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The Current is the official student publication of Three Rivers Community College.

It is written, edited, and designed solely by students.

If you would like to contribute to The Current

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MASK OFF?

Last Monday, Governor Ned Lamont had announced that the state-wide school mask mandate on schools will be lifted on February 28. According to Lamont, the decision to whether to keep the mask mandate or not will be up to the school districts now.

Lamont believes that the state of Connecticut is in a different place than what it was six months ago and certainly a different place a year ago. With the vaccine, boosters, and better masks, he believes it is time to have the power to determine the use of masks is no longer in his hands.

According to NBCCConnecticut news, Gov. Lamont said, "Connecticut is seeing a dramatic decline in cases caused by the Omicron variant, and children over the age of 5 have had the ability to get vaccinated for more than three months now. With this in mind, I think we are in a good position to phase out the requirement that masks be worn in all schools statewide and shift the determination on whether to require this to the local level."



Students wearing mask. Photo Courtesy: Shutterstock

Governor Ned Lamont is lifting the mask mandate for schools

By Jaizier St.Hilaire



Children in masks. Photo Courtesy: iStock/Getty Images

This lift is only applied to schools as Governor Lamont still recommends wearing masks everywhere else like healthcare facilities, places with a vulnerable population, public and private places, and correctional facilities.

Private businesses, state and local government offices have the option to have people wear masks in their establishments and municipal leaders also have the option of requiring masks to be worn by everyone when indoors in public places, regardless of vaccination status and within their respective towns and cities.

Whether this is deemed a cause for celebration or not is up to you. There are people who say that it is too soon to lift this mandate. Others say that it has been long enough. For now, everybody still has to wear a mask and maintain social distance until said otherwise. Stay safe everyone!

"I think we are in a good position to phase out the requirement that masks be worn in all schools statewide and shift the determination on whether to require this to the local level."

- Governor Ned Lamont
Governor of CT

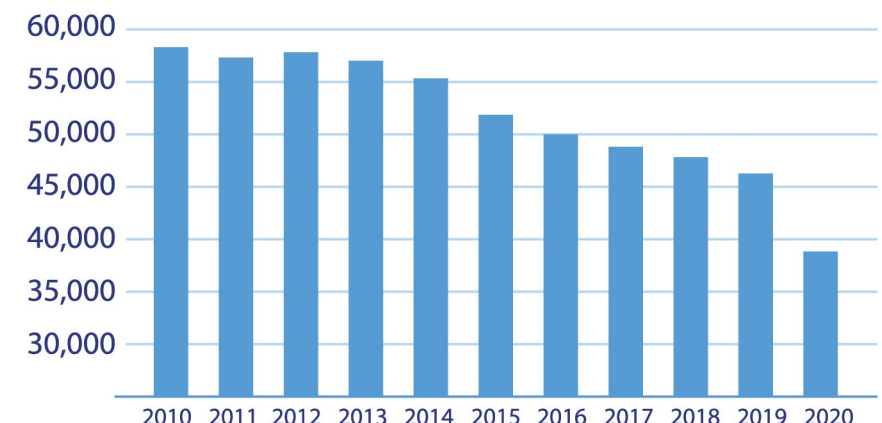


Community Colleges Face Enrollment Decline

Connecticut community college enrollment down 15% since 2019

Written by Jordan Leroy

CT Community College Enrollment
Full-time and Part-time Students
Fall Headcount



Enrollment at Connecticut community colleges has been gradually declining since 2010, but the jump between 2019 and 2020 was steep. Data sourced from CSCU reports

With the negative effects to the economy brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as new programs that offer training and skills, community colleges in Connecticut are seeing a decline in student enrollment. Despite community college being a more financially and academically flexible option, they are facing enrollment decline triple the amount of 4-year institutes. While undergraduate enrollment in Connecticut has dropped 5.3% since 2019, community college enrollment is down 15%, which amounts to approximately 9,000 students.

The pandemic caused about 40% of college students across the nation to lose their jobs, making college unaffordable to them. Now that we are seeing more job openings than ever, many are choosing to work over going to school. Additionally,

several employers are providing their own training, making college obsolete to some.

The Board of Regents has taken part in a nationwide “Guided Pathways” program that seeks to improve enrollment, retention, and graduation rates. Through Guided Pathways, 174 college advisors will be hired by June 2022, cutting the current student-to-advisor ratio from 750 students per advisor to 250 students per advisor. This program has so far been introduced at Middlesex, Northwestern, and Housatonic Community Colleges.

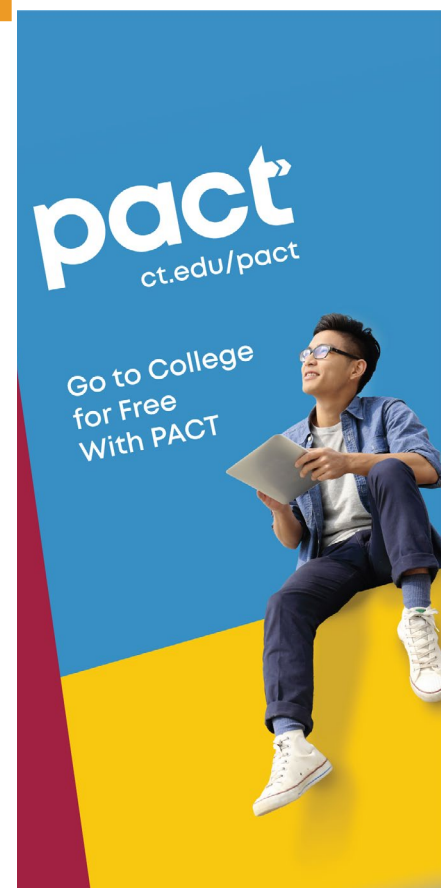


Three Rivers Community College is one of twelve community colleges in Connecticut that have seen a 15% decline in enrollment since 2019.

Another attempted solution to the decline in enrollment is the potential for free community college. The introduction of Pledge to Advance Connecticut (PACT) funding gives students the opportunity to attend any of Connecticut’s community colleges for up to three years, free of mandatory tuition and fees.

However, this program is only available to those who qualify, and does not apply to textbooks or supplies. Here is how to qualify for PACT funding:

- Be a CT High School Graduate, GED, with home-schooled students qualifying
 - Be a first-time college student
 - Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)
 - Attend community college full-time (12+ credits/semester)
 - Participate in a degree or credit-bearing certificate program
 - Once enrolled, remain in good academic standing
- As higher education continues to be a less sought-after option for getting a good job, the Connecticut State College and University System will have to continue determining solutions and incentives to get their student enrollment back up.



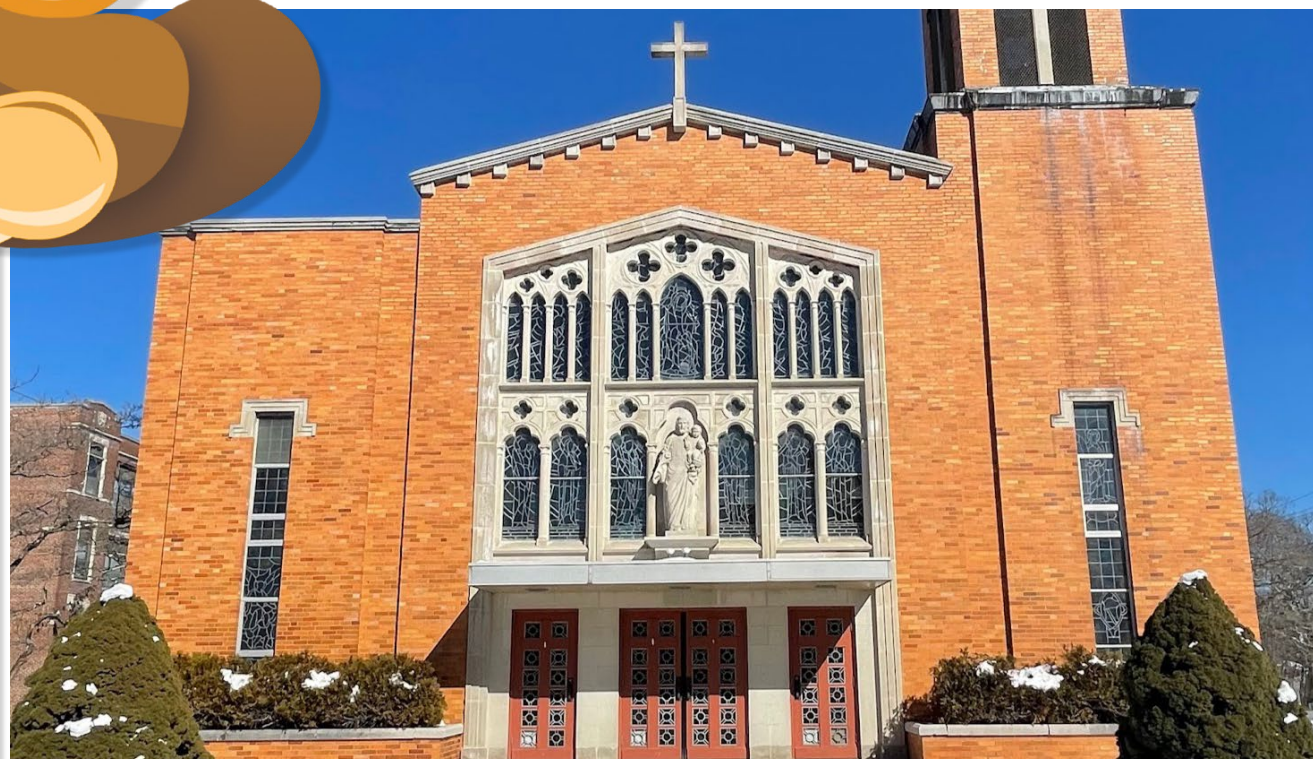
PACT allows students the opportunity to qualify for free community college tuition. Photo Courtesy: ct.edu/pact



St. Vincent de Paul Place

Food Pantry, Soup Kitchen, and so Much More

Written by Jordan Leroy



St. Joseph Church. Before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Several non-profit organizations across Connecticut continue to overcome the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, but not without the help of their community. As the demand for assistance from these organizations rises, so does the need for volunteers and donations.

