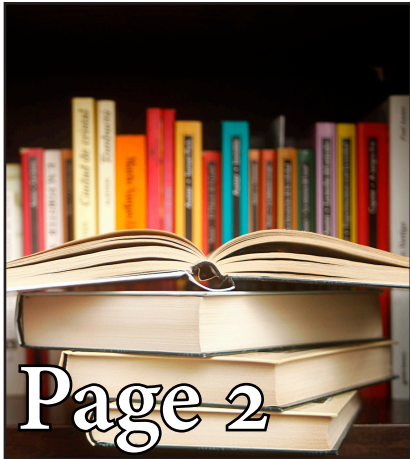
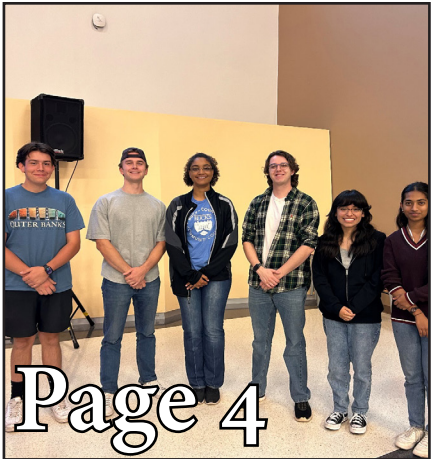




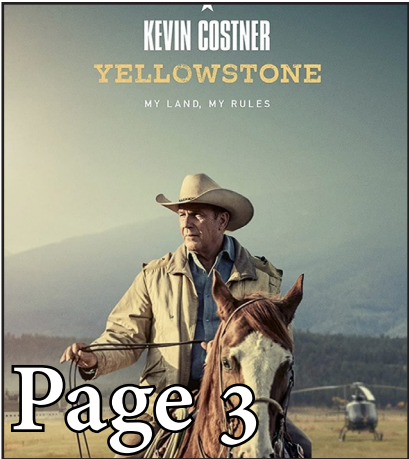
Page 2



Page 2



Page 4



Page 3

THE CENTURION

“The Voice of the Students”



@Centurion_Bucks

Volume 60 Issue 02

October 10, 2024

Bucks-News.com

Bucks County Employees Fed Up Over Wages

Crystal Stout
Centurion Staff

Over 300 disgruntled Bucks County employees took to the streets on Sept. 20 to protest cuts to employee health benefits, the removal of retirement packages and stagnated wages.

Members of Service Employees International Union Local 668 organized a strike outside of the Bucks County Courthouse in Doylestown, PA.

At their most recent bargaining discussion on Sept. 11, when the union and the county negotiating teams again failed to reach an agreement, SEIU 668 gave official notice of their intent to strike.

The gathered employees represented a wide variety of community services, which included 911, IT, children and youth services, mental health, drug and alcohol support and development programs. Supervisors were called in for the one-day strike to cover the essential administrative functions and ensure the public continued to be served without interruption.

The negotiations between the union and the county have been stalled for over 15 months. In that period, workers across the county have been holding informational pickets and address-



Photo courtesy of Crystal Stout

ing commissioners' meetings. Despite these efforts, workers have been without a contract for 9 months.

The latest proposal from the county came in July, after their negotiation teams refused to meet with union representatives for two months. The county described it as their “best, last and final” offer. The proposal was rejected by 99 percent of union members due to the county’s insistence on attacking retiree benefits and cutting funds that go towards services like dental, vision, prescription drugs and life insurance by 18 percent.

A statement released by

SEIU 668 in July explained that “For months, the union has been engaged in contract negotiations that have been hampered by needless delays and strongarm tactics employed by the Bucks County Negotiating Team.”

Christine Galleones, a social services employee, described the teams’ behaviors as “embarrassing,” saying that she has never seen a situation like this in all of her 28 years working in negotiations.

The seeds of this turmoil were planted back in 2020 when county employees agreed to a small wage increase amid the uncertainty of the Covid pandemic.

Employees were under the impression that their goodwill would be paid for but SEIU 668 Negotiating Team member Heidilyn Hoffmeister said, “That’s not what we’ve been given. The County’s Negotiating Team has instead proposed cutting crucial benefits that we have had for years. They have shown no respect for the work we have done or the dedication we have shown to this community.”

