunity, and to constantly search for new and exciting stories to be told.

“The number one thing to know when you’re going out to do any kind of story is that everybody has a story,” Oster said. “It’s your job to find it.”

Along with this, each story must be special, Oster said. He has known colleagues and other writers that just write to get a certain quota out, not really caring about what they are writing.

Oster said, “They (the articles) can’t be special if you’re just cranking them out. No matter what it is, I’m going to make that thing special.”

Whatever you’re writing, the challenge is to make it good, to make it great, to make it better than anyone else could do.”

One of the most important things a writer can do to write a good story is to get on a personal level with anyone they are interviewing, Oster advises.

It is about the conversation between two people, and the story it produces.

“I’m a storyteller, not a writer,” Oster said. “My greatest strength is to go in and sit down with somebody and get to reveal things they wouldn’t normally reveal.”

It is always important to know that not everyone will agree with everything a journalist puts out there, Oster said, but when there is a sense of accomplishment after finishing something, they should feel that they did something right.
This one took place on Dec. 1

Sarah Hefferin remembers past events...

By Sarah Hefferin
Contributing Writer

Dec. 1, 1955 – Rosa Parks, an African American woman, was arrested in Montgomery Alabama for refusing to move to the back of a bus. At the time of her arrest, buses were divided into colored and whites-only sections and the whites-only section was filled. After being asked several times to vacate her seat for a white passenger, she refused and was arrested for her defiance.

Parks had gotten involved with activism in 1943, when she became the acting secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, or the NAACP. Founded in 1909, the NAACP is a biracial organization that advocates for the justice and rights of African Americans.

Through the NAACP, Parks sat in on many cases where African Americans were falsely accused of crimes, with the most notable being the murder of Emmett Till.

Parks’ resistance on the bus in Alabama is considered by many to be the beginning of the Civil Rights movement, which was followed directly by the Montgomery Bus Boycott. On Dec. 5, 1955, over 35,000 handbills were distributed to every African American in the area which read: “We are ... asking every Negro to stay off the buses Monday in protest of the arrest and trial ... You can afford to stay out of school for one day. If you work, take a cab, or walk. Please stay off the buses Monday.”

Many took part in carpool that day, rode in cabs, or walked, even though it rained. The years that followed were bittersweet for Parks and her husband. While she became a figurehead for the Civil Rights Movement, she lost her job at a department store and her husband quit his after he was forbidden to speak about the events involving his wife.

Parks continued to work within activism for as long as she could; she worked until she began to suffer from health problems due to old age. Those messages of separation and racism were prominent throughout the Civil Rights movement, and people fought for equality and the celebration of diversity and acceptance for that fact.

With racism and hatred still being serious issues in the world today, many argue that there is more to be done, and more ways to celebrate being different and human, rather than segregating those who are.

At La Roche College, with such a diverse student body, there are celebrations of diversity everywhere, and teachers and students who continue to fight for the inclusion of outsiders.

Candace Okello, a professor and the head of diversity and inclusion at La Roche, finds it imperative to discuss diversity not only in a college setting, but in a worldwide setting as well.

“(Diversity) is the acknowledgment, celebration, and respect of differences. I think people are kind of scared of the word diversity because they’re scared of what’s different and what’s outside of their norm.”

- Candace Okello

KARATE, continued from page 2

“Karate is not like your typical drill sergeant. (I cover) basic techniques, trying to get everybody to learn a little. Not everybody is necessarily athletic, not everybody has experience. I’m not worried about that. It’s meant to be fun and relaxing.”

Felton noted she began practicing karate around age 6 and credited it with helping her break out of her shell. The benefits of karate, she added, are both physical and mental.

“I definitely think it teaches a lot of respect and discipline,” Felton said. “(It has a) focus on things like etiquette. I think there’s a lot to be said about dedication, determination. It takes you like four years just to get your black belt. So if you really stick with it, you really have to learn some patience, perseverance. I think it’s a really good confidence-booster.”

While karate is an individual event, not a team sport, Felton noted, it can have social benefits.

“You’re not going to get that etiquette and that discipline and that respect and that self-confidence running on a treadmill by yourself,” Felton said. “That whole group mentality and learning martial arts – I think that really contributes to a mental aspect you can’t get from just anything.”

She added people may be surprised at the impact karate can have on individuals’ overall well-being. She noted karate can enable individuals to thrive in areas aside from physicality.

“It’s beneficial and I think people may be surprised by how much you could see the benefits of karate transfer into other parts of your life,” Felton said. “It boosts confidence, it’s good for respect, it’s good for discipline. It’s not just punching and kicking. When you have those positive queues that you gain from karate and you see that, it’s going to translate into your academics or your job searches and your personal life and relationships.”

The karate club meets every Tuesday from 7 to 8 p.m. in the upper dance studio of the Kerr Fitness and Sports Center. Felton said she plans to continue holding karate club meetings in the spring 2018 semester.
Students and faculty alike agree that Dr. Abbott’s shoes will be quite difficult to fill. It will be challenging to find new leadership that outdoes Dr. Abbott’s love and dedication to the Writers’ Center. The event brings the community together and kicks off the holiday season.

