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# TRITON VOICE

Triton High School

Triton's Student-Produced Newspaper

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## Coping with COVID

### College & Coronavirus

Yes, Even the Campus Tours are Online

By Helena Strauch  
Staff Writer

Walking onto the glistening grass on the campus of Bucknell University, Sammie Mariniello knew it was her dream school.

However, the inability to travel, rescheduling of standardized testing, and lack of in-person contact with students and counselors has made applying to and looking for the right fit for college tricky for students starting the process during COVID-19. Virtual tours have been put in place as an alternative to travelling to look at schools, and many schools have become test-optional for exams like the SAT.

"I very much do not like virtual tours. They're set up to make the schools look good instead of realistic," said Mariniello, a senior at Triton High School.

Some students have said that they are not having a difficult time with the process, but that it's just not what they had expected. Triton High School guidance counselor, Karen Christian, stated "the biggest challenge for me is the access to the students," but she also referenced the fact that the process is not necessarily different than it would be without a pandemic.

The inability to meet one-on-one between guidance counselors and students has made the application process more independent for students, but due to COVID-19 and the use of the Common Application program used by more than 800 colleges, many students like senior Kyle Scibetta and Mariniello are applying to several schools.

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"People always talk about how when they go to visit a school, it feels like home, but when it's virtual it just looks like a whole bunch of buildings." — *Kyle Scibetta, Triton High School senior*

"I very much do not like virtual tours, they're set up to make the schools look good instead of realistic." — *Sammie Mariniello, Triton High School senior*

### Green, Yellow, or Red

Understanding Local COVID Levels

By Colette Crooks  
Staff Writer

Students may have heard of different color-coded "levels" of the coronavirus in different towns, such as red, yellow, and green zones. But what do they mean?

In order to beat the coronavirus, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as well as state departments of health have created guidelines to follow. These rules may differ depending on the area where a person resides and the risk residents have of catching the virus. But how does one measure and portray this risk?

The virus has ravaged our nation and continues to do so at an alarming rate. There have been at least 120,000 new cases each day over the past two weeks and the number is only rising. In order to stop the spread, Massachusetts has created color codes to portray the risks in each town, as well as phases for reopening. Each state follows its own measuring system of categorizing COVID severity. The Massachusetts measurements for the coronavirus in each town has recently changed and the Triton district wide metrics have recently been updated.

To understand these metrics, the *Triton Voice* spoke with School Committee Chairperson, Nerissa Wallen, Superintendent Brian Forget, and a nurse at Massachusetts General Hospital, Karen Liebert.

According to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the state has seen a 51 percent increase in cases this past week, with around 27,500 cases in total. Governor Charlie Baker addressed the grim reality of passing 10,000 COVID related deaths last Thursday.

"Every single person in Massachusetts needs

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"We still held three practices with COVID tests every week ... but being over an hour away I couldn't go to any which really affected me but also the whole team as well." — *2020 Grad Kelly Sharkey on playing*

### Where Has Taken Grads

How College Freshmen are Dealing

By Emily Johnson  
Staff Writer

Kelly Sharkey was committed to play field hockey for Bridgewater State University and was eagerly awaiting the first day of school.

Then she heard the news that field hockey was postponed and classes would be held online.

The textbooks had been purchased and the excitement peaked for the day Sharkey and some of her fellow student-athletes had been waiting for, their first day of college. However, COVID came and struck

these dreams down, clouding them with online work, shutting down college life and bringing constant transportation and testing issues. The first day of college was not what these Triton alumni were expecting. When they dreamed of this day for 12 years they expected to be moved in with a new friend in the bed next to them, not to roll over in their childhood bed and log into their online lecture.

With this revelation discovered, Sharkey quickly came to the conclusion that she would attend her first semester remotely, due to the fact that she lived two hours away from campus and had no in person classes. However when it came to field hockey, the team was impacted hard.

"We still held three practices with COVID tests every week and a symptom check in before practice, but being over an hour away I couldn't go to any which really affected me but also the whole team as well." The distance isn't only just affecting Sharkey, many other remote players can not attend practice due to it.

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THS Class of 2020 grad Kelly Sharkey (courtesy photo).