Hoffmeister’s sentiment was shared by the crowd gathered at the strike. One picketer’s sign informed passerby’s of the fact that, in its 48 years of operation, SEIU 668 has never had to

Continued on page 2 ...

Upcoming Events



10/10
Cultural Streaming: Brubeck Quartet Live in Brussels
12:15-1:15 p.m.
Zlock Performing Arts Center

10/10
Mens Soccer Game VS Manor
3:30 p.m.
Newtown Campus

10/11
Eastern State Penitentiary Trip
9:00 a.m.
Depart from Newtown Campus

10/11
A Night on the Bayou: Celebrating Creedence Clearwater Revival
7:30-9:30 p.m.
Zlock Performing Arts Center

10/15
Scholarship Information Workshop
10:00-11:00 a.m.
Zoom

10/15
Financial Literacy Session: What you need to know about Investing and Financial Planning
11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.
Rollins Center Solarium

Radio Bux has BIG plans for this Semester

Kassandra Castillo
Centurion Staff

Radio Bux is back this fall with new management, new voices, and even a new look. The Radio Bux studio, located behind the glass wall near the dining hall, has undergone some serious changes.

Rhiannon Oser, Radio Bux’s new president/studio manager hopes to bring new ideas to the table to gain more listeners.

“I’m trying to bring this into the new age” says Oser, as she is currently accepting applications for all student or faculty who have any ideas of talk shows, pod-

casts, or anything music related. Her plan is for every student to have their voices heard, and hopes to bring forward various clubs to come and speak on air and showcase what their club is about.

Oser and the rest of the Radio Bux team want to elicit a “broadcasting” feel on air, but can’t do that without the help of students. “This is all a work in progress, I’m working with Student Life, trying to get a Spotify going where students can go back and listen to all our weekly shows. I am really trying to get clubs on here and hopefully if students listen, it would even

encourage them to join other clubs.”

Ryan Fealy, the faculty advisor of the club who is considered the “power horse” of it all, and Ian Sullivan, the host of the weekly sports show “The Sullivan Show,” are both looking forward to seeing all the new projects that will come from this. “This isn’t just about radio, but about broadcasting Bucks overall”.

Radio Bux wants to be a place where students can get all of their college related news without ever having to step on campus. They also hope it encourages more students to become involved with campus life.

They have an open-door policy at the studio, so students should feel comfortable to ask questions or become involved at any time. Radio Bux meetings are typically held on Wednesdays, but are subject to change.

Any student interested in Radio Bux should reach out to Rhiannon via the Radio Bux Instagram @buxradio, or through the club email at radiobux@live.bucks.edu.

News

Staff

Editor-in-chief:
Madison Kifolo

Graphic Designers:
Sami Dunkerley

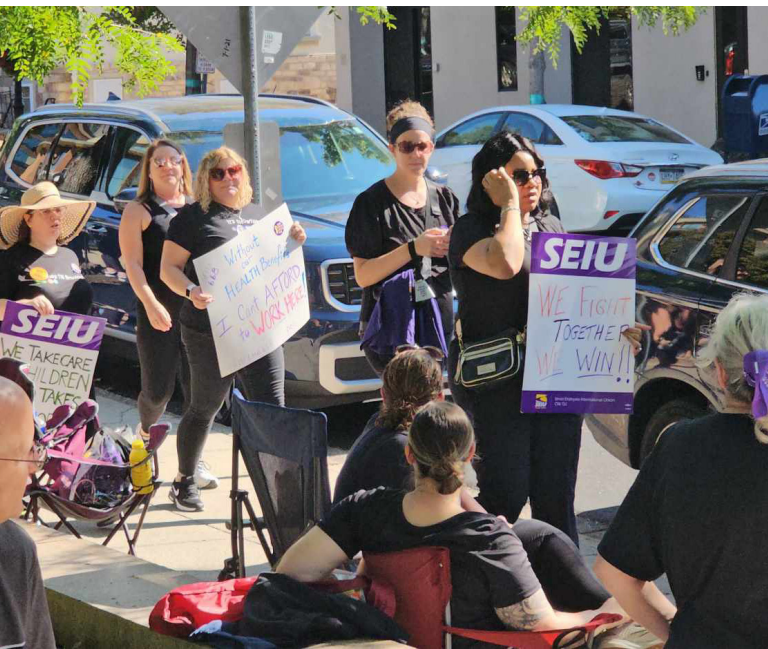
Editors:
Cristopher Ramirez
Abby Palmieri
Rafael Melendez

Faculty Advisor:
Tony Rogers

Letters to the Editor:

Email your letters to: buckscenturion@gmail.com
Letters should be limited to 500 words. They will be edited for spelling, space and malicious or libelous statements. Letters must be the original work of the writer and must be signed. For identification purposes, letters must include the writer's full name and telephone number.

