

Media Makers

AN MCVA MAGAZINE

SPRING 2025



PACE UNIVERSITY

Dyson College of Arts and Sciences

Media Makers

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JAMAAL WATERS, MORGAN RYAN, CIARA MULLEADY, BRYCE AIERSTOCK, JABARI NURSE, AND AUBREY CARROLL POSE WITH MCVA EQUIPMENT. (JADEN KEALEY)

From the Editor

This spring semester, I tasked my writing public relations copy students with pitching stories for a department publication. In teams, the students interviewed faculty, alums, and fellow students, wrote and refined story drafts, curated and captured images, and produced the pages of this digital magazine in Canva. I am immensely proud of their hard work.

As the stories for the unnamed inaugural issue came to fruition, it became abundantly clear that regardless of your background, major, or tenure at Pace, every MCVA family member is a *media maker*.

In an experiential collaboration between my class and the digital photography course taught by fellow MCVA professor and dear friend Lou Guarneri, we challenged his students to shoot photos for the cover. Ultimately, Lina Sigurjonsson's work perfectly encompassed the essence of being an MCVA student and media maker, as did Jaden Kealey's shots, which you can find on the inside cover, and Daniella Schneider's photo, gracing the back cover.

Thank you to MCVA chair Paul Ziek for supporting academic freedom and allowing us faculty to experiment with our hands-on curriculum.

We hope you enjoy the stories of the first edition of Media Makers.

Sincerely,
Heather Hayes
Clinical Assistant Professor



SAHETRESE MCQUEEN TAKING A MIRROR SELIFE IN TARRYTOWN, NEW YORK. (SAHETRESE MCQUEEN)

From Pace to Press

Sahetrese McQueen's Path into Local News

BY SKYLER FLYNN, DANIELLA SCHNEIDER, AND NATALIE MALDONADO

At the crack of dawn, Sahetrese McQueen walks into the bustling newsroom of News 12 in Yonkers, New York, ready to tackle another unpredictable day. As a freelance editor and videographer, McQueen juggles multiple roles: capturing footage, editing stories, and making sure everything airs on time. Looking back on her time at Pace University, McQueen says the skills she gained as a student in the Media, Communications, and Visual Arts Department set her up to thrive in the demanding news industry.

The hum of keyboards and phones fills the air as McQueen steps into the newsroom. Producers are on the phone, reporters are preparing for live shots, and editors rush to meet tight deadlines. It's the type of environment where quick thinking is a must. Today, McQueen is preparing for another busy shift, ready to jump between the camera, editing booth, and transmission control to help deliver the local news.

McQueen, a Pace alum, is already carving out her niche at News 12, working behind the scenes to create news packages that inform Westchester County residents. She graduated with a degree in digital journalism in May 2024 and started working at News 12 that July. Although she's only been in the role for a short time, McQueen has already earned respect for her work and dedication.

McQueen's time at Pace shaped her journey into the news industry. The MCVA program provided her with the technical skills and industry knowledge she needed to enter the workforce with confidence.

"I felt ahead of the game when I entered the workforce because I already understood the terminology and technical equipment," McQueen says. "Learning how to film, edit, and create a complete news package at Pace made my transition into my role much smoother. It's a fast-paced job, but knowing how to put a story together quickly is a huge asset."

Pace professors, including Katherine Fink, played a crucial role in McQueen's growth. "Dr. Fink helped me build connections in the industry," she says. "She shared opportunities and always encouraged me. I felt prepared and confident when I graduated, knowing that Pace gave me the tools to succeed."

McQueen describes a journalist's day as full of positive and negative, unexpected experiences. Not long ago, she was doing camera work in New Jersey, covering a car crash on the Palisades Parkway; a police officer ticketed her and her reporter for being in a restricted area. As a result, she has to go through a court process. McQueen looks at this situation as a learning experience. Now, she reflects on what she should have done better to approach a similar problem with more awareness of what can happen in the field.

"I felt ahead of the game when I entered the workforce because I already understood the terminology and technical equipment."

