

## Students protest shirt regulations

By Jessica Wiegandt  
Arts & Life Editor

Evenings at BC are not typically known for being extremely eventful, but when sophomore Malynne Petoia and freshman Olympia Poplin went topless outside of the Caf during dinner one evening, the student population was immediately notified via social media.

"It was crazy," Petoia said, "Everyone had their phones, using Snapchat and acting like this was some sort of disgusting sight. There were people lined up on the Caf windows, Snapchating, and that kind of got me mad."

Petoia said she and a few friends were standing by the smoking station near Beam on Tuesday, Sept. 13, when she decided to lower her dress and stand outside topless. "I've been on this thing where I've really strongly believe girls shouldn't have to cover themselves up," Petoia said, "And it's not even the boob. It's the nipple. Girls can wear shirts that are really low cut, sexualizing the boob, but can't show the nipple."

According to Petoia, she was standing with her friends and felt really hot, so she pulled down the top of her strapless dress, revealing her breasts. "But I didn't make a big deal out of it," Petoia said, "I didn't shout 'I'm taking my shirt off!' I literally just slipped it down and then Olympia did it too and there was so much attention given all of a sudden that I got mad."

Petoia then began shouting at passersby to take their shirts off, saying it didn't matter what gender they were because it's the same thing. "Then one football coach came by and asked me to pull my dress back up because I was 'making him uncomfortable,'" Petoia said. "That made me get up in his face a little bit because why am I making someone uncomfortable? Is it because I have girl nipples?"

Poplin joined Petoia at this point and said she followed suit to support her endeavor. Poplin said her participation wasn't as noticed as Petoia's as she wasn't filmed by students or given as much attention. "People overreacted," Poplin said. "She wasn't trying to be sexualized but that's the way some people took it. It's frustrating. If guys can take off their shirts, why can't girls?"

Campus Security reported to the scene not long after the interaction with the coach and asked Petoia to pull her dress back up. She then

began to ask what they would do, knowing they couldn't physically touch or restrain her. "I got mad and fiery and I was flicking them off but at that point I was already leaving, so I just got in the car and we drove away," Petoia said.

Several days later, Petoia had a meeting with Dean of Students Debora D'Anna, discussing her and Poplin's conduct on school property. The report D'Anna had received, according to Petoia, said she had been running around campus topless. "The most motion I remember doing was when I turned and did a little dance but I wasn't running around campus," Petoia said. "I wasn't trying to sexualize my boobs, it was actually the complete opposite. I was trying to show everyone that it's the same as if a guy took off his shirt, like, it should be the same."

Petoia's spark for her social statement began last year when she was a freshman at BC. "Honestly it's because I was lazy and I had stopped shaving. This one guy in my art class started saying stuff like 'Hey, Malynne, shave your armpits,' and stuff like that and over the summer my family started telling me to shave," Petoia said, "It kind of got me mad. Just because I'm female, doesn't make me different."

One day, Petoia said she was outside tanning with her friends and all her male friends were shirtless and she wanted to be as well. To her, it wasn't an ordeal for a female to be topless, but she knew social standards weren't in line with her beliefs.

This led to Petoia's controversial picture that was posted on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram over the summer. Within 20 minutes, the picture

was removed from all platforms except Twitter, due to "sexual content." In the picture, Petoia was shown topless with both of her breasts showing. "Yeah there's a picture of me and my tits on social media, it went up and it was deemed 'too sexual' for Facebook and Instagram," Petoia said. "That wasn't the point of the picture. It wasn't supposed to be a 'sexy' photo, it was meant to be a statement to empower women."

She received negative feedback online from former peers in high school, some saying they were tired of seeing such a "nasty" picture on their feed. "There was one girl that put up the picture of the Little Caesars dude because I look like him or something, saying 'no sexism needed' as her caption," Petoia said. "You're a girl! I'm f\*\*\*\*\*g standing for you."

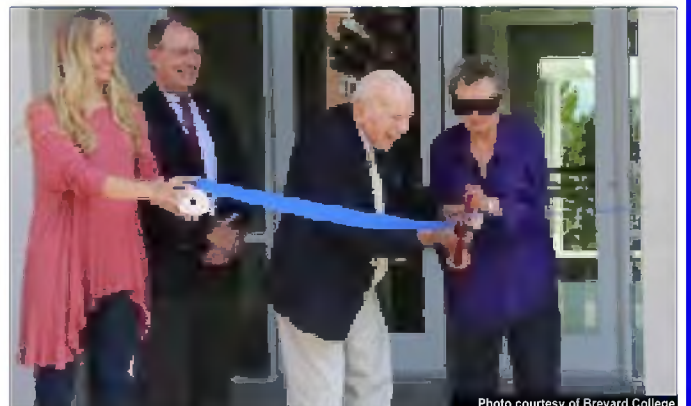
Several people on campus have told Petoia they wouldn't personally do the same thing she did, either online or on campus. Petoia said it doesn't matter what an individual would do personally, she chose to make her statement in the way she did and she doesn't regret it.

D'Anna met with both students to talk about the situation on campus, later passing the judicial decision for reprimand on to Director of Residence Life Michael Cohen. None of the personal student information quoted was released by D'Anna or Cohen, simply the description of the situation.

"A student with strong convictions around women's rights decided she wanted to voice her opinion by exposing her breasts," D'Anna said. While this was done out of protest, the act

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*New residence hall officially has a name: Stanback Hall*



A ribbon-cutting ceremony took place Tuesday as the new residence hall was named Stanback Hall, in honor of longtime Brevard College trustee and financial supporters William C. Stanback and his wife, Nancy.