St. Vincent de Paul Place of Norwich has been able to keep their doors open throughout the pandemic, serving those in need with food assistance, hygiene, case management, and more. Their mission is to serve those in Norwich and the surrounding areas

who are physically, mentally, or spiritually impoverished.

Founded in 1979, St. Vincent de Paul Place was established to meet the needs of the region's poor and homeless. Today, they serve patrons who struggle with homelessness, unemployment, physical or mental disabilities, underemployment, and addiction issues.



The St. Vincent de Paul Place building, which is the former primary school of St. Joseph Parish.

How You Can Help:

Volunteer

There are several areas within St. Vincent de Paul Place that require the help of volunteers. These include cleaners, food pantry workers, kitchen help, front desk, and more. Training is provided with a minimum commitment to work once a week for ten weeks. Visit www.svdpp.org/volunteer to contact the volunteer coordinator.

Food Donations

St. Vincent de Paul Place accepts donations of unopened and unexpired food to distribute through their food pantry. Dry and canned goods, along with spices, condiments, and garden produce are all acceptable. Commonly needed items include tuna, soup, pasta, pasta sauce, peanut butter, canned stew, oatmeal, macaroni and cheese, and ramen noodles. Breakfast and lunch are provided by St. Vincent de Paul Place six days a week, serving a combined average of 250 hot meals a day. Common donations for breakfast include oatmeal, cereal, sugar (regular and brown), orange juice, and fresh fruit. For lunch; turkey, ham, and ground beef.

Other Donations

Hygienic items are distributed by St. Vincent de Paul Place, with hundreds of bags of



Students from St. Bernard high school volunteering. Photo Courtesy: St. Vincent de Paul Place

these items provided to their patrons every month. Commonly needed items include toilet paper, soap, shampoo, deodorant, toothpaste, toothbrushes, razors and shaving cream, and feminine hygiene items.

Household items, such as appliances, kitchenware, and linens are accepted for patrons who need them. St. Vincent de Paul Place also accepts donations of pet food and care items for their patrons who own pets.

Monetary donations can be made either by check (payable to: St. Vincent de Paul Place, mail to 120 Cliff Street, Norwich, CT. 06360) or through their website: www.svdpp.org/donate2021.

Any donations can be delivered to St. Vincent de Paul Place at 120 Cliff Street in Norwich, CT. Hours of operation are Monday to Friday 8:00 am - 4:00 pm, and Saturday 8:00 am - 3:00 pm. Contact (860) 889-7374 for any questions.

Food Prayer Love
FOR ALL
St. Vincent de Paul Place • Norwich

SVDPP Logo

The Fate of Three Rivers Community College Text

What's happening to the college's bookstore?

Written by: Davon Brown

The Three Rivers bookstore owned and operated by the Follett corporation and owner of its higher education business, Follett Higher Education (FHE), just sold both their higher education business as well as the corporate entity to a group of private investors led by Jefferson River Capital LLC (JRC).

This news of the selling of the Follett brand to JRC, marks the Follett family's exit from the education business after nearly 150 years. What does this mean for the future of textbooks being sold at Three Rivers and other colleges in association with Follett?

The new CEO of Follett, Emmanuel Kolady was previously the senior VP and head of stores for the eastern half of CVS Retail, and the FHE new president, Ryan Peterson, was formerly VP of strategy and development at VitalSource Technologies.

JRC and Kolady stated "[all] channel background rooted in innovation and customer experiences will be invaluable in continuing the growth of this already strong company, while [Peterson]'s visionary work with inclusive access programs across higher education will accelerate the growth of FHE and the company's overall digital transformation.

Also said by Kolady in a email to the Follett employees and management, he states, "I promise to bring an outside perspective to an evolving landscape but will also leverage your knowledge and experience in the space so we can realize the full potential of this great organization.

While from the everyday college students and an outsider to the company Follett, nothing will seem to be different as they will be keeping the Follett name on everything. But what about the cost of textbooks, will they rise?

David Wittels, president of JRC, said, "The James family and Jefferson River Capital are honored to be entrusted by the Follett family to continue the stewardship of this company and its important mission in higher education ... we are very supportive and appreciative of Follett's role in lowering the cost of course materials and in doing so have widespread impact on the affordability of higher education for students and families."

This being said, it seems as though everything, for now, loved by the Follett brand, the rented textbooks, the buyback system, and most importantly the affordable prices, are here to stay and will not be heavily marked up in anyway.



Follett Bookstore at Three Rivers Community College. Photo taken by Manage Cheryl Pollard.

E

Florida's "Don't Say Gay" Bill

Real and lasting negative effects on LGBTQ youth

Written by: Davon Brown

The LGBTQ community has made great progress over the last decade, but the work is still far from over in terms of visibility. According to CNN and the American Civil Liberties Union, there are currently 100 anti-LGBTQ bills, the majority of which target transgender and non-binary youth, moving through state legislatures across the country.

Looking directly at Florida's "Don't Say Gay" bill, it states school districts "may not encourage discussion about sexual orientation or gender identity in primary grade level or in a manner that is not age-appropriate or developmentally appropriate for students."

This is a very general statement that could apply to classrooms all across Florida K-12, and be used to prohibit open discussions of LGBTQ people, issues, and progress the community has endured.

This bill comes under the notion that being gay is a "choice" and if talked about in anyway in the school system, it'll make someone become gay, transgender, nonbinary, bisexual, etc.

If passed this would silence the LGBTQ youth, which would do real and lasting harm to the LGBTQ youth and the community as a whole. When LGBTQ topics are made taboo, that stigma is often internalized and negatively affects the student's mental health and sense of self.

LGBTQ student learning about their history, in any plan on modern history and civil rights movements, is just as important as their straight peers learning about there's.

The Trevor Project, a leading research foundation for the LGBTQ community, found that LGBTQ students who learned about LGBTQ issues or people in classes at school were 23% less likely to attempt suicide in the past year.



Silence

LGBTQ+ Silence Graphic - (Courtesy of Davon)

Silencing the LGBTQ youth with this bill is inhumane and disturbing to be happening in 2022. To sum this up a TikToker by the name of BryanTheDiamond had this to say about the bill, "as an American citizen I find it truly disgusting that my country goes 40 steps forward, just for people like the governor of Florida to take us 30 steps backwards."

If you or someone you know needs help or support, The Trevor Project's trained crisis counselors are available 24/7 at 1-866-488-7386, via chat at [TheTrevorProject.org/Get-Help](https://www.thetrevorproject.org/get-help), or by texting START to 678678.

How to Break Social Media Addiction

Background photo of Social Media Apps. Credit: LoboStudioHamburg on Pixabay

Is Social Media Addiction Important?

Story by: Joe Barberi

Social media has become a vital part of how people get their news, share their own personal lives, and communicate with others. On one hand social media is a great way to stay in touch with the world, however, there are negative effects to being too attached to social media.

According to an article by Jena Hilliard at the Addiction Center, "Social media addiction is behavioral, that is characterized as being overly concerned about social media, driven by an uncontrollable urge to log on to or use social media, and devoting [too] much time and effort to social media that it impairs other important life areas."

Like any other addiction, if someone who is addicted goes long periods without social media, it could result in mood swings and withdrawal symptoms. To know if someone in your life may have a social media addiction, Hilliard compiled six yes or no questions to ask. If three or

more are answered yes, its most likely that someone may be addicted to social media.