In contrast, she also discloses the time her boss trusted her to go out to get a story. McQueen decided to cover a ribbon-cutting ceremony for affordable housing in Greenburgh and Scarsdale, New York. It was a pivotal moment for her since it was her first solo reporting assignment.

"I was able to utilize what I had learned at college, what I learned in the MCVA program as well as what I had learned working here for the past, like, seven or eight months to grab together a story, edit it together all on my own, and send it off to the news."

Not only did the story carry personal significance for her, but it also highlighted the great value of Pace's resources and professors. Sahtrese says that Fink was an amazing mentor who empowered her with a lot of knowledge that makes her feel more assured about taking on any opportunity.



SAHTRESE MCQUEEN WORKS BEHIND THE CAMERA AND CAPTURES A STORY IN MIDDLETOWN, NEW YORK. (SAHTRESE MCQUEEN)



SAHTRESE MCCQUEEN'S VIDEOGRAPHY SET UP AT A NEWS SHOOT IN CAMPBELL HALL, NEW YORK. (SAHTRESE MCQUEEN)



THE CAMERA SAHTRESE MCQUEEN OPERATES DURING AN INTERVIEW IN MOUNT PLEASANT, NEW YORK. (SAHTRESE MCQUEEN)

Through the past eight months as a freelance editor and videographer, McQueen's experience helped teach her important lessons and allowed her to grow in her position and field. Her challenges taught her the significance of being a quick thinker and problem solver.

"There's a lot of times where you just have to read people and be able to tell — is this somebody who would be interested or who would be open and willing to get this story? Or is it better to allocate your time somewhere else and get that information elsewhere?" McQueen says.

McQueen emphasizes the importance of being kind and pleasant to those around you while in her role. She says it allows a reporter and videographer to foster relationships with the people around them. While working as a reporter at a local news station, she values the connections she builds within the community and the opportunity to learn about local events and personal stories.

Reflecting on her path to her current position, McQueen says she feels lucky and would not change anything about her experience. Her career goal is to become a self-sufficient reporter, also called a multimedia journalist. As a multimedia journalist, she would be fully responsible for all aspects of a segment, including gathering and editing a story. Ultimately, her future goal is to share stories she feels proud of and to always try something new.

PaceDocs: Take Two

BY LILAH MCCORMACK, SYDNEY SIMS, AND ZACHARY POLONCARZ
STORY COVER PHOTO BY KAT BRENNAN

Pace University's PaceDocs program sends students abroad to film documentaries. This year, four students returned for a second shot to produce "Harmony of the Azores" in Portugal after filming in France and Spain previously. They used their experience to capture the culture of the "viola da terra," an Azorean stringed musical instrument. Students highlight the value of this intensive documentary production.

In the Media, Communications, and Visual Arts Department at Pace University, students have an experiential opportunity to film a documentary while visiting different places worldwide. PaceDocs is an award-winning study abroad initiative in MCA 370: Producing the Documentary, led by professors Maria Luskay and Lou Guarneri. Hawaii, France, and Curaçao are just a few places students have visited while taking the course. In 2024, PaceDocs filmed a documentary on the art of cooperage, or barrel making, in Spain.

This year, Angie Starn, Donovan Smit, Jackson Blackburn, and Kat Brennan ventured west to the Azores, a Portuguese archipelago, for a shot at filming the documentary for a second time. From bringing past experiences in productions to helping mentor the newcomers, they will be key students in capturing the rich culture of the “viola da terra.”

Starn is a digital media and communications graduate student. She first took the course in 2023 when she traveled to France to produce “For the Love of Food” about the French slow food movement and how it differs from other parts of the world.



