PARIS – Around 7 p.m. local time smoke could be seen billowing into the evening air. To the horror of local Parisians and foreign travelers alike, Notre Dame Church, which has stood at the heart of Paris for over 850 years, was burning.

Fire fighters believe that parts of the scaffolding used in ongoing refurbishing projects may have caught fire due to a short circuit.

The fire first spread around the cathedral’s spire on the east end of the building, quickly engulfing the mostly wooden structure.

Images of the gothic cathedral awash with flame quickly began to circulate through the internet on news stations and social media accounts of bystanders. As the fire quickly spread, videos of the spire crashing down shocked the world.

Local residents found difficulty expressing their profound grief and what this kind of loss means to not just the people of Paris, but all of France.

The construction of Notre Dame, which means “Our Lady” in French, began in 1163 and took more than 200 years to complete. For close to a millennium, it has held a central position in French capital. The medieval landmark is located on the small island of Ile de la Cite, in the middle of Seine River that runs through the center of Paris.

It has been witness to countless historical events: from the coronations of both French and English kings, to surviving the Black Plague, revolution and two World Wars.

Notre Dame was the centerpiece of writer Victor Hugo’s 1831 classic “Notre-Dame de Paris,” which was published in English as “The Hunchback of Notre-Dame,” later adapted into a popular feature animation by Disney. It was also the where Pope Pius VII crowned Napoleon Bonaparte Emperor of France in 1804, establishing the first French Empire.

Along-side attractions such as the Eiffel Tower and the Louvre Museum, Notre Dame ranks as one of the most popular tourist destinations in France, attracting an estimated 30,000 visitors a day. Luckily, the fire didn’t destroy the building entirely.

Officials in France are also stating that most of the priceless artifacts inside the cathedral were successfully retrieved, such as the Crown of Thorns that Jesus supposedly wore while suffering under crucifixion. In further good news, over a $1 billion has already been raised in support of the cathedral’s rebuilding.

Governments and experts around the world have already offered assistance in the rebuilding efforts. The French government has already made it clear that Notre Dame will be repaired, Highlighting the government’s commitment to reconstruction efforts, French president Emmanuel Macron gave an emotional address the night of the fire, proclaiming, “We will rebuild this cathedral.”
There is uproar in the streets of Chicago after Jussie Smollett, who was suspected of staging a racial and homophobic hate crime, had all charges dropped in Cook County.

In the last issue of The Pioneer, we explained how the Chicago Police Department had a solid case built against Smollett, including video evidence of Smollett’s preparations, a check made out to the staged attackers, and a falsely given alibi by Smollett. The extremely sensitive case seemed to be looking bleak for Smollett, which is why when Cook County prosecutors dropped charges against him on March 26, the city of Chicago, and the rest of the country, was left stunned.

On April 4, a group of Illinois Police chiefs came together with Chicago’s Fraternal Order of Police to voice their disapproval and gave a vote of no confidence to State’s Attorney Foxx. Outgoing Mayor Rahm Emanuel has stated his intent to open a lawsuit, seeking the $130,106 spent on the Smollett investigation. Smollett’s attorney responded, saying that not only would they not pay the money, but also warned that if the lawsuit was opened, Mayor Rahm Emanuel would face a deposition.

Although it appears Smollett may escape charges, one Cook County attorney, Saani Mohammed, who recently worked as an assistant in State’s Attorney Foxx’s office, is filing for a special prosecutor to take the case.

When questioned as to why Mohammed was going to such lengths to pursue justice in this case, he responded, “The case was plagued with irregularity.” Mohammed released a 10-page petition asking for Criminal Court Judge Leroy Martin Jr. to investigate if Foxx “concealed evidence, and/or intentionally misled the public.” for the truth. Keep on the look-out for updates in future newspaper editions.
UPDATE: Brexit now postponed until Oct 31.

On April 11, UK and EU officials came to an agreement to push back the deadline for the UK to leave the European Union until Oct. 31. The vote for the UK to leave the EU first took place over two years ago on June 23, 2016, which saw the “Leave” campaigners win with the slim margin of 51.9% over the “Remain” campaigners’ 48.1%.