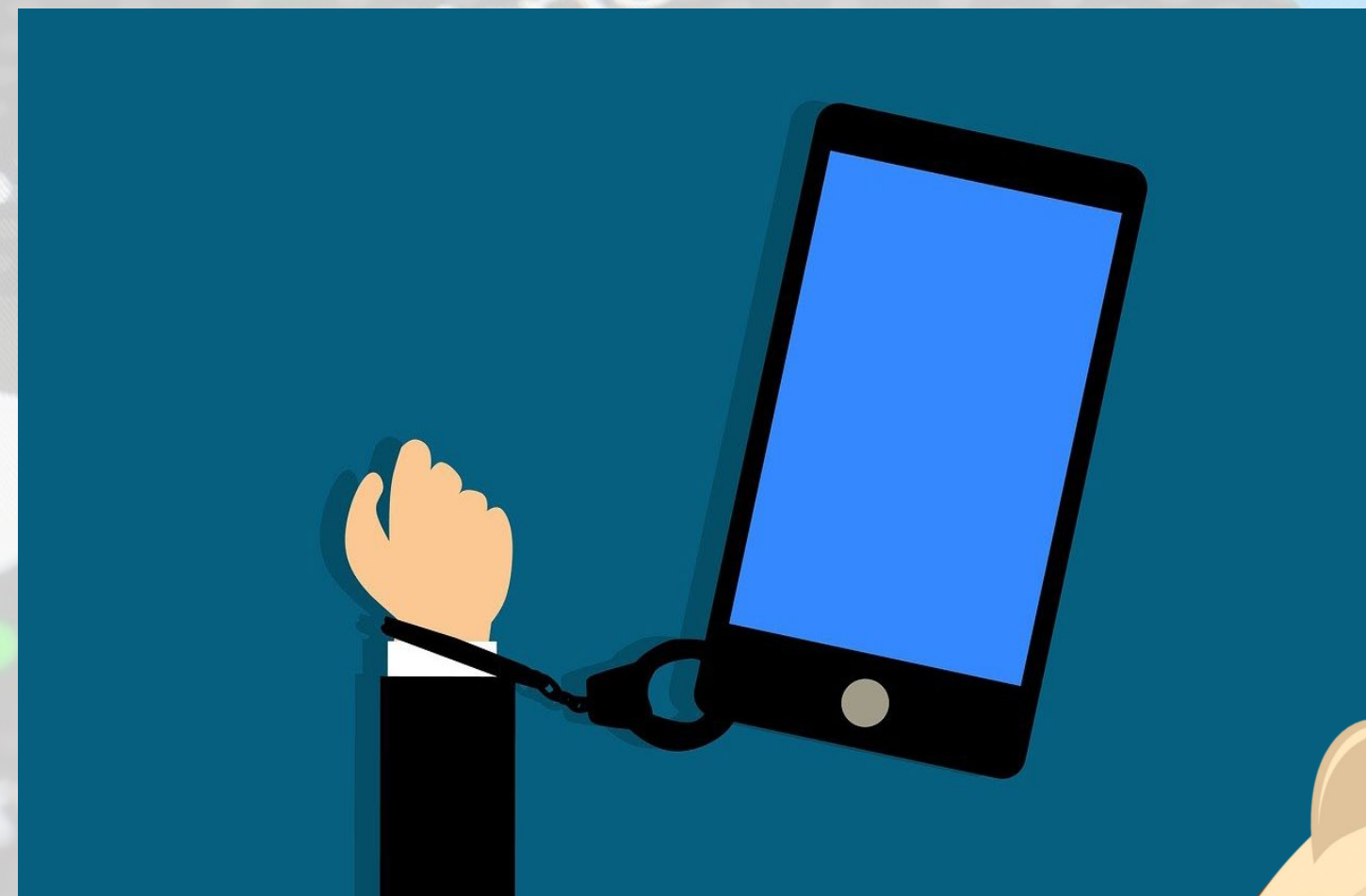
- Do they spend a lot of time thinking about social media or planning to use social media?
- Do they feel urges to use social media more and more?
- Do they use social media to forget about personal problems?
- Do they often try to reduce use of social media without success?
- Do they become restless or troubled if unable to use social element?
- Do they use social media so much that it has had a negative impact on their job or studies?

A big reason why someone might be addicted to social media is because of low self-esteem. Someone who has low self-esteem uses social media for validation. While seeking positive comments and likes is "normal," when it becomes obsessive, that's when it becomes a problem.

Despite all the negative, there are solutions to

break social media addiction. Hilliard gives great options on control, one being: "Reducing screen time," taking time away from any electronic devices and social medias.

Many people are finding that in today's world, it's hard to be without a phone or any other device. Taking some time to go outside and be with nature, or going out and exploring what's around is a great way to give yourself a break from constantly being absorbed by social media.



Visual of Social Media/Phone Addiction. Credit: mohamed_hassan on Pixabay

History of the Olympics Logo

Do you know the story behind the Olympics?

Story by: Joe Barberi

This year taking place in Beijing, the Olympics, a worldwide event that takes place every year hosting many events that the best athletes in the world compete in, has been around for about 3,000 years.

The games have been ever changing, with the recent addition of skateboarding back in 2020, and freestyle skiing added for 2022's Winter Olympics.

The founder of the Olympics, Pierre de Coubertin, was a French educator from Paris, France. Later in his life, during the Paris Universal Exposition in 1889, Coubertin brought together the first "Congress on Physical education and Scholar Competitions."

Stated in an article by the official Olympics website, the congress was a "international network of educators, politicians, aristocrats and leaders in commerce, culture and sport who would help him fulfil his Olympic dream."

This group of people would help Coubertin in bringing back the Olympics on June 23, 1894. He started the Olympics to, "Help build a peaceful and better world by

educating young people through sport." Coubertin was a man who dedicated his life to educating the youth, leaving an impact on the world forever.

Millions of people see the Olympics logo all the time, but what is the meaning behind it?

According to the official Olympics website, "The Olympic symbol expresses the activity of the Olympic Movement and represents the union of the five continents and the meeting of athletes throughout the world at the Olympic Games."

In other words, the logo is a symbol of representation for the worlds 5 continents and their time meeting peacefully at the Olympic games.

The logo itself hasn't changed all that much throughout the years, from the original sketch in 1913, to the present. The original logo is very simple, it is made



1913 Olympics Logo. Credit: Official Olympics Website

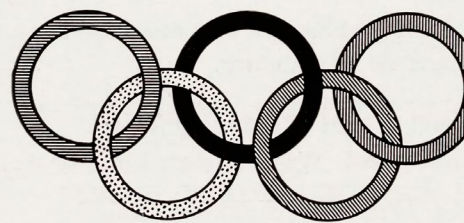
up of 5 rings that are in the colors, blue, yellow, black, green, and red. The rings are also intersecting each other and are together compactly.

In 1920, the official Olympics logo was created, and was extremely similar to the original, sharing the same attributes.



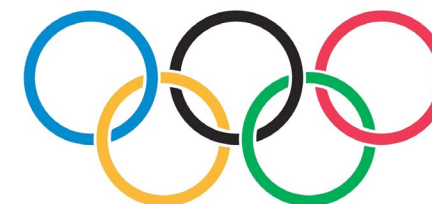
1920 Olympic Logo. Credit: Official Olympics Website

However, in 1957, there were slight changes where the rings weren't as compact and changed the way they intersected. These decisions were made by the International Olympic Committee (IOC).



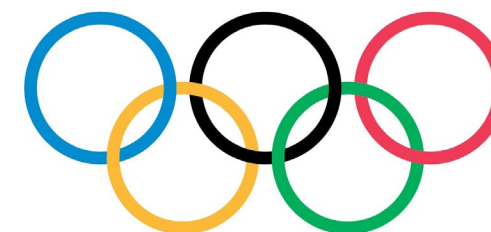
1957 Olympics Logo. Credit: Official Olympics Website

Later in 1986, the logo was becoming more modern, having uniform space between each ring, the rings were less thick, and the IOC created a description of how the logo should be created.



1986 Olympics Logo. Credit: Official Olympics Website

Finally in 2010, the Olympics logo kept the same look of the version from 1986 but returned to the way Coubertin first envisioned.



2010 Olympic Logo. Credit: Official Olympics Website

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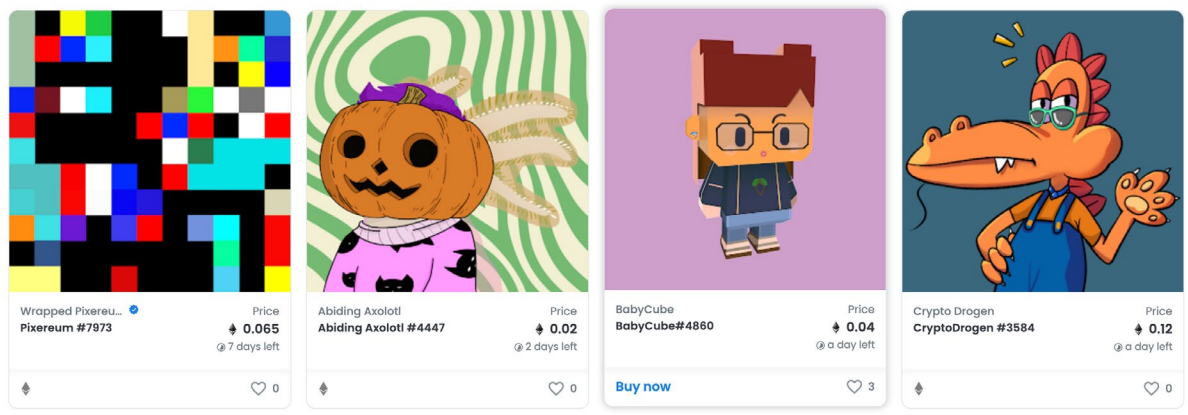
YOUTUBE ADOPTS NEW NFT FEATURE

Are NFT's Taking Over the Internet?

**Story by: Joe
Barberi**

NFT's are a newer kind of technology, and they've been taking the internet by storm recently. Due to them being so new, there is a lot of controversy around buying NFT's and if it even makes sense to own them. However, more and more companies are starting to adopt the use of NFT's, and for some companies, even creating their own. YouTube is introducing a feature where creators can monetize their short videos and sell them as NFT's to their viewers.