Photos courtesy of Crystal Stout



Short Fiction Contest Returns to Bucks

Ava Fife
Centurion Staff

The Bucks County Short Fiction Contest is an exciting opportunity for writers across Bucks County, and the deadline is fast approaching.

All submissions must be in by Oct 10, 2024, at 12 p.m. for consideration in the contest. Stories must be original and unpublished works and can also be up to 15 pages long.

The contest is run and organized by Lang and Lit Professor Elizabeth Luciano, who has been a part of Bucks' college community for 20 years now. She was inspired by the poetry contest already held on campus, and hoped to do something similar for all of the short fiction writers in the area.

She started the contest in 2016, and ever since then it has been a hit for students



Photo courtesy of the Bucks website

and active members in the Bucks County community.

The Short Fiction Contest is open to people over the age of 18. Luciano encourages anyone to participate, "writing can be a lonely enterprise, but writing can give you a community." Luciano loves reading stories and is interested in seeing what people can articulate. Prizes are also awarded

to the top three winners of this contest. First place will win a \$200 gift card, second place will win a \$100 gift card, third place will win a \$50 gift card, and there will also be honorable mentions.

As well as winning a prize, top applicants will be invited to share their work at a celebratory event scheduled for Nov 9, 2024.

Luciano urges applicants

to "write thoughtfully, make sure your story is clear, and make sure the writing is clear. Clarity is key, or you could lose the reader."

For all interested applicants, more information about the Short Fiction contest can be found at <https://www.bucks.edu/academics/department/lang-lit/short-fiction-contest/>.

Continued from page 1 ...

Bucks County Employees Fed Up; Commence Strike

strike before, illustrating the severity of the struggle workers have been facing.

The union has been able to win some improvements for its members so far. IT Services Member Andrew Withers, whose name has been changed to protect his

anonymity, complained that, before joining the union, he was earning wages that were "way below the national average" for a person in his job position and with his qualifications.

Multiple employees mentioned being expected to work overtime without pay before the union's intervention.

However, without an active contract, Withers explained that he and his coworkers have no means to plan for the future. Even long-time administrative employees are unsure about their future with the county, citing fears about the proposed cuts to retirement funds.

Many are being forced to reconsider their healthcare options as well with the proposed coverage losses being extremely detrimental to employees and their families. Many members of the union have been speaking out about their personal experiences to sway the commissioners towards negotiating a compassionate contract.

Stacey Miller, whose name has been changed to protect her identity, is a 4-year employee with the Children and Youth Services department and a union member since she began at the job. As a mother herself, Miller has found it increasingly difficult to support her family with wages that have failed to accommodate inflation rates.

Miller explained that in the course of her job, she provides assistance to low income and underprivileged families through various programs and services. She said, "We're caring for vulnerable people. We put our own families to the wayside to help the families in our

community." She feels particularly outraged that "we offer these services to the community, but when we need help, the county won't provide for us."

At the commissioners meeting on Sept.18, Kristina Decesare was recognized for her 20 years of service in children and youth, behavioral health, and developmental services for the county. She surprised the room when she announced that "Instead of celebrating this milestone, ... I will be striking unpaid with my fellow coworkers from SEIU 668."

Decesare asked the commissioners, "What salary, healthcare and retirement benefits would you accept to put your physical and mental health on the line daily, for decades?"

She goes on to list such instances from her career. "Would you have a table thrown at you while you were pregnant? ... Stand in a freezer for 30 minutes during a lockdown? ... Would you return to work two days after your child passed away?"

Decesare ends her speech by imploring the commissioners to cooperate with SEIU 668 in negotiating a fair contract to "allow us to continue the great work that this community deserves." Her words were met by applause.

Decesare and her peers, although sufficiently compelled to maintain the picket line, were not without their anxieties during the 10-hour strike.

Several strikers said they feared possibly losing their jobs if the strike became prolonged.

