

Midwood Alumn Shares Skills as Coach

By Jared Hwee '19

Ms. Danielle Daskalakis is a left-handed athlete, a gamer, a karaoke veteran, a dog lover, and is in love with Asian culture. Having gone to Midwood herself, she has recently become a new physical education teacher and assistant coach of the girls handball team.

When she was just three years old, Ms. Daskalakis' first sport was softball. This decision was inspired by her father, and she joined private teams and tournaments. She played until she was 16 years old and was a part of the softball team for Midwood, which was coached by Ms. Jenny Ferrarin.

Ms. Daskalakis started going to Midwood in 2004. This is when she started taking an interest in handball.

"Most of my friends were Asian," said Ms. Daskalakis. "All of them were playing handball, and I eventually picked it up and liked it a lot."

She joined the girls handball team and instantly dominated the division. She left all of her opponents under 7 points and developed a reputation of being one of the best. Ms. Daskalakis was co-captain of the girls team. Alongside her was Ms. Kimberly Lau, the current AP Environmental Science teacher, as co-captain of the handball team.



Ms. Daskalakis becomes new physical education teacher and the girls handball coach.

"She had a brolic reputation," said Tiffany Chiu, a long time friend since high school. "She even took it to the next level. By sticking with handball, she became a global phenomenon."

Mr. Jay Park, a long time friend and student teacher at Midwood, said, "People called her 'DreamKrusher.' She plays people and crushes their dreams—it's pretty self-explanatory."

Ms. Daskalakis then attended Stony Brook University in 2008, dorming there for four years. Her roommate was Ms. Lau. Ms. Daskalakis was tutored by Simon Lau, who later became Ms. Lau's husband, in chemistry, math, and even picked up a few Chinese phrases along the way.

Ms. Daskalakis continued handball by playing on the Stony Brook four-wall team, becoming co-captain, again with Ms. Lau. Handball was always on Ms. Daskalakis's mind.

"I remember studying one night, and all I heard was a loud bang," said Mrs. Lau. "I was so scared, and when I looked over to see what had made the noise, I realized that Ms. Daskalakis had smacked our wall in her sleep."

In 2009, Ms. Daskalakis won a world title for one-wall Girl's singles—19 unders in Portland, Oregon. She continued to win two more titles: one-wall Girl's singles—23 unders in Ireland, and the title she is most proud of, the Opens—Women's singles and doubles in Canada. She is looking forward to securing another world title this year.

"I want to win," said Ms. Daskalakis. "I've been going to the gym, going on runs, and playing more games to win. It is essential to stay in shape."

Additionally, she has also been a part of Team USA for handball. Ms. Daskalakis has games, interviews, and multiple articles on her career posted online.

"Google me," said Ms. Daskalakis.

Aside from her stunning handball career, Ms. Daskalakis has other hobbies. She plays a lot of Call of Duty, Fortnite, board games, and spikeball with her friends. In addition to gaming, she goes mini-golfing, has competitive karaoke nights, and

frequently goes to the gym. She also participated in Ms. Lau's wedding as a bridesmaid.

"I have a group of friends, a round five to seven people, and we get together and have fun," said Ms. Daskalakis.

Ms. Daskalakis is also a dog fanatic, owning four dogs. She has two Dachshunds named Jack

and Louie, a French Bulldog named Bella, and a Boxer named Bubba.

Ms. Daskalakis is an enthusiast of the Asian culture, surrounding herself with Asian friends, enjoying Asian food and Asian music. She enjoys listening to K-Pop, drinks an ample amount of bubble tea, and enjoys going to Dimsum. If you ever see her around, she loves to drink honey green tea with half honey from Kung Fu Tea.

Ms. Daskalakis had several majors during college and took some time to figure out what she wanted to do as a career. After some time, she decided that she wanted to become a physical education teacher.

After getting her degree, she came back to work at Midwood. She now assists Mr. Williams in coaching the girls handball team and has helped them reached the finals.

"Ms. Daskalakis is very inspiring," said Vina Weng '20, a member of the girls handball team. "She's awesome, caring, and a very strong person."

Photo Credit: Daniela Ramirez '18

Ms. Swaybill to Retire After Helpful Career

By Allana Hoyte '19

After 18 years of being a part of the Hornet family, Ms. Nancy Swaybill is saying farewell to Midwood. The social worker is retiring this June.

Ms. Swaybill has been a social worker for 25 years. Before coming to Midwood, she was a social worker at John Dewey, Clara Barton, and Maxwell High School. Over her 18 years here she has worked with thousands of high school students.

"Adolescence is an important time," said Ms. Swaybill, "helping them before becoming real adults have more of an impact on their lives. I love working with high schoolers."

In her work she has done private meetings as well as counseling groups with up to five students at a time and finds them to be very helpful.

