

Walsh University Honors Program Presents

# Honorable Mention

Fall 2025 Volume 9: Issue 1



Freshmen Honors Students

A Welcome to the ...



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# Welcome Freshmen Honors Students!

It is our privilege to welcome everyone in the class of 2029 to Walsh University and, specifically, the Honors Program! On behalf of the Co-Directors of Honors and ourselves, we sincerely hope that you have begun to feel at home at Walsh University and among your Honors peers as you have begun your college journey.

The new levels of responsibility and freedom that come with college life are often both exciting and challenging. Likewise, college courses, and especially Honors courses, may be both more rigorous and more personally interesting than high school classes. As you face these new experiences, we encourage you to “lean in” academically and socially. Leave your comfort zone! Take courses and start projects that you never would have attempted in high school. Go to games, club meetings, Honors functions, or ministry events that you would not have attended in the past. Because, at risk of sounding cliché, your college experience, and the many opportunities it brings with it, will be over before you know it.

Whatever mountains and valleys lie ahead, remember that you are in the Honors Program because you have proven yourself to be dedicated and capable students. The Honors directors, your Honors professors, and those who have come before you in the program are confident in your ability to persevere through every challenge. Lastly, do not forget that your education is a work in progress. So, don’t get it perfect – get it going.

We wish you well in all the exciting opportunities to come!

- Your Co-Editors: Troy Mazzei and Aliya Shine



Troy Mazzei



Aliya Shine



# Our Freshmen Honors Students

**Freshmen students participated in the annual Honors Student Mentoring Night**



**At the Honors Student Mentoring Night, the freshmen are paired up with a table of upperclassmen who are in similar majors as the student. The event is a great way for students to meet people and ask questions about their field of study.**

## Welcome to Our Honors Freshmen Honors Students!

Amira Adiyeh, Hannah Altieri, Sierra Beiter, Brady Benjamin, Cheyenne Bennett, Natalie Betz, Erin Bryda, Madison Budding, Chloe Burt, Griffith Carmichael, Ryan Cassidy, Megan Emch, John Fabek, Lauren Festi, Camryn Foltz, Henna Gash, Emma Gates, Logan Gawlak, Reese Griffin, Brysen Grimes, Kevin Hudak, Keena Hurd, Hannah Ison, Katelin Ison, Morgan Joyce, Riley Kasler, Gabriella Kravanis, Nathan Krayzel, Kendall McCray, Aedan Miller, Hayden Minnich, Abigail Moore, Madelyn Morckel, Dominique Muggeridge, Gauri Naik, Diana Obrajero, Joseph Piccirillo, John-Michael Polnik, Gabriella Racanelli, Chloe Ray, Gavin Redfern, Aden Renz, Margaret Rolwing, Aubri Rucktaschel, Justin Sanford, Jessica Serafino, Anna Smith, Noelle Smith, Anna Soos, Hebreonna Sowers, Bella Stuhldreher, Nathaniel Teeple, Sarah Thompson, McKenna Trent, Anthony Triveri, Luke Vlacovsky, Ellianna Warren, Chloe Weiland, Rocco Wolfe

Welcome to the Honors Family!

# Meet Your Honors Assistants

by: Troy Mazzei

We are excited to introduce this year's Honors Student Assistants, Sophia Rosa and Molly Durkin. These student leaders work in close collaboration with the Honors Co-Directors and Class Representatives, Shareen Awadallah, Maria Purcell, and Aidan Markey, to plan social events and service opportunities for our students. This fall, they have been involved in a total of nine service events in addition to helping with the fall social, our freshman mentoring night, and Honors Program Christmas party. Honors Assistants, we thank you for all that you do to

enrich the students' experience within the Honors Program!



