

Harvard Announces Return to Required Testing for Next Admission Cycle

Scotty Gregory
Online Editor-in-Chief
Opinions Editor

For Freeman High School's rising seniors, college applications are approaching fast. Some students are looking to apply to Ivy League colleges, however, these plans may change with the recent Harvard College announcement on April 11, 2024, which reinstated test scores as a part of the application process for prospective students.

Harvard's decision to return to the requirement of submitting test scores is not a new concept; they followed other Ivy Leagues such as Brown University, Dartmouth College, Yale University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and other prestigious schools. This decision became public only months before the start of the application process for the Class of 2025, but it will also affect the Class of 2026. The news came as a shock to our school counselors.



Logos of schools returning to test-required policies

"The most poignant thing for me is that they had put in writing and promised that for this coming application cycle and one more that they would remain test-optional," said Freeman Counselor, Ms. Meadows.

On February 5, 2024, Dartmouth became the first prestigious university to remove the test-optional policy from its application. Other universities such as Harvard, Dartmouth, Yale, Brown, and CalTech followed suit not long after Dartmouth's announcement. Due to the common application opening in August, students who have not tested but are planning to apply are now in a time crunch. "This is really late for Harvard to be determining that for their next admission," said Ms. Meadows. "Students only have three months before they have to start submitting applications." If students are planning on applying to these Ivy Schools in the upcoming application cycle, then they

should be aware of the sudden change in the evaluation process.

The original decision to go test-optional at these schools was primarily due to the restrictions of COVID-19. Opportunities to take standardized tests like the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and American College Test (ACT) were limited due to the pandemic. These constraints forced universities to alter their policies and application requirements. "[COVID-19] meant we couldn't go out in public, so you can't require something from students that are literally unable to take," said Ms. Meadows.

"Standardized tests are a means for all students, regardless of their background and life experience, to provide information that is predictive of success in college and beyond," said Harvard Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Hopi Hoekstra. "The decision was made due to a variety of factors," said Hoekstra. However, in recent years, controversy has stirred over whether standardized tests are an accurate portrayal of knowledge. American University claimed that standardized tests "fail to account for students who learn and demonstrate academic proficiency in different ways," and "place emphasis on reading, writing, and mathematics, [which] have devalued instruction in areas such as the arts, history, and electives." Britannica ProCon also stated that standardized testing only determines which students are good at taking tests due to the variety of factors that affect the scores. "The tests only show



PHOTO: FLICKR

Students walking around Harvard Yard

which students are best at preparing for and taking the tests, not what knowledge students might exhibit if their stomachs weren't empty or they'd had a good night's sleep," Britannica ProCon said.

"It will be interesting to see over the next couple of years if non-Ivy level schools also move back to requiring test scores in the state of Virginia," said Ms. Meadows. At the moment, Georgetown is the only Virginia university that requires standardized testing. Most Virginia schools went test-optional because of COVID-19

precautions, however, there were a couple of schools beforehand, like James Madison University, that have been test-optional for years.

During the upcoming weeks, there could be more universities announcing new policies as well. If students are struggling with this process, counselors urge them to not be afraid to reach out to them and make use of Freeman's abundant resources. "[This announcement] really puts a lot of expectations on students and this process is stressful enough," said Ms. Meadows.

Freeman's "We The People" Team Places Second At National Competition

Connor Almstead
News Editor

Freeman's "We The People" team placed second overall at the "We The People" National Conference in Washington D.C. from April 13-15, 2024. The team consisted of Freeman teacher, Mr. Peck, and his sixth block Advanced Placement (AP) Government class. Their second-place finish marks the highest Freeman has ever placed in the national competition.

"We The People" is a long-term competition designed to engage students in the world of civic and political affairs. At Freeman, every AP Government student participates in it. Students are divided into six units, each one covering a specific section of constitutional history.

This exemplary performance resulted from months of practicing, studying, and rehearsing. "Mr. Peck started immediately," said senior Shiny Chandravel. "We had no AP Government experience, so he had to crash an entire textbook in three months."

In preparation for the competition, each group prepares an opening statement in response to a unit-specific question designed by the Center for Civic Education. After the opening statement, a group of judges, who usually possess a background in politics or law, conduct a round of questioning. During this time, the judges examine the students'



PHOTO: LORELEI KELLEY

The group after their second-place finish

knowledge of the subject and how well they present themselves.

Despite the tight schedule, the class remained optimistic and excited. "I was competitive and I looked forward to what was to come," said senior Spencer Philips. "I've really wanted to win since when I first heard about it and was really looking forward to what it had to bring."

As they prepared, Mr. Peck guided the groups through the

process. According to his students, he played a very important role in the team's success. "We couldn't have done it without him, and he's way too humble to admit that," said Shiny.

While he played an integral role in the team's success, Mr. Peck rarely gave complete guidance, allowing students to fill in the blanks about how they wanted to work through each problem. "He knew the value of taking a

step back and letting groups figure out how they wanted to answer the questions," said Spencer.

Mr. Peck was very impressed by the level of commitment displayed by both of his AP Government classes. "Both rotations that I had the pleasure of teaching this year were extraordinary," he said. "I didn't know which one would make it to the national meet."

The sixth block team almost didn't qualify for nationals at the

regional competition with a third-place finish. "The other Freeman team got second, and they never took two teams from the same school, so they took Glen Allen who came in fourth," said Shiny. "Due to two other schools dropping out, we got to advance onto states with the other Freeman team."

While there were minor issues, Mr. Peck remained confident that his sixth-period team would do well, especially against the long-time champion school, Maggie Walker. "I told [my AP Government students] at the beginning, if we could beat Maggie Walker, then we could beat anyone," he said. "I think they started to believe that when they won the state conference."

While in Washington D.C., the team was able to travel around the city in between competition sessions. "I enjoyed seeing the Lincoln Memorial and the security around the White House," said Spencer. "I also visited the Museum of African American History, and was able to get my genealogy traced."

After months spent working together, the team grew close by working closely together to overcome the hardships of preparing for competition. To Shiny, her experience competing with her classmates in Washington D.C. is an unforgettable memory. "Everything was a 10 out of 10," she said. "I don't think I ever imagined [bonding with] the people in my class as much as I do now."



Court of Appeals Rules for Transgender Rights

Liah Chung
Graphics Editor

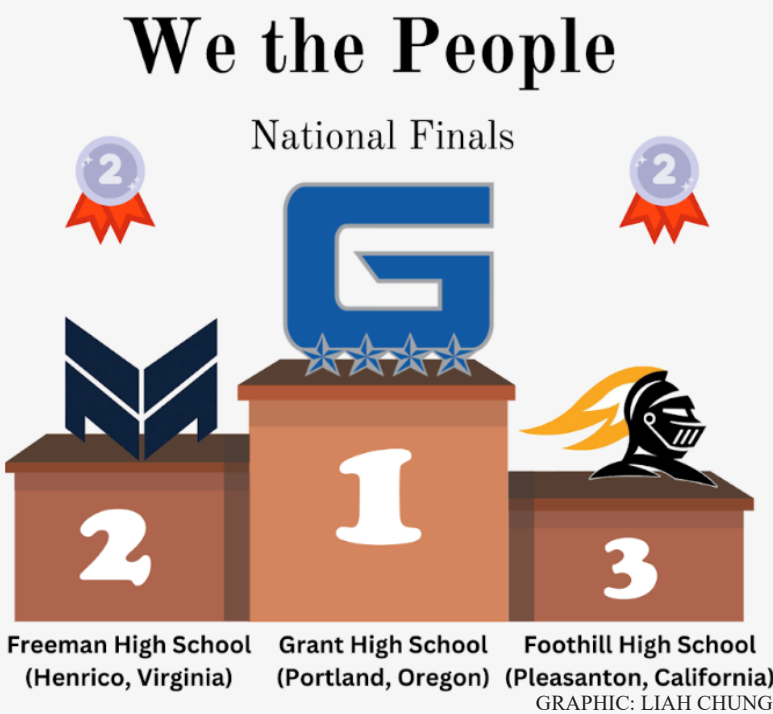
On April 16, 2024, the Fourth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that a West Virginia transgender sports ban violated the rights of Becky Pepper Jackson, a 13-year-old transgender athlete, under Title IX. Passed in 2021, West Virginia’s pioneer law restricting transgender athletes has since inspired similar legislation in 23 states, according to NBC. Since third grade, Jackson has identified as a girl, taking hormone-blocking medication and participating only in girls’ sports teams, according to a recent article for AP News by reporter John Raby. After West Virginia’s governor, Jim Justice signed a bill banning transgender girls from joining school sports teams in late April, Jackson successfully sued the state for her right to remain a part of her middle school’s cross country and track team. The court was split two-to-one on the decision. “Offering [Jackson] a ‘choice’ between not participating in sports and participating only on boys teams is no real choice at all,” Judge Toby Heytons wrote. Heytons also claimed that it was unrealistic to expect Jackson to “countermand her social transition, her medical treatment, and

all the work she has done with her schools, teachers, and coaches for nearly half her life by introducing herself to teammates, coaches, and even opponents as a boy.” Although the court’s ruling enabled Jackson to continue playing on the girls’ team, the law restricting transgender athletes has yet to be repealed. The decision found that restricting transgender athletes from gender-affirming teams violated Title IX, but continues to allow separate boys’ and girls’ teams in schools. Title IX states that no person “shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination” in public schools, according to the U.S. Department of Justice. The law would “deprive [Jackson] of any meaningful athletic opportunities, and do so on the basis of sex,” wrote Heytons, a clear violation of Title IX. Jackson’s attorney described the ruling as a “tremendous victory for our client, transgender West Virginians, and the freedom of all youth to play as who they are,” according to an NBC article on the case. Similarly, Fairness West Virginia, an LGBTQ+ advocacy organization, applauded the court’s decision. “Transgender women are women, period,” said Com-

munications Director Jack Jarvis. Meanwhile, Patrick Morrissey, a Republican and the West Virginia Attorney General, said he was “deeply disappointed,” when asked about the ruling. “We must keep working to protect women’s sports so that women’s safety is secured and girls have a truly fair playing field ... We know the law is correct and will use every available tool to defend it,” said Attorney General Morrissey. “There is nothing equal about having males compete against men and women ... Gender identity is beside the point.” Transgender participation in sports has been a polarizing debate in America’s culture wars for decades, according to a 2023 Washington Post article. Opponents of transgender integration in athletics, including Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, argue that transgender girls have physical and biological advantages over cisgender girls. Conversely, some proponents of transgender integration, such as House of Representatives member Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, view the bans as discriminatory and transphobic. In many Republican-dominated states such as South Carolina, legislatures have restricted minors’ ability to access gender-affirming healthcare in addition to placing limitations on athletic participation.

Two days after the ruling, Jackson won second place in discus and first place in the shot put events at her county’s middle school championships, according to WCHS-TV, a local television station. Five opponents refused to compete against her in protest of the court’s decision. “My hope is that this case will get revisited, and I’m asking all men and all women that believe in women’s sports

to get on board and help us save women’s sports,” said 14-year-old Emmy Salerno of West Virginia, one of the students who refused to compete against Jackson. The recent decision will set a precedent for future cases involving transgender athletes not only in West Virginia but nationwide. “If we allow this decision to stand, then those laws are in danger, too,” said Morrissey.



