



Ship Life



SU's fifth annual mental health fair checks the box

Natalie Nichols
Staff Contributor

Shippensburg University hosted its 5th annual mental health check-in fair, Fresh Check Day, on Oct 29 to an impressive turnout. The event was organized by Kurt Dunkel, the coordinator of Connection AOD & Wellness Programs.

Fresh Check Day aims to assist the student body in maintaining strong systems of mental health support. As the semester moves toward final exams, many students, particularly underclassmen, can find themselves subjected to more stress than they know how to handle. The resources made available to students can help them to manage their time, stressors and emotions.

Activities and information tables included a suicide awareness board, schizophrenia awareness and anti-hazing. Students were also given access to

various therapy dogs and informational packets. Most of the tables were student-led, with trifold displays and personalized handouts. Focus on less commonly represented forms of neurodivergence are particularly valuable, as many such conditions become prominent and diagnosable around the general age of college underclassmen.

Tables for community connection were a common theme at this year's fair. Various organizations provided opportunities for students to use markers, paints or handwritten cards to express personal anxieties alongside positive affirmations and goals. By the end of the event, previously blank posters and papers were filled with names, statements and goals from students.

Water and snacks were also provided at the event to promote the impact of eating balanced meals

and staying hydrated on maintaining good mental health. For students facing food insecurity, Big Red's Cupboard provided a table of information and operating hours.

Students can find additional support through the Shippensburg Community Resource Guide, which was distributed at the event and can be found at www.shipresources.org. The guide covers a range of topics, including clothing assistance, rape crisis services and homelessness support.

Fresh Check Day is a national program from the Jordan Porco Foundation. It has recently been approved for inclusion in the Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC)'s Best Practices Registry, a library of resources and programs that provide suicide prevention and support. More information can be found at www.freshcheckday.org.



Gabe Rader / The Slate

Shippensburg University's annual Fresh Check Day was held in the CUB Great Hall and hosted different clubs and campus organizations. Students could access various resources, both on- and off-campus.

Shippensburg University's 'The Rocky Horror Picture Show' honors queer celebration

Megan Sawka
Ship Life Editor

From feather boas to fake pearls, "The Rocky Horror Picture Show" has captivated audiences for almost 50 years, celebrating individuals of all shapes, sizes and identities and encouraging people to be themselves. "The Rocky Horror Show" first came to life in 1973 as a

successful until 1976, when the film had its first midnight screening at the Waverly Theater in New York City. It soon became a cult classic, with midnight screenings all over the country, each accompanied by fans in extravagant costumes.

About five months into the film's midnight run at the Waverly Theater, the infamous callouts began.

Louis Faese Jr., a usually quiet teacher, saw the character Janet place a newspaper over her head to shield herself from rain and yelled out, "Buy an umbrella, you cheap bitch." This quickly caught on with other theatergoers, giving rise to a self-proclaimed "counterpoint dialogue" that became a

pansexuality. In this world, a traditionally straight, white and conventionally attractive young couple, Brad and Janet (Barry Bostwick and Susan Sarandon), both virgins until marriage, are the true outsiders.

Meanwhile, a "sweet transvestite from Transylvania" (a dazzlingly charismatic Tim Curry), dressed in high heels, suspenders, full makeup and little else, steals the show.

Common criticisms of the show point at two main plotlines: the portrayal of Dr. Frank-N-Furter's "transvestite" character and the sexual coercion that takes place about halfway through the show. People often criticize the portrayal of Dr. Frank-N-Furter as being offensive to the transgender community, as he is referred to using terms like "transvestite" and "transsexual."

Frank is portrayed as promiscuous, seducing both Brad and Janet against their will and creating Rocky solely to fulfill his sexual desires. Despite this, the show has been championed for showcasing a trans character in a leading role almost 50 years ago, creating roles for people that may not have been in the spotlight prior.

Additionally, the lines of consent are blurred in the show, as both Brad and Janet are coerced into sex by Frank-N-Furter. Modern productions and showings of the film warn audiences of these scenes and critique them as a whole. Many productions educate audiences about consent and rape as well, either before the production begins or during the scene itself by holding signs. As the show has been performed over the last 50 years, it has evolved and changed to adapt to the times.

This year, Shippensburg University's production of "The Rocky Horror Picture Show" was directed by Katie Huston and Alyssa Sheriff. Huston stressed the importance of the show to the queer community, "It's important because even though there are some terms and ideas that are outdated, the community that has been built around it, even since the '70s, has been so important."