**Sophia Rosa and Molly Durkin**

Sophia Rosa is a senior studying Nursing. She is a member of the women's golf team and is the president of the Student Athlete Advisory Council (SAAC), a program that encourages student-athletes to engage with the community and raise money for various causes. Sophia is also the vice-president of the Nursing Club and is a tutor for many Nursing and Honors classes. She is currently in the thesis process, working with the Stark Parks Wildlife Conservation Center to research metabolic bone diseases in mammals, primarily opossums. After graduation, Sophia plans to take the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX) and work at Akron Children's Hospital as a Registered Nurse.

Molly Durkin is a sophomore double-majoring in Government and Foreign Affairs (GFA) and Public Health, with a minor in Theology. After completing her undergraduate degree, she plans

to attend law school and specialize in medical malpractice law. Outside of academics, Molly competes on the STUNT team and has been cheering since 7th grade. She is the Chief Justice of the Walsh University Student Government, where she creates working relationships with clubs and senators on campus. As secretary of the Pre-Law Club, Molly assists in the organization of an LSAT study group and runs the club's social media. Additionally, Molly is a member of SAAC, Campus Ministry, and is a Cavs Cor Leader. Molly is excited to begin her thesis process next fall alongside her class of 2028 cohort. ●



# Thesis Spotlight: Alexis & Olivia

by: Nathaniel Borman

The Honors Thesis Presentation is an exciting time for seniors who have spent months working towards a single goal. All Honors students, beginning their sophomore or junior year, pick a topic that interests them to research. They then complete a in-depth literature review. Based on this research, students plan and execute research or creative projects. Projects range from research on preeclampsia to the development of a video game about cats. These two examples are what two seniors, who are graduating this fall, chose to pursue in order to deep dive into their passions.



**Alexis Perretta**

Alexis Perretta is a Pre-Medical Biology major with a minor in Chemistry. She followed her passion for science by deciding to base her thesis around researching high blood pressure experienced by mothers during pregnancy, called preeclampsia. More specifically, Alexis wanted to research how oxidative stress correlates with preeclampsia. Alexis worked with Dr. Novak testing the placental tissues of rats.

Olivia Pita also took on a complex problem head-on by creating her own video game, from scratch, for her Honors Thesis. It took Olivia countless hours of coding, seeing what went right, and fixing what went wrong. Olivia recalled running into many problems and obstacles, but always being surrounded by the help and support she needed to overcome adversity. She worked with her advisors, Dr. Chris Seeman and Quentin Westcott, peers, and others to see her project through to fruition. Her final project is an entertaining, two-level pixel-platformer game.

Alexis and Olivia's advice for younger Honors students is to do things they would not normally do. The little things, like taking a class that they normally would not have registered for, talking to new people, and volunteering to speak in class, are what helped Alexis and Olivia grow academically. Challenging themselves in small ways allowed them to eventually write the theses that they did. For example, Olivia's favorite class from her time at Walsh was HON 320: Atlantic Revolutions, taught by Professor of History, Dr. Rachel Constance. Despite not being a history major, she enjoyed how interactive the class was, with each student acting, voting, and delivering speeches as a real historical figure. Olivia believes that it helped her grow in new areas and made her a more well-rounded student.

These two seniors have made their educational careers exceptional within the Walsh University Honors Program and have set a high standard for future Honors students with their Thesis Projects. Their hard work, dedication, and intelligence were evident throughout their time in the Honors Program, as they honed their skills as researchers and writers. Their vastly different thesis topics illustrate the intellectual diversity of Honors students and are a testament to the adaptability of the Honors Thesis process.

We would like to offer a well-earned Congratulations to Alexis and Olivia for completing their theses and wish them the best of luck in their future endeavors! ●



**Olivia Pita**

# Service & Social: How Honors Students Have Served Their Community in 2025

by: Gabriella Berlingieri



**Students with Hall of Famer Robert Brazille at the HBCU Golf Classic**

Another Fall semester has come and gone, and Walsh University's Honors students have spent it planning and participating in local service events. Although the Honors Program is primarily an academic program, it maintains a commitment to service, one of Walsh University's core values. As a result, all Honors students complete at least six hours of service annually, allowing them to work alongside local organizations and become connected with the Canton community.

