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Remembrance Service to Be Held for Marissa Borst

By Olivia Slack, Co-Editor in Chief

On Wednesday, Sept. 22 at 10 a.m., a Remembrance Service will be held for student Marissa Borst, '24, who died on Aug. 1, 2021. The service will be held in the grassy area in front of Jones Chapel. Because the service will be held outside, there is no RSVP required and social distancing will be enforced. In case of rain, the service will be held inside Jones Chapel, which can accommodate 150 people.

Chaplain Stacy Pardue told *The Herald* that the College has held a service such as this whenever there has been a student death and that the service "honors the student, supports the family members and helps the campus grieve and support one another."

Marissa's mother, Vanessa Borst, described Marissa as an active student in high school who hoped to continue that involvement at Meredith. Ms. Borst said that Marissa was an avid reader, loved Broadway musicals and hoped to be involved in theatre productions at Meredith. Marissa was a recipient of the Meredith Legacy Scholarship, and she was a

psychology major who "wanted to open her own practice one day and help children" according to her mother. She was also in-

olved with the Meredith Autism Program (MAP) and her mother said she loved "times spent with fellow classmates and her Big Sis."

Ms. Borst shared that Marissa was diagnosed with bipolar II disorder, which she described as "a physical disease, a chemical imbalance, that affects you mentally." Ms. Borst said, "The main thing I'd like to convey is there is no shame in dealing with anxiety, depression or bipolar disease...I just want [students] to understand that you need to talk about

your feelings...don't try to go through this alone. Even though this was conveyed to Marissa many times, and she



Photo courtesy of Vanessa Borst

talked with me many times about them, the disease can fool your brain into thinking it won't ever get better. Remember, everything is temporary and won't last forever. Please reach out to someone if you feel like you need help."

For students struggling with Marissa's death,

Rev. Pardue said, "That's normal when you come to appreciate and love someone. It's the human condition. I would encourage them to take some time to be grateful for the ways that Marissa touched their life,

and to share those with others who knew her and are also grieving." She added, "There... may be students or others on campus that are personally dealing with mental health issues and suicidal ideation, and I would strongly encourage them to seek immediate professional help." Rev. Pardue also said she is happy to speak with students who need to process ideas about death or suicide, and that they can email her at pardues@meredith.edu to set up an appointment.

To make an appointment at Meredith's Counseling Center, email counselingcenter@meredith.edu or call 919-760-8427. In a crisis, contact the counselor on-call at 919-760-8888 or the Critical Response Team at 919-612-6350. September is also Suicide Prevention Month, and there are many resources available from the Suicide Prevention Lifeline and the Crisis Text Line.

Read the extended version of this story with Ms. Borst's full reflection on our website.

Students Weigh In on Meredith's Water Policy

By Maggie Barnhill, Staff Writer, and Shae-Lynn Henderson, Contributing Writer

As Meredith College's fall semester begins, the school's policies regarding COVID-19 for the 2021-2022 school year are being scrutinized by concerned students. One policy prohibits students from eating or drinking in class. This guideline, differing from policies set in place during the 2020-2021 school year, restricts students from using a straw under their mask to drink water while in class. While the College's Community Standards discourage eating or drinking while indoors, they do not directly say that students are prohibited from drinking water in class by using a straw under their mask.

From an administrative perspective, Senior Vice President and Provost Dr. Matthew Poslusny responded to a few questions regarding the new COVID-19 guidelines concerning food and drink in the classroom. When asked why students are unable to drink from a straw under their mask

this year when they were able to in the 2020-2021 school year, Dr. Poslusny stated, "Last year, students were seated six feet apart, the majority of our classes were either online or hybrid. This year, in order to have more classes on campus...we made the decision to go to three feet seating. In order for this to be successful, it is critical that masks be worn correctly. That means no gaps. When one drinks through a straw, even for the briefest of moments, that creates a gap which allows for the transmission of the virus."

Dr. Poslusny also offered insight into why students are allowed to eat and drink in buildings such as the Cate Center and Belk Dining Hall. "There are a number of differences between a classroom space and a space like the dining hall," he said. "These factors include the size of spaces and the ability for an individual to choose whether to eat inside the facility." He also went on to state that administration had

"consulted with the Director of [the] Health Center and also with the Assistant Director of Disability Services so that we could put into place a procedure that would protect the health of our entire population while taking into account the needs of individuals. Disability Services has been in touch with students that have accommodations to eat in class, and they have made alternative arrangements as needed."

In his final statement, Dr. Poslusny wanted to remind everyone "that the requirement has been put into place to keep people safe and that it really extends to all public indoor spaces where food is not routinely served."

Hannah Taib, '22, a student athlete on the field hockey team, said that she agreed with some of her teammates that having to step out of class in order to drink water puts them at a disadvantage. Taib said, "People tend to forget that we

are still students—education always comes first in order to keep playing for Meredith College." She explained that this policy negatively impacts her and her teammates because as "student-athlete[s] in Division III, [we] do not get to slack in [our] classes." Taib and her teammates, like Kate Erb, '24, don't want to miss important information to remain hydrated. Erb said she now struggles with "headaches and fatigue [that] make it difficult to concentrate" as a result of a lack of hydration and the heat.

Looking after the Meredith students is at the heart of all decisions made by Meredith staff, but some students believe the new guidelines about drinking water during class are not the best way to keep Meredith students safe.