

New Year, New Henrico: Phone and Pass Policy Rundowns

Maya Tluchak
Copy Editor

New policies are taking effect in Henrico County Public Schools for the 2024 to 2025 school year: new identification (ID) badges for students, stricter cell phone regulations, and a new hall pass system, Securly Pass. On July 9, 2024, Governor Glenn Youngkin signed an executive order addressing schools across the commonwealth, implementing a cell phone-free policy for classrooms, according to the Henrico Citizen. Without the distraction of cell phones, in classrooms, the county is “trying to remove barriers for our students that distract them from engaging in learning, but not only engaging in learning with their teacher but with their peers,” said Marcie Shea, the Tuckahoe District representative on the Henrico School Board. These new measures consist of

storage containers for cell phones that are provided to every classroom in the school. Students can have their cell phones during the non-instructional times of lunch and the five-minute bell period between classes. “I think it makes everybody a little more focused in class,” said freshman Nate Cooper. However, they will face consequences of confiscation, referrals, or calls home for using them during class time, including study halls. ID badges are a new implementation at Freeman and across Henrico County that were advocated for “[in] a Project Maverick project two years ago,” said Mrs. Shea. Students are encouraged to wear the lanyard all school day and it serves as a safety and accessibility measure for them. “Each one has a QR code, which is unique to each student,” said Mrs. Shea. “It can be scanned as your library card, to pay for lunch, [and to get] on and off buses,” she said. They also categorize stu-



PHOTO: HENRICO COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

A student scans their ID card to buy lunch

dents by school, so “if a student from another high school was to come on Freeman’s campus with their ID, we would immediately know that they’re out of place,” said Mrs. Shea. “All Freeman students will have an ID that looks similar and unique to Freeman.” Another form of identification in Henrico County is the implementation of the Securly Pass system is meant to be in place of paper-written passes and increase safety and engagement at Freeman. “There’s just a ton of students in the hallway not learning, and we like kids learning,” said Freeman Principal, Dr. Marshall. Leaving class also means that you are missing out on important instruction time, therefore “it should be [considered] a big deal to leave class,” he said. The system also seeks to protect the school from student vandalism, “particularly all the bathroom

violations,” said Mrs. Shea. Securely Pass allows administrators to know “who’s who, who’s where, [and] when,” said Mrs. Shea. Students argue that “[Securely Pass] is a disruption to the class [to] have to get out [their] computer,” said senior Lila Holden. However, this new system is meant to be convenient. “Anytime something new comes along, it’s an obstacle for both the staff and students, but ‘I bet in a month [we] will be past that obstacle,’” said Dr. Marshall. Students, though, are concerned about safety issues that come with not having their cell phones on them when they leave the classroom. “I feel like not having that security of your phone to talk to parents if something happens in school could be bad,” said Nate. However, “they are visible to students at all times,” said Principal Dr. John Marshall. “We

understand that keeping them in the same room and keeping them where I can see them is something that students care a lot about, so that’s the thing we’re listening to.” There is a possibility that ID cards will, in the future, become even more a part of student’s daily routines. For example, Freeman’s annex building could be accessible by scanning the ID cards, or “one day it could be your attendance in class,” said Dr. Marshall. “We’re not there yet. I don’t want to promise that, but it’s where we should go.” Although these new implementations and policies can feel like a lot of change for the students around the county, they promote “high standards for behavior and academics,” said Dr. Marshall. “We put these things in to also make sure that it’s safe and we’re able to push students to be the best they can be.”

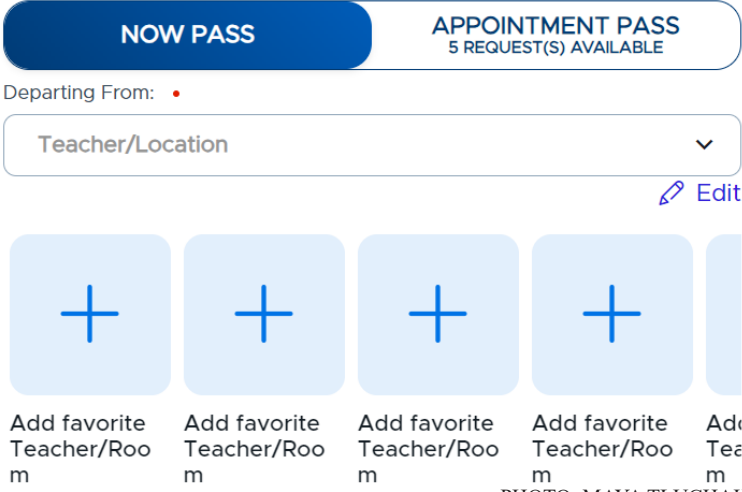


PHOTO: MAYA TLUCHAK

The Securly Pass website

Quioccasin Middle School Rebuild

Izzy Minkler
Sports Editor
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Quioccasin Middle School (QMS) is next up in the recent series of Henrico County School renovations that began with J.R. Tucker High School. The Henrico School Board has been rebuilding schools all over the county. Most recently, J.R. Tucker High School, Hermitage High School, and Highland Springs High School were subjected to renovations. However, the School Board has to fully approve the plan before construction can begin. To start the renovations, the construction team will tear down the school, relocate the classrooms into trailers, and begin to rebuild. Dubbed “QMS 2.0” by Principal Robert Stevens II, the school will boast the latest technology and classrooms. According to The Henrico Cit-

izen, the Henrico School Board has been planning to renovate QMS for around ten years now. Currently, the proposed plan for all Henrico school rebuilds has a budget of 340.5 million dollars. QMS will get around 89 million of that budget, with seven other elementary schools including Carver Elementary and Jackson Davis Elementary, using the rest of the allotted funds. “The current building is old and dark with very few windows and outdated fixtures.” “QMS has always been an old school, it was never really comfortable or welcoming, especially since it only has nine windows,” said senior Anna Hargrove, a QMS alum. “I am sad to see the building that holds so many memories for me go, but I am very excited to see the new building and hope it will become a better environment for the coming classes and students,” she said.

The school holds a lot of memories for alums. “I really loved the Big Gym, it was where my friends and I used to hang out,” said Anna. “I hope they can find some way to keep that kind of community space around in some way.” Senior and QMS alum Paisley Allan agrees with Anna that QMS is due for a renovation. “They desperately need windows; the building feels dark and stuffy,” said Paisley. QMS followed the trend of most schools built in the ‘70s, such as Mills E. Godwin High School, with very few windows and long hallways. “I used to love going to the library because it was really the only room that had big bright windows,” said Paisley. “It was the only place where I didn’t feel closed in.” Paisley’s younger brother will be attending QMS in the coming years. “I am excited that he gets to experience a school en-



PHOTO: QUIOCCASIN MIDDLE SCHOOL

Quioccasin Middle School mascot, the Griffin

vironment that makes him actually excited to come in every day,” said Paisley. “He gets to have all the new tech and the big windows that I didn’t get,” she said. According to the Henrico County Public School’s (HCPS) website, the QMS building is overcapacity. This new plan will fix that issue and make room for more future enrollment. Overcapacity is an issue that plagues HCPS schools because the older buildings aren’t equipped to handle the influx of students every year. Every year HCPS administrators present a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) to the School Board for approval. CIPs include permanent changes to a building, such as new bathrooms, heating and air conditioning, and flooring. In addition to permanent renovations, a CIP can include a complete renovation. QMS, for example, is set to be torn down and completely rebuilt from the foundation

up. CIPs can also include plans or proposals, however, those plans are dependent on the funding that the Board is willing to provide. All past approved CIPs are available to the public on the HCPS website. The QMS building plan is not public yet, however the CIP is public. According to the CIP, the latest concern with QMS is that the current building has a lot of accessibility issues. The CIP also outlines ideas or proposals for new schools and more rebuilds: Mills E Godwin High School, Glen Allen High School, and Rolfe Middle School are all on the list for future projects. However, as of now, there are no identified funding sources for these projects. The CIP is set to be reviewed by the School Board on October 4, and the approval meeting is scheduled for November 14. Then, we will know what the final plan will be for QMS and any other approved projects.



PHOTO: RICHMOND TIMES DISPATCH

Sign out front of Quioccasin Middle School

The Ins and Outs of Project 2025: A Recap

Matthew Wozniak
News Editor

With less than a month until Election Day, political discourse is ramping up. From social media platforms like X, previously known as Twitter, to the debate stage, a packet called Project 2025 has been at the forefront of the discussion about this election cycle.

This project is the Heritage Foundation's Presidential Transition Project, with the "Project 2025" title being a nickname for its most recent revision. Even though many may not have heard of the Heritage Foundation before this election season, they aren't new to the game. The group has been writing presidential "wish lists" for Republican presidential candidates since the election of Ronald Reagan in 1981.

The plan consists of four pillars: a database of personnel who could serve in the next administration, a training plan for said personnel called the "Presidential Administration Academy," a guide for what they want to see done in the first six months of the presidency, and the policy guide. Most of the focus has fallen onto that policy guide which outlines the overhaul of the Federal government that the foundation wants to



Presidential candidates Kamala Harris (D) and Donald Trump (R) at their September debate

see. Called "Mandate for Leadership 2025: The Conservative Promise," it mirrors the title of the original "Mandate for Leadership" guide made for the Reagan administration nearly 45 years ago.

Most voters aren't completely sure what the plan contains. The main Project 2025 document is over 900 pages long, and there are no official summaries or bullet points of what the plan aims to accomplish. Although not officially affiliated with any political party, it shares many similarities with the Republican party's platform, but also differs in ways.

Many former Trump staffers have contributed to the plan, including former director Paul Dans,

who was a senior advisor in the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Dans himself also said in July that the group has a "great" relationship with the former president and that he is "very bought into" the plan.

However, shortly after this, Trump himself claimed otherwise. "I know nothing about Project 2025," he said on Truth Social. "I have no idea who is behind it."

During the September 12 debate with Vice President Kamala Harris, he was more nuanced, saying the document was a combination of "some good, some bad." Trump also reiterated that he "[has] nothing to do [with it]."

The plan expectedly calls for



PHOTO: ASSOCIATED PRESS

many conservative policies, but isn't identical to the Republican platform. For example, Project 2025 does not call for a nationwide abortion ban. However, it does call for the withdrawal of the abortion pill Mifepristone from the market, which can end a pregnancy in the first ten weeks.

The Republican platform, contrastingly, does not mention the pill and supports protections for in-vitro fertilization and birth control. It also suggests a ban on "late-term abortions," a term which the platform leaves undefined.

Some of the most controversial suggestions in the document relate to the structure of the Federal government. The Plan advocates for

"unitary executive theory," a system where every Federal agency, even currently independent ones like the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), would be placed under the direct control of the president.

This would be a change from the current system, where the heads of these different departments are either part of the cabinet or appointed by the President after the end of their term, which is usually longer than the term length of the President. The FTC Chair, for example, has a term length of seven years.

Opponents of this theory argue that consolidating so much power in the President can lead to an autocracy, with the only thing left checking the President's power being Congress's power to impeach.

Another controversy of Project 2025 comes with its stance on diversity, education, and inclusion (DEI). The document suggests abolishing the Department of Education and ending any kind of DEI programs in schools and any other government department. This would end programs like Title I, which provides Federal assistance for schools in low-income communities. This idea is also extended to foreign aid, stating that staff for the U.S. Agency for International Development who "engage in ideological agitation on behalf of the DEI agenda" should be fired.

Van-GOgh!: New Immersive Experience in RVA



Guests enjoying the immersive room of the exhibition

Libby Mercer
Editor-in-Chief

The Van Gogh Immersive Experience: an art exhibit that transports you into the artist's famous masterpieces with technology, has made its way to Richmond. This roughly hour-long experience takes guests through Vincent van Gogh's life as an artist and his struggle with mental health while highlighting the beauty of his art.

The way Van Gogh's art is shown in this experience is unlike any traditional art museum. John Zaller, Executive Producer at Exhibition Hub and Van Gogh Richmond, works to bring "compelling stories [and] compelling content and present it in the most dynamic way possible," he said. The Van Gogh Immersive Experience does that with its use of technology that puts the viewer "inside" Van Gogh's paintings. "We create [an] environment where you can literally step into his paintings," said Mr. Zaller. "We built out [Van Gogh's] bedroom painting in 3D so you can walk into that painting and become a part of it."

Other than the 3D bedroom, the immersive experience uses projections to fully transport the viewer into Van Gogh's world. "Van Gogh's work with his very bold brush strokes and vibrant painting style implies an incredible amount of motion in it," said

Mr. Zaller. "With our technology, we're able to focus on the vibrancy of his colors and take that suggested movement [of brushstrokes] to interpret those paintings [and] give you an idea of what the artist was intending in his brushstrokes," he said. To fully capture Van Gogh's work, the gallery has many interactive experiences to put you in his works.