For the first event of the year, Aliya Shine and other Honors students volunteered at the historic Clearview Golf Course, which hosted the

Black College Football Hall of Fame's Clearview Golf Classic on August 30th. Volunteers assisted the staff by helping the golfers begin the event, putting up signs, serving lunch, and performing other tasks.

On September 17th, upperclass Honors students participated in the Honors Freshman Mentoring Night, which sought to introduce new Honors students to their older peers with similar majors, in order to connect each student with their very own mentor. Fun stories and great conversations were shared as the freshman rotated from table to table. A big thank you to all of the Honors students that volunteered their time for the event: Johnathan Ardelian, Bridget Beatty, Gabby Berlingieri,



**Photo 1: Students preparing food at the Refuge of Hope**



**Photo 2: Students cleaning golf clubs for one of the players.**



**Photo 3: Students cleaning up after the Refuge of Hope service event.**



Laura Bliese, Brianna Birkle, Caitlin Bray, Alyssa Cocchiola, Molly Durkin, Logan Figuerado, Kailey Hobart, Jeffrey Howe, Troy Mazzei, Amelia Molitor, Sachin Nallapaneni, Hailey Plesz, Sophia Rosa, Meleah Sawastuk, Grace Tabellion.

Honors students got to work removing invasive plants and doing landscaping work at Sippo Lake Park on September 22nd, which was organized by Sophia Rosa. On October 4th, the Honors Program made an appearance at Potter in the Park at Silver Park in Alliance, where students manned a science booth and helped teach young Harry Potter fans how to make "potions" using water and oil.

On October 11th, Honors students volunteered at First Christian Church-Canton's Café Disco event, which was coordinated by Rocco Wolfe. The event was for adults with



**Rocco dancing with guests at the Café Disco service event**

physical and developmental disabilities and included dancing, karaoke, food, games, a party bus, and face painting. With their positive attitudes and helpful demeanors, Honors students helped make this night special for guests, even getting a chance to dress up for the dance.

Students helped serve lunch and dinner at Refuge of Hope on various days throughout September, October, and November. On October 17th, 18th, 24th, and 25th, students volunteered at Beech Creek Botanical Gardens for their Spooky Science Event, where Walsh helped host a booth that included an interactive "science of blood" activity.



**Student making cards for veterans**

Ahead of Veteran's Day, Molly Durkin organized a volunteer opportunity with Hospice of the Valley's We Honor Veterans Program on October 21st, where Honors students wrote thank you cards to veterans in hospice, making sure these heroes know that they are still being celebrated for their sacrifice. On November 17th, Stark Parks visited Walsh and a representative taught students how to thoroughly clean seeds collected from various plants native to the Canton area, which helps in their efforts to maintain local parks in Stark County.

Thank you to all of the Honors students who have volunteered their time this semester in order to help others in need. Giving back to the community and serving others is at the core of Walsh University, and these students represented our college well. We look forward to seeing the Honors community engage with the many service opportunities happening in the spring! Have a wonderful and safe winter break! ●

# Expanding Horizons: How Diverse Journeys Shape the Honors Experience

by: Alyssa Cocchiola



**Anthony Fusaro with his friends**

Though their paths couldn't be more different, Anthony Fusaro and Haruki Imanishi both let their faith guide them as they found a home in Walsh University's Honors Program. Anthony, driven by faith to serve his country while simultaneously attending college, and Haruki, taking a leap of faith to travel across the Pacific, have found significant enrichment in their educational journeys through the Walsh University Honors program.

Anthony Fusaro is a junior at Walsh majoring in Theology and Philosophy with a minor in Sacred Scripture. Alongside his academics, he serves as a Marine Reservist: a part-time Marine who balances military commitment with a civilian career.