New Documentary Exposes Dark Side of Children’s Television

Kristen Carpenter
Online Editor-in-Chief
Opinions Editor

From old hits like “Drake & Josh” to newcomers such as “Erin & Aaron,” Nickelodeon has been famous for producing classic television shows for children and teenagers. For many, Nickelodeon resonates with nostalgia and their childhood. However, when HBO released the documentary “Quiet on Set: The Dark Side of Kids TV” on March 17, 2024, the seemingly wholesome reputation of the television network was completely altered. “Quiet on Set” is a five-episode Home Box Office (HBO) documentary series that highlights the behind-the-scenes corruption at Nickelodeon, specifically under the leadership of former Nickelodeon producer, Dan Schneider. The documentary includes the perspectives

of past staff, crew members, and former Nickelodeon stars. Two key people in the documentary are Jenny Kilgen and Christy Stratton, the only two female writers during the first season of “The Amanda Show.” The series, which was created by Dan Schneider, featured Amanda Bynes as the main character. Kilgen and Stratton were interviewed separately, but both mentioned the uncomfortable work environment and derogatory rapport Schneider established with the two women. “It was early on when we first started when Dan said he didn’t think women were funny,” said Stratton in an interview with the “Quiet On Set” producers. Schneider made it fairly clear that he had no issue with making sexist jokes. Kilgen and Stratton discussed examples of Schneider’s unprofessional behavior: showing writers inappropriate material and asking for massages in exchange for him to put one of

their sketches in the show. When he made remarks like this “he would always be laughing when he said it,” said Kilgen in a separate interview. “You always felt like disagreeing with Dan or standing up for yourself [which] could result in you getting fired.” Both women also claimed that Schneider asked them to “split a salary” when they were hired. Kilgen reported the request to the Writers Guild of America, alleging that Schneider threatened her when he discovered the report. Schneider has publicly denied any involvement with the salaries of his writers. Schenider was also known for his casual inclusion of inappropriate jokes in his shows with younger audiences and for putting his cast members in uncomfortable situations. For example, former cast member of the hit Nickelodeon show “All That,” Bryan Christopher Hearn, shared one specific incident in which he was asked to play “the youngest rapper of all time, Lil Fetus.” Being an African American cast member on a Nickelodeon set forced Hearn to face racist commentary. Since he was playing a fetus, he was required to wear a skin-toned bodysuit. When figuring out the exact color of the suit, “someone said the skin tone should be charcoal,” Hearn explained in an interview. Another incident occurred when another “All That” member, Leon Frierson, was asked to play a superhero named “Nose Boy.” The

costume included a prosthetic nose both on Frierson’s face as well as on the costume itself, however, the nose was made in a way that suggested something far more inappropriate. “You can’t help but notice that it look[ed] like [genitals] on my shoulders,” said Frierson. Although most of the documentary is focused on the misconduct of Dan Schneider, another portion is dedicated to Drake Bell and his traumatic relationship with former Nickelodeon dialogue coach, Brian Peck. The third episode of the series hones in on Peck’s misconduct and sexual assault of Bell. Bell appeared in many popular Nickelodeon shows including “The Amanda Show,” “All That,” and “Drake & Josh.” As his career began to take off, Peck would assist Bell’s family by driving him to auditions and allowing him to sleep at his house. “My home was too far out of the way, and my mother didn’t like driving,” said Bell in an interview with the “Quiet On Set” producers. One morning after spending the night at Peck’s house, Bell woke up to Peck assaulting him on the couch. Being 15 years old at the time, Bell did not know how to handle the situation. Over multiple months, Peck continued to take advantage of Bell. When asked about what exactly Peck did to Bell, he said “Why don’t you think of the worst stuff that someone could do to somebody as a sexual assault, and that’ll answer your question.” Schneider has claimed he had nothing to do with the hiring of

Brian Peck. Schneider said that when he heard about the assault, he was “more devastated by that than anything that ever happened to [him] in [his] career.” Dan Schneider has watched the series and said that it was “very difficult” to watch all four episodes. While he has not gone into detail about to whom he directs his remorse, he has said that “[he] definitely owes some people a pretty strong apology.” After the series was released, Schneider expressed his support for cutting the inappropriate jokes from the shows he produced to prevent further upsetting future audiences. “Every one of those jokes was written for a kid audience because kids thought they were funny — and only funny,” said Schneider in an interview with Bobbie K. Bowman, a former cast member on the Nickelodeon show, “iCarly.” “Now, we have some adults looking back at them 20 years later... saying, ‘I don’t think that’s inappropriate for a kids’ show.’ And I have no problem with that... Let’s cut those jokes out of the show.” The series has left a major impact on viewers. “I was shocked [after watching the documentary] because I’ve watched Nickelodeon my whole life and I did not know there were such horrible things going on,” said Freeman junior Abby Sapon. “Quiet on Set: The Dark Side of Kids TV” has given childhood stardom a new connotation and has shed light on the corruption happening behind the scenes at Nickelodeon.



Alarms Installed on Outside Doors

Matthew Wozniak
News Editor

In April 2024, alarms were installed on four key doors around Freeman High School, including the chorus room door, the specialty center door, and the door above Freeman’s cafeteria stairs. The purpose of these alarms is to prevent students from bypassing the metal detectors installed last summer. School officials, including Freeman’s principal, Dr. Marshall, noticed that many students were conveniently avoiding the weapon scanners. “We can’t have people accessing the building through other doors and then avoiding weapons detectors,” said Dr. Marshall. “That causes the whole system to break down.” For instance, in the fall, members of the marching band frequently go in the back door to enter school after morning practices, consequently avoiding the metal detectors. “The door alarms came as a result of some

complaints that well-intended people had,” said Dr. Marshall. Ultimately, the concerns led to Freeman’s choice between safety and convenience. Based on national trends, safety has become a necessary concern in schools. “You don’t have to look far nationally to see that security at a school is important,” said Dr. Marshall. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, school shootings have increased nearly ninefold from 2000 to 2021, and have doubled from 2020 to 2021. This statistic exemplifies the need for safety precautions in schools, such as Henrico County’s weapon scanners. However, a balance between the metal detectors and student convenience needs to be established. For example, doors that are frequently used during the school day, such as the annex doors, will not have alarms installed on them. “Working with the safety office, my administrative team and I were intentional about where we see the most [building] access happening,” said Dr. Marshall. “[Above all] we

still need to function as a school.” The new alarms were strategically put on doors that aren’t typically used during the school day. “In case of emergency, [the doors to the chorus room and the center] would be helpful to get out really conveniently, but in the normal course of the day, it is not a massive inconvenience to use other doors,” said Dr. Marshall. The security practices in place at Freeman aren’t set in stone, and the door alarms are a reaction to the current situation in the school. “We’re gonna constantly reevaluate what we need,” said Dr. Marshall. “For instance, five years ago [students were] not able to cut across the quad to get from [the math hall] to [Green Acres].” The tradeoff between functionality and safety is something that is constantly being looked at by Freeman’s admin. The fact of the matter is that Freeman wasn’t built for the looming concern of school assaults. “The building wasn’t designed for a post-Columbine world,” said Dr. Marshall. Freeman isn’t alone in

this either; many Henrico County schools, such as Varina and Henrico High School, have outdoor campuses that make it difficult to adapt to safety issues. Along with balancing security and functionality, “Nothing is the perfect answer to keeping a school safe,” he said. Similar to the weapon scanners

acquired last summer, the door alarms will become a school-mandated routine. “There will be consequences for people who open [the doors] when they shouldn’t, so I think there will be lessons learned pretty early in the process,” said Dr. Marshall. “Safety is actually a lot about retraining habits.”



Map of Freeman marked with the Alarm spots



From Lavender Lattes to Spicy Refreshers: New Menu Items at Starbucks

Kristen Carpenter
Online Editor-in-Chief
Opinions Editor

We see it daily: Freeman students walking into the building, plastic cup in hand, with that all too familiar mermaid emblem right in the middle. Starbucks has always been famous for its most popular drinks such as the Strawberry Acai Refresher or the Vanilla Sweet Cream Cold Brew. However, Starbucks has recently welcomed a plethora of new menu items. They feature a brand new lavender flavor along with a spin on the classic refreshers; now being sold with chili powder. Along with the lavender and chili powder addition, Starbucks has also introduced a new flavor of egg bites and hazelnut coffees. I took it upon myself to go to Starbucks and see if the new additions to the menu were as good as they looked.

I placed my order online promptly at 3:55 p.m. in hopes that it would be ready by the time I reached the Starbucks located in Regency Square. To my delight, all five of the items I ordered were fresh and ready to go as soon as I walked in the door. I tried the new Lavender Crème Frappuccino, Iced Lavender Cream Oat Milk Matcha, Spicy Strawberry Refresher, Potato Cheddar & Chive Bake Bites, and Iced Hazelnut Oat Milk Shaken Espresso.

The first item I tasted was the Lavender Crème Frappuccino, which did not disappoint. The drink features a strong lavender

flavor that compliments the crème flavor of the frappuccino. The purple color closely resembled that of the photos Starbucks posted on its online menu. Unexpectedly, I tasted the slightest hint of lemon. This citrusy sensation mixed with the floral lavender syrup created a refreshing combination. The drink tasted how it feels to stroll through a freshly blooming garden on a sunny spring morning.

Next on the menu was the Iced Lavender Cream Oat Milk Matcha. I have never been a big fan of matcha, but with all of the buzz surrounding this drink, I knew I had to give it a try. The first thing I noticed was the delicious lavender cold foam on top of the matcha. The combination of the lavender cold foam and the matcha reminded me of the milk left by Lucky Charms cereal. The matcha was slightly more bitter than I had hoped, but the lavender enhanced the flavor. For someone who doesn't usually order matcha, I was pleasantly surprised with this drink.

After the lavender drinks, I thought I would follow the floral flavor with a more powerful spice; chili. As someone who does not enjoy spice, I was scared to try the Spicy Strawberry Refresher. I was immediately worried when I saw the concerning intense red hue of the beverage. It smelled just like any other Strawberry Refresher, but upon my first sip, I realized that was not the case. The drink's spice level was far too much for me to

handle and it left my throat with a burning sensation as well as an unfortunate aftertaste. The only redeeming quality of this drink was its strawberry flavor. However, since you can access a Strawberry Acai Refresher for a similar price without facing the fiery pain of chili powder, it is impractical to choose the Spicy Strawberry Refresher. Unfortunately, this item is not worth the praise and I will not be sad to see it go.

After that horrible so-called refresher, I needed some food to cleanse my palate. The Potato, Cheddar & Chive Bake Bites came in a small container and were hot when I got them. The bites come with two squares of egg mixed with potato, cheddar, onion, spinach, and of course, chives. I was already excited about this item when the smell hit me and reminded me of a homemade, savory breakfast casserole. After my first bite, my predictions about the deliciousness of these egg bites were confirmed. The bites tasted extremely fresh and authentic. Often, when fast food restaurants use eggs, they can taste very processed. This, however, was not the case with the Potato, Cheddar & Chive Bake Bites. The bites were perfectly savory and not overpowered by an excessive amount of sodium. They were the ideal serving size for a small breakfast or a filling snack. I would definitely recommend trying them yourself.

Finally, I washed it all down with the new Iced Hazelnut Oat Milk Shaken Espresso. The Iced Brown Sugar Oat Milk Shaken



PHOTO: STARBUCKS

Iced Hazelnut Shaken Espresso (left), Iced Matcha with Lavender Cold Foam (right)

Espresso has always been my go-to Starbucks drink, so I was excited to test a new flavor of the beverage. The drink had a lovely nutty flavor, but it did not subdue the coffee flavor. The hazelnut paired so well with the espresso and the oat milk created a smooth consistency in the drink, which I loved. It was truly such a well-crafted beverage and has become my new staple drink. Since my initial tasting, I have already added it to my rotation of Starbucks orders. While this drink is not the most unique new menu item, it is a dependable beverage that all coffee lov-

ers can count on to hit the spot.

Starbucks's ability to constantly produce fun new menu items is one thing that makes the company so popular. While there are the occasional flops (Spicy Strawberry Refreshers), the company has generally produced drinks that keep its customers happy and hydrated! Overall, the new lavender flavor was the perfect spring addition, the egg bites tasted like a cozy morning breakfast casserole, and the hazelnut coffee was fantastic. Everyone should taste these new Starbucks menu items but remember to avoid the Spicy Strawberry Refresher at all costs.

Delicious & Auspicious: Richmond Restaurant Week

Katelyn Morrow
Centerspread Editor

Richmond Restaurant Week (RRW) is a local Virginia event from April 21 to April 28, 2024, where 32 restaurants participate in providing a three-course meal at a stable price of \$35.24 and donating \$5.24 to the non-profit organization Feed More. "Since our start in 2001, Richmond Restaurant Week has donated over \$1.2 million to Feed More which translates to nearly five million meals for people in need across the Greater Richmond Metro Area," said Aline Reitzer, founder of RRW and co-owner of Acacia, a local Richmond restaurant.

Feed More is a charity organization that helps nourish communities lacking financial support with healthy food. They have worked throughout Central Virginia and served the community for nearly five decades. In 1967, the organization established Meals on Wheels, which provides mobile support for these communities.

As a participant in RRW with my friend and fellow staff editor, Libby Mercer, I had the opportunity to choose from many amazing restaurants, but ultimately, I chose Tarrant's Cafe Downtown. Tarrant's Cafe stood out to me for many reasons: their hospitality was superb, their servers were very welcoming, and the restaurant was family-oriented with an adult-friendly energy as well. The restaurant and staff were also eager to show their support for RRW. They had fliers perched at the entrance along with friendly servers who were willing to answer questions regarding the event.



PHOTO: KATELYN MORROW

From top to bottom: Tuna Tartare, Garlic bread and the Arancini Flight

While at Tarrant's Cafe, I ordered a wide variety of food. For appetizers, I chose an Arancini Flight: three Arancini balls with raspberry chipotle compote drizzle. I thoroughly enjoyed the crispy shell and soft risotto inside the Arancini balls, along with the sauce which was not spicy, but added some extra flavor. Libby ordered Tuna Tartare as her appetizer and loved it! "[The Tuna Tartare] was delicious and is a unique food to try," she said.

As we moved on to the next course, I got a New York strip steak topped with garlic thyme compound butter with mashed sweet potatoes and asparagus. If you are a steak lover, this is an exemplary choice because it provides a sweet and savory flavor without overpowering the steak. I loved this dish and I would certainly recommend it. Libby ordered Salmon Florentine: sautéed spinach and tomato cream sauce over lobster risotto. The presentation

was beautiful, full of color, and seemed to be cooked to perfection.