The results saw the departure of then Prime Minister David Cameron, replaced by current Conservative PM Theresa May. Under Article 50 of the EU charter, the UK was set to leave the EU on March 29, 2019. During this two-year period, the UK was supposed to have negotiated its withdraw from the Union, but a tough stance by a notably united EU and no clear goals by a divided UK government made it difficult for the UK to get a favorable deal.

On Nov. 25, negotiators from both the EU and the UK reached an agreement on the terms of the UK’s withdraw; however, when the 599-page agreement was brought forth to Parliament, it was rejected by its members. This marked the first of several embarrassing defeats for Theresa May’s government, as the agreement, in one form or another, was brought back to the floor of Parliament several more times, each time being voted down.

With the March 29 deadline approaching, with no deal agreed upon, and with fears of the UK dropping out the EU with a “No deal Brexit,” the UK government approached the EU seeking an extension on the withdraw until June 30.

The European Council responded by offering two dates: May 22 if an agreement for withdraw is passed by Parliament as of March 29, or until April 12 with no agreement; there as has been no agreement. Adding to the UK’s complications, members voted in late March to take control of the Brexit process from Theresa May’s government and place authority with Parliament. Such a move has been seen as unprecedented. The BBC reports Shadow Brexit Secretary Sir Keir Starmer tweeting: “Another humiliating defeat for a Prime Minister who has lost complete control of her party, her Cabinet and that of the Brexit process.”

Upon taking control, MPs from various parities brought forth five alternative plans; each plan was voted down. To avoid a feared “No deal Brexit,” Prime Minister Theresa May returned to Brussels once more reaching the April 11 agreement with EU leaders that set the new deadline for withdraw for Oct. 31.

The new delay is significant because it means the UK will remain for now in the EU, and thus must now participate in the upcoming European Parliament elections slated for next month.

With the new deadline now set for Oct. 31 and no solution in sight, only time will tell if this Halloween will be more trick or treat for the UK this fall.

Written by Matt Rohrer
Spring is here, and school is almost over, which means it’s time for students to decide what their fall plans are.

On Saturday, April 6, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., Prairie State College hosted an open house for community members to learn about and tour the PSC main campus. PSC has something for everyone, whether you are looking to begin or continue to expand your college education, change your current career path, pursue certificates and/or degrees, or take adult educational courses for your personal goals.

Those who attended received a chance to hear all about the programs and services that PSC offers, speak and meet with current students, and visit with the current staff and faculty members to discuss PSC life. This was especially helpful for graduating high school seniors because, often, community colleges are given negative stigmas and are seen as a last resort instead of a first choice.

However, PSC is dismissing these false notions by showing there is more than meets the eye when it comes to community college, PSC in particular.

The Dean for Career and Technical Education, Janice Kaushal, explained. “When I look around here, it is fabulous. We laid it all out, and we are demonstrating just how broad our programing is and how many opportunities we have for the students.”

For example, PSC will soon be offering a culinary program and physical therapy program. Those who attended received a chance to see a display of the current and new curriculum programs and services that PSC offers. There were also opportunities to talk to the current staff and faculty members to find more information on some of the most frequently asked questions when it comes to determining what college to attend, especially concerning cost and registration.

The financial aid office as well as the admissions office were open for service to explain to potential students that PSC offers a great education at an affordable price, so there is no need to trade in quality for quantity. In an interview with the Director of First Year Experience, Dr. Stefanie Coleman, she stated, “A lot of families cannot afford $150,000 for a Bachelor’s degree, but you know that you can clearly afford this, and then think of some other options as you go.”

To top this event off, fresh food, giveaways, raffles, and games were included. If this was an event that you missed out on, there are several ways to get a similar experience. See below.