"I've always wanted to serve my country," Anthony explained. "I have always been interested in

the military. I recognized that that's where God was leading me at this point in life. I had thought about going in straight out of high school, but I decided to go to college first to better myself through a better understanding of the world." Anthony is currently stationed at Headquarters and Support Company (H&S Co), 3rd Battalion, 25th Marines out of Brook Park, Ohio, as a drilling reservist. His service typically consists of a multi-day training event, called a drill, one weekend a month, and two weeks of annual training during the summer. "It is sometimes difficult during drill weekends to stay on top of my coursework, particularly with missing classes; I usually just have to put in a bit more effort to stay ahead of schedule during the week," he explained. After his freshman year, Anthony learned that it was possible to be involved in the military while taking college courses. "That really appealed to me," he recalled.

That summer, Anthony attended boot camp. In the fall, he took a semester off from college to finish his entry-level training. He came back to Walsh the following spring as a reservist. Balancing these schedules was difficult at first. "Figuring out how to manage, doing my drills every month, since it's not just two days of the weekend," Anthony said. "Sometimes you have to miss a little bit of school, so learning how to manage with that was an adjustment that I needed." After graduating from Walsh, Anthony plans on commissioning as an Officer of the Marines.

Haruki Imanishi, another Honors student, is a Japanese citizen living in O'ahu, Hawaii, who took a leap of faith to travel across the Pacific, by himself, to pursue an education at Walsh. "Back home, you can circle the whole island in two to three hours. A one-hour drive felt really far away back home, and here, a one-hour drive is basically nothing," Haruki compared.

Haruki is on a five-year track for graduation, pursuing a degree in Data Analytics. The additional year allowed



**Anthony at Lance Corporal Seminar**





**Haruki Imanishi**

Haruki to explore more courses and experience more of Walsh. "Instead of having to do my thesis process in the third year, starting in my fourth year going here [...] I've done a lot more things outside of class. I've taken other classes that I may have not taken otherwise, and just [given] myself time to play golf."

Haruki was drawn to Walsh due to his love for golf. Haruki is on the Walsh Men's Golf Team and golfed regularly back home. "I'm here partially because of a former alumni, Clark Harvey. He was also in the Honors program," Haruki explained. "Clark's brother-in-law is a famous golfer. His name is Jason Day. He is a former world number one professional. He still plays at a very high level, and he is one of my favorite players."

While in O'ahu, Haruki met Jason Day's father-in-law. "He took such a liking to me, and we kept in touch," Haruki explained. "When it came time for me to choose colleges, he was like, 'Oh, my son went to this school called Walsh in Ohio,' and I applied, got into the Honors program, and now I'm here."

Though different in major, both Anthony and Haruki are united by their Catholic faith. Both students discussed the rich impact of HON 121: Catholic Intellectual Tradition with Dr. Cary Dabney.

"I really enjoyed taking HON 121 with Dr. Dabney. That's what made me want to major in theology," Anthony explained. "Taking that class with Dr. Dabney... I feel like I learned so much in that one class, and also just the fact that he held us to a high standard but also gave us what we needed to reach that."

This love of theology led Anthony to his research for his Junior Honors Project. He is currently researching the connection between the virtue ethics of Plato and St. Thomas Aquinas's moral theology in relation to the spiritual anthropology of the human person. He plans on using Dante's *Inferno* as a case study to demonstrate these implications in Christian moral theology.

Haruki entered Walsh with no religious affiliation. When taking HON 121, Haruki explained, "That wasn't the spark that led to me to convert to Catholicism, but it was the first time I learned anything about Catholicism and Christianity in general, so it was a really good experience for me," he continued.

The five-year track also allowed Haruki to spend more time completing his senior Honors Thesis. For the thesis, he is combining his expertise with his love for racing. "I am trying to use data analysis techniques to determine who the greatest Formula One driver of all time is," Haruki explained. He is currently collecting data through the Formula One open-source database. He will use clustering and base models to form his conclusions.

For both Anthony and Haruki, the Walsh University Honors program has enriched their unique college experiences. For Anthony, his experience in the different worlds of college and the military made a huge impact on his life.