“Acts and actresses dressed as the characters of King Goldwyn, Queen Columbia, Princess Vista, and Prince Morgan will mingle about the crowd,” a 1994 Pittsburgh Post-Gazette article said, “Following the reception, guests will cross a ‘moat’ into the dining room where they will be served a full-course medieval meal.” The actors and actresses were La Roche students, alumni, faculty, and staff. This tradition ended in 2004 so that La Roche could focus on the Festival of Lights and allow students to have more fun.

There have been international tree displays, live performances, and tree lighting ceremonies that did not withstand the test of time. However, there are things that have remained over the years, such as carriage rides, vendors, and fireworks.

Kristen Spezialetti (top) and Lauren Ranalli both utilize the Writers’ Center in a variety of ways.

Center, continued from page 1

Krisitn Spezialetti (top) and Lauren Ranalli both utilize the Writers’ Center in a variety of ways. “I have faith that the next person chosen will be more than qualified to fill Dr. Abbott’s shoes,” she said.

One thing that will remain the same, Deem assured, is the Writers’ Center commitment to collaboration. “SASS is very team-oriented,” she said. “It is important to me that integration happens.” The nature of writing is inherently communal; because it is a vehicle for communication, it must always be in conjunction with the ideas and perspective of the people who wield it. As such, teaching writing requires a certain level of cooperative understanding that Deem will not sacrifice.

“While I’m teaching others,” said Derrick Izzani, another student tutor, “I’m also learning myself.” This open reciprocity is an aspect of the Writers’ Center that has inspired such loyalty in its tutors, and commitment to excellence even through large changes.

“The Writers’ Center is my favorite part of La Roche,” said Kristen Spezialetti, a senior student tutor. She will be spending her last semester at La Roche under a new director, and, while she said she has grown comfortable with Dr. Abbott, she will not put any less effort into her work nor will she resist adjustments.

“Ultimately,” said Deem, “we all want the same thing: student success.” If the student body’s positive reviews about the Writers’ Center are any indication, student success is its first priority, and the overall consensus among tutors is that it will continue to be.

Dr. Abbott might be leaving the Writers’ Center, but she is not taking it with her. “The Center is alive and well.”

Read more at courier.laroche.edu
Desserts, continued from page 3

Nguyen made Vietnamese sweet potato fritters for Global Day and was pleased that students, faculty, and staff were so willing to try it. After the first hour of the event, the fritters were gone.

November was filled with other events, like Global Game Night, Food Truck Fest, Sushi Cooking Class, and Study Abroad Thursday.

“We are proud of our increasingly diverse and global community at La Roche,” Markham said, “International Education Month is a great way for us to embrace our global identity and provide international students with a platform to share their cultures in a unique way.”

One of the major events was the Global Problems, Global Solutions conference that focused on the “progress, plans, and initiatives related to the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals,” according to La Roche’s Nov. 1 press release.

Throughout the week of Nov. 13-17, the conference examined health care as a social justice issue. The sessions included a panel on “Strengthening Health Care for Pittsburgh’s Underserved,” and a Keynote Address titled “Health Care: An Issue of Social Justice?”

Sister Veronica said she wanted this month’s events to educate domestic students about different cultures and “open their hearts and their minds” to increase cultural awareness and global citizenship.

The events also included “Coffee From Around the Globe” and “Tastes of the World” throughout the entire month.

Additionally, 10 local families hosted 18 international students from La Roche for thanksgiving dinner. Sister Veronica stresses the importance of making international students feel comfortable, welcome, and safe at La Roche. “We try to be their mom, their home, their friend,” she said, “like their family members.”

“We are proud of our increasingly diverse and global community at La Roche.”

- Emily Markham
Sister, continued from page 3

NaNoWriMo, continued from page 6

read. Her sister did not. Tracy said she runs on the same unique way in which she entered the community.

Once Tracy became a sister, Tracy said she felt she found her call. She had not always felt called to become a religious sister, though. As a matter of fact, she said she had previously believed she was called to be a missionary. Tracy recalled that she had always been excited when missionaries would speak about their work.

“I always had the great heart to be a missionary,” Tracy said.

During her 61 years as a nun, Tracy has spread that love. She worked as an elementary school teacher, she worked in parish social ministry, and she advocated for social justice issues.

Tracy co-founded Deborah House, a re purposed convent where single mothers from poor economic back- grounds could come together. They lived in the home, where they were given support as they raised their chil- dren. Deborah House also offered resources to help these women find employment.

When she reminisced about the work she did with Deborah House, Tracy called it “one of the greatest things I ever saw happen in my life-time.”

Tracy said no matter what kind of service she was involved with, she al- ways loved being part of something larger than herself.

One of Tracy’s most recent posi- tions was working as the volunteer coordinator for Providence Family Support Center. She said she often recruited La Roche College students to volunteer.

Tracy still advocates volunteerism for college students. “When a vol- uneer opportunity is offered,” Tracy said, “try to do it.”