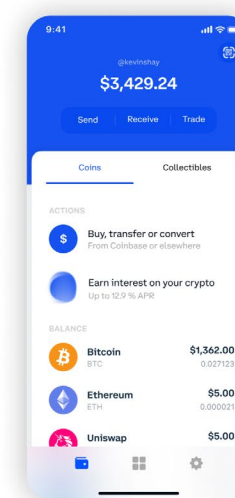
So, what are NFT's exactly? In an article published by Coinbase, a crypto currency wallet company, they state "NFTs (or "non-fungible tokens") are a special kind of cryptoasset in which each token is unique — as opposed to "fungible" assets like Bitcoin and dollar bills, which are all worth the same amount. Every NFT is unique and can be used to authenticate ownership of digital assets like artworks, recordings, and virtual real estate or pets."



Examples of NFT's

Essentially, NFT's are a one-of-a-kind work of art that can purchased and or sold, and only one person can own one NFT at a time. They can be just about anything, NFT's can be an illustration, a photograph, a video clip, the possibilities are endless.

What makes NFT's important to buy or own? They are as important as you make them and are a lot like virtual collectables or artwork. In the same Coinbase article, they explain that "You can think of NFTs as being kind of like certificates of authenticity for digital artifacts [and are] currently being used to sell a huge range of virtual collectibles."



WALLET

Do more with your crypto with
Coinbase Wallet

Store your crypto in your own personal crypto wallet and explore
decentralized finance (DeFi), buy and sell NFTs, and more.

[Learn more](#)

Coinbase's Website

For example, an artist can sell their painting to a collector, and the collector can then keep the artwork for themselves or sell it to another person interested in the painting. NFT's are kind of the same, if someone is selling a certain kind of NFT that you like, then you can buy it and have it for yourself or resell it.

A few days ago, a blog post was written by Neal Mohan, who is YouTube's Chief Product Officer, describing the new features that the company plans on rolling out this year. One of these features was the introduction of NFT's to the platform.

Mohan explained, "We believe new technologies like blockchain and NFTs can allow creators to build deeper relationships with their fans. Together, they'll be able to collaborate on new projects and make money in ways not previously possible."

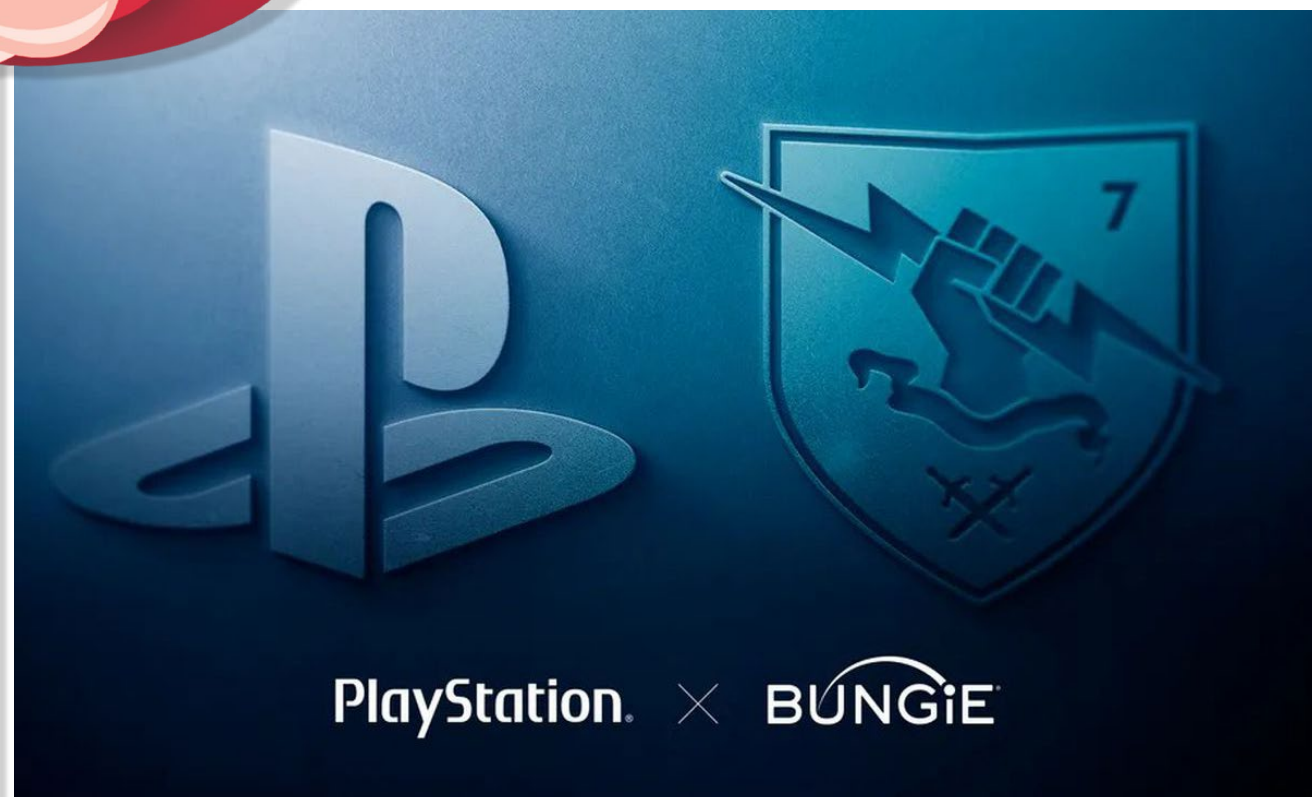
This feature benefits both creators, by having more options for monetization on their content, and their viewers, being able to buy some of their favorite creators' video clips and art.

NFT's are becoming a new way for people to share just about whatever they do with the world and have a way to monetize their passions even more now than ever. This new YouTube feature is just the beginning for what the future will be like.

Sony's Uno Reverse?

By Jaizier St.Hilaire

Sony successfully buys Bungie



*Sony x Bungie logo: Another one to Sony's collection.
Photo Courtesy: Sony*

On January 31, 2022, in what seems to be an attempt to try and one-up Microsoft for buying Activision Games for Xbox, or perhaps a impulsive purchase out of fear, Playstation developer Sony bought Bungie, the developers of games such as Halo and Destiny, for a reported \$3.6 billion. According to PlayStation CEO Jim Ryan on Gamesindustry.biz, this deal was in the works for half a year.

Bungie was created in 1990 and bought by Microsoft in 2000 to create the popular game in its franchise, Halo. They had later regained independence after the creation of Halo 3 back in October 2007. They later signed a 10-year deal with Activision Blizzard and created the Destiny franchise until its purchase by Sony at the start of the year.

Most say that it is a pretty big price tag for a company very well-known for one game. This move seems to pale-in comparison to Take-two purchase of Zynga for about \$12.7 billion on January 11, and Microsoft's recent buying of Activision Blizzard for \$6.78 billion a week later and prior to that, Bethesda.



Bungie name: A potential gold mine? Photo Courtesy: Bungie

Some think this was an attempt to have PlayStation gamers have access to a popular shooting title in case Microsoft decides to cut the Call of Duty games from PS consoles.

Destiny 2 seems to be Bungie's biggest asset right now, with a revenue estimated to be around \$200 million. Bungie did announce a non-Destiny game that is in the works and set to release sometime in 2025.

Sony had also announced that after the acquisition of the game company, they will continue to let Bungie be an independent subsidiary, multi-platform studio, with the option to "self-publish and reach players wherever they choose to play."

Jim Ryan had also said on Gamesindustry.biz that there are plans for more acquisitions in the future.

"They will continue to let Bungie be an independent subsidiary, multi-platform studio, with the option to "self-publish and reach players wherever they choose to play."

- Jim Ryan
CEO of Sony

E

Joe Rogan Versus the People

The controversial podcast that has people turning away from Spotify

Story by Melissa Tucker

Joe Rogan has the most popular podcast in the world with about 11 million listeners. Spotify recently obtained exclusive streaming rights to the Joe Rogan Experience podcast in a 100 million dollar deal.

It also happens to be one of the most controversial podcasts as of late, with consumers boycotting and artists like Neil Young removing their music from the platform of Spotify in protest of the anti-vaccine message Rogan has been spreading on his program.

It all began when a group of more than 260 scientists, doctors, nurses, and healthcare professionals wrote an open letter to Spotify demanding that they put a stop to the lies about COVID and implement a misinformation policy.

This happened in response to Rogan featuring discredited scientist Robert Malone in an episode of his podcast. Dr. Malone credits himself with discovering the mRNA technology of vaccines and uses that to push factually false claims. Malone has been notably banned from Twitter for promoting misinformation about Covid-19. The episode went viral in which Malone shares baseless claims and several conspiracy theories about the vaccine and Covid-19 deaths.



Controversial podcaster Joe Rogan. Photo Courtesy: Entertainment Weekly

Rogan himself is accused of spreading misinformation, famously having discouraged young people from getting the vaccine, and promoting taking ivermectin to treat Covid-19 even though there is very limited evidence that it helps with the symptoms.

Pressure mounted when artists such as Neil Young and Joni Mitchell demanded Rogan be removed from the platform.

Musician Neil Young wrote an open letter to Spotify with an ultimatum: either remove Joe Rogan from the platform or take down my music.