## Meet the Teachers

### Teaching behind the Scenes

SPED Evaluation Team Chair Christine Lyman

By Alivia Black  
Staff Writer

A black screen, muted microphones, and empty classroom chairs. Unengaged, unmotivated, students struggling at home. Ms. Christine Lyman is a brand new staff member at Triton Regional High School who is one of so many dealing with these issues during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lyman is an evaluation team chairperson and works within the special education department at Triton. She runs and hosts the Individual Education Program (IEP) meetings where she coordinates and schedules times with families and teachers. She also finds time for the students to take the required testing for their IEPs.

Lyman didn't always know she would be on this career path; she started as a business major, but she did know she loved working in schools with kids and ended up in education. For her undergraduate degree she went to Salem State University and then attended Cambridge College to earn her master's

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Ms. Christine Lyman (courtesy photo)



By Jack Carroll  
Staff Writer

An enthusiastic teacher from North Dakota has been joined the music department at Pine Grove Elementary School. That teacher is Mr. Lucas Brown. He was hired as Pine Grove's new music teacher, replacing longtime music teacher Mrs. Lois Freeman, who retired last year.

Mr. Brown says that he became interested in music from his first grade music teacher. He graduated from Minot High School in 2004, where his primary instrument was tuba. He then went on to graduate from Minot State University in 2008, where he majored in piano and organ, and minored in voice.

Before coming to Pine Grove, Brown taught music in a number of different elementary and high schools in his native state of North Dakota. Most recently, he taught at Des Lacs-Burlington High School in Des Lacs, North Dakota. His new job at PGS is his first teaching job outside of his home state.

Brown described Pine Grove as "warm and welcoming." He added "Moving from such



New PGS Music Teacher, Mr. Lucas Brown (Carroll photo).

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Due to COVID-19, the amount of travelling to colleges has been limited. Students who want to look at schools that are not doing tours and not in one’s reasonable driving distance, have had to adjust to the virtual tours provided by some colleges.

“People always talk about how when they go to visit a school, it feels like home, but when it’s virtual it just looks like a whole bunch of buildings,” said Scibetta.

Many schools have become test-optional, meaning taking a standardized test isn't necessary to submit an application. This is a benefit for students like Scibetta, who has not and does not plan to take the SAT or ACT. However, students such as Mariniello who needed to take the test, had the testing rescheduled several times. There are certain waivers to sign, spaced seating meaning smaller groups, and mask protocols to follow.

As more schools are becoming test-optional, students’ college essays are more significant.

“Their essays might have a little bit more weight as far as their acceptance. Colleges need to make sure that when they accept a student, they need to make sure they’re going to be a good fit for campus and the way to find that out is through their personal essay,” said Christian.

Students’ grades, school and community involvement, and essays are a large factor that admissions officers plan on looking at. Many state that they are expecting many COVID-19-themed essays, but according to NPR’s *How The Coronavirus Has Upended College Admissions* it is not the topic to choose because everyone was affected by the COVID lockdown, and admissions officers are not going to want to relive it while going through applications. However, through Common App. students can share briefly how COVID-19 has affected them and their lives.

Due to COVID-19 and other personal reasons, some groups of students are taking a gap-year or not going to college at all. A gap year is beneficial to some, others it is not. According to the Gap Year Association, no two gap years are the same. It can be beneficial for helping students get a better grasp on what they want to study, or using the time to get an internship and experience what the workforce is like. Up to 90 percent of students enroll in a four-year institution after their gap year, and from a 2015 survey has led to better job satisfaction.

The virus has affected those involved in the college application process in similar and different ways. Regardless, the process may have not changed to some, but the factors of the application are weighted differently.

a small area to a larger area, they have been really welcoming and inviting and encouraging in everything that’s going on in the school year.”

Each new teacher has been assigned to a mentor teacher within the school district. Mr. Brown’s mentor is Mrs. Deb MacKinnon, the band director for the three elementary schools. Mrs. MacKinnon’s role as mentor teacher is to support Mr. Brown and to make him feel welcome within the school community. When asked about Mr. Brown, MacKinnon immediately replied “Love his enthusiasm!” She went on to say “He has got some great ideas, and that just comes through in his personality and his enthusiasm.”