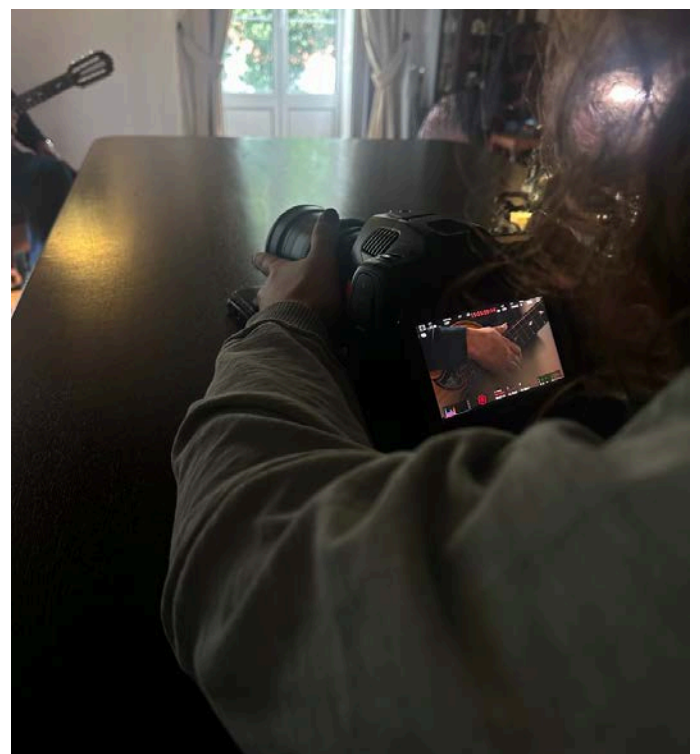
ANGIE STARN AND LIZ KAUFER CAPTURE DOCUMENTARY FOOTAGE WITH CAMERA STABILIZERS IN THE AZORES. (BRIE LUNA)

Donovan Smit is a senior pursuing a degree in digital cinema and filmmaking. Smit was a part of the 2024 production exploring cooperage in Montilla and Malaga, Spain. “The Cooper: Crafting the Soul of the Cask” captures the rich culture of barrel making.

“I didn’t really understand the history and heritage that was passed down through that, so that was really interesting,” Smit says. “And I had much more of an appreciation afterwards with that.”

What makes students want to take the documentary course for a second time? Smit describes how his first experience led him to enroll in the course again. He encourages students to take this course because it can support them in their future careers. Creating a documentary within three months is impressive, and this will stand out on your résumé compared to many others. Smit explains that this achievement on your resume will spark employers’ interest in wanting to know more.

“When employers look at your accomplishments, they will see that first and be like, you made a documentary in three months – tell me about that.”



KAT BRENNAN, A TWO-TIME PACEDOCS CREW MEMBER, FILMS THE “VIOLA DE TERRA” FOR THE 2025 DOCUMENTARY. (BRIE LUNA)

Producing a successful documentary in a short time is not without challenges. Students reflect on the main takeaways from their last trip as they gear up for the Azores.

For Starn, the biggest takeaways are related to production. She reflects on how she would be hesitant when it came to filming for fear of making a mistake. However, since taking a year off from the documentary course, she is more confident.

"So I think this time around, I'll be more ready to go and dive right into everything rather than kind of hesitating," Starn says.

Smit reflects on his Spain experience and plans to apply it to his next documentary trip.

"I would say being a lot more serious about the work. I mean, of course, we're students, we're learning, but we are spending a significant amount of money to go on this trip, and we only have a week to film everything," Smit says.

This production course differs from others in the department in that students study abroad. Starn and Smit have an advantage over their peers in the class with their prior experience with international travel for the course.



LEANNA WARD AND BROOKE SMITH FILM THE SEA AS HANNAH TROY MORGAN OBSERVES ON THE FIRST DAY OF PRODUCTION. (LOU GUARNERI)



DONOVANN SMIT AND ANGIE STARN POSE FOR A PICTURE WHILE IN PRODUCTION. (LOU GUARNERI).

"Last time, I don't feel like I packed enough, and I was kind of falling short of what I needed, so I kind of by doing that I really feel like I gathered a better idea of what I need in terms of clothing or like necessities ... I have some personal cameras I'm gonna bring this time and some personal like equipment that I can wear," Starn says.