The Van Gogh experience has traveled throughout the United States and Europe, opening exhibits as close as Washington, D.C., and as far as Rome, Italy. As a vibrant city with rich culture and history, Mr. Zaller and his team knew Richmond would appreciate the exhibit when they were looking for their next stop: "[Richmond] is a place with a population that's looking for new experiences [and] new ways to experience content," he said. "It was a natural next step for us."

One of Mr. Zaller's hopes for this exhibit is that viewers come out of it with inspiration for art and Van Gogh. "The first thing we want visitors to take away is a deeper appreciation of the artist himself," said Mr. Zaller. Mr. Zaller wants people to come out of the experience with a better understanding of "what led him to create, what he created, a better understanding of who he was at the time that he lived, and why he painted what he painted," he said. The exhibit aids that desire of Mr.

Zaller's by including insight on Van-Gogh's past and the context for where he was when he painted the works presented in the exhibit. "You get to know the artist and his personal struggles [when he was] trying to figure out who he was and what he was meant to do," said Mr. Zaller. "It creates a powerful relatability to the artist himself."

This exhibit is meant to get guests excited about art and inspire them to follow their own passions, like Van Gogh. "We see a lot of visitors who come out saying they identified with the artist, and with the idea of a calling," said Mr. Zaller. "[It's] really satisfying to see people, first of all, respond so positively to artwork, and then secondly, feel inspired to go and create their own artwork," he said. Creating your own artwork is encouraged at the exhibit with a designated place in the exhibit for guests to make their own art and see it projected on the walls just like Van Gogh's.

Just as the exhibit inspires visitors to create art, Van-Gogh inspires Freeman art students. Van Gogh and his specific impressionist art style is an inspiration to senior Freeman art student and National Art Honor Society Co-President Madi Cain. "I do draw inspiration from [Van Gogh]," said Madi. "I like the way that [impressionist art] can convey emotion [while also conveying] what it physically looks like with so little detail," she said.

Freeman art teacher Mrs. Jones teaches Van Gogh's "Starry Night" in her Advanced Placement Art History class. Mrs. Jones spends a lot of time talking about Van Gogh's life and how that affected his art. "We are lucky enough to have a treasure trove of information about him because he wrote letters to his brother almost every day," said Mrs. Jones. "[Those letters] help us understand who he was, so we get to make that connection between his art and who he is," she said.

The Van Gogh Immersive experience will run until October. Grab your paintbrushes and get ready to be inspired!



GRAPHIC: IZZY MINKLER

Digital AP Testing

Nina Henley
Staff Writer

In May 2025, College Board, a non-profit organization that expands opportunities for high school students preparing for college, made an announcement. Twenty-eight out of the thirty-nine Advanced Placement (AP) exams that are offered for high school students are making the switch from paper to online. AP exam testing started in 1952; since then, the exams have been on paper. Out of the twenty-four APs that Freeman offers, thirteen are going fully digital, nine are going to be portioned where half is digital and half is paper, and two AP exams are remaining fully on paper.

Freeman AP Biology teacher Mrs. Keller had expected this change but the timing was a lot sooner than she had originally thought. "[The Freeman teachers] had been told [by College Board] that it was going to happen sooner or later, but due to integrity violations, they sped up the pace at which they went to online testing for everyone," said Mrs. Keller. The integrity violations consisted of multiple "released AP tests on Reddit and TikTok behind a firewall that people paid for to get information," she said.

One specific concern about this switch is how physical computers will respond to the new digitalized platform. With hundreds to thousands of students taking tests on the same online program, there are possible technology issues that may arise: wifi, internet, and computer function issues. However, Mrs. Keller is not worried: "I don't expect it to be a problem, because we've been doing online testing with SOLS for so long," she said. "[Freeman's] network should be okay."

Junior Abhishek Garg predicts that testing online will provide positive benefits as well. "AP testing will provide more efficient and faster grading because it is computerized, like how it was with SAT testing results this year," he said.

The environmental effects of using an abundance of paper for testing may have played a significant role in the switch to digital tests. "The amount of paper

they print for AP tests is insane," said senior Audrey Sisler. "Each student gets at least one hundred pieces of paper, especially for the English ones," she said.

The switch has created speculations on whether or not digital testing will benefit certain APs over others. Abhishek, who has taken two AP classes, predicts that there will be advantages in some classes. "The AP Computer Science exam would be good to be online because it's more adaptive to those fields and more realistic," he said.

Audrey, who has taken five AP exams, presumes that AP English exams will be given an advantage by testing online compared to others: "Typing would be so much easier and you'll have more time," she said.

On the contrary, some APs could potentially be more difficult online due to the way they are set up. "Math exams, like AP Calculus and AP Statistics, would be hard because you can't write next to the problems or brain dump all your information," said Audrey. "It's helpful to organize your work right next to the problem and when you're taking it online you can't do that," she said. "That could add stress to the exam."

According to College Board, APs like AP Calculus and AP Statistics will all respond to multiple-choice questions in Bluebook. Bluebook is an app where all the digital tests will be administered. However, all of the free response questions will be answered in a paper exam book as it has been done in previous years. "I think the hybrid approach could challenge students due to the difference in paces and the switch halfway through from online to paper testing" said Audrey.

Mrs. Keller anticipates that students will adapt well to the change, however, she is concerned that the teachers may have a hard time adapting to preparing students: "I think teachers will struggle to give students the experience of online testing," said Mrs. Keller. "I think from a logistical standpoint, it will be more difficult as a school to administer the test, just because we've never done it before," she said. Digital AP testing is going to be a new experience for the Freeman Family as a whole.

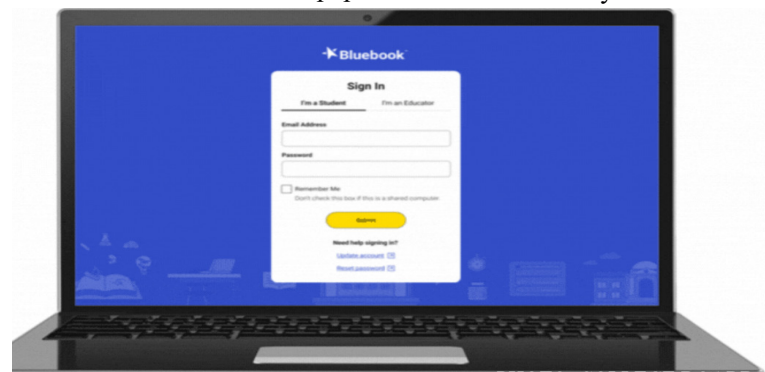


PHOTO: COLLEGE BOARD

Bluebook, the digital service used for online AP testing

Students Take Too Many APs?

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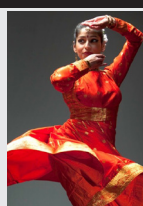
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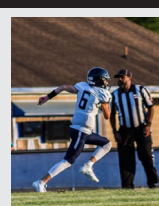
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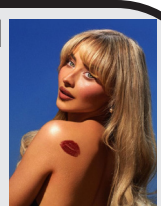
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The Race To Nowhere: Freeman’s Pressurized AP Classes

Cate Woodrum
Features Editor

To be a competitive Maverick, you have to fight to the top. This idea applies to much of the world, so learning to be in Advanced Placement (AP) classes is a good thing; but not at the cost of students’ learning and health. Pressure from the extremely competitive college admissions process has forced students to abandon their genuine passions in the classroom and front-load themselves with as intense of a schedule as they can handle. Advanced Placement classes effectively do two things: they demonstrate a student’s ability to handle college-level coursework and they provide a grade point average (GPA) boost. Colleges use this class-level difference in transcripts as an easy way to sort through the piles of applications. These two factors separate students from their peers by revealing how far students can push themselves before they break. Navya Lella, who currently sits at No. 1 in the 2025 class rank, attests to this challenge. She is currently enrolled in seven AP courses. Navya believes that it’s important to remember that not all AP classes are not uniform in terms

of difficulty or stress. “For me, AP United States History (APUSH) is a much harder AP class in rigor,” said Navya. While AP classes may be challenging, Navya believes that APs are genuinely enriching: “My first AP helped me prepare for notes in all other classes as well as time management.” When it comes to balancing AP classes, there must be a middle ground between Navya’s seven college-level courses and not challenging oneself. “Students should be able to take four AP classes max...You need to know your limits,” said Navya. A county limit to enforce mental health is essential. “10 years from now, you are not going to be thinking about how many APs you took,” said Navya. “Everyone should do what is right for themselves at this moment,” she said. We also need to consider teachers’ perspectives and their strain from APs as well. As students cram their schedules with more and more AP courses, the class sizes grow to unteachable levels. Cramming upwards of 38 students into a single classroom with a rigorous work schedule forces teachers to compromise their teaching methods for the sake of keeping up with the curriculum. With the sheer number of students in these classes, most of whom are also

taking too many other AP classes, both students and teachers cannot cope, causing the class to lose much of its academic merit. “They physically don’t have enough time in the night,” said Mrs. Hunnicutt, a Freeman English teacher who has taught both AP and non-AP classes. “There’s a disconnect between what people say about students’ mental health and then the pressure that colleges put on kids,” said Mrs. Hunnicutt. “I think that’s a disingenuous attempt to sound like they care about students’ mental health,” she said. Teachers, who would normally shape the course to be unique to their teaching and their students, are forced to abandon opportunities to keep up with the demand, both in numbers and curriculum. Change needs to be enacted. In a perfect world, students would accept that their mental health and education were more important than their transcripts, but asking teenagers to choose against their futures for the sake of their health is not fair. The county needs to mandate a limit, forcing the competitiveness to cap at a manageable level. According to The Western Hemisphere, Albemarle County Public Schools adopted a hard limit of nine AP classes throughout each student’s high school career. This cap is intend-

ed to curb the competitiveness of their student body and encourage them to pursue classes that reflect their passions. Due to each school system having different opportunities, colleges often compare applicants first and foremost to the other applications coming from the same pool. Therefore, a cap on AP courses would not hurt students’ transcripts, instead, it would create less academic pressure to overload one’s course load and allow students’ extracurriculars and

interests to be more meaningful. AP classes are a resource that should be used for students who want to be challenged in a healthy environment, not a tool to be abused with disregard for students’ education and health. A limit must be set in place to preserve the academic standard. Students should be able to be successful and competitive without subscribing to a course load packed with more college-level classes than they could ever be expected to succeed in.

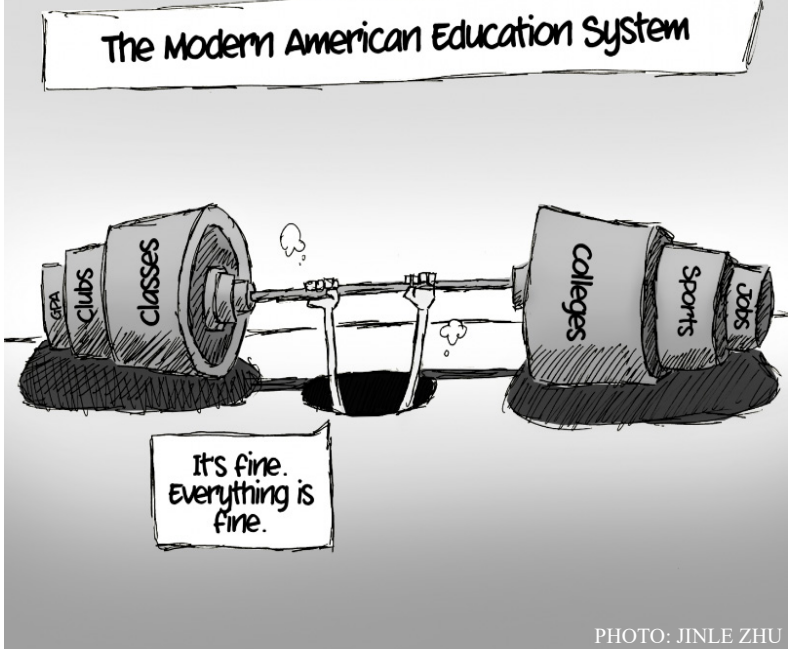
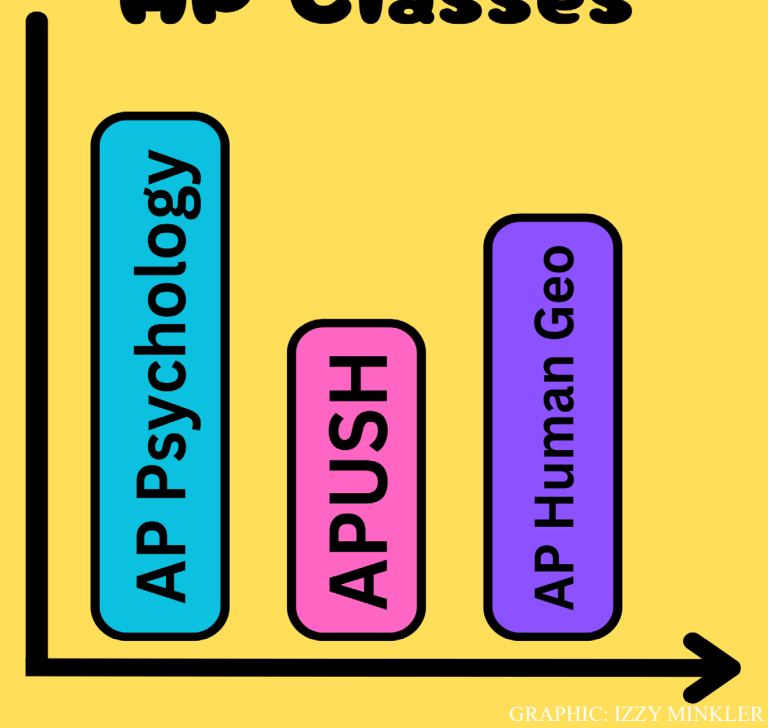


PHOTO: JINLE ZHU

Satirical cartoon about pressures of being a high school student

DSF’s Favorite AP Classes



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Physical education (PE) classes have been implemented as a mandatory part of the high school curriculum for centuries. At Freeman, ninth and tenth graders must take gym classes as a requirement to graduate. However, there are many arguments against making gym classes a graduation requirement for student-athletes, no matter their grade level.