In the letter Young wrote “I am doing this because Spotify is spreading fake information about vaccines — potentially causing death to those who believe the disinformation being spread by them.” Young had his music catalog removed from Spotify.

Artist India Arie went viral on Twitter for her decision to remove her music as she included a video compilation of Rogan saying the “n” word uncensored on his podcast about 20 times. She makes the point that Spotify pays artists very little for streaming their music yet are able to shell out millions for Joe Rogan: “They take this money from music streaming and pay this guy \$100 million and pay us .003% of a penny [per stream]? Just take me off! I don’t want to generate money that pays for this,” she tweeted.

Rogan apologized for his use of the slur and worked with Spotify to take down about 70 episodes of the podcast from the platform in response.

Spotify further responded to the outrage by coming out with a statement saying the platform was planning to add warning labels to content that discusses Covid-19. They did not mention Rogan’s podcast by name.

In addition to his apology Rogan himself posted a 10-minute video to his Instagram in his defense. “I’m not trying to promote misinformation,” Rogan said. He defended having Dr. Malone and other vaccine sceptics on his show stating they are “very highly credentialed, very intelligent, very accomplished people and they have an opinion that’s different from the mainstream narrative.”

The public has responded as well. Hashtags such as #CancelSpotify and #DeleteSpotify were trending in response to the controversy.

According to Variety, 19% of Spotify users said they cancelled or plan to cancel their subscription to Spotify over the controversy. The cancellation page of Spotify’s web traffic spiked 196% in recent weeks in response to the controversy according to CNN.



The Joe Rogan Experience Podcast streaming through Spotify

It is clear people are upset and passionate about Rogan’s presence on the platform and willing to boycott Spotify in response if they continue to do nothing more about the situation.

Rogan has his supporters as well. Jon Stewart came to Rogan’s defense claiming he shouldn’t be censored and that when it comes to misinformation, “My point is, these are shifting sands, and I think I get concerned with, well, who gets to decide?” Rogan’s supporters make the point that removing Rogan from the platform would be censorship gone too far.

CEO of Spotify Daniel Ek wrote in a letter “it is important to me that we don’t take on the position of being content censor while also making sure that there are rules in place and consequences for those who violate them.” There is no mention of Rogan, his podcast, or what the consequences would be in the letter.

Ek also writes “based on the feedback over the last several weeks, it’s become clear to me that we have an obligation to do more to provide balance and access to widely-accepted information from the medical and scientific communities guiding us through this unprecedented time.”

There has been no announcement of plans to remove Joe Rogan from the platform.

The Division: Heartland

Ubisoft set to bring a Tarkov-style experience to console

For years now, Escape from Tarkov has been in a league of its own, blessing those behind a mouse and keyboard with its unique style of gameplay.

PVE (Person vs. Environment) of an unforgiving nature compounded by PVP (Person vs. Person) even more brutal and unpredictable due to ballistic stats and other unique game mechanics – This is Tarkov.

Some would even consider Tarkov to be in a genre of its own, having no true competition in a space Battlestate Games carved out all for themselves.

With no real plans to expand its player base to another platform, the complexity and realism Tarkov brings to the gaming world is non-existent on console.

With the number of key binds and simultaneous inputs required to perform even the simplest of actions, it is no surprise how difficult it would be to port a game like Tarkov to console.

Story by Dustin Durham

Ubisoft is attempting to change that narrative with the release of The Division: Heartland later this year.

Tarkov-style game modes seem to be slowly replacing the battle royale craze of the last few years. This is what Tom Clancy's series of shooters is attempting to do with their new installment of The Division.

The Division was a highly revered title that brought a unique RPG style shooter with MMO aspects and PvPvE to consoles for the first time in 2016.

Destiny followed suit in 2017 with a similar concept that started to round out the genre on console. Nonetheless, The Division set the bar and many within the gaming community feel they will do the same thing with Heartland.

There is not a ton of information on the title yet since Ubisoft announced it in May of 2021. All that was shared at the time was that Heartland would be a standalone free-to-play game for PC, PlayStation and Xbox that would release during Ubisoft's fiscal year 2022-23, meaning the game is currently scheduled to release by March 2023.

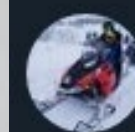
Background of The Division: Heartland Poster. Photo Courtesy: Ubisoft

It's being developed by Ghost Recon studio Red Storm Entertainment, and you can already register your interest in joining playtests on the official site.

A well-known leaker by the name of Tom Henderson with many ties to different studios around the gaming industry, shared some information about the title through a few tweets on February 9th, teasing he'd have more details to come in the following days.

Over the last few months, Ubisoft has been conducting extensive Q&A sessions on Heartland, leading some sources to believe that a release could be imminent.

Will The Division: Heartland and its Tarkov-style game mode be a viable option for console gamers? No one can say for certain. Although, it will certainly shake the gaming world on release and give Battlestate Games a worthy adversary for its unique one-of-a-kind shooter, Escape from Tarkov.



Tom Henderson @_Tom_Henderson_ · Feb 9
I've got new details tomorrow on a shooter 🎮

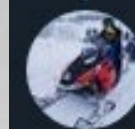
I'm already getting bored of saying "It will have an Escape From Tarkov-like mode" though.

EFT-like modes seem to be the new Battle Royale.

84

59

1,623



Tom Henderson @_Tom_Henderson_ · Feb 9
Let me rephrases the "EFT-like" comments before EFT players get upset... A lot of developers are now looking at the EFT FORMULA over Battle Royale it seems. So an extraction-based mode basically. EFT is the easiest mode to compare it to.

I'll have more details tomorrow.

Tom Henderson Tweet. Photo Courtesy: Tom Henderson's Twitter account

E Don't Look Up Film Review

Oscar worthy film or overhyped?

Story By Melissa Tucker

Don't Look Up is an explosive black comedy film in which Kate Dibiasky, played by Jennifer Lawrence, an astronomy grad student, and her professor Randal Mindy, played by Leonardo DiCaprio, make the discovery that a huge comet is on track to destroy planet Earth in six months and fourteen days.

The duo embarks on a media tour that is met with frustrating resistance and with time running out until the comet hits earth, the pair must convince an apathetic and disinterested world to act or else face the destruction of the entire human race and planet Earth as we know it.

Don't Look Up is a film that clearly mirrors our own society and pokes fun at the bizarre extremity of it all. The main characters are low level scientists that are met with not only indifference but defiance in the attempts to get people to listen to their pleas for action. It is all too familiar to some of the response to the pandemic we have been experiencing.

The movie tackles the political sphere with sharp humor. The president is played by Meryl Streep who is more concerned with polling numbers and PR optics than the end of the world and trying to save it. Don't Look Up also takes aim at the media



Don't Look Up Poster Photo Courtesy of IMDB



Jennifer Lawrence plays concerned scientist Kate. Photo Courtesy of Verve Times

and their response to such an event. The humorous take on media coverage is done in a very clever and hilarious way with the characters played by Cate Blanchett and Tyler Perry on the news show "The Daily Rip." They treat the situation as if it is a fun story worthy of a soundbite in between their easy banter and not the urgent life ending news that it is.

The film is star studded with appearances by Ariana Grande and Kid Cudi, which further added to the humor of the film. Their appearance and storyline were a commentary on the obsession of celebrity culture in our society and it was humorous in the right ways.

The run time was a bit long, the movie clocks in at about 2 hours and 18 minutes and it felt that long. The movie could have been cut shorter in some parts.

What made this movie shine the most was how it was so easy to envision real life playing out like the movie was showing. There were times during the pandemic that had felt just like what was being depicted in the movie. It was comical but also depressing at the same time, truly black humor at its best.

Overall, it was an enjoyable film that was sharp and funny. Watch it now on Netflix!



Kid Cudi and Ariana Grande appear in Don't Look Up. Photo Courtesy of Rolling Stone

E

Wordle: Play for Free While You Can!

Wordle creator sells to The New York Times for over \$1 million

Written by Jordan Leroy

If you frequently peruse Twitter or Facebook, you have probably heard of Wordle. The daily word guessing game gained popularity back in December of 2021 and has already been purchased by The New York Times.

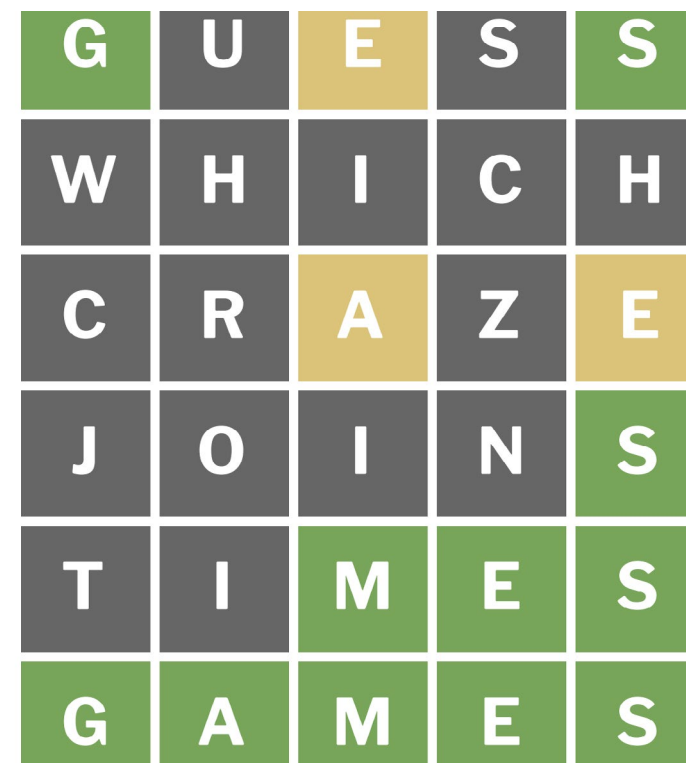
Josh Wardle, creator of Wordle, began his career working for Reddit. It was there, back in 2013, that he developed the prototype of Wordle. Yet it wasn't until January of 2021 when he went back to working on the game, as he was looking for a word game that he and his partner could play together.



