

SPARTAN SUCCESS STORIES

by Aniyah McGill Racine, '25

Jimmy T. Martin



Jimmy T. Martin, a now successful business owner of the company named “Brrrn”, is an alumni of the Wyoming Valley West High school and graduated in 2003.

In October of 2021, Martin appeared for an assembly at WVWHS, as the first alumni starting the Spartan Success Story tradition.

“I always strive to be better the next day, but it was nice to come back literally 18 years after I graduated,” said Martin. “I was honored that Mr. Griffith (12th grade English teacher at WVW) asked me to kind of kick off the whole Spartan Success Story.”

Martin explained how the school felt like an extension of his home. “Seeing people that I’ve spent a few years of my life with, it kinda felt like an ongoing summer camp,” Martin stated. “It was a melting pot of so many different types of people interested in a lot of different things, under one roof.”

While in high school, Martin contributed to the school’s wrestling and football team as well as leading his senior fall play. Martin was captain of the wrestling and football team.

“I was interested in a lot of different things and I felt that was a flaw not a strength; to not feeling like you fit one certain group of people,” explained Martin. “But I’m happy that over time I realized it was a strength.”

Besides being a jack of all trades, Martin also formed a band in high school.

“Most notably...my sophomore year, [I] formed a boyband,” he said. “We were an ‘*NSYNC’ cover boy band named ‘Diversity.’”

Martin and a, now Wyoming Valley West history teacher, Randy Shoemaker who graduated in 2004, played on the wrestling and football team together. Martin and Shoemaker are still friends today and still keep in touch. They have known each other since elementary school and their bond continues to grow.

“I considered him, like a bigger brother, almost,” said Shoemaker as he explained how smart and kind Martin has been, since he had known him.

Martin now owns a company, ‘Brrrn’, that is most known for their ‘Brrrn Board’. The “Brrrn Board” has been seen on shows like ‘Kelly and Ryan’ and written about from companies like The New York Times.

“There’s something amazing about being able to look at something you built, and see a lot of people be psyched about it. It’s a really good feeling,” claimed Martin. “The business is really a reminder of resiliency; about thinking differently about how you do things and that progress isn’t linear. We need to adapt to new ways of thinking in order to move forward.”

Martin claimed himself as a ‘quote guy,’ and is no stranger to giving motivational sayings to inspire students, and encouraged Spartans to “Follow the unusual and heighten it.”

Kait Kerrigan

Kait Kerrigan, an American playwright/musical theater lyricist/ book writer, graduated from Wyoming Valley West in 1999.

While in high school, Kerrigan joined any chorus, play and/or musical she could. She also created two independent studies. One being creative writing intensive and a women’s literature course. “At the time the only women we read were a handful of poets and short story writers in two short units of Harper Lee,” Kerrigan said. The books Kerrigan read in class made her feel uninterested and made her want to explore authors on her own. Outside of the school based curriculum, she read Virginia Wolfe, Alice Walker, and Maya Angelou.

Kerrigan would stay hours after school and would talk with friends about books they were currently reading, artists that inspired them and more. Kerrigan feels strongly that school was a place for her to express her creativity and to pursue her interests no matter what else would hold her back.

Kerrigan expresses hope for diversity at WVW as her experience wasn’t as inclusive as it is now. “I wish there had been more space made for the kids who are not cis heteronormative and white,” Kerrigan said. “There wasn’t a great deal of diversity in our time at WVW and a lot of kids who came in contact with people who were ‘different’ were cruel about it.”

Kerrigan started a student-run musical program with the first show being “You’re a Good Man, Charlie Brown.” Kerrigan directed and produced the musical as the artistic director. The show was funded with student-run bake sales and other fundraisers. The program then went on for another ten years.

The student-run musical program was the first push for Kerrigan to become who she is now.

Kerrigan has many favorite pieces but she specially recommends one to high school students. “But if I could recommend one to high school students, it would be “The Mad Ones,” which is the piece, in a lot of ways, I learned to be a writer on,” Kerrigan said. “It’s also about high school and grief and coming of age which are some of my favorite topics.”

Kerrigan advises students to start their journey as soon as possible. All of the resources you need are offered for you all throughout your schooling career, so use them while you still can.

“You have to be your own advocate. You have to be your own producer,” Kerrigan said to any high school student who is inter-