"I would say in terms of being there and the culture there and the language, just learning a few phrases here and there and making sure to understand what they're saying because we had very few actual people there who could speak and understand the language, so just having some of those keywords that you can take from people's conversations and being able to interpret what they mean," Smit says.

Jackson Blackburn is also a graduate student in the course. He reflects on his experience after his second time producing the documentary.

"Traveling is a privilege, and I'm so grateful I was able to visit the Azores to witness and document the breadth of the islands' beauty and the complexity of their culture," Blackburn says. "Also being able to be hands-on with every aspect of the project made the Azores trip one of the most experiential moments of my college life — both personally and professionally."

Starn enjoyed the Azores islands, praising the views, people, and stories. She feels fortunate for the opportunity to travel with the PaceDocs crew for a second time.



THE 2025 PACEDOCS CREW POSE FOR A GROUP PHOTO ON THE SAO MIGUEL ISLAND. (BENTO CORDEIRO GUIA)

"I'm so grateful I was able to visit the Azores to witness and document the breadth of the islands' beauty and the complexity of their culture."



FOLLOW PACE DOCS ON INSTAGRAM

"I got to grow as a cinematographer, storyteller, and writer, all the while listening to the incredible musicians of the instrument, the 'viola da terra,'" Starn says. "This trip has taught me so many valuable lessons about production, new global perspectives, and the importance of preserving and passing down culture."

Overall, this course is a great opportunity for those looking to gain experience and strengthen their media and communications skills. According to current students retaking it, the class's benefits only get better the second time.

The Pace Docs crew premiered "Harmony of the Azores" on May 5, 2025, at the [Jacob Burns Film Center](#). The documentary will soon premiere on the [MCVA YouTube channel](#), [@PaceUniversityMCVA](#), where you can also watch projects from past years. Follow [@pacedocs](#) on [Instagram](#) for YouTube premiere updates.



SOME MEMBERS OF THE PACE DOCS CREW CARRY EQUIPMENT ALONG THE AZOREAN SHORE. (BROOKE SMITH)



STUDENT ORGANIZATION LEADERS EMMA RAINERI (MICHAEL TALES), PAYTON COCCHIA (ABBY ROBERTSON), AND ELENA DAVIS (ELENA L DAVIS/INSTAGRAM)

Meet the Female Leaders of Pace's Media Organizations

BY ANNIE FORD,
PAYTON COCCHIA,
JAEYA ANDERSON, AND
KATIE SWANSTON

At Pace University, women are not just participating in leadership - they're redefining it. From the Pleasantville to New York City campuses, female students are claiming positions of leadership and shaping both academic and extracurricular environments into safe spaces where students can grow. These inspiring students are transforming leadership in meaningful ways while strengthening Pace's media organizations.

Junior Emma Raineri is the president of the Pleasantville campus's Film Club. The film industry is male-dominated, particularly in creative roles such as directors, writers, and producers. But Raineri is breaking down doors and turning heads by leading the club and inspiring other young women to pursue careers in filmmaking and media production. Under Raineri's leadership, along with the help of her female vice president, Ava Woods, and secretary Olivia McClain, the club has transformed into a beacon of creativity and empowerment where students now come together and can freely express their love and passion for watching and producing films. Last year, the club was in a slight funk, but the organization's growth has been remarkable. Raineri is proud of the work put into revamping the club.

"It gives me the opportunity to demonstrate that all types of people have the ability to lead versus some preconceived notion about what a president or leader should look like, speak like, act like, and the fact I can be unapologetically and authentically myself is really empowering and gives me confidence," Raineri says.

President of Pace Media Zone, Payton Cocchia, is a senior digital journalism major who is also making waves on Pace's Pleasantville campus. After becoming the club's treasurer in 2022, she ran for president in 2023 with the hopes of rebranding and bringing new life to the previously student-run public relations agency.

"We made it into Pace University's official pop culture club, centered around Hollywood, pop culture, celebs, and public figures," Cocchia says. "All of our events are celebrity-oriented, so we've had album release parties, Oscars watch parties, huge celeb merchandise giveaways, and more."