Josh Wardle, creator of Wordle. Photo Courtesy: DailyMail

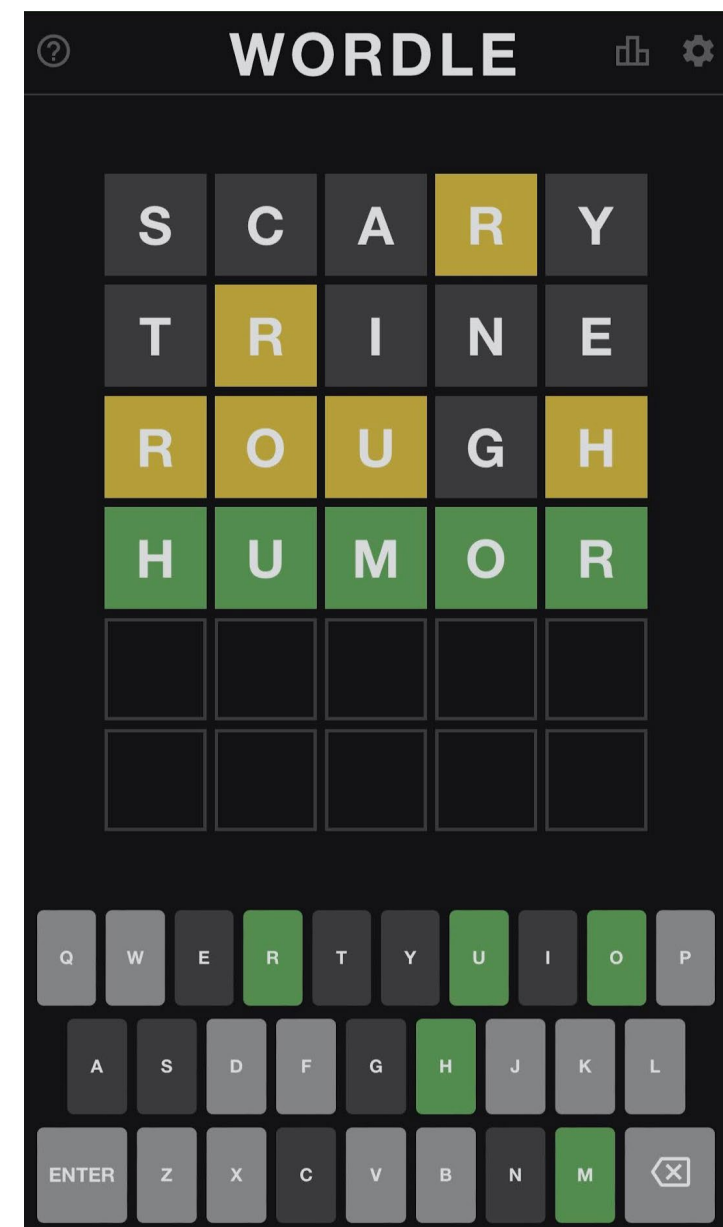
Only Wardle and his family played Wordle until he decided to publish it on his website for others to play. The idea was to keep the word game advertisement-free, with no profit gain. Wardle took a loss from Wordle, as it cost \$100 a month to keep it online.

Wordle went from having about 90 players in November 2021 to two million players in February 2022. Regardless of the success of the game, Wardle did not intend on making it his full-time job. In January 2022, The New York Times announced that it had acquired Wordle "for an undisclosed price in the low-seven figures."



The New York Time's announcement of their acquisition of Wordle, spelled out via the Wordle game grid. Photo Courtesy: The New York Times

In a statement regarding the purchase of Wordle by The New York Times, Wardle said, "If you've followed along with the story of Wordle, you'll know that New York Times Games play a big part in its origins, and so this step feels very natural to me. I've long admired The Times's approach to the quality of their games and the respect with which they treat their players. Their values are aligned with mine on these matters and I'm thrilled that they will be stewards of the game moving forward." Although The New York Times has announced that the word game "would initially remain free to new and existing players," the probability of it eventually requiring payment to play is high. Their other online games, such as The Crossword and Spelling Bee, currently require a subscription of \$1.25 a week or \$40 a year to play.



You have six chances to guess the daily five-letter word. Type in a word as a guess, and the game will tell you which letters are or aren't in the word. The aim is to figure out the word in the least amount of guesses. Screenshot of Wordle by Jordan Leroy

THE WASHINGTON COMMANDERS

Is it as bad as it looks and sounds?

Story by Dustin Durham

The Washington Commanders announced their official name change on February 2. For many Native Americans it marked a day of conquest, and in some sense brought closure to a century long slur and disparaging stereotype grounded in American history.

With the unveiling of the new name, logo, and team crest, the Washington Commanders look to commemorate their rich football history and embrace the future while cutting ties from any negative connotations that arose from their former team's name, the "Washington Redskins."

Although the decision to change the team's name and branding was supported by the masses because of its offensive nature towards America's Indigenous population, could they have not chosen something more creative and less combative than the Commanders?

The franchise opted for what it calls a "powerful 'W'" for its primary logo. This logo will appear on helmets and apparel and will be most notably recognized as the franchise's new identity going forward.



The Crest. Photo Courtesy: ESPN

The angled cuts and serifs at the top of the "W" are intended to depict progress and forward movement for the franchise. The slanted stripes are inspired by military rank insignia and look to give a nod to America's armed service members.

Though the explanation for the design choice sounds great from a public relations point of view, from a graphic designer's standpoint, it is lazy, bland typography that lacks any sort of imagination or cohesiveness with other NFL team branding. There are many other NFL franchises that are past due for a branding makeover as well, and this was Washington's chance to set the tone for past decades of poor design choices.



The "W" Logo. Photo Courtesy: ESPN

There were many other team names and logo options that surfaced before Washington announced their decision to go with the "Commanders." One of which was the "Redtails," which had a remarkably interesting design, much more complex than that of the "powerful 'W'." The Redtails also seem to sit well with Washington's fanbase as there was an overly positive response towards it on social media.

The team crest on the other hand is quite pleasing to the eye. It is simple, yet not as simple as a "W" done with a stencil. The top of the crest features the "Washington Football" branding, which represents the team's previous iterations and honors its long history in the region. The years displayed at the bottom



The Redtails Logo. Photo Courtesy: Twitter

commemorate the team's two world championships and three Super Bowl titles.

In the end, the decision to change the identity of the franchise was the right decision for many reasons. It just doesn't look like the fans of the franchise agree with the outcome when there were other options that they openly preferred and were satisfied with.

"For many Native Americans it marked a day of conquest, and in some sense brought closure to a century long slur and disparaging stereotype grounded in American history."

E-Sports v.s. Sports

Should it be considered one? What is the controversy?

By Jaizier St.Hilaire

Video games. To some, it is the source of getting away from the real world's problems and becoming someone that might think they could never be. Or it could be a recreational device to have fun in one's free time.

To others, it could be the bane of their existence. An unnecessary electronic equipment that distracts the user from doing anything else with either their spouse, parents, or friends.

Since its creation in the 40s and its popular boom in the 70s with the introduction of the Atari, video games have become more embedded in most people's lives with every generation.

Since the early 2000s, video games have been on the rise to fame to the point where even tournaments were starting to be made and hosted. Big game companies like Epic Games, creators of the popular game Fortnite, Ubisoft's Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six Siege, and Riot Games' League of Legends are but a few games to be held in such tournaments, with various teams from around the world participating and competing in these events to win money, and a trophy.



An arena dedicated solely to Esports. (Photo Courtesy: Variety)

Sounds awfully familiar to the more traditional sports? This is where the line between virtual and physical starts to meet. Discussions regarding whether this new type of "sport" should even be considered one have started to emerge.

The International Olympics Committee is still debating, however, countries like China, Italy, South Korea, Russia, Denmark, Nepal, South Africa, Finland and Ukraine have recognized it as one. So what exactly is the difference between Electronic Sports, also known as E-Sports, and its traditional counterpart? Should it be considered one?

Background of Esports vs Sports Illustration. (Photo Courtesy: Viewsonic)

Let's start with what a sport is. According to the Oxford dictionary, a sport is "an activity involving physical exertion and skill in which an individual or a team competes against another or others for entertainment."

According to a scholarly article called E-sports are Not Sports by Jim Parry, he concludes that, "esports are not sports because they are inadequately 'human'; they lack direct physicality; they fail to employ decisive whole-body control and whole-body skills, and cannot contribute to the development of the whole human; and because their patterns of creation, production, ownership and promotion place serious constraints on the emergence of the kind of stable and persisting institutions characteristic of sports governance." Other arguments say that practicing to get better and learning strategy for video games can be applied anywhere, which ultimately doesn't make esports a sport. To reinforce that claim, they also argue that esports is not helpful for your body and only damages it, unlike sports, where you exercise, resulting in staying healthy and having a clearer mind.