For more information, contact Beth Wyack, Manager of Recruitment and Advising, at (708) 709-7776 or bwyack@prairiestate.edu or Gabrielle Sampedro, College Recruiter, at (708) 709-3569 or gsampedro@prairiestate.edu

Written by Julia Porco & TiAun Donald
Coach Brain Johnson has been coaching Prairie State College’s tennis team for five years now, and he has been extremely successful, winning the Illinois Skyway Collegiate Conference in 2015, 2016, and 2017. Although these accomplishments are newsworthy in and of itself, we want to focus on the academic success that Coach Johnson promotes in his players. Last semester, we at the Pioneer promised our readers an in-depth look at the struggles of the student athlete.

We sat in with Coach Johnson during one of the tennis team’s daily practices and began asking about the hours the student athletes are expected to put in. He replied, “We practice two-to-three hours a day, sometimes on Sundays; however, I am very lenient when it comes to keeping their grades up. My emphasis for these guys is to graduate, not just to get enough credits, and leave I want them to have that degree.” Coach Johnson’s words are not hollow, as he expects more out of his players than the average coach. To maintain eligibility as a Prairie State College Athlete, players are expected to keep a C average, above a 2.0 GPA, but that is not enough for Coach Johnson who requires a B average, 3.0 GPA, for all his players.

The requirements for the tennis team do not stop here though, as Coach Johnson also explained, “I do require that they carry more than the minimum credit hours [12]. Most of them are 16-18 credit hour students.” Although Coach Johnson seems to be bending these students to their limits, he makes sure not to let them break.

Coach Johnson also explained his routine for make-up days. These “make-up” days are for used when a student needs to take a day off from their weekly practice routine to focus on their studies. Coach Johnson encourages all of his players to take these whenever needed. It is apparent that the primary reason for the tennis team’s success are the high expectations and family atmosphere that was built by Coach Johnson.

When asked about this atmosphere, Johnson responded with, “Yeah, I am always trying to keep it that way.” After speaking with Coach Johnson, we sat down with one of his many international players, Jofre Tura, from Spain.

Early in the interview, Jofre explained that all but two of the tennis team’s players are international students, coming from places all over the world like Brazil, Poland, Jamaica, and even Zimbabwe.

When asked what are some of the great aspects of the tennis team, Jofre responded, “It is an opportunity; you can improve a lot of your tennis [skills] because Coach gets players from all over the world, guys who have been playing tennis their whole lives.” Jofre also went on to explain how Coach Johnson’s make-up days have been beneficially to him when studying for tests.

Finally, when asked if Coach Johnson and the tennis team have made a positive impact on his academics, Jofre said, “I think I am doing better because of Tennis. I think if I had more time I would be more lazy.”
On Friday, March 15, Prairie State College held a regional Speech tournament. We spoke with Natalie, co-captain with two years’ experience from Moraine Valley College, and Destiny, with two semesters of experience from PSC, who were competing against each other.

Destiny took part in the “Dramatic Interpretation” round, which involved acting out a play, and the persuasion round and a poetry round. Natalie participated in the persuasion and dramatic interpretation rounds as well as a communication analysis where she took an artifact and had to analyze it for ten minutes. She also participated in the “pros” round, which was another story telling/acting piece. Each contestant got to choose which rounds they would like to participate in.

There were about five people in each group, and eight schools participat-ed this year. After two rounds, they found out if they broke into the next round. If they broke, the winners moved on to the next round, which was the next day.

Many competitors make it into the next round for the next day; however, the PSC Speech team did not win the Regional tournament. That honor went to Moraine Valley. On a brighter note, this April, six competitors from the PSC Speech team went to the National Phi Rho Pi Speech and Debate Tournament in Nevada.

**WINNER of the SPEECH**

Elijah Leake won Gold in CA (Communication Analysis), Esmeralda Manzo won Bronze in Informative, Cahron Cross won Bronze in Poetry, and Danielle Turner won Bronze in Persuasive.
BLITHE SPIRIT

By Noel Coward
directed by Sammi Patti

Apr. 29
Barnes & Noble College Auditorium

SGA Sponsored show, FREE 2:30 p.m.
Evening show $5, 7 p.m.

Questions, contact Justin Vidovic jvidovic@prairiestate.edu.
STUDENTS OF PRAIRIE STATE COLLEGE

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On Your Commencement Ceremony of

GRADUATION!

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