For the last course, Libby and I picked the Lemon Blueberry pound cake. This was my favorite dish from the entire night. It was served with a lemon on top, blueberry frosting, and a lemon pound cake. It was soft and delicious, and when the lemon was squeezed over the dessert it tasted like heaven on earth.

The atmosphere of Tarrant's was calm and romantic; there were dark lights, beautiful mirrors, paintings, and old decor.

After speaking with Mrs. Reitzer, one of the most important takeaways about this program is its communal environment. "Think local! From restaurants, food trucks, and pop-ups to shops and markets to growers, harvesters, and makers, we are at our best when we collaborate with and support each other," said Mrs. Reitzer.

This event, in accordance with local Richmond businesses and the Feed More organization, is more than a three-course meal; it's a chance for those who are fortunate enough to support their community. "For spring 2024, we have 32 locally owned and operated restaurants participating, and we are always looking to grow our number and expand our reach," said Aline. The RRW is always looking for new sponsors and restaurants to participate in this event in hopes of expanding the variety of cuisines and broadening community connections.

RRW provides Virginians with the opportunity to try delicious new foods, visit new restaurants, and become more in touch with community events. I would recommend people visit and participate in RRW to support an important cause and have a guaranteed great time.



PHOTO: KATELYN MORROW

Katelyn and Libby enjoying their meals at Tarrant's

Commentator Staff

Editors-in-Chief:
Sarah Chilton
Libby Mercer

Online Editors-in-Chief:
Kristen Carpenter
Scotty Gregory

Centerspread Editor:
Katelyn Morrow

Features Editor:
Cate Woodrum

Graphics Editor:
Liah Chung

A&E Editors:
Julia Connor
Sadie Edlavitch

Copy Editor:
Maya Tluchak

Sports Editor:
Izzy Minkler

News Editors:
Connor Almstead
Matthew Wozniak

Opinions Editors:
Kristen Carpenter
Scotty Gregory

Staff Advisor:
Mr. Pruett
AP Lit & DE English Instructor
jbpruett@henrico.k12.va.us

The Commentator is a publication of Douglas Southall Freeman High School.

Principal: Dr. John Marshall
8701 Three Chopt Rd Henrico, Virginia 23229
<https://freeman.henricoschools.us/>

Seizing the Day by the Sea

Scotty Gregory
Online Editor-In-Chief
Opinions Editor

What time is it? Almost summertime! We barely have any days left of school, but I am still so eager for summer to start. Anticipation builds as beach days galore approach. When it comes to beach days, some enjoy quietly reading near the ocean or sunbathing, while others can't sit still and are constantly playing beach games. I, more than most, love a good beach read, but sometimes, a game is what I'm feeling. This presents the question: which games are really the best for the ultimate beach day? If you think of a classic beach picture, you might imagine its Disney-esque scenery complete with a kite or two. Kites are hard to fly, but also fun to watch. Keeping a

kite airborne is a daunting task and a hard skill to master. It's not my ideal activity because I don't have the patience needed for it. However, if it sounds like fun to you, then find the right kite and go for it! My favorite gym class unit has always been badminton, and it turns out the activity is also a great beach activity. You can play at the pre-prepared sand volleyball courts located at most beaches. Badminton generally takes a little bit less skill than volleyball, making the competitive game inclusive and fun for everyone. Not the most popular, but a classic through and through is cornhole. Is it necessarily a 'beach game'? No. However, it is still a great way to enjoy the beach. Once you find a place where the boards will lay flat in the sand, the game is a blast. Yet, the biggest

downside of cornhole is carrying the game to your designated spot on the beach. Lugging two heavy wooden boards when it is 100 degrees out and sandy doesn't sound like my idea of fun. Depending on the size of your group, you may have to take turns with who is playing since there is a maximum of four players, but it is still a great beach game option. If you have never played the toss-and-catch velcro game at the beach, you have not lived. It is one of my all-time favorites. Everyone can play since the paddle catches the ball for you ... unless you have terrible hand-eye coordination. Playing this game down in the waves is summertime perfection until your ball falls into the water. Whoops. Now, what you could never go wrong with is a simple game of football. Playing in the sand eliminates the fear of possible injuries and if the beach isn't too crowded, there is endless space for a friendly football game. There is almost no added weight to your already bulky beach bag and no extra hands are needed to bring the ball down to the beach. No one needs more things to carry on that treacherous and sandy walk to the beach. Many beaches come fully equipped with volleyball nets for the sake of our happiness. Use them! You may have to bring your own volleyball, but again, that is hardly an inconvenience. Even if



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

Fun at the beach

there are only a couple of participants or the whole family, divide up into teams and have fun! Volleyball is a perfect way to pass time and make life-long memories with your family and friends. Ladies and gentlemen, hold on to your hats, for the greatest beach game of all time. Drum roll, please ... Spikeball! It is my top choice and is incredibly fun. I may not be the greatest player (or understand the rules), but that isn't necessary to have fun! It's super easy to carry down the boardwalk, all stuffed nicely into a little bag that you can throw over your shoulder. Set up takes no time at all and, once you have your sunscreen on (never forget your sunscreen), you can begin the game. It also does not take up

acres worth of room on the beach so the people around you (hopefully) won't hate you! Even if you don't know the rules, like me, friends can teach you the basics and it is easy to catch on. You'll have the hang of it in no time! If you've made the trek to the beach, you might as well enjoy yourself. My favorite games might not be the same as yours, but the important thing is that you have fun and make memories. So, set up some beach music and have fun playing games! Even if you are not typically the "athletic" type, you're on vacation and the world won't end if you have a little fun. Say goodbye to clouds of gray and hello to skies of blue and sunny beach days ahead in the summer of 2024.



PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

Spikeball being played by the beach

Should Schools Embrace Artificial Intelligence?

Connor Almstead
News Editor

Cheating in school is unfortunately nothing new. For generations, students have found ways to cheat the system. From passing notes to secretly writing on a desk, students have developed a myriad of ways to avoid doing work. In recent years, a new development has exploded in popularity: Artificial Intelligence (AI) websites and translators. Programs, such as Chat-GPT, are capable of writing essays that mimic human writing patterns. If done right, an AI resource could fabricate an entire paper without the student needing to do more than provide a prompt. AI serves as a "get out of jail free" card for students either short on time or who are simply too lazy to complete an assignment themselves. As a result, teachers have begun to crack down on catching these culprits using a variety of methods. Ironically, one of the most common ways AI is being fought is with AI itself. Programs, such as TurnItIn read submitted material and evaluate the likelihood that an AI generator was used to write it. Many schools across the United States have begun to rely on the validity of AI software. These AI-checking systems have resulted in thousands of students either being caught using AI as a cheating device or being forced to admit that they have previously used one. Using AI to assist with schoolwork is considered a form of plagiarism. At Freeman High School, committing an act of plagiarism comes with serious consequences. Punishments may differ depending on the situation, however, getting caught cheating with an AI device will likely affect your academic honor. While punishments like these deter disreputable actions, strict regulations of AI may hinder its

benefits. For example, before generative chatbots existed, AI was used for societal progress, such as revolutionizing fields of science and mathematics. In 1955, the first AI program capable of thinking for itself, Logic Theorist, was released. It assisted in solving controversial proofs that were highly debated at the time. Over time, however, AIs became increasingly advanced and ultimately contributed to the development of many fields. One of the most prominent examples would be the original text-to-speech bots in the early 2000s, such as the Apple iPhone's Siri, which revolutionized the world of digital assistants. However, with the current "AI Revolution," there may be a limit to what computers are capable of. Specifically for education, popular learning programs are beginning to incorporate AI into their curriculums to enhance studying methods and user experience. The biggest ones as of now are Duolingo's, "Duoling Max," Khan Academy's, "Khanmingo," and Quizlet's, Premium Program. These programs will likely be the pioneers of a new generation of education, in which learning is more digitized and customizable to meet individual needs. AI has created an educational experience that is far more flexible and accessible to students and has challenged the conventional way of teaching. AI has significantly influenced the way students approach their school work. Therefore due to the magnitude of AI programming, some argue it should be regulated on school grounds. Maybe this comes with extensive teacher supervision or one public computer with AI software per class, we simply don't know yet. However, it would be silly to stubbornly refuse a resource that could be powerful in the future. No matter what happens in American schools, there's only one certain thing: AI is here to stay, whether we like it or not.

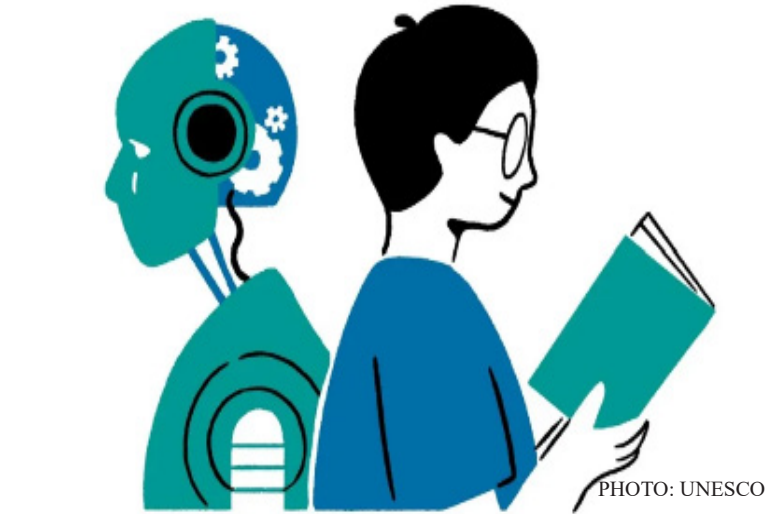


PHOTO: UNESCO

AI will play a great role in educating the next generation's youth.

HE SAID SHE SAID

News Editor
Matthew Wozniak



Features Editor
Cate Woodrum



The ocean is fun,
but the sand? It's
just crushed-up
rocks, innit?



Beach

I do enjoy a
museum or two.
Stay in the AC!



City

I love a good hike;
the tougher the
terrain the better.



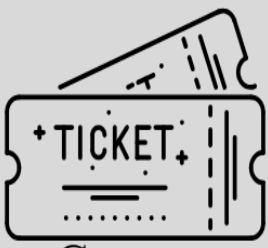
Mountains

You're going to the
wrong lakes, all the
best lakes are cold!
They're called great
for a reason.



Lake

Can't you enjoy
music in the
comfort of your
own home?



Concerts

Gagged.



Roadtrip

The best part
about
summer.

Fun, but sooo hot
that all I can think
of is pit sweats.

Backpacking
makes me feel cool.

Why are they
always warm ...
gross.

So much fun and
the best way to stay
in touch with all
your people during
the summer.

The journey is
worth more than
the destination.

Freeman's Asian Student Alliance Celebrates AAPI Month

Liah Chung
Graphics Editor

Freeman High School's Asian Student Alliance (ASA) is a club dedicated to providing a safe and enriching environment for people of all racial and ethnic backgrounds to come together and celebrate Asian culture. ASA meets roughly twice a month for presentations, celebrations, and discussions on topics ranging from Tamil New Year and Chuseok (Korean Thanksgiving) to cultural appropriation and the impact of the model minority myth on race relations.

The club was founded in 2021 after the COVID-19 pandemic spotlighted and accelerated anti-Asian racism. According to NBC News, anti-Asian hate crimes increased by almost 150% in 2020.

Club sponsor Mrs. Divina, a second-generation Filipino-American, said that when the two co-founders asked her to be their sponsor, she was "absolutely thrilled." "When I was in high school, we never had anything like this," she said. "I'm glad that we have the opportunity to pro-

vide a safe space for our Asian students." Mrs. Divina also mentioned the multitude of Asian cultures at Freeman; "Contrary to popular belief, even though we share a lot of cultural characteristics, we're very different," she said.

Senior and current ASA president Lydia Prak said ASA has become a very important club to her throughout her time at Freeman. "When I first came to Freeman, I noticed how there were

"I got to see the Asian community — even though at Freeman, it is small — come together and learn about each other."

- Lydia Prak

a lot of cultural clubs but there wasn't one for Asians, so seeing the Asian Student Alliance be founded was very beneficial," said Lydia. "I got to see the Asian community — even though at Freeman, it is small — come together and learn about each other."

With members from a range of

countries including India, Cambodia, China, Korea, Japan, the Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam, and Afghanistan, ASA aims to be an inclusive resource for all of Freeman's Asian students. "Asia isn't a monolith and even though there are a lot of differences [between our cultures], there are a lot of things that bring us together, and it's fun to connect with other people," said junior Elaine Jacob.

According to ASA leadership, ASA's ability to create internal connections within Freeman is the cornerstone of the club. "I really like the fact that people voice their opinions about experiences they've had that [they] wouldn't be confident sharing outside of ASA," said Vice President Sahan Muthukumar. "I don't feel uncomfortable sharing [my experiences] and I shouldn't have to feel uncomfortable sharing them [outside of ASA]."