The ones who support esports say otherwise to such a statement. Another scholarly article

Embracing the sportification of society: Defining esports through a polymorphic view on sports, by Bob Heere, claims that e-sports are a manifestation of sportification, which is "(a) view, organize, or regulate a non-sport activity in such a way that it resembles a sport and allows a fair, pleasurable, and safe environment for individuals to compete and cooperate, and compare their performances to each other, and future and past performances; or (b) add a sport component to an existing activity in order to make it more attractive to its audiences." Heere claims that applying any sports-like rules to an activity makes it a sport.

Supporters believe that the use of having tournaments held in stadiums, having teams compete each other with their developed skills, and having a very broad audience both in-person and at home, which traditional sports do have, should have esports be recognized as one.

Esports lie in the gray area of being a real sport or not. For now, what we seem to know is that video games and esports itself are continuing to become more popular and expose more people as it becomes mainstream in our lives.



One of the many paving the way in this new age of gaming. (Photo courtesy: Forbes)

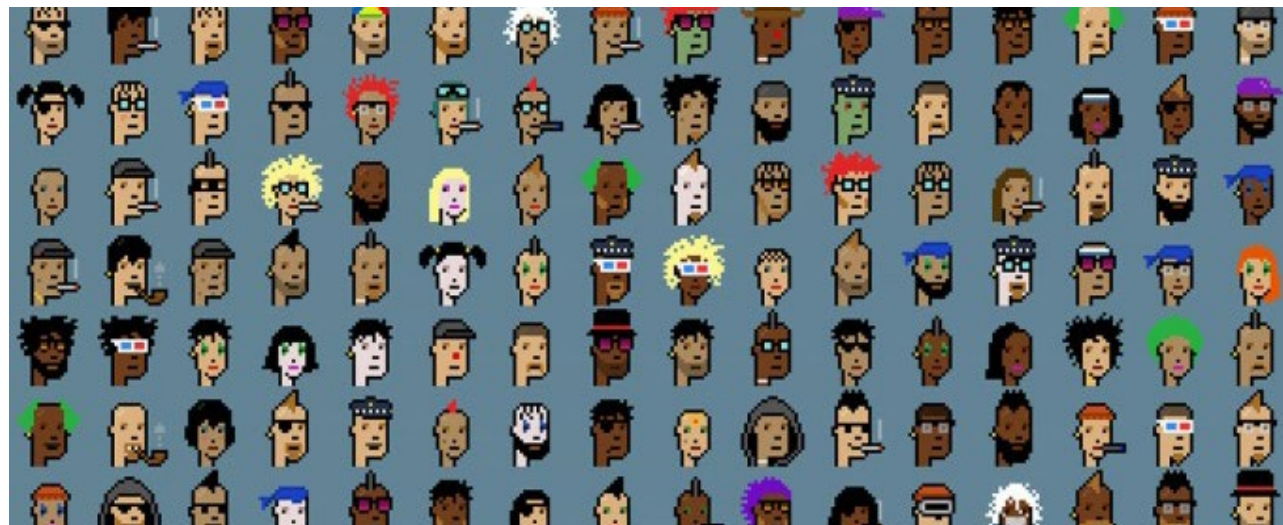
THE TRUE COST OF NFTs

The environmental impact of NFTs is devastating.

Story by Melissa Tucker

NFT stands for non-fungible token. “Non-fungible” means one of a kind unique and can’t be replaced with something else. No two NFTs are the same. NFTs are digital content that can be anything from artwork to gifts to songs, that are linked to the blockchain. The blockchain is the database that is the foundation for cryptocurrencies like Ethereum and bitcoin.

In short, an NFT is a unique cryptocurrency token that can take the form of anything digital. Famous examples include CryptoPunks, Bored Ape Yacht Club, Cool Cats and Axie Infinity. They can sell for millions of dollars, the most expensive NFT sold for \$91.8 million.



Cryptopunks NFT. Photo Courtesy The Hollywood Reporter

But these NFTs come at an even bigger price. NFTs use up power and generate heat pollution. Memo Akten, a digital artist, found that after analyzing 18,000 NFTs, the average NFT has a carbon footprint equivalent to more than a month’s worth of electricity for a person living in the European Union.

Admittedly, the data that is available has not been reviewed by outside experts, as the NFT scene is fairly new.

But we do know that the cryptocurrencies that are used to buy NFTs, such as Ethereum and bitcoin, use blockchain technology which uses up a ton of energy and generates a massive amount of greenhouse gases.



Cryptocurrency mining machines. Photo Courtesy The Verge

The cryptocurrency Ethereum is the most popularly used to buy NFTs and it is problematic for several reasons. Ethereum is built on a system called proof of work which requires tons of energy. Proof of work acts as a system to keep transactions and information secure and makes people solve puzzles using energy sucking machines. Users, or “miners” as they are called, solve the puzzles in order to add a new block to the blockchain which is a sort of ledger and receive new tokens as the reward.

The process is meant to be energy inefficient because using up a lot of electricity makes it less profitable for someone to go in and mess with the blockchain. But the cost of this process is steep. According to the Verge.com Ethereum uses almost as much electricity as the country of Libya. Annually, according to CBS news, Ethereum is responsible for nearly 21.35 metric tons of carbon dioxide released each year, about as much as the carbon footprint of Sudan.

There is debate when it comes to NFTs, defenders say that there are more sustainable ways to have NFTs.

There is an alternative to the energy guzzling proof of work system called proof of stake. Proof of stake works by having people put away some of their own cryptocurrency tokens to verify they have a “stake” in keeping the blockchain accurate. This is more energy efficient than the proof of work system because it doesn’t take up huge amounts of energy from machines solving complex puzzles which in turn emit greenhouse gasses.

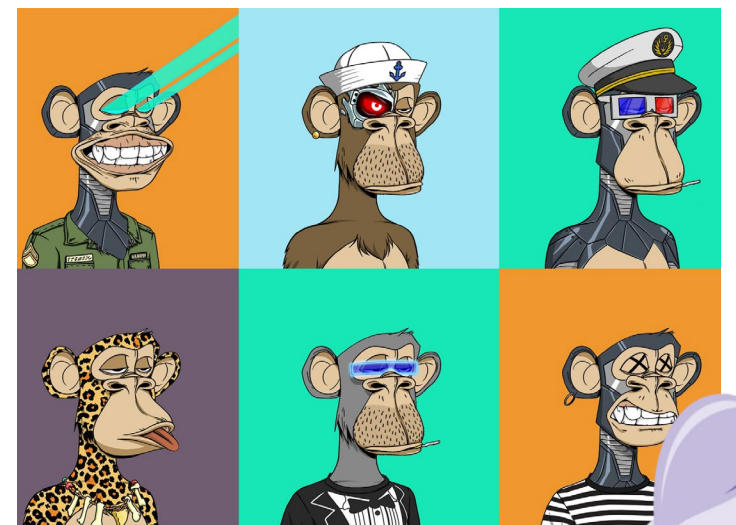
Ethereum has said that it will eventually switch to proof of stake and that’s what NFT fans hope to see but it’s been years and it’s unclear if this will ever happen meanwhile the climate crisis grows more urgent every day.

Every time someone buys, makes or sells an NFT using cryptocurrency like Ethereum they have a hand in contributing to the massive amount of greenhouse emissions generated by the systems, but many artists and buyers aren’t aware of the energy usage behind their actions.

Artist Lemerrier was shocked to find out how much energy NFTs use, “It turns out my release of 6 CryptoArt works consumed in 10 seconds more electricity than the entire studio over the past 2 years,” he wrote in a blog post.

Financial economist Alex de Vrie told TIME, “If you are buying an artwork, you don’t see those calculations going on, you don’t see your money is going to a miner who’s going to pay for fossil fuel-based energy with it. That’s a real problem.”

It’s undeniable the NFT game is a profitable one, but is it worth the detriment of our planet?



Famous Bored Ape Yacht Club NFT. Photo Courtesy The New Yorker

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Elon Musk's SpaceX Loses 40 **Starlink** Satellites

Worth as much as \$20 million.

Story by **Dustin Durham**



Falcon 9 rocket. Photo Courtesy: SpaceX

Elon Musk's Starlink operation lost 40 out of 49 satellites it launched into the Earth's upper atmosphere as a geomagnetic storm knocked out most of the fleet.