The show also transcends generational divides. "It brings people together of all ages. I can bring it up that I'm directing to someone who's much older and they'll be like, 'Oh my gosh, I love Rocky Horror' and we'll talk about it, which I think is really important to staying involved and in touch with queer elders. That's a part of the Rocky Horror community, keeping in touch with those people," Huston said.

"The Rocky Horror Picture Show" has become a staple of self-expression. Aidan Bertram, who played Frank in this year's production, spoke about his performance. "It feels very elegant. It's definitely a step outside my comfort zone, but I'm enjoying it so far," Bertram said. "It's good to be surrounded by all these people."

The show has become a staple at SU during the Halloween season. Each year, students line up at Memorial Auditorium and wait in their costumes to see the show.

Seamus Landis is known for actively participating in the show's callouts in previous years. This year, however, he played Rocky. Landis reflected on his transition from audience member to show star, "It's a little bit sad that I can't be that active audience member because watching the shows and being a part of it from that side is always incredibly fun," Landis said.

"I saw the energy of people doing call-outs and getting active in it," Landis continued. "I've been doing theater a long time but that was exceptional in a lot of ways. That got me really driven to be that person, who sparks off doing the call-outs."

However, "The Rocky Horror Picture Show" almost didn't happen at SU this year. "They had asked someone else to direct, but that person was too busy this year. [The PAGE Center] had reached out to the cast from last year and was like 'Hey, if no one is going to direct, there's probably not going to be a show,'" Huston said. Sheriff and Huston stepped up as co-directors and Ari Stevens stepped up as choreographer.

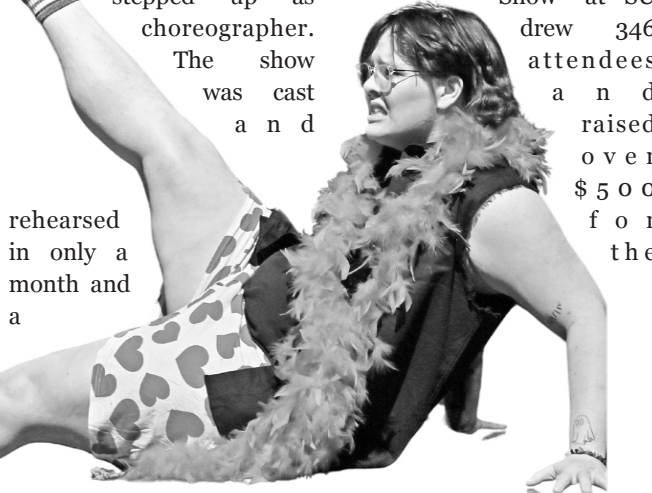
The show was cast and

rehearsed in only a month and a

the queer influence of this year's performance, "I think that really shows...I have everybody up there grabbing each other's asses, and then Columbia and Eddie have a little bit more of a lesbian touch."

"I really appreciate Ari being willing to take up choreography as well as their actual role in the production and also Alyssa for agreeing to co-direct with me," Huston said. "I think we all really worked well together to bring this vision together through all of our different ideas. I really appreciate the cast and how much work and effort they've put into it because they've really put in a lot, especially with the short timeline."

This year's production of "The Rocky Horror Picture Show" at SU drew 346 attendees and raised over \$500 for the



Jayden Pohlman / The Slate

Griffyn Imes playing Brad in this year's production of "The Rocky Horror Picture Show."

half, with rehearsals beginning in mid-September.

An important piece of the show is the choreography. Ari Stevens, who choreographed the show and also starred as Columbia, spoke about where their inspiration for the choreography came from.

"I watched a lot of heels videos online, because those are something that you can incorporate with everybody wearing heels on stage," Stevens said. Stevens also spoke about

PAGE Center and the campus Trans Affinity group. "The Rocky Horror Picture Show" has almost 50 years of cult-like following, and with productions like this at Shippensburg University, it will hopefully continue to be a safe space for the queer community.

For resources and information about queer identity, consent and more, visit the PAGE Center in the CUB or at www.ship.edu/life/diversity/page/.

musical stage

Jayden Pohlman / The Slate

Aidan Bertram, who played Dr. Frank-N-Furter, spoke about the confidence and ability to express himself that Shippensburg's production of "The Rocky Horror Picture Show" gave him.

show in London. It was written by Richard O'Brien, who later starred in the film as Riff-Raff. The inspiration for the show came from science fiction and B-horror movies that O'Brien watched as a kid. The play was met with positive reviews and eventually opened on Broadway in 1975 at the Belasco Theatre.

"The Rocky Horror Picture Show" film premiered in London in August of 1975 and drew small audiences. The film did not seem