Student-athletes typically attend daily practices and weekly games, therefore students feel as if PE can be too much stress for their schedule and body. “[I’m] already exerting myself enough, and then the stress of performing in gym [class] is not good for my sport [performance],” said freshman athlete Andrew Perez.

Student-athletes feel as though they already fulfill the physical requirements of PE, however, the health aspects are still a necessary part of the curriculum. “The portion that athletes will not get is the health education,” said Coach Clements. Athletes must learn how to take care of their bodies and minds and ask themselves: “What am I going to do to stay healthy?” “Hopefully, through PE and our health program, you learn how to take care of [yourself],” said Coach Clements.

Students also claim that PE takes up an unnecessary block of time in their schedule that could be used as a study period. “Since I’m a football player, I could use [a] study hall [block] to catch up on all my work, and any not turned in (NTI) [assignments],” said freshman Julian Gambrel.

Eliminating PE from student athletes’ schedules and graduate requirements also opens a spot for other credits needed to graduate high school, such as an art

A Pass for Gym Class?



PHOTO: WRIC NEWS

Freeman football, one of the many sports offered at DSF

class or language. “If I didn’t take gym class, I would do another elective so I can get [my] credits,” said Freshman Porter Sentz, a member of the junior varsity football team.

With underclassman student-athletes consistently participating in workouts, games, and practices, an added gym class is argued to negatively affect athletic performance and could potentially lead to overuse injuries. “I already get a bunch of exercise from field hockey, so I feel like I shouldn’t do it twice, in one day,” said freshman Ashby Belding.

However, PE purposefully does not consist of injury-inducing activities. “Typically in PE we’re not doing a repetitive motion longer than two weeks, and we switch units, or we take a break,” said Coach Clements. Although, there is still the risk of “acute injuries: you get hit in the face, twist an ankle, etc.” PE is designed to keep you healthy. The health and fitness curriculum that PE supplies to students “is something you have the rest of your life,” said Coach Clements. Although PE can be time-consuming, it doesn’t mean to put stress on your body or mind. “I would think most of our athletes who take a PE class want to be there and they enjoy be-

ing there,” said Coach Clements.

Some students might benefit from alternative PE options, which could be offered in the form of a semester online class or a “driver’s ed class where [students] only have to take the health portion, because within that health portion, [they are] also taught CPR, which is a life-saving skill,” said Coach Clements. Although this information is available through online resources, it’s beneficial to “see and hear why it’s important, coming from a credible [school resource],” said Coach Clements.

Student-athletes can participate in gym class at a higher ability, due to their extracurricular activities. On the other hand, non-athletes may participate at a lower ability. This is due to their target heart rate and overall effort, which differs based on how usual their exercise is. “Your intensity of effort may not be the same as someone who’s not conditioned,” said Coach Clements. However, “the only thing I ask [is] for them to participate at their own ability.”

Although student-athletes argue that they are reaping the benefits of PE through their sport, they are missing “information that is important,” said Coach Clements. “It’s all about being healthy,” he said.



PHOTO: RVA TIMES

Students participating in Henrico County gym class

Lalo’s Margarita’s Taste Test

Julia Connor
A&E Editor

Down Patterson Avenue, past The Shops at 5807 and Westwood Pharmacy, is a Mexican grill: Lalo’s Margarita’s. The bustling tables are filled with homemade chips, queso, tacos with savory seasonings, and top-tier churros. The authentic food bursts with flavor and the smell welcomes the guests for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. There are classic staples on the menu, like fajitas, tacos, and enchiladas, as well as a wide variety of specialties like mariscos, seafood, and fundido. I visited Lalo’s for dinner with my family and there was a line of people waiting for a table to clear. The interior is vibrant and cozy, featuring a bar with an intricate, beautiful backplash. The blue tile displayed at the bar stuck out to me as the

highlight of the interior because it gave the space a vibrant feel. We opted for an indoor table to shorten our wait time, however the restaurant features outdoor seating as well. The tables outside are highly sought after, especially during warm breezy nights. During dinner, we ordered an assortment of dishes. I had tacos de carne asada, which came with a side of refried beans and Spanish rice. Other dishes at the table were the pollo feliz, arroz con pollo, and pollo Yucateco. My carne asada was cooked perfectly tender and it is not a spicy dish, which is perfect for picky eaters like myself. The pollo feliz is a chicken dish with grilled onions, mushrooms, zucchini, and squash. With a bite, you could tell the vegetables were fresh and the chicken was cooked flawlessly. I am very particular about my chicken texture — I like it to be very juicy— and I loved this. The two other dishes also featured

chicken, which had the same perfect consistency. The pollo Yucateco was similar to the pollo feliz but it included different vegetables and came with a rich Yucateco Sauce that had a spicy kick to it. The arroz con pollo is a classic pick at any Mexican restaurant, it comes with delicious queso to pour over the crispy chicken and plain rice. This is a delicious, but safe option for picky eaters or people without a strong spice tolerance. Since my taste buds and I enjoyed my new restaurant discovery, I ordered it for lunch take-out another day. The parking is simple for pickup and you can find a spot in either the front or the back of the restaurant. This time, I only got two dishes: the arroz con pollo and the pollo Yucateco. The arroz con pollo was delectable, however, the chicken was a little too crispy for my taste. Rest assured, others gladly enjoyed it. The pollo yucateco had outstanding fresh vegetables, though the vegetables were a different variety than those served at the restaurant. The Yucateco has elevated flavors, making it my favorite dish from the restaurant and the most adventurous one I have tried. Lastly, I ordered myself a little treat for all my hard taste-testing work. I selected the churros because they looked delectable and they did not prove me wrong. The warm, sugary, cinnamon chur-



PHOTO: ALLISON EVANS

The Interior of Lalo’s Margarita’s
ros graced my taste buds, and they even came with two bonus sauces. The rich flavor of the chocolate sauce paired splendidly with the churro. The cherry red sauce had a light enjoyable flavor, but it was a bit overpowered by the tastiness of the churro. The creator behind my, and now your, new go-to restaurant is Eduardo Lalo Macias. Macias owns six other restaurants in the greater Richmond area, including Chicano’s Cocina, Lalo’s Pinches Tacos, and Mexican Grill. Macias has been working up the ladder in the restaurant business since 1995, according to Chicano’s Cocina’s website. The first restaurant he opened was The Patron Mexican Restaurant in the Mechanicsville area. Now, the restaurants are spread throughout Midlothian, Powhatan, and the Fan. The mission of his restaur-

rants is to “use fresh and special Mexican ingredients to bring and share the Authentic-Mexican flavor into Richmond,” said Macias. Having a red chili pepper as an apostrophe in the restaurant’s logos is his special trademark. Macia’s family is originally from Jalisco, Mexico, but he was born in California. He came to Richmond when he was 16, and helped his uncle, Jose Garcia, who had his own restaurant. His uncle taught him about the restaurant business: “He treated me like a son and taught me how,” said Macias. “I did it all from dishwasher to bartender to manager.” Go and visit any of Macias’ delicious restaurants and I know you will enjoy them just as much as I did. They all feature an extensive menu, a welcoming and quick staff, and most importantly, authentic Mexican cuisine.



PHOTO: RAVEN SMITH

Lalo’s carne asada tacos

Getting From Point A to Point B



PHOTO: WRIC ABC 8NEWS

A GRTC bus stop

Matthew Wozniak
News Editor

By far, the most predominant form of transportation in America is cars. Since World War II, cars have catalyzed the way to an extreme suburban sprawl. Regulations like minimum parking requirements — laws that mandate a certain number of parking spaces per building — have only exacerbated the issue. In the United States, there are more than two billion parking spaces for 250 million registered vehicles. The lack of spending in the public transportation sector means that the vast majority of Americans have no other safe alternative to driving. Around 80% of drivers feel they have “no choice” but to use cars, according to a report by Transportation for America, because of the design of the transportation infrastructure they have around them. Cars are expensive. For lower income families, a quarter of their household spending can be on transportation. On average, U.S. households spent nearly \$11,000 on transportation in 2021. This is a combination of a car insurance, repairs, maintenance, gas, and other costs. In contrast, the average household in the UK spends less than £4,000 on transportation a year. The solution to the American car dependency problem is simple: end residential only zoning. Allowing corner shops to be on streets where people live ends the requirement to drive for 10 min-

utes just to go pick up some eggs. According to MIT professor Charles Fine, the best way to improve this situation is to use existing infrastructure. For example, the Chicago Metra Rail commuter rail system expands far into the suburbs on over 1,200 miles of track. However, this system is extremely inconvenient to use as fares are high and the trains and you could potentially be waiting up to more than an hour for a train. Increasing frequency for these lines would be much less expensive than building whole new infrastructure. The COVID-19 pandemic was devastating for progress on American public transportation. Transit ridership still hasn’t returned from pre-COVID levels, down 40 million people per week from March 2020 to March 2023. Tackling car dependency is something that European countries have done well, especially the Netherlands. Much of Europe built the core of its cities before the advent of the automobile, and it shows. However, even with similar cities in the States, like Boston and New York, we can see the auto lobby’s successes when it comes to things like the Cross Bronx Expressway. In western Henrico, there are very few lines for anyone interested in using the Greater Richmond Transit Company (GRTC), the Richmond metro’s bus system. For me, at least, the closest station is a 30 minute walk up Gaskins Rd, with only half of it being on a sidewalk. School buses are the closest thing we have to proper public transit, and many people get to school early or leave late which makes it not convenient at all to use.



PHOTO: SCOTTY GREGORY

The DSF Parking Lot: most students arrive to school by car

“ I really like how the hallways are a lot less crowded, and I feel like it keeps track of everyone better.”
Anonymous (10)

“I find that securly passes are not practical because we have to interrupt the teacher in class to go places.”
Millie McCabe (11)

“I feel like we should not need to make a pass for things like just getting water because we are only gone for such a short period of time”
Lucy Robinson (9)

GRAPHIC: IZZY MINKLER

HE SAID

Matthew Wozniak
News Editor

SHE SAID

Cate Woodrum
Features Editor

FALL FAVORITES

<p>Charlie Brown is fantastic, but I think “A Charlie Brown Christmas” clears the other two.</p> <p>I’m scared of the great pumpkin from Charlie Brown running over me.</p> <p>I love getting candy but I haven’t done it in years. Maybe I should try it again before it’s too late.</p> <p>Pumpkin spice bread is amazing (it’s basically cake). Never had a PSL either.</p> <p>The fall sun and crisp breeze in the late fall is definitely the best weather there is.</p>	<p>Charlie Brown</p> <p>Horror Movies</p> <p>Trick or Treating</p> <p>Pumpkin spice Latte (PSL)</p> <p>Weather</p>	<p>So funny and nostalgic, the great pumpkin is legendary.</p> <p>I don’t understand why people like to be petrified in their own homes.</p> <p>I loved it as a kid and getting to pass out candy now is so sweet (Woz it’s already too late).</p> <p>...I’ve never had a PSL.</p> <p>My favorite weather, I miss wearing pants so much in the summer.</p>
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Emma Crone: Queen of Tumbling

Maryam Vohra
Staff Writer

Senior Emma Crone is flipping at football games and rebounding back from injuries. Emma has been a part of the Freeman cheer and gymnastics team since she was an underclassman and began her gymnastics career when she was three years old. Now, as a senior, Emma is one of the captains of the cheer team, among fellow seniors Kenzie Edmonson and Leah Lewis. Emma started cheerleading in her sophomore year after watching the upperclassmen on the team. “They were super sweet girls and [they] loved cheering so much; seeing that inspired me to start doing cheer,” she said. In addition to being on the cheer team, Emma is the go-to member of the team when it comes to tumbling sequences. She tumbles at football games and pep rallies. “I do get nervous because there is a whole crowd watching me,” said Emma. “[However] it’s something that I love to do, and I’m confident in myself and my skills,” she said. At football games, Emma is known for spelling out each letter in “Freeman” using backhandsprings and twisting to display each letter. One of Emma’s cheer coaches, Coach Smith, has seen her grow since she joined the program in 2022. “Emma came into our program as a gymnast just trying cheer

for fun,” said Coach Smith. “It has been amazing to watch her love for the sport grow,” she said. As a gymnast, Emma had always suffered from back pain. In November 2023, at the beginning of Emma’s junior year and winter gymnastics season, she was diagnosed with two lower lumbar fractures in her back and had to wear a back brace for six weeks, putting her out for season. Emma took it as a learning experience:

“Sometimes, taking a break is what you need.”
- Emma Crone

As an athlete, [physical] strength



Emma and the DSF competitive cheer team after placing 2nd in the Region and qualifying for state

is pushing through and ignoring how you’re hurting, but real strength is finding what’s wrong and being able to fix that.”