Cocchia credits her event planning and marketing success to MCVA professor Heather Hayes, who taught and advised her during Hayes' public relations courses. Upholding the PMZ presidency has helped Cocchia prepare for her future and gain confidence to enter the professional world.



EMMA RAINERI, OLIVIA MCCLAIN, AND JAKE PETERSON HOST FILM CLUB'S 2025 PLEASANTVILLE INVOLVEMENT FAIR TABLE. (JAEYA ANDERSON)



MAKAYLA MORRIS, PAYTON COCCHIA, AND BRYCE HARPER HOST PMZ'S 2025 PLEASANTVILLE INVOLVEMENT FAIR TABLE. (MARIA LEMUS)



ELENA DAVIS VOLUNTEERS AT THE 2025 GRAMMY AWARDS IN LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA. (SAMMY WROGE)

Over on the New York City campus, Elena Davis, vice president of Pace Music Group, reflects on her experience at Pace as she prepares to graduate this spring. Davis' position with Pace Music Group has propelled her toward internships with major record labels and volunteer opportunities with prestigious awards shows.

Earlier this semester, Davis flew to sunny Los Angeles, California, to work the Grammy Awards while balancing classes, her job, and her position with PMG. According to Davis, she is grateful for every position and encourages other young women who aspire to be in leadership positions at Pace.

"Keep pushing! Don't be afraid to ask questions, collaborate with others, push your ideas forward, think outside the box... A 'no' can be a redirection ... never let it discourage you," Davis says.

When asked if Pace creates a space for women in positions of power, Davis gets candid. She reminds us that the progress Pace has made is not quite enough yet, and we still have a lot more work to do.

"Pace struggles a little bit on their side and sometimes refuses to admit it, which can be frustrating for club organizations," Davis says. "We've had a lot of ups and downs as a club. We try to be perfect, but obviously, nobody is perfect. We try to make it work as best we can."

Raineri, Cocchia, and Davis are following inspiring "Pace Paths" that underscore how leadership is impactful in many forms — whether that be through artistic expression, community engagement, or political advocacy. Pace provides a platform not only for their voices to be heard, but also where women are central in progress.

Pleasantville Press Internship Allows Students to Practice Community Journalism

BY JAMES STEIGERWALD, MADISON IBACH, AND CHARLIE DEGENNARO

Pleasantville Press is a hyperlocal news site where students from the Media, Communications, and Visual Arts Department at Pace University can produce stories covering news right in town.

It currently exists as an internship under the supervision of Katherine Fink, an MCVA professor and adviser to The Pace Chronicle, Pace University's student-run newspaper. Fink initially started Pleasantville Press as a website where students could submit their journalism assignments that would be visible to the public rather than just the professor.

"The original idea was to have a website that was also community journalism focused because I used it in classes that were doing reporting in Pleasantville," Fink says.