"College is very flexible," Anthony concluded. "Your schedule and how you do things is put on you. Getting those two different experiences, I think they shed light on one another. You get a little bit of the structure from the military and the responsibility and being able to take responsibility for your own life and for the things that you're doing from college." ●



**Haruki at a service event in 2024**

# International Student Spotlight

by: Logan Gawlak

## Meklit Tofu & Gloria Tindana Share Their Story

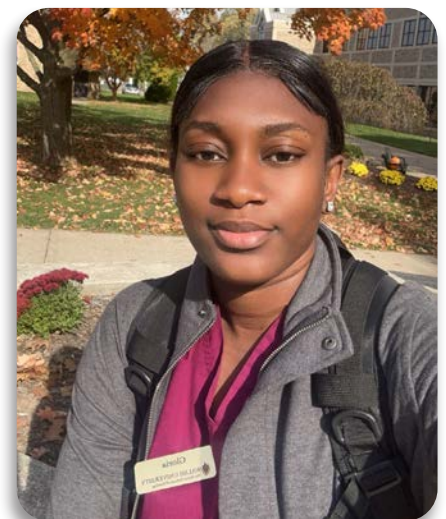
Meklit Tofu, a senior from Ethiopia studying Computer Science, Programming, and Cybersecurity, has spent her time at Walsh University immersing herself in the campus's culture. In addition to serving as the president of the World Student Organization and a member of the African Student Association, Meklit found the Honors Program to be a critical part of her personal growth. She asserts that HON: 120 Interdisciplinary Research and Writing, taught by Dr. Hepner, was a pivotal class in her college experience that challenged her existing perspectives.

For her Senior Honors Thesis, Meklit is developing a website focused on cybersecurity awareness for young adults. She notes that while her peers are comfortable with the internet, over time, many have unconsciously lost their sense of online privacy. Her advice to incoming students is rooted in a growth mindset: the more you experience obstacles, the more you will be refined. She emphasizes that it is important to acknowledge challenging emotions, while continuing to remember: "You are in this position for a reason."

Gloria Tindana, a senior Nursing major from Ghana, has served as the former treasurer for the Black Student Union and the World Student Organization. She believes that the most challenging aspect of her college journey was balancing nursing courses, clinicals, and her Honors work. Reflecting on her freshman year, Gloria admits she was initially nervous about being able to manage her workload. However, once she began her degree, she found it to be achievable through utilizing "strong support systems, effective time management, and proficiency in language and culture." Nearing the end of her time in undergrad, Gloria is thankful for the professors who have helped her learn and for the opportunities she has received to work on personally interesting projects, such as her Honors thesis. ●



Meklit Tofu



Gloria Tindana





Professor Fox and Shareen

## Professor Spotlight: Professor Stephanie Fox

by: Shareen Awadallah

Professor Stephanie Fox is a familiar face to many students in the Byers School of Nursing, but her impact on the Honors community stretches beyond the classroom. As the interim undergraduate chair of the Byers School of Nursing, a nursing professor, and both an Honors Thesis and academic advisor, she brings a level of commitment and enthusiasm that shapes students' experiences from their first scheduling appointment to their final thesis defense.

When asked about her favorite part of being an Honors thesis advisor, she didn't hesitate to say, "My students, without question." She shared that "connecting with my Honors

students throughout their journey is what I enjoy the most." She

has watched students turn their ideas into research, growing academically, but also personally. She loves getting to know them beyond their academic work, learning about their families, hobbies, sports, jobs, and interests. Being able to witness that transformation, year after year, is what she considers the heart of her work.

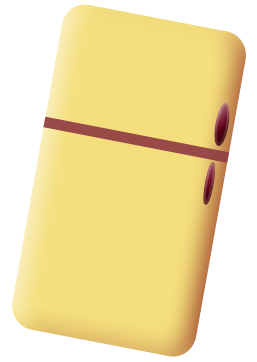
Last spring, Professor Fox taught an Honors course about healthcare and AI, a course that quickly became a favorite among students across majors. She was struck by how eager students were to dig into the role of artificial intelligence in the medical field. She stated that "many were amazed by how rapidly AI is advancing". She noted how much she loved teaching a diverse group of students that consisted of Nursing, Pre-PT, Chemistry, Biology, and even a Finance major.