ASA is a platform for not only spreading and celebrating culture but also for promoting racial justice, solidarity, and understanding. "In a school where around 51% of the student population is White, [minority students] can feel isolated and out-of-place, [making] it difficult to feel the same



PHOTO: LIAH CHUNG

Members of ASA pose for a photo

connection to the 'Freeman Family' that the rest of the school is so proud of," said junior Nat Taylor who has been involved in ASA since his freshman year. "It's great to have a community you can fall back on," he said. "Having a group you can talk to about it and say 'this is what I'm going through' is really useful."

The federal government first designated the month of May as Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month to recognize the achievements and persistence of Asian American communities. Since then, it has been an important way for Asian Americans to share their stories. "May is a really important month for [Asian Americans]," said Nat. "To have that ability to [say]: 'this is my experience, and these are the challenges we face as a minority group' is really important."

ASA celebrated AAPI month in many ways. The club hung posters of famous Asian Americans around the school, conducted a scavenger hunt with red envelopes and Asian treats, held a meeting with Freeman's Black Student Union on intersectionality in civil rights, and advertised the AAPI festival at the Greater Richmond Convention Center. They also interviewed

students for a morning announcements video and held a potluck during Freeman Focus for students to celebrate Freeman's rich cultural diversity through food.

ASA and AAPI Month can also help people who feel disassociated from their AAPI roots reacquaint themselves with their heritage. "It makes me reflect on my grandma and everything she's been through—coming here to a new country and having to learn a new language," said junior Adie Fankhouser, whose grandmother immigrated from South Korea to the United States in 1966. "[ASA is] important because it helps people express a part of themselves that they might not be able to express around the rest of the Freeman populace," she said. "It helps people like me feel more connected to their roots."

The Asian Student Alliance does not limit membership to people of only Asian descent. "ASA is a place for me to learn about cultures that are different from mine, spend time with my friends, and try to understand things that are different from what I see in my world," said senior Millie Grymes, a two-year member of ASA. "I get to understand other people's worlds a little bit better," she said.

"THE AMERICAN DREAM BELONGS TO EVERYONE."

Betty Ong Kalpana Chawla Dat Nguyen Johnny Kim



Chinese-American flight attendant



Indian-American astronaut and engineer



Vietnamese-American linebacker



Korean-American U.S. Navy lieutenant commander

GRAPHIC: LIAH CHUNG

Señorita Bailey Makes Her Mark at Freeman as the First-Year Teacher of the Year

Libby Mercer
Editor-in-Chief

Before Spring Break, Señorita (Srta.) Bailey, Freeman High School's newest Spanish teacher, was named First-Year Teacher of the Year by Freeman principal Dr. Marshall and her peers. In just her first year of teaching, Srta. Bailey has involved herself in the Freeman Community as a mentor of many organizations and by making countless connections with her students.

Srta. Bailey grew up in a small town in Pennsylvania with a family of educators who influenced her and her career path. Her Grandfather and Father were both teachers and inspired by her family, Srta. Bailey chose to follow suit. Although Srta. Bailey had the option to stay in her hometown and teach, she decided that it was time for a change. "The school [in Pennsylvania] that I student-taught at ended up offering me a full-time position," said Srta. Bailey. "It would have been great, easy, [and] comfortable." Instead of taking the job in Pennsylva-

nia, she decided to take a "leap of faith" by coming to Freeman.

Srta. Bailey received her award at a monthly faculty meeting before Freeman's 2024 Spring Break. She was not expecting the recognition but was elated to share the news with her family back home. "It was really special to be able to share [the award] with my family," said Srta. Bailey. "It's been really hard to be in a new state without all of them, [especially] since they are also teachers." When sharing the news with her grandparents, Srta. Bailey discovered that about 50 years ago, her Grandfather received the same award. "I guess it runs in the family," said Srta. Bailey. "It's really special."

Srta. Bailey was not passionate about a career in teaching Spanish until her Freshman year of college when she studied abroad in Mexico, which fueled her passion for teaching and learning Spanish. "I went [to Mexico] and fell in love with the culture," said Srta. Bailey. "[Knowing Spanish is a] superpower, being able to communicate with so many other people in the world is really neat."

This year, Department Chair of

World Languages, Señorita (Srta.) Snellings has worked closely with Srta. Bailey and gladly nominated her for the First-Year Teacher of the Year award. "Even though this is her first year at DSF, I can't remember the Freeman Family before her," said Srta. Snellings. "[Srta. Bailey] has not only made her mark on the World Languages Department, but her contributions to the Freeman community in general make her a valued and integral member of the Freeman Family."

In addition to supporting Freeman's World Language Department, fellow Freeman Spanish teacher Señora (Sra.) Kossak has been a mentor to Srta. Bailey. While Sra. Kossak has helped Srta. Bailey to find her footing at Freeman, Srta. Bailey has taught Sra. Kossak educational tips and tricks in return. "While I've advised [Srta. Bailey] on topics such as DSF's policies, procedures, classroom management, and more, she has taught me much in return," said Sra. Kossak. "As a veteran teacher, I love that her ideas have helped me to stay updated with the current trends in World Language education."



PHOTO: SRTA. BAILEY

Srta. Bailey with her award

Srta. Bailey's teaching style hones in on making connections with her students. "[Teaching is] more about how you can impact anyone else in your job," said Srta. Bailey. "Even if it's just one student a day." When it comes to establishing connections with students, Srta. Bailey makes an effort to support them in and outside of school hours. "[I try to] go to their lacrosse [games] or the musical they're in," she said. "But even if I have other events, which is reality, I ask them the next day, 'Hey, how was the game..?' Those kinds of conversations I feel like have helped a lot build the classroom environment with the students overall."

Harboring relationships with her students and being an involved member of the Freeman Family has ensured that her students feel heard and have someone in their corner. Sophomore Anna Ray is

in Srta. Bailey's Spanish IV class and feels supported and seen by her. "Srta. Bailey has come to chorus performances that I have been in and she is super supportive and enthusiastic about what her students are interested in."

Srta. Bailey is also involved in the Freeman Community as a club sponsor of the Taylor Swift Club and Athletes Worshipping Christ, an assistant coach for the Varsity Softball team, and a leader of Young Life. However, no matter what her students are involved in, Srta. Bailey makes sure to come out and support them!

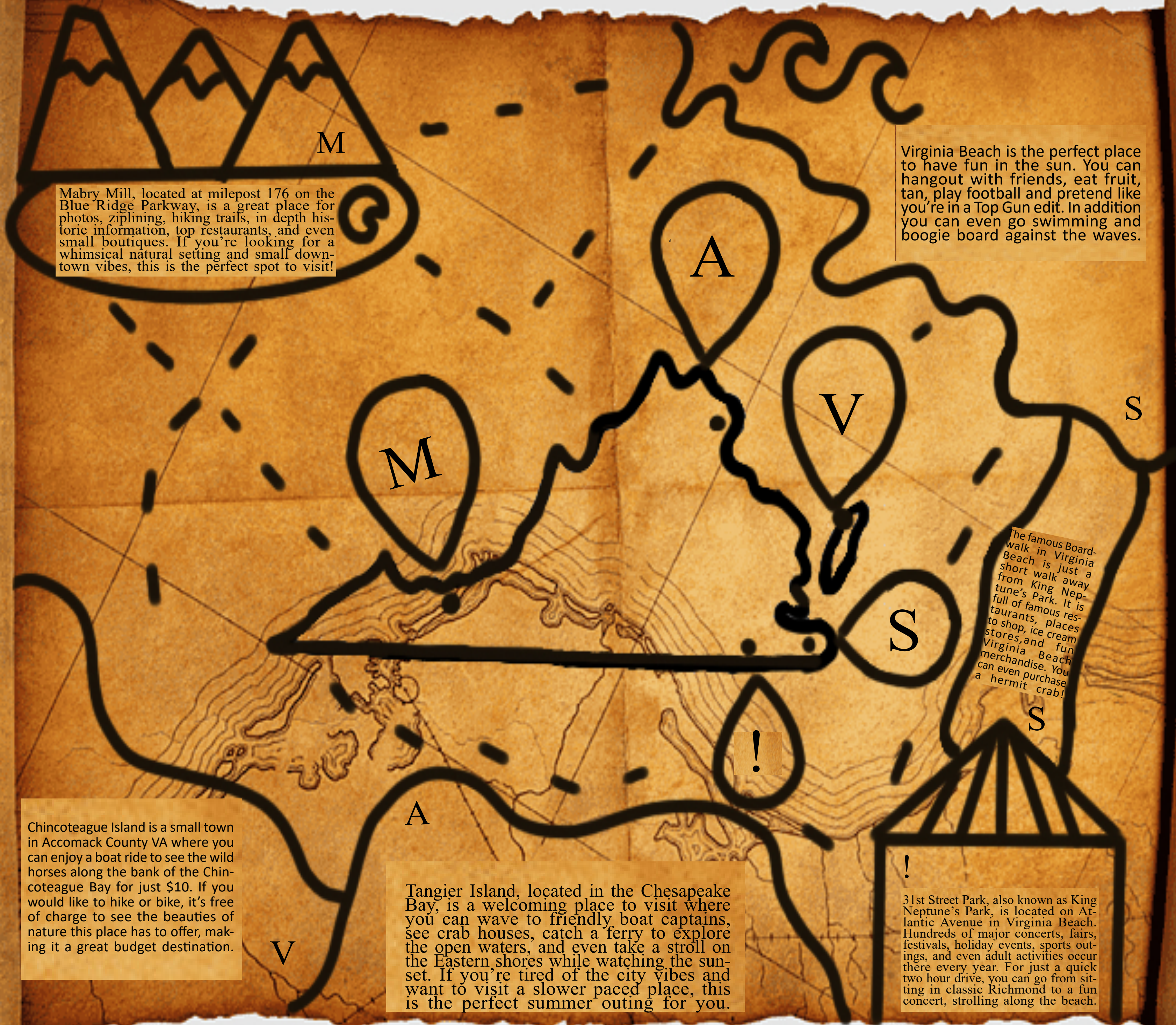
Being named First-Year Teacher of the Year has only encouraged Srta. Bailey to keep impacting her students. As a supportive face in the Freeman family, she will continue to build connections with students and share her passion for learning a new language with the Freeman community!



PHOTO: SRTA. BAILEY

Srta Bailey with students at young life retreat

VIRGINIA'S HIDDEN TREASURES



La Doña: A Fresh Taste of Mexican Culture

Cate Woodrum
Features Editor

La Doña Cocina Mexicana opened its doors six months ago with a strong message and a carefully crafted menu to deliver it. The restaurant's Southern Mexican cuisine is deeply rooted in the culture of the Gutierrez family, who own, run, and cook for La Doña. Located right on Horsepen Road, it is an untapped source for the Freeman community to discover.

Before Daniel Gutierrez and his family immigrated from Guerrero, Mexico to Virginia, they created food to spread love and further their culture. Growing up in Mexico, Gutierrez attested to always being in a home built off of a love for cooking.

However, once his family moved to America, they quickly realized that to capture their culture, which the local food landscape was lacking, they needed a bigger platform. So, when Daniel Gutierrez saw the "For Rent" sign right off Horsepen Road he decided to take a chance. Now, the family is looking to educate (and feed) the Henrico Community on the different aspects of Mexican culture across the country. Gutierrez was raised on a ver-

sion of Mexican cuisine that strays from the traditional American expectations of 'Mexican' food. It then became a family goal to educate their new community by sharing this interpretation of Mexican cuisine. "Mexican style food is not just TexMex, it is fresh, vibrant, organic flavors and spices like the ones here," said Gutierrez, which La Doña seeks to represent in their menu.

The physical space of La Doña Cocina Mexicana is a bright and cheerful setting adorned with flowers and hand-painted murals along the walls. The vibrant environment is bubbling with creativity and culture.

The restaurant also has a designated photo spot decorated

"This is more than just selling food to us, it's about sharing culture"

- Daniel Gutierrez

with a flower display similar to those surrounding the rest of the dining area. Yet, these arrangements are not coincidental; they reflect Gutierrez's floral business, "Moonlight Floral," another form of self-expression and creativity in the Gutierrez family.

Although the message of La Doña is admirable and its interior is aesthetically pleasing, none of that matters if the food is not up to par. The menu of La Doña is straightforward: a list of dishes followed by available meat and vegetable combinations, but this is the opposite of the food placed in front of you. Regardless of your order, decorative plates with vibrant-colored sauces, meats, fruits, and vegetables cover the table. According to Gutierrez, the in-house guacamole is a fan-favorite along with their Barrias Tacos.

La Doña also uses organic and fresh ingredients, which are present in a wide variety of colors and flavors that jump off the plate. Much of the menu takes inspiration and recipes from Southern Mexican roots, but the restaurant adds a twist through food presentation and arrangement. Many dishes are sprinkled with microgreens and other aesthetically pleasing garnishes that embellish flavor and add to the dining experience.