Mrs. Elyse Earls, Assistant Principal of Pine Grove, made very similar remarks about Mr. Brown. When asked about what Mr. Brown brings to Pine Grove, Earls replied “Excitement and engagement.” Earls went on to describe how engaged the students were in Mr. Brown’s class. She also described how eager Mr. Brown was to interview for the job despite being in North Dakota. She stated that that really caught the attention of the interview committee.

Due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, teaching is much more difficult than normal. Triton started the school year fully remote, but the district has transitioned to a hybrid model. Mr. Brown says that one of the most challenging aspects of remote learning is gauging how much the students were actually focusing throughout the class and how much they were actually learning from the class. He also added “You have to be mindful of ... is it actually the student doing the performance or is somebody at home doing the performance for them?”

Despite school being held remotely, Mr. Brown has already developed a great reputation within the Pine Grove community. He has not only been praised by his coworkers but he has a teaching style that will surely make a positive impact on Pine Grove students.

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to appreciate the significance of their role in dealing with the spread of this virus, people need to change their behavior,” Baker said.

Massachusetts has created maps, diagrams and charts to provide citizens with accurate depictions and numbers of the COVID-19 severity in each town. If a person visits its website, and searches for the weekly report, they will find the data for each town listed alphabetically.

It is now the job of the school committee to make decisions for the Triton District, consisting of Salisbury, Newbury, and Rowley, based on the information from the state and the town health departments. The committee has been working behind the scenes on things some may not have even thought about, such as planning the school reopening this past fall as soon as the first news of the virus had emerged.

Wallen, a committee representative Rowley, joined the board in 2015 and said she never expected to be pandemic planning. She is one of in committee members who usually meet once a month, but since the pandemic, have been meeting around nearly once per week. They take into consideration the categories that each town is in when making decisions such as the debate over whether to go forward with remote and hybrid learning.

The different category designations for each Massachusetts town are: gray, green, yellow, and red, with each zone getting progressively worse. It is difficult to explain the exact metric without a diagram because there are so many different data points, but the gist is this; The gray zone means there are fewer than or equal to 10 new cases in a town of 10,000 or less, such as Rowley. According to the state, Rowley is currently in the gray zone, but this is not entirely accurate.

“They actually just changed the system up, which is interesting because it kind of dials back our risk factors,” said Wallen. A couple of our towns would be red right now if you look at the older metrics.”

With inconsistencies in data, it is hard to understand the risk students may face in their towns. Salisbury is stated as being in the green zone, which means there are less than or equal to 15 new cases. But in total, there are 109 cases which also puts the town in the red zone. This goes for Newbury as well, which is categorized in the grey zone, but with 43 cases, it is also in the red zone. This means that according to the older metrics, all three towns in the Triton district are in the red zone and therefore are very high risk areas.

Triton Superintendent Brian Forget has been in his role for five years now and says his job has been completely upended since the pandemic started. He described his position in the committee as being the CEO.

“Think of it as a company, the school committee is the board of directors, and I’m the CEO”, said Mr. Forget, “I play a big role in the decision making.”

During the school committee’s most recent meeting, the members’ consensus was to waive the old metrics for the district and enforce a new model that would be updated every week.

“The committee talked through concerns about the data points in the current metric and the way in which they were used to trigger a learning model vote. The decision was made to work toward a more extensive data dashboard that can be considered on a weekly basis moving forward," according to a statement released Thursday by the Triton School Committee.

According to Forget, there were two in-school cases of the virus last week. One student at Pine Grove and one in the staff, but there were no close contacts in either case. He says this is thanks to the families' cautious approach and because of the adherence to established protocols. However, over the weekend, THS reported two new cases with many close contacts.

A parent of a Triton student, Karen Liebert RN, is a nurse at Massachusetts General Hospital, who does clinical drug trials at the hospital but is currently mainly remote, only going into the hospital 2 or 3 times a week. She has worked on the floor with positive COVID-19 patients and has seen a spike in sick people being admitted. Mass General takes patients from other hospitals such as Dana Farber and they are currently setting up field hospitals in preparation for the surge in cases.