Due to her injury, Emma had to stop doing gymnastics, but she chose to see that as a blessing in disguise. She used the opportunity to focus on her academics. “I was taking five AP classes and was doing gymnastics and cheer at the same time,” said Emma. “If I didn’t hurt my back, I don’t know how I would have managed that.”

After six months, Emma made a full recovery and got back into the swing of things in May 2024. “Despite the injury break, Emma returned at the same skill level and has continued to grow even more this season,” said Coach Smith.

Emma’s cheer coaches have

played a role in her cheerleading journey. “My cheer coaches have always been willing to listen to me, how I’m feeling, and work through what I’m able and not able to do.”

As a freshman on the gymnastics team and a sophomore starting the cheer team, Emma “found role models as a freshman,” she said. This inspired her to be an upperclassmen role model for the underclassmen.

“Emma shows up every day giving 110 percent and encouraging them to do the same... her team respects her and counts on her positive energy and advice”
- Coach Smith

“Emma is a good leader, she always talks to me,” said Delilah. “I would love to be in her position one day,” said freshman Delilah Schreher, the only freshman on the team.

Emma is also known for her dedication and work ethic at practice. Since starting the cheer team, Emma has become a “trusted friend to all, and holds herself and her teammates accountable,” she said.

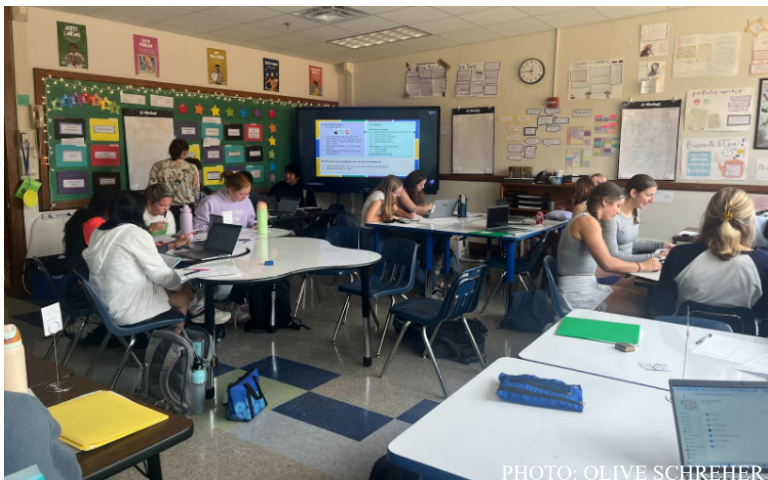
Despite her injuries along the road, Emma helped Freeman’s competitive cheer team qualify for the State Championships last



Emma with fellow teammate, McKenzie Edmondson

year. They qualified for the first time with “the work [that] they put into [practice] every single day,” said Coach Smith. Emma is excited about the upcoming competition season: “So far, we have put so much work into our routine, and I can’t wait to see how it plays out,” she said. Emma is excited for the remainder of her senior year but is sad it is her last year cheering with Freeman. “I don’t want to say goodbye. It’s like finding your place, I found my people, and I found my team.”

Mrs. Barbolish: Mastering Math



Students working on mastery in Mrs. Barbolish’s class

Olive Schreher
Staff Writer

Mrs. Barbolish joined the Freeman Family only three years ago. Since then, she has introduced the concept of “mastery” to several math classes at Freeman and has advanced to become the head of the math department. She developed the current form of mastery throughout her career because “I want students to say, ‘Oh, I’m not good at this skill yet,’ and [then have] mastery help guide them,” said Mrs. Barbolish.

Mastery is the comprehensive knowledge or skill in a topic. Mrs. Barbolish’s goal in using mastery in the classroom is that she “need[s] [the student] to un-

derstand all of these concepts at some point,” she said. “It might not be the day of the test, but I need [the student] to know it at some point and in some way.”

In seventh-grade, Ms. Barbolish, catching on to Algebra 1 easily, helped students who struggled in the class. Ms. Barbolish’s teacher recognized her efforts to help her peers and suggested that she consider becoming a teacher in the future. Mrs. Barbolish attended the University of Vermont (UVM) for her undergraduate degree where she majored in Mathematical Sciences and Secondary Education; then for Graduate school where she studied Complex Systems and Data Science. UVM’s curriculum ultimately led Mrs. Barbolish to introduce the idea of mastery at Freeman. “[UVM] calls it profi-

ciency-based learning, but it’s the same thing,” said Mrs. Barbolish. “[Mastery] changed a lot when I came here, and the rest of the math teachers helped improve it, to make it more rigorous,” she said. Mastery has evolved in Mrs. Barbolish’s time here and has become part of the curriculum in all math classes. Mastery is:

“An educational philosophy that gives students time to learn from their mistakes without penalty”
- Mrs. Pike

a math teacher at Freeman, who has been teaching for fifteen years. Mastery is a method that teaches students the material through repeated practice. “It gives teachers and students a chance to make their learning pace slightly more individual in a system that’s really not set up for individualized learning,” she said.

The focus shifts to learning and away from grades because the student’s grade isn’t as reliant on quizzes and tests. “When we grade students based on a mastery portfolio, those individual checkpoints aren’t a record in the gradebook,” said Mrs. Pike. Instead, the teacher reviews the student’s check-

points, tracks their progress, and then the student reflects on their level of mastery of each concept. The introduction of mastery has “honestly drastically changed the way I think about grading,” said Mrs. Pike. “We [have seen] really positive results, both in student mindset and in content,” she said.

Students often overestimate the stress that comes with mastery, however, “mastery helps [students] practice math more often,” said junior Gabriella Mazzeo, a student in Mrs. Barbolish’s Advanced Placement (AP) Calculus class. Gabriella soon discovered it was useful and preferable to tests: “[You] have the comfort of knowing that your grade is probably going to be better than what it would have been... on a test grade,” she said.

In addition to appreciating the impact of Mastery, Mrs. Barbolish’s students and colleagues express their appreciation for her. “Mrs. Barbolish was good at teaching Algebra because she was giving us different methods and helping us understand the content,” said Gabriella. Mrs. Barbolish tends to focus on the students’ deeper understanding of a concept. “The class is almost discussion-based, which is kind of abnormal for a math class so that really helps you not just know how to do something, but know why this certain thing is happening,” said Gabriella.

In the math department, Mrs. Barbolish “leads from a place of

understanding... versus just coming in with her own ideas” said Mrs. Pike. “I’m really excited to see how Mrs. Barbolish takes the department and capitalizes on the talent that we have,” she said.

Mrs. Barbolish teaches students and strives to learn from the teachers around her. “My goal is to take the awesome parts of each teacher and share them with everyone else so that the math department can take all the best pieces of all of our classes and put them together,” said Mrs. Barbolish. Upon learning of the opportunity to become chair of the math department, Mrs. Barbolish discussed the position with her colleagues, and “they showed me how it can really be focused on student learning, which is what I care about,” she said. “I just want to be a good teacher, and now I want to have a good department.”



Mrs. Barbolish

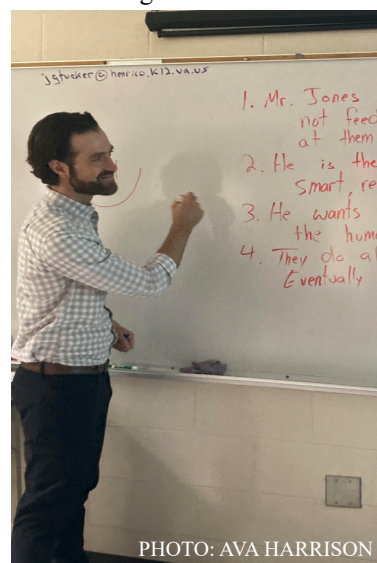
Mr. Tucker: Freeman’s New 9th Grade English Teacher

Ava Harrison
Staff Writer

Mr. Tucker, a new English teacher at Freeman, brings “positivity” and “enthusiasm” into his classroom, said freshman Ella Vu, one of his honors students. Last year, he was introduced to the Freeman family as a board substitute for a teacher who did not return. Now, Mr. Tucker teaches ninth-grade honors and college prep English classes at Freeman.

Mr. Tucker’s path to teaching wasn’t linear: “It wasn’t something I always knew I was going to do,” he said. He graduated with an English degree from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech) and later started substitute teaching. After realizing that he liked substitute teaching, he went back to school at Old Dominion University to get his master’s degree to become a teacher. Mr. Tucker likes to encour-

age discussion and debate between his students in the classroom. “I always tell my students it’s not necessarily about what opinion you have, it’s about [if] you can defend it and [if] you can express it in a way that makes sense to others,” he said. Something Mr. Tucker is look-



Mr. Tucker teaching Animal Farm

ing forward to teaching this year is Animal Farm. “It’s going to be cool and it’s going to coincide with the election that’s happening, so [it] should be interesting,” he said.

Since becoming a board substitute last year and now working as a full-time teacher, so far it’s “been great,” said Mr. Tucker. “I really like the culture of the school, I like how diverse it is,” he said. “Students [have] been super nice and friendly, same with the other teachers.”

Mr. Tucker’s students have positive things to say about him, as well. “I think he’s a cool teacher; he knows how to teach and comes to school with a smile on his face,” said Ella.

In terms of his teaching style, “he makes us make notes manually,” she said. Ella believes it will help her be successful throughout the year because “it implements [the content] in our heads,” she said. In terms of the writing curriculum, “[his] teaching [style] is really good, and I think that



Mr. Tucker

it would help people that don’t like to write or struggle to write,” said Niyhanna Marshall, a freshman in Mr. Tucker’s College Prep English class. “He is a very good teacher... He doesn’t give up on anybody,” she said.

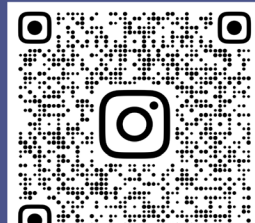
Even though Mr. Tucker has not been at Freeman long, people are already comfortable with him. “Everybody just has said he fit in so incredibly well from the get go,” said Mr. Durrett, an English teacher at Freeman and the English Department Chair. He also has a sensitivity to him. “I think

he connects really, really well with people and especially students,” said Mr. Durrett. He came in [as a board substitute] and just seemed to create order and peace as soon as he was in there,” he said.

Previously, Mr. Tucker worked at Binford Middle School in Richmond City. There, he started an outdoor program that was, “Incredibly well loved and attended by the student body” said Mr. Durrett. Mr. Tucker is still new to Freeman so he has not been involved in many extracurricular things, but “I think he’s still getting his feet wet, [and] he loves the outdoors,” said Mr. Durrett. “He has said that he would love to do something with that here at Freeman.”

Overall, students have said that Mr. Tucker is a good teacher and they feel they will have a successful year. The teachers believe that Mr. Tucker will bring creativity and positivity to the English department and to Freeman as a whole.

Scan for New Staff Members!



GRAPHIC: IZZY MINKLE



Kat Herzog Attends Paris Olympics

Vrusha Pramod
Staff Writer

The chance to see Olympians compete is only available to a few, and one of Freeman's seniors, Katherine (Kat) Herzog, claimed that she would "10 out of 10 do it again!" Kat attended women's soccer, field hockey, gymnastics, and rugby events with her sister and parents. "I actually got to meet the Australian field hockey team," Kat said. "My sister, she and her best friend play field hockey; she said, 'Katherine, we are going to meet these people if it's the last thing we do,'" said Kat. "We were sitting really close, and they walked up and wave[d] to

us. Then, [after the game] their team walked out and I got 50 pictures. It was really cool," she said.

Kat was also able to see some of Team USA's artistic gymnasts, such as Simone Biles and Suni Lee. "I did gymnastics for around two years, [and now] I'm a cheerleader, so I at least understand that part," said Kat.

Team USA won three Olympic gold medals for artistic gymnastics this year. Biles surpassed many other decorated gymnasts by winning her sixth and seventh Olympic gold medals. NBC Olympics also stated that "The team's final gold moved Biles' Olympic medal tally to eight, surpassing Shannon Miller to become the most decorated U.S. Olympic gymnast in history."