Your experience at La Dona can be accredited to the work of an entire family who have worked to reflect generations of Mexican culture. Daniel Gutierrez expressed just how much his family has poured into La Doña. "My parents are in the back cooking right now [and] I cook in the



PHOTO: RICHMOND TIMES DISPATCH

The Gutierrez Family

mornings and work out here in the evenings," he said. "My husband, my sister, we all help out here as much as possible."

Daniel Gutierrez continued to emphasize just how important it was that his family's cultural roots were shared with the Henrico community. "The goal is really just the expression of our culture," said Gutierrez.

In a culturally diverse community, such as the area surrounding Freeman High School, having a diverse food topography, in turn, reflects diversity in the community.



PHOTO: CATE WOODRUM

La Doña sign

Cry Loud, Spare Not, Speak Up: Empowering Women to Break the Silence

Maya Tluchak
Copy Editor

Non-profit organization Cry Loud, Spare Not, Speak Up is an organization in memory of Francesca Harris-Scarborough, who was killed in a domestic violence dispute. The non-profit is devoted to empowering women and raising awareness of abusive relationships. Through educational workshops, promotional products, and informative resources, Cry Loud, Spare Not, Speak Up envisions a society where silence is replaced with strength and empowerment. Shirley Scarborough, the founder and president of Cry Loud, Spare Not, Speak Up, said, "I want for my heart for young girls and ladies to know their worth."

The memory of Shirley Scarborough's daughter, Francesca Harris-Scarborough, is the reason for Ms. Scarborough's mission. Ms. Scarborough has used her grief as a weapon to fight and advocate for an end to domestic violence. Ms. Scarborough's mission is to provide a safe environment where women feel empowered to speak up and learn their self-worth. "[My goal is to] teach younger women, to know their worth, to love themselves, to have standards and to not settle for less, to build up confidence, [and] self-esteem," said Ms. Scarborough in her testimonial, "A Mother's Cry." The organization also teaches women how to

set healthy boundaries in relationships through seminars and workshops and distinguish a healthy relationship from an abusive one.

"We want to educate women on what healthy and unhealthy relationships look like," said Tivoli Dabney, the non-profit's Vice President.

Junior Lily Brooks, the president of Freeman's One Love Club, which educates high school students on relationships, said... not only with how people are taught to treat others but also how they treat themselves," said "A lot of the time people do not like how

"Education [people] on healthy relationships can be life-saving..."

-Lily Brooks

they are being treated but do not know that it is not okay because they have experienced it so much.

Ms. Scarborough's mission is "As a mother, to make sure no one has to wake up a call like I did or

feel the heartbreak I felt [when my daughter died]," said Ms. Scarborough. "We want to educate, empower, and save somebody's life." Cry Loud, Spare Not, Speak Up "Has allowed younger girls to open up and be transparent with what is going on in their relationships." Therefore, the resources provided by Cry Loud, Spare Not, Speak Up can be life-changing and shine a light at the end of the tunnel for women of all ages.

However, this non-profit is not only raising awareness for the injustice of domestic violence; it is also serving as a resource for

young women to learn their self-worth and begin to experience self-love. For example, the non-profit hosts the "Annual I Am Enough, Known Your Worth Conference, which 130 women and girls attended," said Ms. Dabney. "There were counselors, community resources, legal resources from the attorney general's office, and education on protective orders."

After Francesca passed away, Ms. Scarborough found her journals, which she had documented her life in before her passing. "When I looked through the journals that Francesca left behind, it showed me she didn't know her worth or her beauty," said Ms. Scarborough. This eye-opening moment furthered the organization's mission: Cry Loud, Spare Not, Speak Up

"I've got to help these young women know they're worth something."

- Ms. Scarborough

is fulfilling its mission of supporting women and their voices by providing scholarship funds in memory of Francesca and promoting self-worth through various classes and workshops. "In Francesca's memory, we make the best out of the bad," said Ms. Scarborough.



PHOTO: CRY LOUD SPARE NOT SPEAK UP WEBSITE

Organization mebers promote domestic violence awareness month

The Future is Green...Teenz!

Cate Woodrum
Features Editor

Green Teenz RVA is a non-profit organization of young people working together to preserve and protect the Greater Richmond Region's natural environment. The group has been actively serving and advocating for a cleaner Richmond for over four years. For Earth Day, and in celebration of mother nature, Green Teenz is working to raise environmental awareness.

The group was founded in 2020 by former Freeman High School

students Kristina Kang and Camille Kidwell, as well as former Collegiate School student Maia Zasler. After watching the documentary "50 Minutes to Save the World," a call to action surrounding the threats to oceanic life, the girls were inspired to found Green Teenz RVA: a youth-led organization that encourages local environmental action.

Over the past four years, Green Teenz has been successful in promoting environmental awareness through conversation with the Board of Supervisors and other public discussions. In addition, the organization created a docu-

mentary with Outspoken Narrative about environmental racism in the Richmond area. The documentary received an honorable mention at the Richmond Environmental Film Festival for its recognition of the systemic environmental issues minority groups face in Richmond. Green Teenz also organizes classes for children in collaboration with Project Engage RVA, and more.

Green Teenz is not just an after-school club, their members have expressed a life-long dedication to the safeguarding of natural life. St. Catherine's School student and Green Teenz member Charlotte Broadbent is passionate about the issues Green Teenz advocates for because

"Lives are being lost, humans are being displaced, and so many organizations are still yet to recognize that there is a problem."

- Charlotte Broadbent

"They refuse to take progressive initiatives to help reduce the negative impacts that they are having on our planet."

The driving force behind Green Teenz and the environmentalist movement as a whole is the people, and they "must take action," said Charlotte. Green Teenz explains that taking action includes lobbying for environmental initiatives, recycling, reducing your carbon footprint, supporting local businesses, and more. All are efforts that Freeman students are capable of in their day-to-day life.

One of the Green Teenz many goals is to provide volunteer opportunities to Richmond youth, that, in turn, benefits the Richmond community. The Deep Run Park Earth Day Festival is among one of the many volunteer events sponsored by Green Teenz. This event encourages young environmentalists to protect the Richmond community. Other than the Earth Day Festival, volunteer opportunities from Green Teenz often take the form of road-side and community-central clean-ups that are open to the public.

The end goal of the climate movement is not to stop the changing of the climate, a natural occurrence, but to prevent

"There is achievement to be found in the defiance of continuing to act"

-Sastha Tripathi

"the most exacerbated effects of the issue" said senior Sastha Tripathi, a member of Green Teenz and Senior at Freeman.

The future of not only Richmond, but the world is in the hands of future generations. Despite the small magnitude of the Green Teenz's agenda, they plan on creating a safer and healthier environment. "Though our fight against climate change could conceivably be fruitless, we should choose to persist, as... "Please don't ignore [climate change]. Instead, do whatever you can, because that still has an impact!"



PHOTO: GREEN TEENZ WEBSITE

Protest poster for climate justice

The Rise of Women's Basketball: Championships and Coaches

Julia Connor
A&E Editor

On April 7, 2024, the University of South Carolina (USC) Gamecocks got revenge on the University of Iowa Hawkeyes with an 87-75 win at the Women's NCAA Basketball Final. The Gamecocks went head to head with the Hawkeyes in the 2024 March Madness tournament after losing to them in the Final Four round of the tournament in 2023.

The Hawkeyes started the championship game off strong. By the end of the first quarter, they were ahead by 11 points. Caitlin Clark scored most of the team's points, putting up 18 in the first quarter: the most points scored by a player in any quarter of a women's championship game. In the second half, the Gamecocks came firing back, finishing the game 12 points ahead of Iowa. USC concluded their season with 38 wins and won by double digits in 31 of them.

The NCAA women's championship game drew a combined 24 million viewers on ESPN and ABC. ESPN said this was the first time in history that a women's final has drawn a larger remote audience than the men's. "Women's [basketball] in the past couple of years is much more interesting," said Mr. Larkins, Freeman High School's women's basketball coach. "The players tend to stick around longer, and I think that's a big difference." Many men's players from top teams transfer, which isn't as common in women's basketball. "The ladies stay longer, and Caitlin Clark was in Iowa for all her collegiate years," said Mr. Larkins. "I think that encourages a level of interest or engagement that men's college basketball just doesn't have."

USC's Kamilla Cardoso was the third draft pick in the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA), and the Final Four's Most Outstanding Player, finishing with 15 points and a career-high 17 boards — the retrieval of the ball after a missed free throw. "She played through an injury, she played like one of the top picks in the WNBA draft, and her teammates did something that no teammates have done for anybody who went to the WNBA in our program," said Dawn Staley, the USC

women's basketball head coach, in a post-game interview. "They [sent] her off as a national champion, so this is history for us."

Staley was hired by the USC women's basketball coaching team in May 2008. Since then, she has helped USC Women's Basketball establish itself as a powerhouse; the team has consistently ranked first in their division and finished the 2024 season undefeated. Under Staley's leadership, they won their first National Championship in 2017. Throughout Staley's career as head coach, many accolades have been given to the team such as the Southeastern Conference (SEC) Players of the Year award, the National Player of the Year award, and the WNBA's No. One Draft Picks.

While she has many accomplishments in coaching, Staley also played college basketball herself. She led the University of Virginia to three consecutive Final

Four and was named the Most Outstanding Player of the 1991 NCAA Final Four. She then played in the American Basketball League (ABL) for the Richmond Rage and later in the WNBA for the Charlotte Stings and Houston Comets.

During the Olympics, Staley also represented the U.S. as a player and later as a coach. She coached the USA Basketball Women's National Team through the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, helping the U.S. win a seventh-straight Olympic gold medal. Out of these seven gold medals, she was on the roster for five of the wins: three times as an athlete in 1996, 2000, and 2004, twice as an assistant coach in 2008 and 2016, and once as the head coach in 2020.

Even with Staley's achievements, gender barriers still exist. Men's basketball does not typically hire female coaches. "There's still a sort of [a] glass [ceiling] when it comes to coaching," said Mr. Larkins. "We think men can coach women but still seem to think that women can't coach men. It's silly."

Mr. Larkins and the Freeman girls basketball program will host the first all-girls basketball camp this summer. "There's some little girl out there watching Caitlin Clark... just like boys used to look up to Larry Bird or Micheal Jordan," said Mr. Larkins. "There's hope to see more success in our program."

Women's basketball is transforming and gaining popularity and "hopefully [we] can build upon that as a spotlight of attention for girl's [basketball]," said Mr. Larkins. Although the girls' basketball team has maintained a better record than the boys in the past two years, the girls still lack



USC after their natinal championship win

Fours and was named the Most Outstanding Player of the 1991 NCAA Final Four. She then played in the American Basketball League (ABL) for the Richmond Rage and later in the WNBA for the Charlotte Stings and Houston Comets.

During the Olympics, Staley also represented the U.S. as a player and later as a coach. She coached the USA Basketball Women's National Team through the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, helping the U.S. win a seventh-straight Olympic gold medal. Out of these seven gold medals, she was on the roster for five of the wins: three times as an athlete in 1996, 2000, and 2004, twice as an assistant coach in 2008 and 2016, and once as the head coach in 2020.

the same support. "I would hopefully like to see some more support from the student body for girls basketball in the future," he said.

Clark has been a big part of the transformation and media spotlight. Through Clark's five years as a Hawkeye, she grew a big fanbase and a name for herself. Your average viewer was [probably] pulling for Cairlin Clark," said Mr. Larkins. From high school games to collegiate games, women are beginning to receive recognition for their hard work, dedication, and talent. Senior Catherine Mottley is attending USC next fall and said she plans on going to games, "Both women's and men's," she said.

The Flying Squirrels Spread Positivity in the Richmond Community

Maya Tluchak
Copy Editor

Since Sept. 29, 2009, The Diamond Stadium has nested the beloved Richmond, VA Minor League Baseball (MiLB) Team, the Flying Squirrels. Their devoted fan base and mission for positive change have coincided with 14 consecutive sold-out season openers at the Diamond Stadium.

Through programs such as "Squirrels for Schools" and "Virginia Credit Union Strike Out Hunger," the Flying Squirrels are devoted to positively impacting the Richmond community. "Squirrels for Schools" provides resources for schools in the Richmond area that serve as a motivation to participate in educational activities. For example, in local Richmond and Henrico elementary schools and middle schools, the "Go Nuts for Reading Program" challenges students to read with the incentive of free game tickets and a pre-game march on the field. The Squirrels also promote high academic performance through their 'Score an 'A' Program.' In the program, students can earn a free home-game general admission ticket for each A on their report card.

The Squirrels are also affiliated with multiple charities and nonprofit organizations in Richmond. They work to raise money for partner organizations with a mission to promote wellness in the community. The Squirrels provide outreach for Jacob's Chance, a nonprofit organization in Richmond, Virginia that creates local inclusive programs for individuals of all abilities. "The Squirrels embrace our community and support so many causes that create positive change, as well as [create] opportunities for others that do not easily have access to them," said Kate Mardigan, founder and president of Jacob's Chance.