Diane Ellis-Marseglia, the chairperson of the commissioners, told Levittownnow.

com that the offer most recently put out by the county is the largest it has made and accused union leadership of not telling members all the details.

Even with threats like these looming over them, the atmosphere at the strike was a generally energetic and optimistic one. Strikers commented that, along with achieving the goals of their union, they hope to demonstrate to the community exactly how their public servants are being treated by their elected officials.

Withers commented that "It's not just about the money. It's about collectively working for the people. It's about respect."

Steve Catanese, SEIU 668 president, made it clear that the union never wanted it to come to this, but they are determined to fight for their rights, saying in a statement to 6ABC, "We're here. We're ready to talk, ready to get a deal done. Instead, we unfortunately have to be on strike today. If they were ready to negotiate without demanding cuts, we're all right here. We're about 50 feet away from the building."

A Bucks County spokesperson released a statement saying "This administration stands ready to continue negotiating to reach a fair salary and benefits package for our valued employees."

With both sides seemingly willing to return to the table, union members await further discussion to determine the future of their careers.

News

SGA Meeting Leaves Clubs Wary of Change

Anna Sztenderowicz
Centurion Staff

The Student Government Association welcomed all students to an open forum on Sept. 24 to discuss various topics of concern with their SGA officers, though the topic of converting student clubs and organizations to utilize Microsoft Teams generated controversy and took the spotlight.

The open forum was scheduled to have Bucks new president, Dr. Patrick M. Jones join the students, but due to a scheduling change, Jones will be attending the next open forum on Oct. 7.

Clubs and organizations at Bucks currently use Discord, the app allows real time, less formal communication and flexibility for sharing information, managing events and attendance.

The SGA is encouraging clubs and organizations to adopt Microsoft Teams. With a Bucks email, students will have access to Microsoft 360 and all its features, including Teams, thus making it easier for student accessibility.

Teams will help better organization and communication, the SGA noted, “The issue with having to use multiple apps already serves as a problem, the

goal as of now is to move officers to use Teams, then we will work on having club members join. We are trying to go forward as one student body.”

Bucks clubs are voicing that they already have a difficult time having members join Discord group and converting to teams will not make a difference. SGA President, Ben Armagost stated, “Discord is more of a chat location, when using your student email, you won’t have to make an account, all Microsoft applications coordinate, making it easier for members to join.”

Converting to Teams will allow future students to see previous work that the clubs and organization have done. Once students graduate, Teams will leave a continuity and a cohesive experience to improve current and new clubs to join the college community.

According to the SGA, clubs and organizations have been getting too relaxed on Discord. Inappropriate behavior on behalf of students has been an ongoing issue.

Upper Bucks Liaison of the SGA, Deb Hammond voiced, “We are sick and tired of Discord, the inappropriate behavior is unacceptable, we are tired of



Photo of SGA members courtesy of Anna Sztenderowicz

reports. We are trying to get more order. Teams will start out strict but once behavior improves, protocols will be lifted. But right now, it is more like babysitting on Discord.”

“Not everyone has Discord, Teams will be a more organized and central place to talk about professional discussions and communicate more efficiently.” Hammond stated.

Admin of Discord chats have the capability to delete messages that have been sent. Unfortunately, admin have been abusing their power by deleting inappropriate messages before repercussions could have occurred. “All messages

that are sent and shared in Discord will be seen by administrators -- we cannot discuss further on the inappropriate messages that were sent but they are being handled accordingly,” said Christopher Seifert, Director of Student Engagement and Leadership.

Clubs fear that Teams will phase out student control, stating “There is a disconnect between students and the SGA, Teams will make that more uncomfortable and sterile.”

Discord will continue to run parallel with Teams, students who are uncomfortable with the change do not have to adapt into Teams. “We understand change

is uncomfortable, we are all learning through trial and error. Though the pros of using Microsoft Teams outweighs the pros of using Discord.” Armagost stated.

The SGA’s goal is to provide effective means for students to express their desire on topics directly concerning them and the college. As the SGA believes converting to Microsoft Teams is a step closer to becoming a better-connected student body for the future.



**EAST
STROUDSBURG
UNIVERSITY**

EXPLORE ESU.

**OPEN HOUSES
NOVEMBER 2 & 16.**

Turn your aspirations into achievements with a high-quality education, **50+ affordable majors** to choose from and **up to \$6,000 in transfer scholarships**. Your future is within reach at ESU.

ESU.edu/visit