However, in a recent interview



PHOTO: KAT HERZOG

Kat and her family in front of the olympic rings in Paris

on Jimmy Fallon's Tonight Show, Biles claims she is unsure if she will be returning to the 2028 Olympics. "First, I'm getting older, 27 is a little bit old for a gymnast," she said. "Outside of the gym, I'm young! But in the gym? I am old."

While there is a chance Biles may not be present, Kat still hopes to attend the 2028 Olympics in Los Angeles (LA), California. Instead of being guests this time, Kat and her family hope to be volunteers. "Essentially, you walk around with a really nice jacket and they give you a VIP lanyard, so you get to go behind the scenes and everything," said Kat. "You [hold] a sign that says 'go that way,' and you stand there for hours on end, but you get free entrance to the games," she said. In addition to access to

the games, there's potential for volunteers to meet athletes behind the scenes. "When you volunteer, I assume you can meet at least some of them because you can volunteer at a shuttle so you're walking athletes around," said Kat.

Although Kat said attending the games was a great way for her and her family to spot Olympians, that wasn't the only way they spent their time in Paris. "That's the other cool thing about Paris, they kept everything within the city, because a lot of the times at Olympic Games, they're in a separate arena that's forever away," Kat said. "My family would be sightseeing [at the Eiffel Tower], and all of a sudden the Spanish cycling team would just like to ride by," she said.

Overall Kat said the experi-

ence at the 2024 Paris Olympics this summer was a dream come true for her and her family. "My mom, when she was 13, watched Mary Lou Retton win gold in the LA Olympics, and she watched it online in a little house in New York, and thought: 'One day I'm going to go see this in person,'" said Kat. "So, when she finally got to see it, it turned out to be a really emotional experience for her, it was really cool," she said.

Just as Paris fulfilled Mrs. Herzog's childhood dream, Kat describes her time at this year's Paris Olympics as "One of the best experiences me and my family have ever had." Kat looks forward to attending more events in 2028, as well as possibly meeting more Olympians!



PHOTO: KAT HERZOG

Gymnasts huddle at games

Celebrating diversity: Festival of India Comes to Richmond

Emerson Post
Staff Writer

The Festival of India is an upcoming event in the city of Richmond, attracting people from all over Virginia to the Greater Richmond Convention Center. It will take place on Sept. 28 and Sept. 29 for two days of music, dance, food, and culture. The Hindu Center of Virginia receives a majority of their proceeds from this festival, helping to stabilize the funding of future festivals in the coming years. People of all ages are welcome to the festival which will have a plethora of activities for children, as well as older citizens.

Attendees of this event can take part in a diverse program of culture, containing many live perfor-

mances, children's games, and a wide variety of food vendors. One can also sample many different varieties of Indian cuisine; all of which are supplied by local Indian restaurants and families, and prepared fresh in front of patrons. A volunteer base consisting of small businesses, local boutiques and clothing stores, local artisans, and even families and students at schools around the festival support it each year by working in different stalls. Stalls at the festival are booths that sell goods and also give people a chance to do certain crafts such as henna and face painting.

Junior Chandan Kuchina, has taken part in volunteering in the past. "I got to meet new people, and learn about [Indian] culture," said Chandan. The Festival of India isn't described as an event, but rather an opportunity to learn

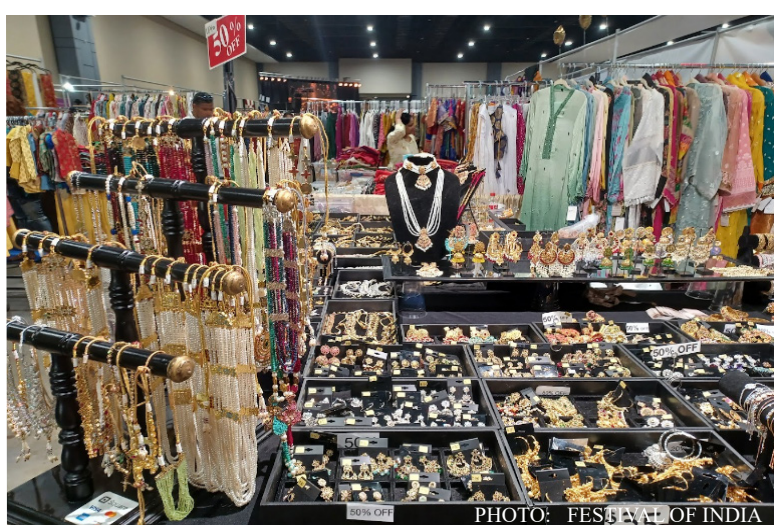


PHOTO: FESTIVAL OF INDIA

Jewelry at the Festival of India

about Indian culture, and how they live their day-to-day lives. "[I like that with] festivals like these, people can learn more about other people's cultures," said Chandan. "I think that it is really important in Richmond today," she said.

Along with the other activities and food stalls about Indian culture, the festival offers traditional performances of Indian music, such as "Fusion." Indian Fusion music is a genre of music that combines traditional Indian music with different aspects of other genres, like jazz, hip-hop, rock, and some styles of electronic music. Junior Aiden Rao got to experience performances of this type of music live for the first time this past year. "It was a very positive environment," said Aiden. "It was extremely energetic, fun, and

nice to meet new people," he said.

In addition to live music, performances at the festival include two main types of classical Indian dance: Bharatanatyam and Kathak; as well as Bollywood-style dances. Volunteers participate in the performances, in which both children and their parents are encouraged to participate. Five categories of dances have been added to the festival recently: White Out, Glam, Glow, and Glitter, Colors of "Kapoors," Palette of Colors, and Spectrum of Celebration.

Each category has its distinct lens into various aspects of Indian culture. White Out is significant in rituals and ceremonies, like weddings where white signifies purity. Glam showcases the "sparkle" that Bollywood entertainment forms offer. Glow symbolizes the victory

of light over darkness. Glitter is often a part of traditional attire for festivals and weddings in India. Lastly, the Kapoor family has had a major impact on Bollywood, and this theme celebrates their legacy.

All of these themes have brought festival attendees together for multiple live performances that the volunteer staff spent a lot of time preparing for. The festival also hosted a fashion show which featured different styles of clothing seen in India.

Mohini Nallapaneni, fundraising director for the Festival of India, has worked at the festival in years past with people of similar backgrounds throughout the past years. "I love the festival as there is continuous entertainment and food all day, and shops at the best vendors," said Ms. Nallapaneni. "You get to see all your friends, and socialize with people you were unable to see in the last few months," she said.

The first Festival of India in Richmond was first held in 1981, by Dr. M.G. Kurup, and ended up drawing a crowd of about 1500 people. The variety of activities for both children and adults was very different from today, but as Richmond has given more attention to this event, the event has seen an increase in attendees. Last year, over twenty thousand people attended the festival. The festival has continued to grow in the past 43 years alongside Indian culture in Richmond, with the mission to provide a place of camaraderie and culture for the Indian community.



PHOTO: FESTIVAL OF INDIA

People gathered at the Festival of India

Lewis Ginter's Flowers After 5 Concert

Saanvi Gourishetty
Staff Writer

Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens is hosting a series of live concerts by local and regional acts each Thursday evening until October 24. The concert will be hosted in the Grace Arents Garden: a popular area at the Gardens for special events. Local musicians perform a variety of genres there, creating an ambiance that resonates throughout the Gardens.

This year's Flowers After 5 lineup includes bands such as Abrams Bridge, The Jangling Reinharts, The Dan Schutt Band, Main Street Station, Whiskey Rebellion, and more. Flowers After 5 also hosts a sub-event called Fidos After 5. This event takes place on the second and fourth Thursday nights until October 24. Fidos After 5 has partnered with the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) so you can enjoy

live music with your furry friend. Rick Schaffer, a Freeman graduate and performer with his band The Jangling Reinharts at the Flowers After 5 concert has "been fortunate to play at Lewis Ginter for years," he said. "We went about seven years in a row playing a concert for Father's Day," said Rick.

The Jangling Reinharts were drawn to this event seven years ago as they wanted to play at an event with a broad audience. "Flowers after 5 is a larger crowd and draws a more diverse demographic," said Rick.

The diversity of the crowd that

attends Lewis Ginter also helped. The Jangling Reinharts showcase their talent. "We play a lot of clubs and private events but love to do concerts where we feel we can showcase our best material to many new folks, [and] this event allows for that," said Rick.

The band's decision to play in the fall as opposed to the summer proved beneficial. "The move to playing Flowers after 5 is not only cooler but is exposure to a larger crowd," said Rick. Many concertgoers are also drawn to the garden's natural environment and comfort. "It's gorgeous in the garden," said Rick. "People are coming for the atmosphere and ambiance of music outside in a garden setting," he said. Attendees can experience the music from their own picnic blankets or experience the show while wandering through the Garden's scenic areas. As outside food and drink are not allowed on the garden premises, food is purchasable on-site under the Bloemendaal

House Tent from 5 to 8 p.m. "Lewis Ginter does a nice job of offering a variety," said Rick.

Freeman student William Luginbill has previously attended the concert and remembered the venue's scenic views. "I was up on the hill, and you can see a lot of Lewis Ginter including a nice sunset," said William. His experience consisted of "a Southern rock concert, [which] I thought was pretty fun," he said.

There are various reasons the concert has such a high rate of attendance. "Each band will bring their fans," said Rick. "Offering the variety of blues, dance, Americana, and rock [music] surely exposes the gardens to a different group of fans," said Rick. This high level of diversity within its music "attracts and appeals to different people and different groups," said William.

The concert's varying types of live music welcome "the diverse community of Virginia," said Rick. "Part of the attrac-

tion of [the Virginia] community is its arts; music is a huge part of that," he said. "A vibrant art scene attract[s] new people which is exemplified in this concert."



PHOTO: WILLIAM LUGINBILL

The crowd gathered for the concert at Lewis Ginter

"If you play music, you want to be heard by as many folks as possible; this event allows for that."

- Rick Schaffer

Coach Bailey: New Addition to Field Hockey

Tylerson Tweardy
Staff Writer

The Freeman Athletic Department welcomes a new junior varsity (JV) field hockey coach, Coach Bailey: a graduate student at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU).

Coach Bailey's love for the sport began in the sixth grade when her physical education teacher suggested that she should try out; which resulted in Coach Bailey making the team as a goalie. "I play[ed] for Hickory Middle School and Saints [Field Hockey Club], and I progressed quickly," said Coach Bailey. "I was invited to play in events such as the USA Field Hockey National Indoor Tournament with less than a year of playing under my belt," she said.

In addition to field hockey, Coach Bailey competitively swam, a sport she went on to commit to at The University of Mary Washington (UMW). "I joked that I should ask to walk on [the UMW Field Hockey Team] since I had played once upon a time," said Coach Bailey. After contacting the field hockey coach, she was invited to practice to display her athletic abilities for the sport. She accepted an invite for the spring and fall field hockey seasons, "It allowed me to once again find my love for athletics," said Coach Bailey.

Coach Bailey now attends the VCU Graduate School as a first-year in the Doctorate Physical Therapy program. She plays club field hockey for VCU and now coaches the JV Field Hockey



Coach Bailey with her team after their first scrimmage

team at Freeman. Coach Bailey keeps busy with school and field hockey: "Managing my crazy schedule is something I'm honestly still working on," said Coach Bailey. However, in Coach Bailey's crazy schedule she finds time to do fun stuff such as "going to VCU sports and Richmond Flying Squirrels games," she said.

Coach Bailey has built a plan for improving Freeman's JV Field Hockey Team: "If we can have consistency with basic skills, then we can build from there," said Coach Bailey. "I want to keep my attitude positive and make practices [and] games a safe space for constructive criticism."

Freshman Livee Mungo is a captain for the JV Field Hockey team. "Coach Bailey has been really supportive throughout the season with helping players realize their mistakes both on and off the field," said Livee.

Coach Bailey is all about "sharing and having fun," she said.

The primary goal for the JV team this year "is to bring back a love for the sport," said Coach Bailey. This refers to the rough past the field hockey program faced over the past year, since "last year's environment was filled with a lot of negativity from the coach and players," said Coach Bailey.

One of the varsity team's captains and senior Campbell Cox has noticed Coach Bailey use a variety of coaching techniques to improve upon the entire program, JV and varsity. "She had [all of us] watch a field hockey game between Mary Washington and Lynchburg," said Campbell. "We watched one quarter of the game and listed one thing could improve on and three things they did well at."

Coach Bailey has been working hard to keep the teams' energies up, after the passing of the former

JV coach, Coach Plunket Beirne, who passed away in November 2022. "I want to bring back Coach Plunket Beirne's passion for helping people to fall in love with the sport and make it fun," said Coach Bailey. "I suppose a winning record would be awesome, but as long as the girls are happy and having fun, I'm happy," she said.