Jacob's Chance works closely with Freeman students of all abilities and provides opportunities for student participants along with student volunteers, such as the Teen Scene, where students in Richmond get to have fun and make new friends. For example,

the Teen Scene recently held an event at the Flying Squirrels game where they watched baseball and enjoyed fireworks. "The Squirrels go above and beyond by making sure Nutzy interacts with our families," said Kate. "They provide a positive, empowering, and fun environment."

Discussing the Flying Squirrels without mentioning the notorious Nutzy and Nustasha, the Flying Squirrel's two mascots, is impossible. The season always begins with "Nutzy's Block Party," which consists of food trucks, music, vendors, a petting zoo, activities for kids, and autographs from mascots Nutzy and Nustasha. These two characters serve as in-game and out-of-game entertainment. They frequently visit local schools and participate in the "Squirrels for Schools" program. They also deliver a source of entertainment during the games. For example, at the start of each game, the squirrels zoom onto the field in a makeshift race car.

Although The Diamond Stadium has been the home of the Flying Squirrels since 2009, Richmond City has plans to fly the Squirrels to a new nest, as part of the city's multi-billion dollar Diamond District mixed-development project projected to be finished in the year 2026. This project will incorporate a new stadium set to replace the Diamond. According to Nexstar Media, the new design's purpose is to make the area "Richmond-Centric," in other words, a focal point in the Richmond Community. According to Ballpark Digest, the stadium will have community-centered amenities such as an outfield play area for kids and families, terraced lawn seating, a beer garden, a party deck, and a barbecue picnic area to reach this goal.

These plans are set to continue the Flying Squirrels' legacy in Richmond and their mission of making positive change. The team's support for charities, students, and other programs makes a productive difference in the Richmond community beyond baseball. "Because the Squirrels are respected and loved in the community, their support of a cause only solidifies the cause," said Kate.

Freeman Varsity Girls Lacrosse Team: On the Road to their Fourth State Championship

Sadie Edlavitch
A&E Editor

Douglas Freeman's lacrosse team is suiting up for another victorious season. With three consecutive state titles to their name and the guidance of Head Coach Christina D'Angelo, the team is on the road to their fourth state championship! Sophomore Hannah Kantanen has played lacrosse since elementary school; "I started playing lacrosse when I was in fifth grade, and ever since then, I fell in love with the sport," said Hannah. Not only does Hannah commit to the Freeman family, but she also plays on a local club team, Yellow Jackets Mid-Atlantic, as an attacker and draw specialist. "I

really enjoy the mechanics of the draw and always learning ways I can get better," said Hannah. In 2023, Hannah was selected as an Apex All-American. To receive this award, one must be accepted into one of the elite showcases of the Apex Lacrosse Events, and evaluated at the top 5 percent by professionals at the event. Hannah was presented with this award along with eight other high school athletes.

The pressure of fighting for another state championship title comes with a lot of excitement for Hannah and her teammates. "I have never won a state championship before so it would be such a cool opportunity for me if our team makes it," said Hannah. Lacrosse can be a very physically demanding sport, how-

ever, Hannah has found strategies where she can mentally and physically prepare herself before a game. "I like to meditate and take many deep breaths before a game to reduce some of my stress," said Hannah. "I also drink a lot of liquid I.V. and water to feel hydrated and ready to play."

In the first game of the lacrosse season, Hannah received "the Golden Stick" for scoring a total of six goals and for four draw controls. Athletes on the team receive the golden stick for showing exceptional work ethic and perseverance on the field. The athlete who is awarded the Golden Stick after a game gets to choose who it goes to in the next game of the season.

Junior Molly Bannister has played on the lacrosse team for three years, one year on the Ju-



PHOTO: FREEMAN GIRLS LACROSSE'S INSTAGRAM

The varsity girl's lacrosse team after their first game of the season

Paris Olympics 2024



nior Varsity team, and two years on varsity. "I started playing lacrosse in third grade because all of my friends were and I only really liked the social aspect of it," said Molly. "As I got older, I got more involved in the game and started to make a lot of progress." Along with being a member of the varsity lacrosse team, Molly is a member of the Freeman girls varsity basketball team.

In 2023, Molly was awarded the Second Team All-Region 5C Honors award for her athletic performance. For this award, the All-Region honorees are selected as the best players in the region and honored by the division. In addition to this regional honor, she won the Golden Stick in 2023 for her "hustle and stick work," wrote Coach Christina on the Freeman lacrosse Instagram page. This year Molly won the Golden Stick for her offensive movement on the

field and for scoring two goals in a game against Glen Allen High School. "Last year, it was my first time winning a state championship," said Molly. "It was probably one of the best experiences in my whole life, just the feeling of winning after the hard work we all put in to get there."

Additionally, many of the athletes have other commitments alongside lacrosse, which can be a lot to take on. "I love playing lacrosse but I also do love spending time with my friends and family," said sophomore, Chase Wilson. "I also find it hard to find time to do all of my school work at times."

Overall, the Freeman girls lacrosse team is practicing daily and working to win their fourth consecutive state title. "I think that everything works out for a reason," said Molly, "I know we are going to go far this season."

Everybody Cut Loose, Footloose!

Sarah Chilton
Editor-in-Chief

In April 2024, the Freeman theater department brought the 1984 classic movie “Footloose” to the auditorium for one weekend only. In this year’s spring musical, the cast and crew wowed audiences with their production of the well-known story produced by Director Claire Gardner, Orchestra Director Rob Blankenship, Music Director Lizzie Williamson, and Choreographer Nadia Harika. The musical begins with Ren McCormack, a rebellious teenager from Chicago who moves with his mom to a small country town named Bomont after his father suddenly leaves. As he attempts to fit in, he learns that dancing, one of his favorite things, is illegal, a law heavily enforced by the Reverend Shaw Moore. Ren hates the law against dancing and wants to revolt, but it was put in place because of the death of four students who died on the way back from a dance a few years ago, one of whom was the Reverend’s son. In his pursuit to dance, Ren ends up falling in love with the Reverend’s daughter, Ariel, which causes drama between himself and Ariel’s boyfriend, Chuck Cranston. “The story is a ‘tug of war’ between the two sides, which focuses a lot on his relationships with his friends at school [and] the people that he meets along the way,” said senior Ethan Park who played Reverend Shaw Moore. “It’s a story of him trying to break through to the Reverend, but they’re both broken people.” According to Ethan, the musical had its similarities and differences with the movie. The movie “feels like it’s a lot about Shaw, but the musical shifts the focus towards Ren,” he said. “It’s a lot more grounded and realistic and

feels a lot more like something that people are able to connect to.” The leading players for Footloose featured many seniors including Dylan Becker as Ren McCormack, Nora Rossi as Ariel Moore, Ethan Park as Reverend Shaw Moore, Jesse Blankenship as Chuck Cranston, Emerson Gamlin as Willard Hewitt, and Riley Mullis as Urleen. The main cast also starred a handful of juniors including Erin Walters as Dusty, Bessie Nelson as Wendy Jo, and sophomore Anna Ray as Vi Moore. There were over 30 cast members involved in the production and many more crew working backstage, in the tech booth, with the sets and costumes, and in the orchestra pit to make the show come to life. The costumes and sets of the show received praise from the audience and represented the setting and characters. The outfits consisted of both a hodgepodge of 80s outfits featuring baggy jeans, scrunchies, bright-colored eye makeup, and traditional rural outfits that fit the setting with cowboy hats, jeans, and overalls. There were also niche outfits for different crews, such as Chuck’s group which was separate from the rest of the town, as they were dressed in darker colors and a more ‘rebellious’ style of clothing. Conversely, the adults and Reverend stuck to suits and dresses. The set of the musical featured two platforms with stairs and different levels that faded from purple to pink. Setting changes were aided by add-ons like benches, a podium for the church, and a door and table for the Moore household. The show itself was heavily integrated with musical numbers, with a variety of cast participation. Some songs included the whole cast, such as “Footloose,” but some songs only featured one actor or actress, such as “I Can’t Stand Still” and “Heaven Help Me.” There were also a few songs

that featured only a couple of characters, such as “Holding Out for a Hero” and “Almost Paradise.” These contemporary songs are part of “jukebox musicals” — shows where a majority of songs are already well known and popular as opposed to original — and what made the show enjoyable, said junior Erin Walters. “This show is definitely newer, more pop-heavy, and more dance-heavy too, [which gives it] a more fun vibe,” she said. According to the audience, opening night was a hit! This show was the first Freeman production that freshmen Anna Minkler and Maeve Bridge had ever seen, and after watching it they decided that they would be returning for another. Maeve’s favorite parts were the “singing, the lights, and [that] the crowd was so involved,” she said. “Now that I know what it’s like I definitely am going to come back.” For long-time viewers, the show upheld its value just the same. Senior Emmett Townsend said, “[the show] ‘s great, I love it every year and I have so many friends in it so it’s fun to watch.” Junior Sydney Miller added “It was really incredible, I love all the voices of the actors and actresses and the dancing is so good,” she said. Though it appeared seamless to the viewers, there were some slight hiccups in the production process. Since it was Ms. Gardner’s first year as the theater director at Freeman and her first time directing a musical, it took some getting used to. The transition from how Ms. Spears, Freeman’s previous theater teacher, did everything to Ms. Garder has been different, “so it’s finding how they differ and then going with that change” to adjust, said Ethan. In addition, the team got a new choreographer based in New York, which made it difficult to learn choreography. “She came down for a week and then she’s been in



PHOTO: MAC-HAYDN THEATRE

Footloose the musical poster

New York ever since, so we’ve mainly been learning through videos, which is kind of new for all of us,” said Nora Rossi. In her absence, they had two dance captains — seniors Charlotte Holloway and Chandler Doll — to help the cast learn the choreography. “They’ve been really good at knowing their stuff,” said Nora. “It’s a team effort with everyone trying to help when things go wrong.” What the audience saw on opening night and the three shows that followed did not come easy. This preparation has been ongoing since January, and once the competitive audition process was over, the cast kicked off rehearsals with “a read-through of the show and then slowly [worked through] scenes [and songs], then [started] to work with the band,” said Erin. As time went on, the evolution of blocking, choreographing, and run-throughs culminated in “tech week” (or “hell week” as some call it) where actors and crew members alike put all the pieces together late into the night during the two weeks leading up to the show. In the final stages, “we put on our microphones, put on costumes, warm up, and then it’s just run, run, run, through the show as much as we can before 10:30 or 11 o’clock at night,” said Ethan. None of this, however, would be possible without the crew. When asked what they wished the audience knew about the show, multiple cast members cited their crew and how hard they worked behind the scenes for the show to be successful. “Sometimes a lot of the attention goes towards the actors, but the amount of work that’s being done by other

people behind the scenes is super impressive and it deserves to be appreciated,” said Ethan. Ollie Jones, a junior on the running crew of seven to eight people explained that they join the cast members around 2-3 weeks before the show. “We have a costume crew that works in [the theater room] and works with quick changes backstage, and we have the wonderful booth who do the lights [and sound],” said Ollie. “I definitely don’t think the crew gets enough props because I feel like we do a lot backstage but all everyone sees is the actors performing on stage [so] we’re kind of forgotten.” Eva Milby, one of only two stage managers, has been involved in the musical from start to finish, even before the actors! “I’m there at every single rehearsal from the very beginning,” she said. After helping to organize the auditions, Eva helps with the blocking, fills in for cast members, writes down choreography, and has to make sure she knows every costume change and set piece. During the actual performance, she manages the operations backstage with a headset and communicates with the sound and lighting crews to make sure everything runs smoothly. Similar to the small town of Bomont, the theater community at Freeman is a tight-knit group, and many members of cast and crew alike have cited their love for not just the performance, but the friendships they made along the way. With such an energetic end to the 2024 school year, one can only imagine what Ms. Garner and the theater department have in store for the play this upcoming fall.