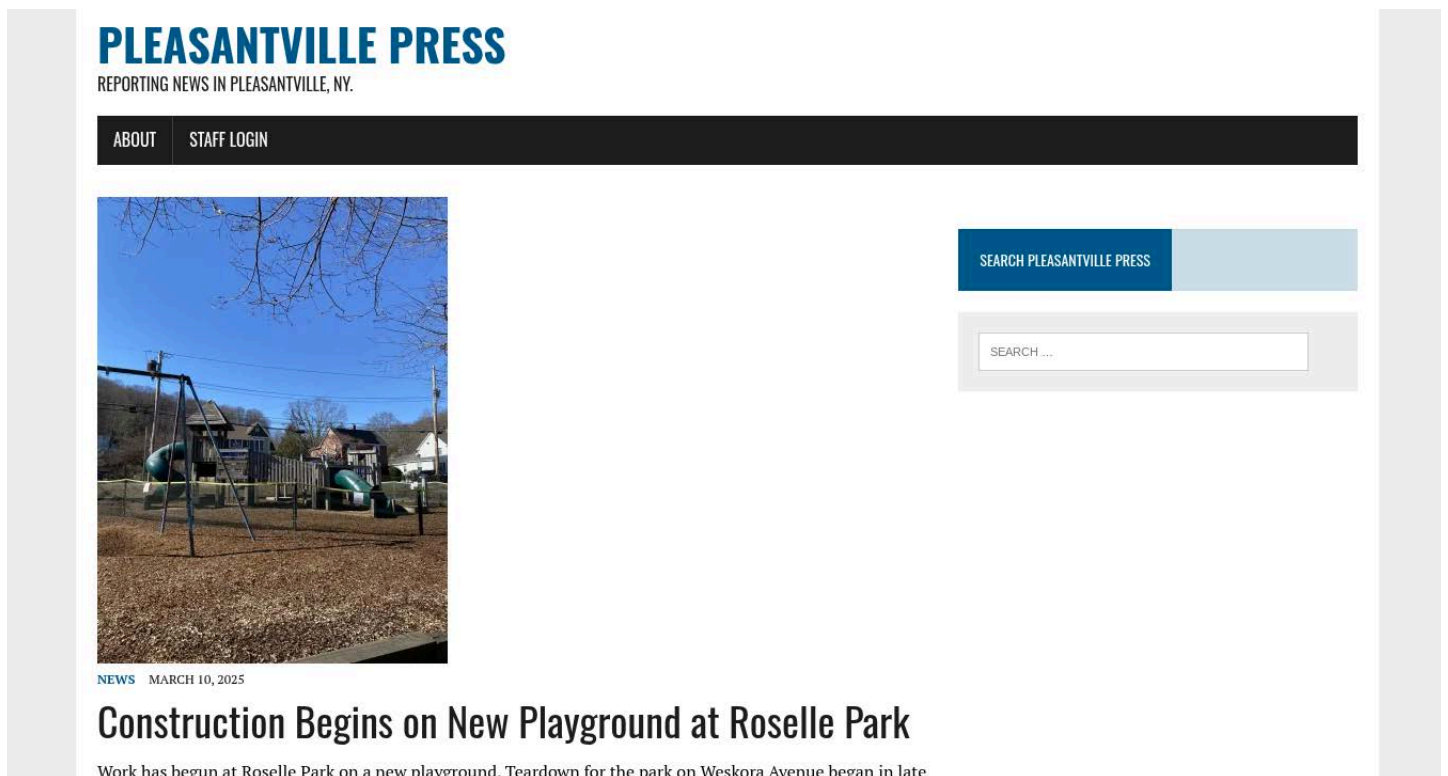
Interns submit to the website through a Wordpress interface, which is traditionally how journalists send stories to their editors.

"I wanted the students to be able to see what the interface was like that they might encounter in a job because if you're working in journalism, that's what you're doing," Fink says. "You're not just sending an emailed story to somebody; you're logging into a website."



PLEASANTVILLE PRESS INTERN EJ SPEIGHT SHOOTS B-ROLL IN PLEASANTVILLE, NEW YORK.
(JAMES STEIGERWALD)

“I learned how to make interesting and valuable video news content as well as polish up my writing skills.”