The Freeman JV Field Hockey Team, so far, has had two successful matches against Deep Run High School and Mills E. Godwin High School. "Since

this is a JV team, a lot of these girls are new to the sport or have not been playing for very long," said Coach Bailey. "What I love is that the lack of experience doesn't stop them, they aren't scared to go out and try something new, completely fail at it, then go back and try it again," she said.

With the upcoming games for the team, Coach Bailey will continue to provide support for the team throughout any roadblocks they may face.

Dylan Chou to W&M Tennis



Dylan Chou in action on the court

Maria Mcguill
Staff Writer

Senior Dylan Chou is committed to William and Mary University for his tennis excellence. Through his dedication, long hours after school, and hard work on and off the court, Dylan plans to continue to excel in his next years at the university. With support from family, coaches, and teammates, he is devoted to carrying on this sport in college. "It was a goal of mine for a couple [of] years to play college tennis, so I [am] happy that I achieved it, and look forward to it," said Dylan.

With hard work and dedication through ten hours of training each week, he has brought the Freeman team to states his junior year, won states in doubles his freshman year with his partner Daniel Lim, and won states in singles his sophomore year. "Those were big achievements," said Dylan. The commitment to a D1 school is an achievement that entails competing at the highest collegiate level in sports with the top, most well-known universities and athletic organizations. His experience and hard work training at many athletic clubs and tennis academies, such as the Midlothian Athletic Club, the Westwood Club, and the Sancilio Tennis Academy at Mac, has allowed him to take this opportunity at William and Mary.

Growing up, Dylan's parents have always been encouraging. "My mom and dad inspire me the most," said Dylan. With his recent commitment, he is following in his father's footsteps, as his father was a tennis player at Wake Forest University. "He got me into the sport," said Dylan. "It's inspiring to see and hear about what he's done, and he's helped me also," he said.

Dylan's mom works as a physical therapist, providing him with guidance and security when getting

back to tennis after his injuries. "When I was five years old, I broke my left elbow, and they messed up the surgery," said Dylan. This outcome led to his left arm being shorter than his right arm, which has caused him problems throughout his tennis career. Due to his situation, he was set back a year in his training and had to switch to a one-handed backhand, a difficult way to hold the tennis racket when taking a shot across your body. Two years after his setback, he was diagnosed with Crohn's Disease which set him back another six months. "I went out, supported [my team], and coached them when I could," said Dylan.

Dylan has proved to be a good leader and teammate to many of his friends. "Dylan's a very positive guy, you know he's obviously the number one seed on the team, but he always manages to watch the lowest seeds matches and always cheers[s] them on," said junior Thomas Kreutzer, Dylan's teammate. "He would also give some tips about footwork and where to be on the court at different times," he said. Dylan is praised and loved for his good attitude, supportiveness, and all-around kindness to everyone. "He's had matches where there's been difficulties with the other players being unsportsmanlike, and he's taken it like a champ," said Thomas. He is talked about as a good classmate and dedicated player, coming back each year better and better. He has learned the ability to balance his strong work ethic with the long hours of training and hard work he has put into tennis over many years.

From the time Dylan spent training he has gained a gratitude for working for his success. "Just put your mind to it, and you'll be able to achieve it," said Dylan. "You're going to have to work hard, but just enjoy it while you're doing it," he said.

A New Face as Quarterback



George Davis with the ball against Glen Allen last season

Sadie Edlavitch

Arts and Entertainment Editor

Junior George Davis has made his big entrance on the football field as Freeman's new varsity quarterback following an injury to the previous starter, senior Wells Nunnally. George made his first debut as quarterback this August at the beginning of the football season. "George is a good leader from a physical standpoint but also from a mental standpoint," said varsity head coach, Coach Simonds. "He keeps calm and always has a smile on his face," he said.

Coach Simonds, also an Exceptional Education and Algebra One teacher at Freeman, was recently promoted from assistant to head coach this past year. Since his time as head coach, Coach Simonds appointed George Davis to the quarterback position for a variety of reasons. "When George first started at Freeman, he was a freshman on the junior varsity (JV) team while rotating quarterback positions with Wells Nunnally," said Coach Simonds. Wells, a sophomore at the time, kept his position as a quarterback until this past year when he tore his ACL, sidelining him for the rest of the season. "After [Wells] went on to varsity, George took over the position as starting quarterback on JV and had an exceptional year," said Coach Simonds.

When George stepped into Wells's position, he was faced with adapting to the demands of the quarterback role. "George can work very well with the team," said Coach Simonds. Leadership is a quality that quarterbacks often use on and off the field; for example, when the players huddle to plan their plays, the quarterback typically picks which strategy they will use in the game.

In addition to the coach, his

teammates also notice his displays of leadership. "George is always willing to lead the team in warmups and help us play better together," said Drew Nunnally, a junior on the varsity football team.









George started his football journey back in kindergarten. "All of my friends were joining the flag football team and I wanted to try it out with them," said George. "I also have an older cousin who played football at the University of Virginia (UVA), so I grew up going to his games," he said. When George was in eighth grade, he was playing football for the Tuckahoe Middle School Patriots and decided he wanted to play the position of quarterback. "We had a really good year and I liked how you are really the leader of the team when you play this position," said George.

George plans to graduate next year with the class of 2026, but his football journey will hopefully not end there. "I've always dreamed of playing for the National Football League (NFL), but I want to see how this year goes and determine what I want to do with my future moving forward," said George. As a high school student-athlete, George balances his schoolwork with football and allocates time for each activity. "One of the hardest things about being a student-athlete is spending so much time away from home," said George. "When I get home from practice, I am tired and want to go to bed but I feel guilty not spending enough time with family."

When consistently spending mornings and nights together every week, the players have gotten to know each other more. "Between fall camps and early mornings we have together, you spend a lot of time with the same people," said George. "It's really an awesome team and I've made a lot of friends these past years," he said. Continuous practices for long

periods of time come with disagreements and arguments among the players as well. George has made it his priority to try to limit the number of disputes on the field during his time as quarterback. "I try to handle it by hearing out both sides," said George. "I am always looking for ways to talk through these things instead of turning them into something that could get someone hurt."

"I know [George] will do great things in the future, he is a very personable young man and all of his teammates really like him," said Coach Simonds. As the team plans for the upcoming games this season, the new quarterback's performance will be closely watched, but our Freeman community and Coach Simonds will continue to support him.

RECENT DSF COMMITS			
 Nathan Szobota	 Peyton Beale Henry Britt	 Brady Blanchard	 Finn Whipple
 Jefferson Meade	 Ryleigh Perks	 Allie Mackay Jackson Rogish	 Sarah Chilton

Freeman Chorus Department's New Teacher, Ms. Gilleland

Sarah Chilton
Editor in Chief

Previously led by Ms. Tuck, Freeman's chorus department has a new top dog. Ms. Gilleland, a Mechanicsville native and recent graduate from James Madison University (JMU), has taken over the role of leading Freeman Chorus. Going into this year, Ms. Gilleland is excited about many things. "Getting to make music together is so special in any capacity, so [it] has been really awesome [that] every day, my job is to make music with people," said Ms. Gilleland. "It's only been a couple weeks, but [I'm already] seeing the students grow and shine."

Her goals for Freeman Chorus are "to continue growing the program" with recruitment and to create a "safe and welcoming space where [students and I] can connect and make music together," said Ms. Gilleland. "Everyone is welcome to join [the] chorus," she said.

Ms. Gilleland teaches four chorus classes — Men's Chorus, Maverick Singers, Festival Choir, and Show Choir — and a beginning piano class. However, she can't pick a favorite one: "I love them all, they're all unique in their own way, which is really special," she said.

Men's Chorus and Maverick Singers are both non-audition based, meaning people of any skill level can join (Maverick Singers is both girls and boys and Men's Chorus is only lower voices). "I really like getting to know people in the class... If you mess up, they don't really judge, because everyone messes up," said Victor Plata, a junior in the Men's Chorus and Festival Choir.



PHOTO: MS GILLELAND

Hawaiian themed day in the chorus department

There are also two audition-based classes: Festival and Show Choir. Festival Choir is a smaller mixed chamber class. It contains alto, soprano, and bass voices, which have "a bit more challenging rep," said Ms. Gilleland. They sing the national anthem at home football games and do extra events outside of school, such as going to choral assessments. Additionally, they're going to two competitions this year, where they will compete against other chamber ensembles.

Lastly, the Show Choir, also known as Harmony in Motion, is only treble voices: altos and sopranos. They have rehearsals outside of and during school where they learn choreography and songs

for their competitive 20-25 minute show performed in the spring. "They're going to five competitions this year, which is really exciting," said Ms. Gilleland. While these are "big commitments," they have a "fun payoff," she said.

With a new teacher, "the style of teaching is kind of similar, but kind of different at the same time," said Victor. At first, Victor was nervous because he was so used to Ms. Tuck being here, but "she fits in perfectly," he said. "I think it's a good change; I'm excited to have her teach me music throughout the rest of the year and next year."

Many of the choir students cite Ms. Gilleland's comfort and how she has fit into the program right

away. "I love how it's so easy to connect with her; she's very understanding," said Victor. "She likes to use the saying 'mistakes are proof that you're trying,'" he said. "I've been scared to make mistakes so many times before, but [her saying that] kind of eases my nerves."

The biggest challenge Ms. Gilleland has faced is "getting in the swing of things in terms of the schedule," she said. "It takes a lot of energy to be a teacher, so just getting used to the everyday... has been a lot, and I think I'm getting there," said Ms. Gilleland. Change can sometimes be uncomfortable, but "the students are so supportive," said Ms. Gilleland. "We have really great choir kids, [and] the parents have also been so helpful," she said.

In addition to the students and parents, Ms. Gilleland has found support from the boosters, her colleagues, "everyone at Freeman," and "even chorus colleagues [from different schools] within the district," she said.

Though the overall program is about the same as it was the year before, the day-to-day in a Freeman Chorus class is a bit different. "She's pushing us to do new techniques that I've never thought of," said Hannah Allen, a junior in Festival and Show Choir. "She has kept a lot of the events that we've done, but she's changed a lot of the warm-ups," she said.

Additionally, Ms. Gilleland has created a friendly environment for her students. "We all just share and listen to each other," said Hannah. "It's so community-based, and you always can find friends and people to talk to," she said.

"We form our own happy family...in the end," said Victor. "It's nice that we can all

just get along and move past our differences," he said.

After student teaching at Short Pump Middle School and Hanover High School and graduating college in May of 2024, Ms. Gilleland began her first job in the Freeman Chorus Department this year. She got the position in the spring before graduating from JMU because she was "super interested in the job," said Ms. Gilleland. "[I] knew Ms. Tuck already and was at a lot of the events that [Freeman Choir] performed at last year," she said.

Ms. Gilleland's experience also stems from her own chorus experiences. "Show choir was a big part of my life growing up, so it's cool that I get to carry that on as a teacher," she said. "[There are] lots of moving parts with show choir, and knowing about it [first hand] and living that world before [has] helped me."

Throughout the year, some ways that the Freeman Family can support the choral department are by going to the winter and spring concerts, attending Show Choir/Festival competitions, and donating to the program. "We love, love, love to see the support," said Ms. Gilleland. At concerts, "every choir will do a handful of songs, and we have a couple of songs where [the whole department] will sing together," she said. The Show Choir and Festival are also competing at different schools and "they're really fun and you can support and see the other schools performing as well," said Ms. Gilleland. In addition, donating to the program "helps us do all the cool things that we love to do," she said. Come out to support and keep your eyes peeled for the Freeman Choral department led by Ms. Gilleland this year!

Sabrina's Short N' Sweet Stuns: An Album Review

Scotty Gregory
Online Editor-in-Chief
Opinions Editor

If you haven't been living under rock, you've probably heard the news about Sabrina Carpenter's hot new album Short N' Sweet. The album debuted on August 23, although two of the songs, "Espresso" and "Please Please Please," were released earlier this year. The album includes classic Sabrina sounds as well as passionate lyrics written alongside softer music: a lesser-known side of Carpenter.

After initially listening to each song, I rated them from one to five stars: One star means that it wasn't my personal favorite, three stars means it's been added to the playlist, was upbeat, and kept my attention; and my five-star rating was reserved for my favorite song of the entire album.

"Taste," which has blown up on TikTok, is first on the docket. "Taste," unusually, is not directed

at a boy, but at another woman — the "other woman." After Carpenter and this boy presumably break up, he gets back together with his ex-girlfriend. Carpenter's unbothered attitude in the song creates a lively and euphoric feel, which is reflected in her music video starring Jenna Ortega, available on YouTube. "Taste" wasn't all that I was craving, but it was still a great way to kick-start the album. Out of five, I give it a solid three stars.