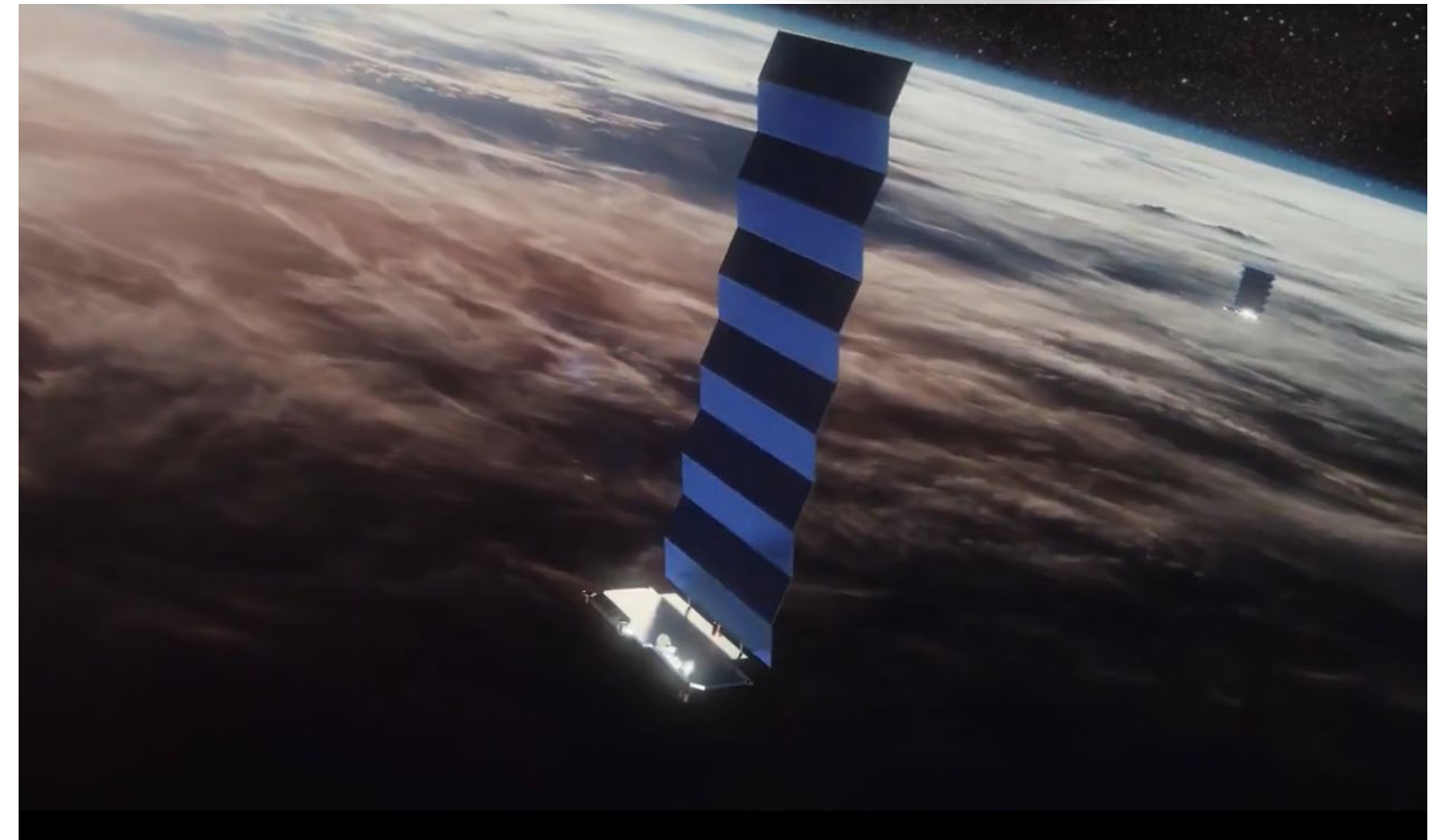
It was reported by multiple news outlets, including The New York Times, that the loss could have cost Musk's SpaceX as much as \$20 million.

Since its conception 20 years ago, SpaceX has had a stellar record, embarking on many achievements many did not deem possible. According to SpaceX Stats, SpaceX has launched a total of 928

metric tons worth of payloads into a variety of orbits, including interplanetary missions.

"Preliminary analysis show[s] the increased drag at the low altitudes prevented the satellites from leaving safe-mode to begin orbit raising maneuvers, and up to 40 of the satellites will reenter or already have reentered the Earth's atmosphere," SpaceX said in a statement Tuesday.

On February 3, SpaceX deployed 49 Starlink satellites into orbit from a Falcon 9 rocket. On the following day, a geomagnetic storm – which occurs when charged particles kicked out from the Sun in a solar flare interacting with the Earth's atmosphere – knocked out 40 of those satellites forcing engineers to abort the mission.



Starlink satellite in orbit. Photo Courtesy: SpaceX

"These storms cause the atmosphere to warm and atmospheric density at our low deployment altitudes to increase," SpaceX said, explaining that the higher atmospheric density increased drag on the orbiting Starlink satellites, preventing them from moving to higher altitudes.

Although SpaceX does not disclose the cost of each Starlink satellite, analysts say the cost of each module is somewhere between \$250,000 and \$500,000. Putting this in perspective, a fleet of 40 Starlink satellites could cost \$20 million at the most.

SpaceX has already launched 1,469 Starlink satellites into orbit and is targeting a grand total of 30,000. The enormous amount of satellites distributed into orbit will form the infrastructure to back Musk's plan of delivering high-speed internet to the most remote regions across the globe.

James Spann, the head of space weather within NASA's division that studies the sun, also said that "It's difficult to predict exactly how such a geomagnetic storm could've impacted Starlink. Because the storm wasn't all that severe, it's not unreasonable to think it would not have had an impact on the launch."

And though the loss of 40 satellites isn't ideal, Spann emphasized that "The data NASA and NOAA will gain from observing how the Starlink satellites reacted to the storm will help improve space weather modeling in the future."

"A geomagnetic storm - which occurs when charged particles kicked out from the Sun in a solar flare interacting with the Earth's atmosphere - knocked out 40 of those satellites forcing engineers to abort the mission." - SpaceX

R

It's Not Just A Diet, It's A New Lifestyle!

Written by: **Davon Brown**

It's February which means your either a month into your new years resolution diet, or still haven't taken the leap. Well I have just the diet for you to start knocking those new years resolution down.

The Mediterranean Diet, is one of the most studied and tops the scale as the best diet for 2022, being now its fifth consecutive year. US News has also ranked this diet No. 1 in five other categories: best diets for healthy eating, easiest diets to follow, best diets for diabetes, best heart-healthy diets, and best plant-based diets.

This diet comes from Spain, Italy, and other countries in the Mediterranean region who have been eating like this for centuries.

This diet emphasizes on primarily eating plant-based food, such as, fruits, vegetables, nuts, whole grains, and beans. It stresses eating fish and seafood at least a couple times a week, and consuming poultry, eggs, and cheese in moderation and limiting red meats and sweets to special occasions.

The goal of this diet it to take out added sugar and saturated fat, which is the main reason why this diet is heart-healthy, along with the added nutrients coming from



"This diet emphasizes on primarily eating plant-based food, such as ..." - Mediterranean Food Pyramid, (Courtesy of The Mediterranean Dish)

your food. As many diets also recommend, staying active and exercising is also important.

I started this Mediterranean "diet," well more of a new lifestyle for me, and have been on this diet for the past 3 weeks and have been loving every second of it. I will put a disclaimer that if you don't like seafood, this may not be the right diet for you, well kind of. The way I look at it is I've become pescatarian in the amount of seafood I eat.

One of the healthiest ways of living.

Even if seafood is not to your liking, just incorporating more of these fruits, vegetables, and whole grains in to your diet and limiting red meats, and taking out saturated fats, is a great new, not just diet for the new year, but a lifestyle going forward.

My body feels a lot less bloated since being on this diet, my head seems a lot clearer, and I'm not running out of energy as fast during the day. I am getting richer in nutrients from my food that's lasting longer than empty carbs from a bagel or a sweet chocolate bar with the sugar rush and crash.

Since being on this diet, I have learned that cooking is something you will be doing, A LOT! So get that apron on, those groceries, and let's start cooking!

Here is an easy to follow, but delicious recipe to kick off this new lifestyle diet:

Mediterranean Baked Dijon Salmon

Ingredients:

- 1.5 lb Salmon
- 1/3 cup dijon mustard
- 1 tbs olive oil
- 2 tbs lemon juice
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1 tbs fresh dill chopped
- 4 cloves garlic (minced)
- 1 tbs capers
- 1 lemon sliced



Instructions:

1. Heat the oven to 400F and line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Place the salmon skin side down on the baking sheet.
3. In a small bowl, mix dijon mustard, olive oil, lemon juice, salt, dill, garlic and capers.
4. Slather the salmon with the dijon mixture using a silicon brush. Top with a few lemon slices if desired.
5. Bake dijon salmon in the oven for 18-23 minutes depending on the thickness of the fish.
6. The salmon is ready once it's light in color and flakes easily with a fork.

Recipe from Unicornsinthekitchen.com

Pair this salmon with a fresh Greek Salad (cucumbers, tomatoes, green bell pepper, red onion, olives, and feta cheese) and your dinner is delicious, and your body is rejoicing from all the nutrition.

This recipe is sure to be kept in your personal recipe book, the flavors from the dijon really brought so mc to the table, I couldn't wait for another bite. I did not use capers, not something I like, but I still really enjoyed this recipe.

Happy Dieting!

- Baked Salmon (Courtesy of Unicorn in the Kitchen)


BLACK



“If there is no struggle, there is no progress.”
—*Frederick Douglass*

“Every great dream begins with a dreamer.
Always remember, you have within you the strength,
the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world.”
—*Harriet Tubman*

“He who is not courageous enough to take risks
will accomplish nothing in life.”
—*Muhammad Ali*



HISTORY MONTH