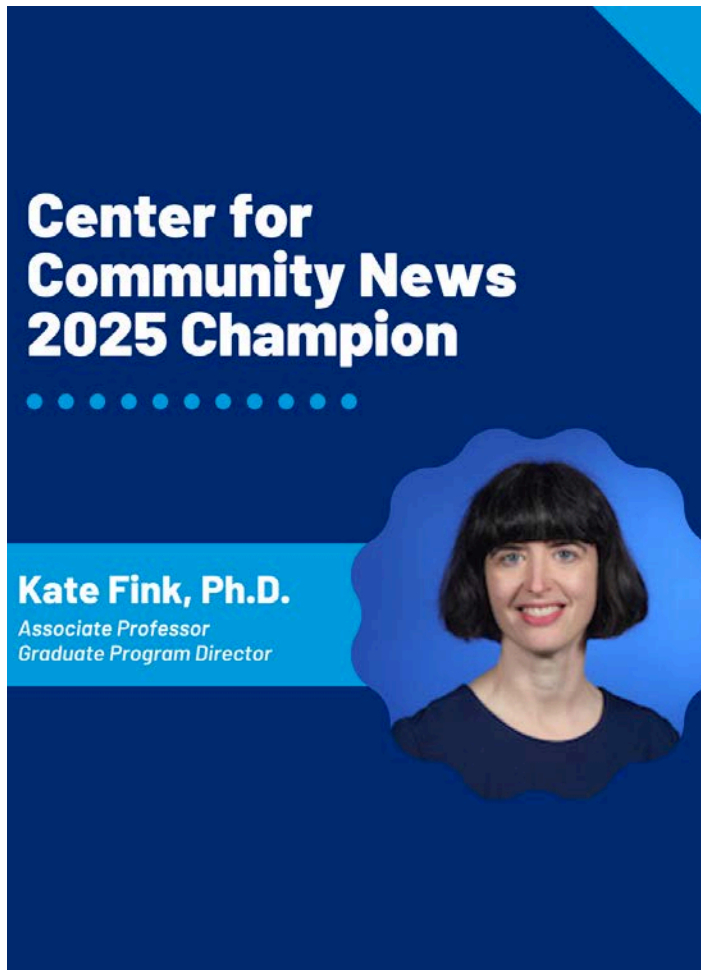


SCREENSHOT OF THE PLEASANTVILLE PRESS HOMEPAGE (PLEASANTVILLEPRESS.ORG)

Since then, Pleasantville Press has evolved into producing multimedia content. On top of written articles, Fink publishes intern-produced video stories to TikTok and Instagram to complement them. Last semester, senior Leanna Ward was the intern for the Pleasantville Press. Ward shares the experiences and skills she gained from the internship.

“When I interned for the Pleasantville Press, I learned how to make interesting and valuable video news content as well as polish up my writing skills,” Ward says. “I gained confidence in approaching people on the street for interviews and filming myself alone in public.”

The Center for Community News, an organization established in 2022 by the University of Vermont that helps strengthen university-led student journalism programs, recently announced its 2025 Champions. The CCN recognizes those who grow these programs at their respective universities each year. Fink’s supervision of the Pleasantville Press put her on the list of honorees for this year.



DYSON COLLEGE CELEBRATES FINK'S WIN AS A CENTER FOR COMMUNITY NEWS 2025 CHAMPION ON INSTAGRAM.
(DYSON COLLEGE/INSTAGRAM)



PLEASANTVILLE PRESS INTERN JAMES STEIGERWALD REPORTS AT A COMMUNITY NEWS CENTER IN VALHALLA, NEW YORK.
(PLEASANTVILLE PRESS/TIKTOK)

When Fink learned about the CCN, it encouraged her to expand the Pleasantville Press and have it branch out into multimedia content as we know it today. She had seen other departmental internships within MCVA, such as Booth Review, a sports media content creation internship, and wanted Pleasantville Press to be like that.

She says there has been a push from Pace University's administration to bring attention to Pleasantville as a destination spot, which news reporting could make a difference with.

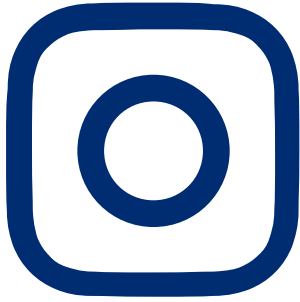
"There are a lot of conversations happening among the administration to try to showcase the Pleasantville campus more, to come up with something that can really revitalize our campus," Fink says. "So in my mind, I'm like, community journalism."

Pleasantville Press has recently teamed up with The Examiner News, which covers stories in the counties of Westchester, Putnam, and beyond. The Examiner News also publishes the Pleasantville Press stories, reaching a larger audience of local residents.

Examples of stories produced include covering local elections, baby cow sightings in town, and the construction of a new playground. For more information and stories, visit the [website](#) and follow Pleasantville Press on [TikTok](#) and [Instagram](#).



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