Freeman’s Production of Footloose the musical

Poets Only Want Love If It’s Torture

Sadie Edlavitch
A&E Editor

Taylor Swift originally became a musical legend due to her sappy songs about teen romance, but compared to the adult heartbreak of her new album, “The Tortured Poets Department” (TPPD), Taylor Swift is all grown up. All 31 tracks on the album were written or co-written by Swift and co-produced by Jack Antonoff and Aaron Dessner, Swift’s long-time friends and collaborators. Swift got wildly

ambitious with her lyrics in TPPD, even by Swift standards. TPPD intimates the soft musicality of previous albums such as “Folklore” and “Evermore.” In “Folklore” and “Evermore,” Swift depicts storylines of fictional characters. However, in TPPD, Swift reflects on her personal experiences. In the song “Fortnight,” Swift sings about a short-lived romance that continues to affect her, even as her former lover moves on. Later on, Swift revealed what inspired “Fortnight” in an interview with Amazon Music. “‘Fortnight’ is a song that exhibits a lot of the

common themes that run throughout this album,” said Swift. “One of which being fatalism—longing, pining away, lost dream.” Freeman students are also enjoying this album due to its relatability and deep meaning. “I started playing the album this morning when it first came out and I really loved listening to “Fortnight” and “The Smallest Man Who Ever Lived,”” said sophomore Emma Anders. “The lyrics really spoke to me and they had a good meaning to them,” she said. However, TPPD has gotten some backlash since its initial release on April 19, 2024, which has caused disputes among fans. “One thing I did not love about this new album was that some of her lyrics caused a lot of controversies that are now going around the internet,” said junior Abigail McGowan. “However, I really did like this new album of hers and I believe it to be one of her best,” she said. Some of the tension surrounding Swift’s music began when she released her 2017 album, “Reputation.” Around this time she dealt with widespread backlash from Kanye West and Kim Kardashian. The song titled “thanKyoualMee” in her new album, TPPD, has the letters K, I, and M capitalized, their fans assumed this was a nudge at Kim Kardashian. The lyrics in “thanKyoualMee” appear to be about a mean girl at school, but fans honed in on these lines in particular. “I don’t think you’ve changed much, and so I changed your name, and any real defining clues,” said

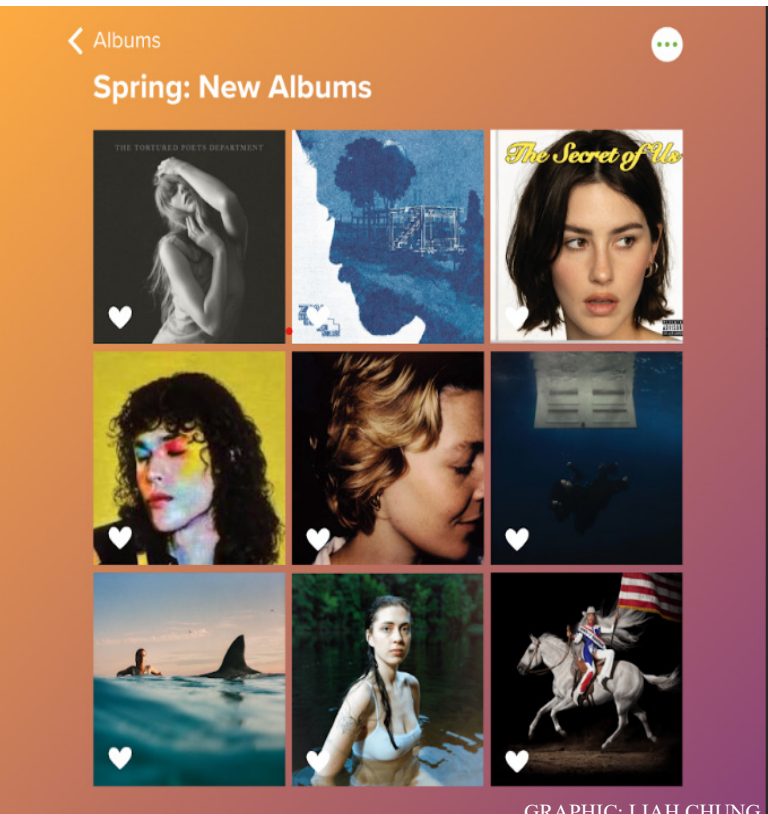


PHOTO: SPOTIFY

Taylor Swift’s album cover for TPPD

Swift in the track. “One day, your kid comes home singin’ a song that only us two is gonna know is about you.” These lyrics specifically, are the ones that fans are relating to Kim, Kanye, and their daughter North West. “I like that this album has a new kind of vibe to it [and] my favorite song from it so far is definitely “But Daddy I Love Him,” said Abigail. The title presumably comes from a line in “The Little Mermaid,” because it’s what Ariel shouts at her father, King Triton, while pleading to join Prince Eric on land. However, in the movie “The Notebook,” Allie Hamilton (Rachel McAdams), says a similar line when defending her relationship with a boy from the other side of the tracks: “Yes, daddy, I love him.” Fans are not sure if the song’s lyrics are about Ariel or Allie, but it’s clear that the lyrics re-

volve around following your heart. Many fans have speculated about who this album is written about since most of her albums tend to focus on one or two of her previous ex-boyfriends. Some assumed the album would focus on Swift’s six-year-long relationship with British actor, Joe Alwyn, which ended last year, while others believed it is about The 1975 lead singer, Matty Healy, whom she briefly dated last summer. “During Taylor’s album announcement, she said she had been working on TPPD for two years, which overlaps with her relationship with [Joe Alwyn],” said Emma Anders, “I just think that some, if not all songs must be about him in some way.” In all, the entire album seems to come straight from Swift’s heart and mind. TPPD showcases Swift’s ability to powerfully display her feelings through lyrical poetry.



GRAPHIC: LIAH CHUNG

Jojo Siwa Gets Her “Karma”

Julia Connor
A&E Editor

From bows-bows to “oh nos,” Jojo Siwa has turned heads with her latest rebranding. Siwa’s audience has watched her grow from wearing bright neon colors, sparkles, and big bows to bold dark make-up, glitter, and black. Along with this transition, she dropped a new single, “Karma,” on April 5, 2024. Before the song was released, Siwa posted on her TikTok account, @itsjojosiwa, 81 times to promote her new music. Almost every post included clips and teasers of “Karma.” One of the many



Cover photo for “Karma”

posts included a warning that this was mature content, a warning targeted towards her young fans. “At this moment, I am making it very clear that [my brand is] going from child star to adult artist,” said Siwa in an interview with Billboard in March 2024. “That is very important to me,” she said. Although Siwa’s dramatic appearance engaged many of her viewers, the lyrics, choreography, and new look provoked mixed reactions from her fans. “[The song was] not at all what [people] were expecting from her,” said sophomore Alice Vosmik. “My childhood is kind of ruined.” Once her music video was fully released, viewers were even more

shocked at the former child pop star’s transition into adulthood. “I actually liked the music video, I just absolutely hate the song,” said senior Nitya Kumar. The music video had distinct choreography and a dark color scheme, contrasting her old songs, such as “Candy Store,” which was upbeat and bright. The video accumulated 29 million views in three weeks, making it a viral social media discussion. However, Siwa got her own karma when it was revealed she didn’t write “Karma” herself; she bought the song as a legal remake of artist Brit Smith’s original demo. This wouldn’t be a big shock, except in interviews, Siwa insinuated she wrote this song, making comments such as, “It’s been a long two years waiting and holding [“Karma”] in,” said Siwa in an interview with iHeartRadio. Smith’s version of “Karma” surfaced and spread rapidly on TikTok. She never released the song in 2012 and chose another single, “Provocative,” to start her short-lived career. The song featured Will.i.am and had Betty White, a Golden Girls actress, in the video. This song did not perform well, so she ended up “stepping away from music,” she explained to Page Six on April 24, 2024. At first, Smith’s demo and Karma” music video were only available on YouTube and TikTok. Now, it is released on all streaming platforms under Smith’s name. Smith’s version of “Karma” peaked



Siwa on April 1 at the iHeartRadio Music Awards

at rank eight on the US iTunes chart, while Siwa’s ranked 89. Many internet users attacked Siwa after Smith’s version came out, saying she stole the song. “It is not unusual for songs to circulate among artists before releasing,” said Siwa to Thirty-Mile-Zone (TMZ). In the same interview, she even denied knowing who Smith was. Smith came to Siwa’s defense by sharing a video on social media. “Jojo did not steal my song,” she said. “I just wanna make it clear that Jojo has done nothing wrong to me.” In the same video, Smith shared she was bullied in her senior year of high school and would never want to be a part of online bullying. Siwa has dealt with bullying

since she first appeared on the reality TV show, “Dance Moms.” “Dance Moms” followed her and a group of girls who danced for the Abby Lee Miller Dance Company. Due to the drama surrounding the show and owner Abby Lee Miller’s harsh teaching methods, Siwa has made clear the importance of sticking up for yourself. Siwa implemented the practice of sticking up for yourself with all the online hate she has received. “[My] experience [with bullying] is [mostly on] social media; every day people comment, ‘You’re fat, you’re ugly, you’re rude,’” said Siwa in an interview with Billboard in 2016. As she said in her 2016 song “Boomerang,” she “won’t let the haters get their way.”

Inside Out 2 Releasing Next Month

Matthew Wozniak
News Editor

A sequel to Pixar’s 2015 “Inside Out,” aptly titled “Inside Out 2,” will open in theaters on June 14, 2024. Announced in mid-2022, the movie — self-described by Pixar “the feel-good (or feel-everything) film of Summer 2024” — tells the story of the eleven-year-old protagonist from the original movie, Riley Andersen, who is now a teenager grappling with her new emotions. The cast of Feelings mostly reprises their roles from the 2015 release: Amy Poehler returns as Joy, Phyllis Smith as Sadness, and Lewis Black as Anger. However there are a few changes: Due to being offered 2% of what Poehler was being paid for her role as Joy, both Mindy Kaling and Bill Hader declined to return as Fear and Disgust. This decision led to selection of Liza Lapira and Tony Hale to voice both characters, instead. However, most of the movie revolves around the new emotions that have appeared as Riley progresses through adolescence. According to Pixar’s Chief Creative

Officer and director of “Inside Out,” Pete Docter, the motive behind the sequel was to “be a little bit more truthful and broaden [the scope],” he said. When researching the first film, they found somewhere between “five to 27 emotions,” making the cast of five in the first movie the bare minimum. The first new emotion to join the crew is Anxiety, an orange emotion with a similarly-colored tuft of hair, introduced in the November 2023 teaser trailer. Anxiety, portrayed by Maya Hawke, most famous for her role as Robin in Stranger Things, is the fourth female emotion in Riley’s brain. According to The Walt Disney Company, she’s a “bundle of frazzled energy” who “ensures Riley is prepared for any negative outcome,” they said. Along with Anxiety, the turquoise-colored Envy, voiced by Golden Globe-winning Ayo Edebiri, joins the group. The next new emotion is Ennui—meaning boredom—voiced by French actress Adèle Exarchopoulos. The penultimate new emotion to make its way into Riley’s head is Embarrassment, voiced by comedian Paul Walter

Hauser, the physically largest of the group and appears pink. Finally, the last emotion to join is Nostalgia: an old woman with brown clothes released by Pixar Post on X. Very little is known about the character, but we do know that she will be voiced by Oscar nominee June Squibb in the upcoming film, according to IMDb. Initially, there were going to be several additional emotions. One of these was Shame, who was cut close to the end of production. “It was not fun to watch,” director Kelsey Mann said in an interview with TheWrap in April. Mann explained that while audiences thought the character was a good addition to the story during test screenings, it wasn’t exciting enough for the production. “You know when you see a good movie and you’re like, ‘Man, that was a great movie.’ You want to see it again? ‘No, not really,” he said. The film’s announcement in late 2022 was not a surprise to those in the industry, but a moment of shared anticipation. Both The Guardian and Entertainment Today wrote right after the first film was released in 2015 that a sequel was “inevitable.”



Inside Out 2 movie poster

Reviving Retro: Goochland Drive-In Theater

Izzy Minkler
Sports Editor

In a world full of cinemas and streaming options, there’s another way to watch movies in a world full of cinemas and streaming options - a drive-in movie theater. Picture this, a big screen under the stars, cozying up in your car with friends or family, and enjoying a flick together. Except, where is it possible to find this relic of the movie theater experience? Your answer, the Goochland Drive-In Theater (GDIT). The theater opened in 2009, and according to their website, their mission is to “offer an affordable good time within a wholesome environment.” The theater provides a rare opportunity to sit outside and watch a movie. Whether you’re into action flicks, rom coms, or family favorites, there’s something for everyone at the drive-in. Plus, you can bring the whole crew — even the pets — for a night of entertainment. Olivia Tyson (11) is one of Freeman’s students who have been to the theater. “The Drive-In has a really wide selection with a lot of great options ranging from much older stuff, to newer releases,” said Olivia. Abby Clifton (11) is another student who has gone for the Drive-In experience. “They have great films available and they always make sure to show a good mix of both new and older movies

that everyone enjoys,” said Abby. “It’s a super wholesome environment, and I think everyone just really enjoys the atmosphere.” The Drive-in is a completely different experience from traditional movie theaters. Forget about assigned seats or waiting in line for popcorn. Just pull up, tune in, and enjoy the show from the comfort of your car. The GDIT offers classic concessions, like burgers, fries, and in the summer, soft serve, and nothing on their menu is above seven dollars. To listen to the movie, all you have to do is tune into the right radio station in your own car. If your car doesn’t have the necessary equipment, radios are available to rent for the night. The GDIT has two viewing areas for movies: The Main Screen and The Grove. The Main Screen is a traditional drive-in, where guests watch the movie from their car (inside or outside of it), and you need an FM radio for sound. The Grove is an outside theater with two viewing options: from your vehicle or the lawn. If you choose to sit in the vehicle section, you’ll need an FM radio for sound. If you choose to sit on the lawn, you’ll

want to bring blankets and chairs. The lawn section has in-ground speakers, so you don’t need a radio. The Drive-In purposely prices everything extremely low, in the hopes that it will encourage customers to return time and time again. “Despite increased costs everywhere these days, please know that we keep our prices as low as possible....especially compared to other entertainment options,” said the GDIT. GDIT is trying to create a more personal and memorable experience than the chain theaters. They want you to remember more than just the movie, but also the whole event. In online reviews, they respond to any lower ratings with an explanation or apology. GDIT also goes out of their way on their Facebook page to thank their customers after every showing. “Thanks again to all the families, friends, couples, and pets who spent an evening with us,” GDIT said, “We appreciate it and hope everyone had a wonderful time!” According to online reviews, people love the theater, it has a four-and-a-half star rating on TripAdvisor, and many five-star star reviews across the internet.