Around half a year ago, the hospital “re-deployed” many of their workers to different roles. This included Ms. Liebert who was re-deployed to in-patient care in the COVID-only floors. She has not been on the floor since she graduated in 1995, so everything was fairly new to her, especially all of the tools that are unique to respiratory virus pandemics.

“Stepping back into that role, I was freaked out. I don’t know any of these systems, the drugs, the pumps, the medications, like it had all changed,” said Liebert,” I mean we used to use paper charts and now everything is electronic charting and they gave us a month to learn and adapt to all of these things.”

Then, in June, the hospital slowly started returning their re-deployed workers into their original roles and allowed occasional visitors. And now Liebert is staying remote until June, 2021.

She explained how testing is now more widely available, so the percentage of people being tested is higher which in turn would make the number of cases higher. So it is nearly impossible to have accurate results concerning how many more people are positive with the virus than before testing increased. But she says that the state does take this into account when determining the categories to put each town in.

We may indeed be heading back to a fully remote model with the cases on a rise. And the metric for the state is constantly changing, but one thing is for sure, we can do our part in stopping the spread by wearing masks and social distancing.

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degree in special education. . Before she came to Triton she had been in education for 25 years in Lynn where worked with students, ages 5 to 8, with moderate disabilities. She also worked in the speech and language department which led to her teaching middle school English. Her most recent position was at Lynn Classical High School as the special education head of department. She scheduled meetings, did transition meetings for students coming from the eighth grade to ninth, and was in charge of all the special education teachers.

COVID-19 has changed the way schools work all across the world. For Lyman specifically she now conducts meetings through Zoom or Google meetings.

“I miss the personal interaction of being able to sit with students in front me,” she said. Scheduling has also been harder for her this year because she has to be very conscious of who is around each person to keep everyone safe.

Lyman said she has a very rewarding job; she helps so many students that struggle with various different problems, but her favorite part is when students have a “lightbulb” moment when concepts comes together so they finally understand. She also said, “That's the one thing I'm a little sad about for this year, I hope to be able to make connections with students in the building.”

Students with IEPs will soon get to know Lyman but even if a student is not on an IEP she said she is always willing to be a listening ear. She loves all the kids at Triton and knows that everyone has had days sometimes, so she said she is always around for a visit.

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The Coronavirus has impacted all age groups, genders and races. There is no one who has escaped the clutches of its wrath. College freshmen are especially feeling the hurt when it comes to starting this new chapter of their life. Colleges all over the nation opened their doors for students this fall. However,

most colleges also gave the opportunity to live on campus while doing remote classes. Another example of such learning experience was Plymouth State. They allowed for students to live on campus but most classes were online.

Charlie Takesian, much like Sharkey, was committed to play a sport in college. Football at Nichols College was also postponed, however practices continued on. Due to this Takesian has been traveling back and forth from Nichols and his hometown of Byfield nearly two hours away. He stays some nights, but not all.

Nichols has been letting up some restrictions due to the low number of cases they have with multiple testing each week and very low cases from each of the tests. The one

required rule is masks must be worn outside of dorm rooms. When asked about the hybrid experience and how football is going, Takesian says “it’s pretty great. I loved being able to play football again after time off and getting to meet all the players and coaches. I wish we could have no restrictions so I could experience all Nichols has to offer, but despite them my first semester has been great.”

Josh Stevens took a different approach than Sharkey and Takesian. He is attending community college at Northern Essex Community College for the upcoming two years. With his classes also all online, Stevens chose to stay home as the remote option for the first semester. He is unsure about whether or not he will be hybrid next semester, as it depends on what his classes are. “I don’t mind how college is set up right now, it’s nice to be able to do work on your own time and still be able to sleep in,” Stevens said when asked how he feels about college right now.

With all the different experiences and ways of COVID college, it is safe to say that freshmen have many different routes they can go. While unconventional, the three believe they are making the best out of a bad situation, but eagerly await when they can truly start the college experience, COVID free.



THS Class of 2020 grads Josh Stevens (left) and Charlie Takesian (courtesy)

“I loved being able to play football again after time off and getting to meet all the players and coaches. I wish we could have no restrictions.” — *Charlie Takesian, THS 2020 grad on playing college foot-*