"It's amazing to see how the most different types of kids can form connections with each other and help each other grow," said Ms. Swaybill.

Seeing kids accomplish what they didn't think they could before her eyes was very satisfying to her and makes her glad to have been there to facilitate that.

"Whenever students go beyond where they thought they would go, such as presenting in front of a class, forming friendships when they had difficulties in doing so, overcoming their anxiety and getting accepted into colleges, it's always very rewarding to see," said Ms. Swaybill.



Ms. Swaybill has dedicated 18 years to helping Midwood students.

Photo Credit: Ms. Swaybill

The many experiences and all the children she has met have made an everlasting impression on her.

"I've become a better social worker, a more understanding person, and an advocate for kids," said Ms. Swaybill. "I still love what I do, so I'd rather leave while that's still true and move on to the next chapter of my life."

As she retires, she still has things she wants to accomplish like traveling to Iceland,

Canada and the South of France. One of her hobbies is also painting, so she wants to get back into landscape and still-life painting and going to workshops.

"I still will continue to see teenagers for counseling and maybe even private practice," said Ms. Swaybill.

Many students will remember her for her hard work and dedication to all the students she has worked with.

Ms. Swaybill said, "Midwood reflects the changes going on in society such as peer pressure, more special needs, technology, and the Internet. Kids need supportive adults to help them through their tough times. We need more social workers in the future."

Hornets Take Home Prizes in Brooklyn College Science Fair

By Nursat Jahan '19 and Daniel Gaft '19

After a lot of research, high school and college students presented their findings at Brooklyn College Science day held on May 4 at the Brooklyn College Student Center.

Every spring, students from different communities gather to celebrate Science Day. From high school students to graduate students in universities. The Brooklyn College website states that students competed and showcased 125 projects in 14 different fields of science with over 50 faculty members as judges. Some of the fields included Psychology, Biology, Robotics, and Chemistry. In each field first, second, and third place is awarded to students with the best project.

Senator Kirsten Gillibrand said, "This gives us an opportunity to contemplate the importance of scholarship in the science. All of our students deserve a robust and inspiring STEM education. Not only to prepare for jobs of the future, but develop skills to make them better students, employees, and citizens."

Seven Midwood students from the Biomimetic and Cognitive Robotics Laboratory (BCR Lab) who worked with professor and Psychology teacher Dr. Frank Grasso, presented their projects. These students are Kevin Chen '19, Larissa Brijmohan '19, Fizza Nayab '19, Annabel Xei '19, Aushna Saleem '18, Hafsa Fatima '18, Nila Mirza '18 and Soanne Saint Victor '18. The students were supervised by Mr. Glenn Elert and Ms. Susan Katzoff.

"It was an amazing opportunity to present in front of college professors and being able to experience public speaking as a junior," said Nayab. She presented a team project with Brijmohan on how Monk Parakeets (Myiopsitta Monachus) influence conspecific behaviors.

Each of these students was judged by two judges and were asked many questions, such as how the results from their project can benefit society.

"I was very nervous while presenting to the judges and the people that came to view my project, but I was very surprised when the judges didn't really ask me many questions," said Xei. She presented a project that determined whether Monk Parakeets



Midwood Research Students and Teachers in front of the Brooklyn Student Center.

Photo Credit: Sabha Iqbal '18

had a preference for the residential area or the urban area.

After all the presentations were judged, the scores were tallied up while the presenters and faculty enjoyed an amazing lunch. Midwood took 2 out of 3 wins for the high school division breaking a clean sweep streak (2014-2017). The first place winner was Chen who presented his project called "Aggression on the beach: Crowding increases aggression levels on fiddler crabs (Uca Pugilator) colonies."

"I was shocked and was really thrilled when my name was announced," said Chen. "My hard work and patience paid off and I thank Dr. Frank Grasso and the BCR lab members for helping me gather my data."

Fatima earned second place with a project called "The effect of temperature on the frequency of vocalization of Myiopsitta Monachus." The third place winner was Kemal Aziz '18, from Staten Island Tech, with the project called "Cooling through quantum mechanics: Magnon-based description of magnetocaloric effects in La-Fe-Si, CoMnSi, and gadolinium."

Mr. Glenn Elert stated, "Brooklyn College Day is always good. Midwood constantly performs and it's nice to meet with other professors from different high schools and colleges. My advice for students who want to participate next year is to just do it. Give it a shot."

As for the future, these research students are continuing their projects and building on to them with help of their lab professors and research teacher Mr. Elert, so that they can be ready to present at the NYCSEF in 2019.

"A student is not going to perform well in competitions if he/she just does a presentation, they will get better by gaining experience with real judges, where they ask you questions and other procedures like in the real event," said Mr. Elert.