"Please Please Please" is next on the chopping block. Released in early June of this year, I've had this song on repeat all summer. The song highlights the realities of being in a relationship with someone your close friends or family may not be fond of in a catchy and enthusiastic way. My initial reaction was that the beat felt dreamlike and magical. The music feels as if it is juxtaposing the lyrics; she is trying to convince the audience that being in a relationship with this boy is a good idea, highlighting the ultimate purpose of the song. The music video avail-

able for "Please Please Please" on YouTube features Carpenter's current boyfriend, Barry Keoghan. "Please Please Please" was very pleasing, so I give it four stars.

"Good Graces" comes next on the album. This song has a high level of familiarity, but I can't put my finger on what. In "Good Graces," Carpenter is upfront about not wanting to put up with liars in a relationship and emphasizes that she can turn "lovin' into hatred" at the flip of a dime. This song wasn't exactly my cup of tea because it felt quite repetitive, but I did love the beat. Overall I give it two stars.

The fourth song on Short N' Sweet is "Sharpest Tool." I've been waiting for this one, turn it up! Right off the bat, this was my favorite song on the album — a five-star song. The track discusses relationships with emotionally unavailable men and brings up topics such as self-doubt and confusion, making it relatable for listeners. During the pre-chorus, Carpenter uses some clever wordplay. She starts a sentence with the word she ended the previous one with. Whether listeners notice or not, it adds cohesion and grace to the song. During the bridge as well, the music seems to be fading out, which is a nice touch that conveys the sense of anxiety she is singing about. I love her voice in this piece and how fun but simple this song is. A round of applause for Ms. Carpenter.

"Coincidence" comes directly after "Sharpest Tool." "Coincidence" is about how Carpenter is caught in a love triangle where the boy is still caught up on his ex. This song also felt repetitive, but not necessarily in a bad way; it further proved her point. Some of the transitions felt a little funky, but this song was very entertaining and had me singing along so I give it three stars.

When you're up trying to finish that essay you procrastinated, you might need some Espresso, and Ms. Carpenter can give it to you. "Espresso" was the first track on the album to be released, debuting in April of this year. The single also blew up on the music app TikTok earlier this year for its classic line, "I'm working late 'cause I'm a singer," and the trend that followed it. I loved this song as soon as it

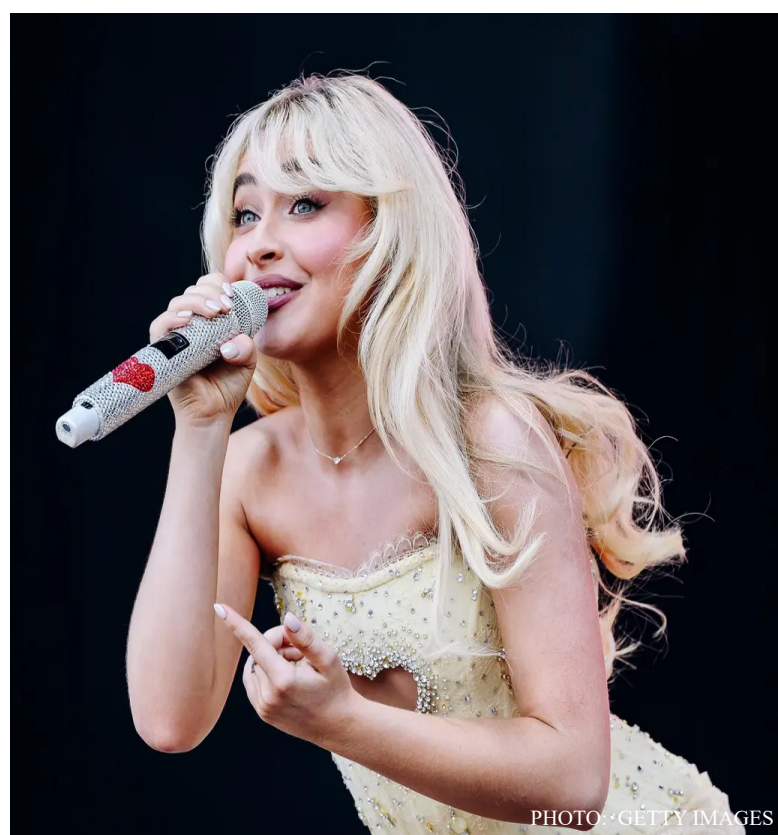


PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

Sabrina Carpenter at the 2024 Governors Ball

came out; it's very clever and very fun. Overall I give it four stars.

Onto the first song of the album that showcases a lesser-known side of Sabrina: "Dumb & Poetic." I immediately loved the sound of Carpenter's voice in this song, it feels very raw and honest. This song talks about seeing the facade of a seemingly perfect man fade to reveal the flawed boy standing behind it. My favorite quote is "Just 'cause you talk like one doesn't make you a man." Preach girl, preach. This song deserves an amazing four and a half stars, almost cutting my favorite, but not quite.

For all the single ladies out there, you may feel like the song "Slim Pickins" was written from your thoughts. "Slim Pickins" encapsulates the idea that all the good guys out there are off the market, as well as how low standards for relationships seem to be today. It may be the most universally relatable song on Short N' Sweet. Although I love the meaning, the sound wasn't exactly my favorite. Something about the music made the lyrics feel like they were off-beat in my head. Off the bat, the song sounds more country while the words are

meant to be more pop and indie. All this aside, I really can't stress the point of the song enough, so I give this song three stars.

Last (song I'll be reviewing), but certainly not least, we have "Don't Smile." This song was definitely not what I was expecting when I read the title, but I liked it anyway. It focuses on the aftermath of a breakup and the reality of the feelings that we need to face in order to heal. Carpenter's tone in this song is kind of pessimistic. She repeats "Don't smile because it happened, baby, cry because it's over," and as much as I try to be optimistic, this song is just music to my ears, literally. I've said it before and I'll say it again, her voice is absolutely incredible and this song really represents that. I love the atmosphere of this song and it deserves a solid four stars.

I think this album is so quintessentially Carpenter and I love it. I feel it's a nice mix of all of her talents, including some that we haven't seen as often before. Overall, I give this album an amazing four and a half stars. Sabrina Carpenter wowed us with this one and I can't wait to see what she does next!



PHOTO: SABRINA CARPENTER

Short n' Sweet Album Cover

Twister vs. Twisters: How the 2024 Remake Compares to the 1996 Classic

Kristen Carpenter
Online Editor-In-Chief
Opinions Editor

The original movie “Twister” made its debut in theaters on May 10, 1966. Since then, the film has left an impact that led to a remake, released on July 19, 2024.



Kate and Tyler looking at storm information

The remake, “Twisters,” stars Glen Powell and Daisy Edgar Jones as the new characters Tyler Owens and Kate Carter. “Twisters” is an action movie surrounding storm chasers as they face many life-threatening tornadoes and fight to contribute to the betterment of society.

Since the initial release of “Twister,” there has been a multitude of new updates, such as Computer Generated Images (CGI) and special effects. “[The special effects] made the movie feel more real, I felt like I was gonna get taken away [by the tornadoes],” said Sophomore Reed Jones. The Twister franchise involves numerous scenes that include dramatic storms, making the modernized CGI prominent in the film.

The original movie and the remake are very similar according to Freeman’s history and psychology teacher, Mr. Lovering. “The new ‘Twisters’ is almost the same movie as the first one,” he said. However, there are minor changes to the plot. “In the first one, they’re trying to make the warning time longer for the tornado so people can get to safety quicker, whereas in the second one, they’re trying

to use chemicals to dissipate the tornadoes,” said Mr. Lovering. While there are differences in the plots of the two movies, there are many parallels drawn between the characters. Similar to Helen Hunt’s character from “Twister,” Dr. Jo Harding, Kate Carter played by Daisy Edgar Jones carries

trauma relating to storm chasing from her past. Due to such trauma, she works as a meteorologist for the National Weather Service in New York City so that she can stay further away from the dangers of storm chasing. However, when Kate’s friend Javi, played by Anthony Ramos, asks her to chase a storm that could produce lifesaving information, Kate agrees to help and go with him to Oklahoma. “I like how [‘Twisters’] followed Kate’s past so you could connect to that [to] when she had been brave enough to go back and conquer her fears,” said senior Lilly Haymore. Throughout the film, audience members get to witness how Kate grows in self-confidence.

After Javi and Kate make it to Oklahoma, Kate meets Tyler Owens played by Glen Powell. Tyler begins as an arrogant and egotistical storm-chaser who is notorious for his YouTube presence, where he posts about his dangerous tornado-chasing escapades. Kate initially can’t stand Tyler however, as the film progresses they form a friendship that turns into a love story. “Tyler’s my favorite character because of his development throughout the film,”

said senior Tori Meyers. “He starts out kind of cocky and then becomes more of a humble guy.” Kate and Tyler’s bond becomes stronger when they connect over their mutual desire to use their tornado-fighting abilities to help others. The team they are working with is full of storm chasers who want to use the damages created by the tornadoes to benefit themselves and their platforms. “I like how [‘Twisters’] included an enemies-to-lovers trope,” said senior Anne Claire Hart. “It made the movie very engaging.”

Unlike their team, Kate and Tyler wanted to help people. Kate used her unique scientifically curated pellets to stop the tornadoes, and Tyler helped with tornado relief by spreading tornado awareness. The movie received very positive feedback from the press and the Freeman community. “I think [‘Twisters’] is great and it’s super family-friendly,” said Tori. You can watch it with anyone.”

“[‘Twisters’ is] a fun film and it’s a good mix of a lot of different genres,” said senior Allie Mackay. “There’s action between the tornadoes, but then there’s also comedy and romance.”

“Twisters” is approaching the \$350 million mark in box office profits and has already become a major 2024 hit. Although both movies have their traits, it appears that “Twister” and “Twisters” have both created a thrilling atmosphere for any moviegoer.



“Twisters” movie poster



Stephen poses with the American flag at the Olympics

Stephen Nedoroscik: The American Gymnast Turned Dance Star

Nikki Rajan
Staff Writer

As the 2024 Paris Olympics ended, one American gymnast caught the attention of watchers worldwide. Stephen Nedoroscik, a men’s pommel horse gymnast, won his first two bronze medals this past year. However, his success didn’t end there. The gymnast also accepted a position on “Dancing with the Stars,” a reality show where celebrities perform ballroom dances with experienced dancers while being judged by ballroom experts.

Stephen’s popularity first rose because of his event: the pommel horse. His whole Olympic routine and only event was the pommel horse. People commented on social media that he would wait hours to do one 45-second routine. Social media users even created memes of him waiting and passing the time, almost sleeping at one point. He also received criticism regarding his inability to compete in multiple events. “[I] knew there was going to be backlash to it,” said Stephen in an ESPN interview. “I do one event compared to these guys that are phenomenal all-arounders, and I am a phenomenal horse guy, but it’s hard to fit on a five-guy team.”

Stephen is the first American gymnast who has qualified for the Olympics as a single-event specialist. This brought media outlets and social media users to post viral clips and articles about his background. His social media attention increased so much that before his Olympic routine, he had to “literally turn my notifications off,” Stephen said. However, Stephen

agrees that “the memes are hilarious,” he said. “I love them all.”

Although he is not a dancer, fans speculate that, due to his popularity, he will be competitive in other ways on “Dancing with the Stars.” “I think he [will] get so many votes and be a great addition,” said senior gymnast Abby Johnson.

People are also excited to see him dance and step outside the realm of gymnastics. “I’m really excited [about his appearance on ‘Dancing with the Stars’] because he’s so nerdy,” said senior Coco Sammons. However, “I don’t think it’s [going to] improve the rating[s] [of the show]. I think they have their audience and it’ll just stay the same,” she said.

Another topic social media users have been discussing is how his gymnastics skills will translate to the dance floor. “This background in gymnastics will help him excel more than the other contestants,” said senior Paisley Allen, who has been a dancer for fourteen years. “I feel like he would be competitive because he knows more of that style and type of movement,” she said.

There is also another contestant, like Stephen, who is an Olympic athlete turned social media star: Llona Maher. Llona is an American Olympic rugby star and model. Her announcement to join “Dancing with the Stars” came shortly after Stephen’s and they’re both making their debut on the show this year.

Stephen’s increased social media presence has many wondering if his Olympic successes will lead to “Dancing with the Stars” fame. People “cannot wait to see his performances and time on the show,” said Coco.

Love Island USA Concludes Record-Breaking Season

Conner Almstead
News Editor

Spoilers of the sixth season ahead!!!

Peacock’s “Love Island USA” officially ended its sixth season with the release of its reunion episode on August 19. Since its release in June, it has remained one of Peacock’s top streamed shows. Out of six seasons, season six has shown to be the show’s most viral one with over one billion minutes of watch time per week in July and August. “I think it’s one of the best reality dating shows that we’ve had in a while,” said junior Ipsita Mishra. “I don’t think there has been [so] much drama in a Love Island USA [season] in recent years.”

Love Island is a reality TV series that premieres every summer. Since the start of their first season in 2019, the premise has remained mostly the same. Contestants are put onto an island villa and are coupled up with each other for one month. At the villa, the contestants compete in challenges designed to put their relationships and desire for love to the test.