Though Tracy said she loved vol- untee work, she admitted it is not always easy. Still, she encouraged stu- dents to overcome their fears, try to find new ways to get involved in the community, and find social justice is- sues about which they are passionate.

For La Roche College students, Tracy offered an encouraging mes- sage. She said, “To me, the great hope is that you would use your four years to become more aware of how you could change the world in the future.”

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NaNoWriMo, continued from page 6

ed, she tries to write 1,000 words per day.

“It is very difficult,” Valderrama said of the balancing act NaNoWi- rMo requires. “The first four days I was meeting my 1,000 word count, but then I started getting assigned projects, so it’s been harder to (reach) 1,000 words. And then if writer’s block comes, the next thing you know, I don’t know what I want to write.”

Writer’s block, Kenna said, is one of NaNoWriMo’s biggest chal- lenges. She said she aims to write for 30 minutes to one hour each night, but has had some days where she doesn’t write anything. “I’ve added peo- ple and elements of nature, like the moon, can provide her with writing inspiration.

“I’m definitely a big people-watch- er, so that definitely helps me out with a lot of stuff,” Kenna said, “Nature always puts me in the mood.”

Valderrama said she likes to write to movie soundtracks, such as the “Wonder Woman” and “Transform- ers” soundtracks. She said she finds soundtracks helpful because there are no lyrics and the varying tempos can encourage writing production or re- laxation.

“Sometimes I think of movies, those are stories as well,” Valderrama said. “So their soundtracks or scores have to match what they’re trying to convey over to the audience. So that’s how I feel when I’m writing. Whatever I’m listening to, I’m matching the energy that I’m putting into a scene.”

Another challenging aspect of NaNoWriMo, Valderrama said, is maintaining confidence in one’s novel.

“I may think my story is great, but then as I’m writing it I’m thinking, ‘Are other people going to like it?’” Valderrama said. “I think staying con- fident in knowing that your story is good, your material is valuable – that really can be a challenge to the whole thing.”

Valderrama described her novel as a teen romance drama. She added she would like to continue editing and re- vising it after November concludes, and she has not ruled out the idea of publishing.

“I’m basing it around that coming-of-age time,” Valderrama said. “The two main characters are 16 and 17-years-old, they’re young, it’s like first love. But then I decided to throw in a little plot twist to make it a little dramatic and something to keep somebody reading it.”

Kenna said she would also like to edit, revise and possibly publish her NaNoWriMo novel, which she de- scribed as realistic fiction. NaNoWi- rMo, she added, can provide aspiring writers with a solid starting point.

“I think it’s nice to have some foundation to start with,” Kenna said. “Especially since Dr. Bellin said the novel he just published (“Freef- all”) was a project he had worked on. I was like, ‘Wow, Dreams do come true.’”
Diversity, continued from page 7

Okello said, “I want to see students more to take the lead on diversity discussions. I can always do programs and have conversations and dialogue, but I want students to be the ones to take hold of the responsibility of being a part of it too. I want to see students facilitate the dialogue and plan the programs and do social justice work outside of the institution.”

As she inspires others to make a difference, Okello knows that all change in the right direction is good, no matter how big or small. Like Rosa Parks, small changes have the ability to spark something that has the potential to change the course of the diversity conversation, Okello said.

“I think sometimes we think that in order to move the needle and make a big impact, we need to do something big,” Okello said. “What (Rosa Parks) did was, she sat on a bus and refused to move, recognizing that she is just as welcomed there as anybody else. And it was that small action that made a huge impact, like to shift history and move forward the trajectory of the Civil Rights Movement.”

Rosa Parks set an example that Okello hopes to follow. As people who have the ability to make changes in how other groups are treated, Okello said it is important to continue the activism of Rosa Parks. Students can make a difference by fighting for equal rights, and promoting diversity and inclusion in everything that they do.

“If we don’t continue this work, we will shift backwards. In some ways, (racism) has never gone away; it’s re-surfacing and showing itself in different ways,” Okello said. “So, unless we continue the work, we will just be telling all those who have fought for us to get to this point that their work was in vain.”

The diverse La Roche community spent the month of November demonstrating the unique foods and and ceremonies of various international cultures, including Korea, Japan, China, and Vietnam. (Front row left to right) Emily Markham and Sr. Veronica Kim, (second row left to right) Mohanad Zahrani and Ly Nguyen, (third row left to right) Shai Wudkwych, Teylor Cargo, Muath Alotaibi, Natasha Garrett, Jeon-Ghye Chae, Cynthia Ncuti, and Minhyun Kim, (fourth row left to right) Justin Hsieh, Ryusuke Kobayashi, Jaeyong Chang, and Tran Chi Duc Bui

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(From left to right) Sijal Mokhtar, Maha Alrajah, Hind Al-Manjoomi, Shekhah Alrasheed, Maram Alghamdi, Razan Basalem, Mayisah Mokhtar, and Deema Ajanayd offered a taste of Arabic food and dance during International Education Month

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