A handful of Freeman students have made the trip to the Drive-In Theater to experience the theater for themselves. Abby Clifton said,

out feeling like I was wasting a nice day,” said Olivia Tyson. According to a theater spokesperson, “Fans can expect the new-



View watching from The Main Screen

“My experience was very enjoyable and super fun overall!” The Theater provides an alternative way to view films in a different setting than a traditional movie theater or your own home. “It was different from watching at a regular theater because I was able to be outside and enjoy the outdoors, at the same time as enjoying a great movie,” said Abby. Being able to enjoy the weather is a huge part of why people are willing to drive to Goochland to see a movie. “I was able to watch a movie with-

est and biggest feature films to be shown on the big screen.” In addition, retro nights will be hosted so that people can watch the classic films as they were originally designed to be watched on the big screen. The films are usually films from the 70s to the 90s. The theater also offers double feature nights on Fridays and Saturdays. The double feature night is an event when the Drive-In shows two full-length movies back-to-back with a short intermission in between the two, for the price of one movie.



PHOTO: GOOCHLAND DRIVE-IN THEATER
Goochland Drive In Theater logo

Water Worries



PHOTO: DIOGO VARA/REUTERS
Houses destroyed by floods

Flooding in Jacarezinho, Rio Grande do Sul state, Brazil is the worst to impact the area in over 80 years, authorities said. It has resulted in at least 90 deaths and over 100 others left unaccounted for. In an interview with global news agency Reuters, Resident Ricardo Junior said, “we’ve been without food for three days...I don’t know where my family is.” Ricardo is just one of the hundreds of thousands of Brazilians who are struggling with no water, no electricity, and no home left to return to after the crisis is mitigated.



PHOTO: NEWS.UN.ORG
A supply station in Hastings

On May 2, 2024, a pipe burst in the English town of Hastings. This event resulted in six days of limited to no water for residents. The burst was between the water supplier Southern Water’s reservoir and the town’s distribution plant. Two days later, the pipe was repaired, and a relief plan was implemented consisting of 228 thousand bottles of water supplied to the town. However, “an estimated 2000 homes [were] still without water” the following day, said Sussex World.



PHOTO: PATRICK NGUGI
Fleeing flood in Nairobi, Kenya

Approximately 750 thousand people have been affected by the severe rainfall and resulting floods in East Africa, with an estimated 234,000 displaced. The rain is due to El Niño, a natural climate pattern that recent studies suggest has been thrown out of usual proportion due to climate change. In response, the government is willing to do whatever it takes “to make sure that [more] lives are not lost and the people... are protected from this disaster,” said Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua at a media briefing.

Content by Cate Woodrum

Chinese President Criticizes 1999 NATO Bombing

Connor Almstead
News Editor

On Tuesday, May 7th, 2024, China’s president, Xi Jinping, wrote a letter while on his visit to Serbia, reflecting on the 25-year anniversary bombing of the Chinese Embassy by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Jinping criticizes the organization for its decision and the Chinese lives lost because of the incident.

“Twenty-five years ago, NATO flagrantly bombed the Chinese Embassy in Yugoslavia,” he wrote. “The Chinese people cherish peace, but we will never allow such tragic history to repeat itself.”

In 1999, from March to June, NATO bombed prominent locations in Yugoslavia. The official death toll was recorded to be 500, but it’s estimated that as many as 1500 other deaths have gone unaccounted for.

The main reason for this bombing was the humanitarian crisis that took place before the bombings. At the time, Yugoslavia was experiencing an ethnic cleansing, or the forced removal of a cer-

tain group of people, particularly the large groups of Albanian people who inhabited the state.

The decision to bomb Yugoslavia faced a lot of opposition, with disapproval shown through protests when news broke out. From China to the United States, widespread crowds and organized marching collectively demanded an end to the bombings, as many believed that the destruction did more harm than good to the health of the nation.

Due to the widespread destruction of Yugoslavia, the Serbian people have gained a long-lasting resentment of NATO, similar to China’s negative view of the organization. That shared view has prompted collaboration between the two countries.

Since the bombing, China has focused on maintaining a friendly relationship with the Serbian government and has claimed that Serbia is their “first comprehensive strategic partner in central and eastern Europe,” Xi wrote, “The Chinese-Serbian friendship, forged with the blood of our compatriots, will stay in the memories of both peoples.”

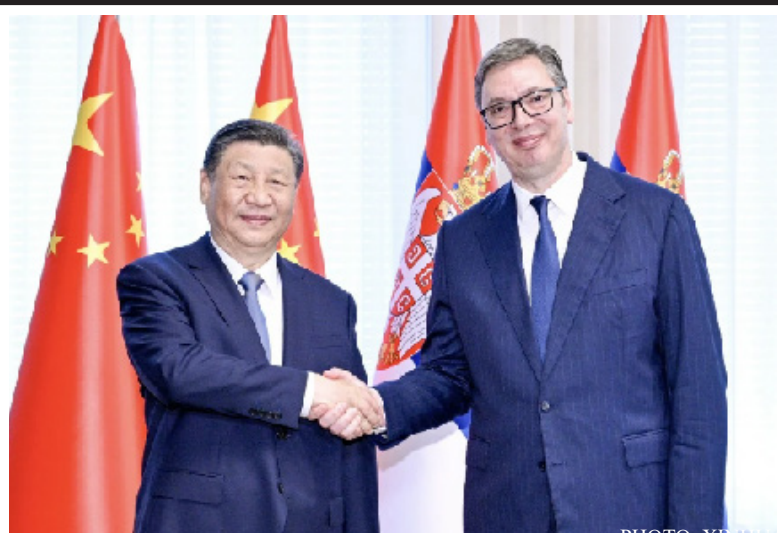


PHOTO: XINHUA
Xi Jinping meeting with Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic

College Graduations Canceled Due to Protests

Julia Connor
A&E Editor

Seniors graduating college lost their high school graduation in 2020 due to the deadly epidemic of COVID-19, and now some have lost their college graduation, too, due to campus protests.

Protests have exploded onto college grounds in response to the Israel-Hamas War. As of May 7, 2024, over 34 thousand people have been killed due to this conflict.

During Pro-Palestine demonstrations, protesters are demanding their schools cut any financial or academic ties to Israel, including relations with companies who are linked to Israel.

Different colleges have reacted to these students in various ways. Some universities have compromised with students: agreeing to resolve ties with Israel, taking student demands to higher-ups,

and investing in new faculty to promote awareness of this issue. In exchange, students cleared their encampments which were set on the college campuses.

For example, on April 30, 2024, Brown University announced that its highest governing body, the Corporation, would vote on divestment from companies affiliated with Israel in October; as a result, students cleared their encampments.

Other universities have responded harshly to protests, such as canceling school-wide events, calling for the police force on campus, and expelling students. Columbia University had its first campus protest over this issue on April 30, 2024, when students took over Hamilton Hall, a building on campus. As a result, students faced either serious legal trouble or expulsion from the Ivy League University. Columbia also canceled their graduation scheduled for May



PHOTO: THE INDEPENDENT

Joshua Dean, 45, died last month from an unexpected illness

Second Boeing Whistleblower Incident

Katelyn Morrow
Centerspread Editor

Joshua Dean, a 45-year-old man who accused Boeing, the world’s largest aerospace supply company, of blatantly ignoring faulty manufacturing, died due to a staph infection that quickly led to pneumonia. However, Dean is the second Boeing-related whistleblower to die in three months.

Dean worked as a former quality auditor at Boeing supplier Spirit Aerosystem and took his role very seriously. His frustrations with the company were evident, and he wanted to speak out against them. “Dean took his job seriously and grew increasingly frustrated with what he described as ‘a culture of not counting defects correctly’ at Spirit,” said Bill Chappell, a writer for Oregon Public Broadcasting. “Dean was one of the first to flag potentially dangerous defects with 737 Max jets at Spirit AeroSystems,” he said.

Dean noticed the improperly drilled holes in the fuselage of the 737 Max jets, which he regarded as a potential threat to maintaining the cabin pressure. In a lawsuit filed by Spirit’s company shareholders, Dean accused the company of concealing this problem after months of knowing about it. On April 26, 2023, he was fired for “retaliating” against the company. Months later, on

Aug. 23, 2023, Boeing announced that they “found fastener holes in the aft pressure bulkhead on certain 737 Max airplanes that don’t match its specifications,” which was the same problem Dean flagged around ten months earlier.

Throughout all the issues between Boeing and Spirit, they are working towards new solutions to ensure manufacturing issues are fixed, and planes are suited for take-off. On April 23, 2024, Boeing agreed to advance \$425 million to Spirit to “improve its manufacturing quality.” The two companies are moving forward to make the company more suitable for passengers. For example, the new Spirit CEO, Patrick Shanahan, sheds light on the company’s future; “I believe Spirit possesses the assets, know-how, and talent to satisfy the extraordinary aviation demand and mitigate global supply chain challenges,” said Mr. Shanahan in Spirit AeroSystems 2023 Leadership Transition Announcement. “I look forward to working closely with our stakeholders, the Board, and the Spirit team to meet all of our customer commitments, build teamwork, stabilize operations, and drive improved cash flow,” he said.

However, according to Dean in an interview with NPR, since the global pandemic, “the mechanics aren’t as experienced. Neither are the inspectors.” “We’ve just lost that,” he said.



PHOTO: MARK HOFFMAN

Student encampments at the UW Madison

15, 2024, which was to take place on the South Lawn, where protestors had encampments set up.

Although the main graduation was canceled, smaller-scale school ceremonies still took place. “These past few weeks have been incredibly difficult for our community,” the university said in a public announcement on April 29, 2024. “Just as we are focused on making our graduation experience truly special, we continue to solicit student feedback and are looking at the possibility of a festive event on May 15 to take the place

of the large, formal ceremony.”

Some, such as a Columbia student on X, believe that the graduation cancellation is “unbelievable and disrespectful.” However, more universities are beginning to take drastic measures to prioritize the safety and well-being of their students.

On May 6, 2024, Emory University issued a statement stating that they would still hold a graduation ceremony, but “concerns about safety and security [may] require [them] to adjust the plans.”

Putin Inaugurated for 5th Term



PHOTO: AP NEWS

Putin greeting his political allies

Kristen Carpenter
Online Editor-in-Chief
Opinions Editor

Amidst conflict and uncertainty, Russia’s President, Vladimir Putin, commenced his fifth term on May 7, 2024, at the Grand Kremlin Palace. Putin’s inauguration reminded the country of his continuous rule, the firmness of his power, and the challenges he and his administration face. Since his initial inauguration in

1999, Putin has transformed Russia from a nation in a state of economic collapse to a global power. Putin’s Russia has proven to run in a system where political power transitions are suppressed, and people’s civil liberties are withdrawn, as seen in policies such as expanding the definition of treason, intimidating human rights defenders, and criminalizing public actions of the LGBTQ community.

In his inaugural speech, Putin said, “We are a united and great people, and together we will overcome all obstacles, realize

all our plans, and win.” Putin’s language during his address promoted Russia’s aggressive stance even in the face of governmental pressure on multiple fronts.

The ongoing conflict with Ukraine has been a prevalent issue in Putin’s most recent term and has escalated into the bloodiest European conflict since World War II (New York Times). The 2022 invasion of Ukraine by Russia led to various events, including bombings and significant casualties, that have since reformed the European political landscape as well as pushed Russia into a state of international isolation.

Currently, Russia is implementing destructive “scorched-earth tactics” on Ukraine. Ukraine has responded with drone and missile attacks (AP News). Although Russia has received condemnation from countries like France, Poland, and the UK, Putin has remained focused on his prioritization of Russian interests and has signaled his willingness to confront the National Atlantic

Treaty Organization (NATO).

With Putin at the beginning of his fifth term, many unknowns exist, including concerns within Russia’s economy. Putin has previously made promises of prosperity. However, Russian living costs are rising, and increased military spending has created economic uncertainty.

With the challenges faced by Ukrainians and the limited infor-

mation given to Russians, there is a negative sentiment between both sides. “Russia is ruled by a liar, a thief, and a murderer,” said Yulia Navalnaya, widow of Alexei Navalny, a Russian opposition leader. The war between Russia and Ukraine shows no signs of stopping soon. With a totalitarian government in control of Russia since Putin’s reelection, it will be difficult for the war to be resolved.



PHOTO: HARVARD GAZETTE

Ukrainian troops on a tank