The reason for this season’s success is due to the many differences in production that took place, compared to previous seasons. The first major change for season six was the new host, Ariana Madix. Famous for her role on another popular reality show, “Vanderpump,” she replaced the seasons four and five host, Sarah Hyland, due to scheduling issues with another show that interrupted Sarah’s ability to host over the summer.

The next major change would be the cast. Each season a new bunch of singles enter the villa. This year there was more diversity among the islanders than in any other season. This season hosted contestants from every major region of the United States, along with contestants from other countries like Great Britain, Australia, and Argentina.

The final difference from previous seasons is its abundant presence on social media which the show gained during its summer streaming. The show was full of references to popular trends designed to appease the majority of their watchers: 18-39-year-olds, according to a YouGov poll. This age cohort makes up nearly 70 percent of their audience. An

example of this was when the brother of the famous NFL receiver Odell Beckham Jr., Kordell Beckham, went viral on the music app TikTok for the dance he did after being announced as one of the winners of season six.

The reunion episode brought the entire cast back four weeks after the ending of the original run. There, they caught up with the contestants and the states of their relationships. Some criticism was made by fans on the way they concluded their careers. “I think that there were a lot more unanswered questions about some of the cast members than answers,” said Ipsita. According to fans, the focus of the episode was more shifted toward marketing, rather than concluding the islander’s journey. “The obvious sponsorship for Domino’s was crazy. They were like: ‘Go to this room. Look at these pizza boxes,’” said freshman Isabell Barrow, an avid watcher of the show.

According to her, the toxicity and drama between the couples made the show worth her time. “We really enjoy trashy people,” she said. She has opinions on all of the islanders and their relationships. “I loved [Kordell and Serena] together,” she said, “but Aaron and [Kaylor] should not have even gotten that far.”

Senior Tyler Altson had very positive thoughts about Love Island as a whole after watching seasons one through four. He plans to continue watching through season six when he “get[s] the free time,” he said. However, he didn’t watch the show alone, instead he “had a small group online, and we would make fun of it or just talk about it.”

Ipsita has watched seasons one through six of Love Island. Despite watching all six seasons, she has not lost any interest in newer content. She has used it as a way



GRAPHIC: IZZY MINKLER

to bond with her family. “My mom watched season one, and she told me that I should watch it because she thought I’d be interested, and I was,” said Ipsita. “We[started] watching them all together since then.” She also enjoys the thrill of gossiping about the show with other people, and recommends watching the show with another person or group of people. “It’s fun to watch it with people that also have the same opinions as you, or [maybe] even have different opinions than you,” she said.

However, not all perception of the show is positive. Front Desk Assistant Mrs. Greulich shows skepticism about the realism of Love Island and other reality television shows like it. “You can tell some things are forced,” she said. She does enjoy watching reality television, but specific aspects, such as the focus on wealth and beauty, made shows like Love

Island specifically unenjoyable for her to watch. “It was just too much,” she said. “I think I matured with my television taste.”

Similarly, junior Amanda Patterson has qualms with the overall vibe of the show. “There were fights and drama all the time, solely for the purpose of the show,” she said. To her, the whole thing feels like directors forcing things behind the scenes. “I think it’s more staged than anything,” she said. She thinks the show lacks any real progression on the islander’s part. “There’s little character development in [all of the islanders],” she said.

Love Island remains one of the most popular shows for reality TV dating. As season six ends its run, production will likely begin for the seventh season next summer, and loyal fans will wait until the next summer to enter the villa again.



Final four couples on Love Island USA season six at the finale

World Politics



PHOTO: AFRICA INTELLIGENCE

Hakainde Hichilema

Zambia's Lusaka High Court blocked President Hakainde Hichilema's September 23 decision to suspend three top judges as a measure to maintain the balance of power. The controversial suspension was based on a recommendation by a panel that investigates judges, for reasons yet to be officially clarified by the president.

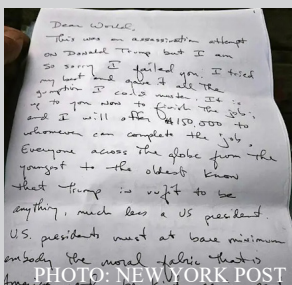


PHOTO: NEW YORK POST

Routh's alleged note

Ryan Wesley Routh, accused of attempting to assassinate former President Trump at his Florida golf course on September 15, allegedly dropped a letter detailing his intentions at an unnamed person's home months before the attempt. The letter, addressed "To the World," criticizes Trump's foreign policy, fitness to be president, and asks citizens to "finish the job" that "I failed."



PHOTO: FRANCE 24

Antoine Armand

France has "one of the worst deficits in [its] history," said France's new finance minister, Antoine Armand, on September 24. This year, the deficit is expected to reach 5.6 percent or more of national output, which is almost double the European Union (EU) limit.

Content by Sarah Chilton

Vietnam Hit With New Storm Following Typhoon Yagi

Tylerson Tweardy
Staff Writer

Typhoon Soulik has prompted officials to evacuate over 1,000 people following the biggest storm that central and southwest Vietnam has faced this year. Typhoon Soulik started its landfall in central Vietnam with wind speeds of 45 miles per hour and heavy rainfall. The storm follows Typhoon Yagi, which commenced its path on Vietnam's north coast on Sept. 7. The damages, which included landslides and flooding, left 329 people dead or missing and over 2,000 injured. It had roughly an economic toll of 50,000 billion dong (\$2 billion) and is increasingly affecting the local infrastructure.

Certain preparations included the military deployment of over 260,000 people and over 4,000 vehicles on standby for operations such as supply and rescue.

The region is still recovering after Typhoon Yagi, including schools and education being affected. Around 50 educational institutions in the area have been affected by the floods and landslides, with classrooms submerged in water. The school year started just only two weeks ago, yet 5,600

students will have to wait until the classrooms have been cleared of debris and restocked with learning equipment before they can make their return.

The country's renowned Son Doong cave, the world's largest natural cave, has had flights to Quang Binh, its location, canceled through Thursday, according to the Civil Aviation Authority of Vietnam.

Vietnam's centralized coffee province, the Central Highland, has undergone heavy rains since last weekend, causing little to no damage to the area. Local forecasters say that Thailand, the neighboring country, has expected heavy rains across flood-prone areas to continue under the influence of Typhoon Soulik.

Agricultural areas were immediately impacted and are facing long-term effects due to the rainfall. Rescue and recovery efforts are currently ongoing, and officials are paying close attention to water levels and are continuing their evacuation protocols for landslide-prone areas. The typhoon's full extent is yet to be determined, but weather agencies and governmental officials are on high alert whilst they handle the continuous natural disasters they are faced with.



PHOTO: REUTERS

People clearing fallen trees at a clean-up following Typhoon Yagi on Sept. 8



PHOTO: NASA

SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket launched to the ISS

Sunita Williams Space Rescue Mission

Katelyn Morrow
Centerspread Editor

National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA) SpaceX Crew-9 mission is set to launch on September 26, to rescue astronauts Sunita Williams and Butch Wilmore, who have been stuck in the International Space Station (ISS) for months. They were stranded on the ISS due to technical difficulties with Boeing's Starliner spacecraft. Williams and Wilmore were originally supposed to be in space for 10 days, but due to safety issues with the Starliner, they returned it uncrewed. Five out of 28 Starliner's thrusters malfunctioned, and helium leaks were found in the propulsion system. These issues posed dangerous risks to the spacecraft's ability to return the astronauts safely back into Earth's atmosphere and complete a controlled landing.

The SpaceX Crew Dragon spacecraft was chosen by NASA to bring Williams and Wilmore back to Earth. Its capsule docked on the ISS on Sunday at 5:30

Eastern Time. The people on the rescue mission included astronaut Nick Hague and Russian cosmonaut Aleksandr Gorbunov.

Hague and Gorbunov launched the Crew Dragon capsule Saturday afternoon at the Cape Canaveral Space Force Station in Florida where they reached their intended orbit without problems. SpaceX revealed that the second stage of the Falcon 9 rocket, which powered the first part of the mission, broke away from the capsule. This malfunction wasn't dangerous but was unexpected.

Both Williams and Wilmore — the veterans from the earlier mission — had positive feedback about being in space. "We have easily adjusted to staying in space until next year," said Williams and Wilmore in an interview live from the International Space Station. Williams noted the microgravity environment is her "happy place."

Alongside the crew on SpaceX, there are two empty seats to transport Williams and Wilmore home, when the group returns next year. They are expected to return no earlier than February 2025.

'Ghost Shark' Discovered in New Zealand Waters

Maryam Vohra
Staff Writer

On September 24, scientists discovered a new species of "ghost shark" off the coast of New Zealand. Ghost sharks, also known as chimeras, are a species of cartilaginous fish, closely related to rays and sharks. Ghost sharks appear almost translucent, with large, beady, black eyes and beak-like snouts. Unlike most shark species, which have around five gills, ghost sharks only have one gill on each side of their body.

In the Chatham Rise, an area of ocean floor to the east of New Zealand's South Island, New Zealand's National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research (NIWA) founded the Australasian narrow-nose spookfish. Ghost sharks typically reside in deep waters, around 1.6 miles below the ocean surface. Their diet primarily consists of crustaceans found along the bottom of the ocean floor.

"Their habitat makes them hard to study and monitor, meaning we don't know a lot about their biology or threat status, but it makes discoveries like this even more exciting," said Fisheries scientist, Dr. Brit Finucci in an interview with The Deep-Sea Podcast.

Two years ago, in February 2022, a baby ghost shark was discovered in the Chatham Rise, also by the

scientists at NIWA, Dr. Finucci included. Ghost shark embryos are laid on the ocean floor and live in egg capsules, feeding off an egg yolk, until they hatch. The young shark was full of egg yolk, which leads scientists to believe that the shark was newly hatched.

Dr. Finucci gave the species the scientific name, *Hariotta avia*, based on her grandmother. "Avia means grandmother in Latin; I wanted to give this nod to her because she proudly supported me through my career as a scientist," said Dr. Finucci.

In addition, Dr. Finucci found a connection between the newly discovered fish and their lineage: "Chimaeras are also rather ancient relatives — the grandmas and grandpas — of fish and I thought the name was well suited," said Dr. Finucci.

The narrow-nosed spookfish was initially believed to have lived in water around the world. However, this species is native to the waters surrounding New Zealand and Australia as they possess both genetic and morphological differences. For example, this new species stood out because of its "unusually long snout," said Dr. Finucci.

The scientists at NIWA will be able to use the discovery of this species to understand their patterns and learn more about them. Because they live in the depths of the Pacific Ocean, ghost sharks are hard to come by, making this discovery all the more worthwhile.



PHOTO: NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF WATER AND ATMOSPHERIC RESEARCH

Picture of a Ghost Shark

U.S. Troops Sent to Israel vs. Hezbollah Conflict



PHOTO: SUSAN WALSH/AP

Joe Biden speaking about conflicts in Lebanon

Maria Mcguill
Staff Writer

In the coming days, United States (U.S.) troops will be sent to the Middle East in hopes of helping Americans flee the region of conflict between the political party and militant group Hezbollah and the country of Israel. The current U.S. troops there are working alongside the Israelis to provide defense against the Lebanese Shia Islamist group. The point of adding more troops to the Defense Department is to have them available there in case the war intensi-

fies and Americans are targeted.

Major General Patrick Ryder, the Pentagon Press Secretary, has decided to keep the locations and number of troops undisclosed. Current concerns have arisen about Israel's plans and actions in response to attacks. Just a week ago, attacks on Lebanon from Israelis killed 500 people and wounded or injured more than 1,500. Israel has not been clear with U.S. defense officials about their intent and next military movements. U.S. officials have been relying on indicators of ground movement to be clear on when the next attacks may happen.

U.S. President Joe Biden has

contemplated sending other military assets to that region. The aircraft carrier group United States Ship (USS) Harry S. Truman, a navy force group with more than 7,000 people that can operate in harsh conditions, has been sent to Europe but might be sent to the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah instead. Other aircraft and ships are being considered to be rerouted to Lebanon to unite with the USS Abraham Lincoln carrier strike group, another naval protection force if it intensifies.

Biden has also attempted to present and pass a cease-fire deal. With the United States acting as the third party in this war, they are hoping the deal will bring a truce and ending to the war where both sides agree to let off attacks and aggressive actions. Complications in this attempt spur from the United Nations General Assembly becoming more intense. Biden and his team were hoping to propose the idea before the United Nations (UN) General Assembly gets too involved. In addition, a cease-fire deal will allow for diplomacy between the officials of each party involved. The results of these propositions are uncertain and most likely going to be overturned by the opposing officials involved.

Throughout history, major conflicts between Israel and the militant group of Hezbollah include, the South Lebanon conflict, the Shebaa Farms conflict, along with the 2006 Lebanon War. With the help of more U.S. troops being sent, the United States Defense Department gives hope to Israelis for increased defense.