Some of Professor Fox's most meaningful moments in the Honors Program come from watching students move through the Junior Honors Project and Thesis process. Seeing their proposals take shape and eventually turn into completed projects is something she finds incredibly rewarding. "Their dedication and accomplishments are inspiring, not only to the student, but also to me," she said. Above all, she hopes her students leave Walsh knowing how deeply she supports them. Honors Nursing students balance two demanding programs at once, which requires focus, resilience, and a genuine passion for learning. Professor Fox hopes they recognize the value of their experience and how it has shaped them into confident, competent, and compassionate future nurses.

As someone who has worked with Professor Fox through the Honors Program and Nursing program, I have experienced firsthand the support and encouragement she shows her students. She consistently guides us through challenges with patience and celebrates our accomplishments. Her dedication to Honors Nursing students is a major part of what makes the program such a strong and meaningful community. ●

## The Honors "Fridge"

A gallery of our Honors students having fun and serving their community. Proud-moments and fun memories that are worthy of being hung on the "fridge" for everyone to see.



Students with Dr. Renee Powell at the 2025 HBCU Golf Classic. Dr. Renee was a pro golfer in the LPGA Tour and was inducted into the PGA American Hall of Fame in 2017.



Annual Honors Fall Social at Green Family Fun Zone

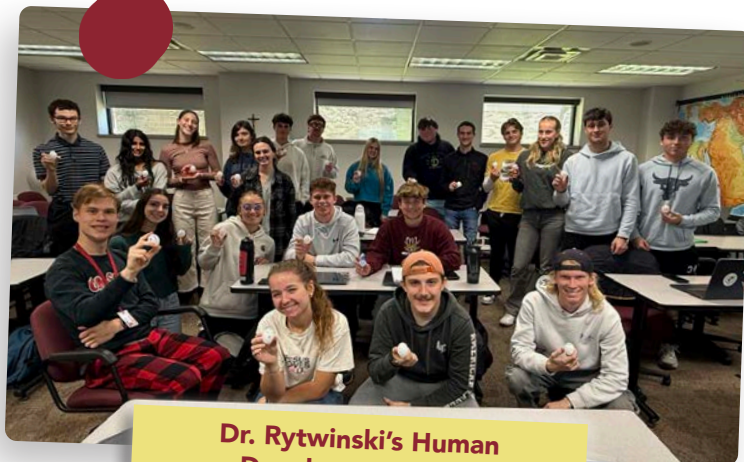




Students who attended the  
Cafe Disco



Dr. Rytwinski's Human  
Development class



Students seed cleaning for  
Stark Parks



Students making cards  
for veterans



Annual Honors  
Christmas Party



Thank you for reading this edition of the Honorable Mention. We hope that it reveals a small piece of the work that the Honors Program students are doing to impact their lives and in the lives of those in the community.

Troy Mazzei  
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Aliya Shine  
Co-Editor

Special thank-you to our student writers:

Shareen Awadallah  
Gabriella Berlingieri  
Nathaniel Borman  
Alyssa Cocchiola  
Logan Gawlak

### Mission

The Walsh University Honors Program provides an enhanced, values-based educational experience to intellectually curious, academically talented, and highly motivated undergraduate students. The program's curriculum is innovative, diverse, and interdisciplinary; it supports a community of scholars that is equally diverse and innovative, as well as collaborative. The Honors Program experience develops leaders who pursue academic excellence, think critically, research independently, communicate effectively, and provide service to others.

For more information about the Honors Program, please contact Dr. Jennifer Clevinger or Dr. Nina Rytwinski at [honorsdirector@walsh.edu](mailto:honorsdirector@walsh.edu).



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