

## Welcoming DSF's New Assistant Principal

**Connor Almstead**  
Staff Writer

This year, students at Freeman High School may have noticed a variety of new faces and procedures around the building. From the language teachers in the Annex to the weapons scanners awaiting your arrival every morning, there has been a lot of change since June. One of the most notable additions to Freeman's roster is Assistant Principal Ms. Pantele.

Ms. Pantele's knowledge of Freeman goes back to when her relatives attended the high school, newly constructed at the time. She attended Godwin High School before continuing her education at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and Christopher Newport University for a degree in English Education. After earning her teaching certificate, she returned to Henrico to work at Glen Allen High School. There, she met Dr. Marshall. Ms. Pantele saw the effect that he had on everyone else. "I think Dr. Marshall has not only a vision for the school but for the community itself," said Ms. Pantele. "It's contagious, and he makes people really excited to be here."

After teaching at Glen Allen for over a decade, she decided to take a different route. When COVID-19 hit, she realized that schools and states across the country could improve policies surrounding student safety. "I felt like we could have done better as a county, and a country, in terms of virtual learning and the mental health of students," said Ms. Pantele. In 2021, she made a choice that would change her life: she would become an administrator. After a year of training, she took

her position as Assistant Principal at the start of the 2023 school year.

In her opinion, the way she administers is "not about the discipline or about enforcing rules," said Ms. Pantele. "It's about the fun and making those meaningful connections with the students around you." Her dream would be for Freeman to incorporate more enjoyable activities into the day-to-day schedule. She believes that engaging activities, such as clubs or events,

*"She's the perfect example of what makes a fit administrator: flexible and caring."*

- Señor Florez

can help fight the attendance rate issues that the school faces.

Another thing she strives to achieve is a true understanding of her students' struggles and successes. According to her, acquiring this comprehension with the students is a key to success. "I want a what you see is what you get kind of deal," she said. She hopes that this mentality will keep students motivated and create a more comfortable transition into her new role.

Other administrators have noted the work she has put into settling into her role at Freeman. Señor Florez, another Assistant Principal at Freeman, spoke very highly of her. "She's very adaptable," he said. "She's the perfect example of what makes a fit administrator: flexible and caring."

She does recognize the time it will take to incorporate these values into the curriculum. According to her, bringing these changes out over the next few months will be the best course of action, so the Freeman family can adapt one step at a time. "My one word for this year is patience, not just with others, but ultimately me since I'm learning a new job with a large role, plus [learning about] a bunch of students in a short amount of time," she said.

Her message to students is to make the most of their time at Freeman. To her, high school is one of the most memorable times in a student's life. She believes that the opportunity to make friends and develop new skills can pop up around any corner if students get more involved in their community. "High school is what you make of it," she said. "It all depends on if you try new things and branch out."

Outside of the office, she enjoys doing portrait photography. To her, it's a great way to destress from life and watch her creativity flow while she sits in the backseat. She also enjoys staying active, and her favorite sports are tennis and pickleball. "I've already talked to Coach Parpart about getting back onto the courts with the girls' team in the spring," she said.

The positivity she has received from the Freeman community has caused her great joy. "I can't reiterate how thankful I am that everyone has made me feel like I'm a part [of a group] here," said Ms. Pantele. She believes that the transition from Glen Allen could not have gone smoother, even after teaching there as long as she did. Excited to innovate, Mrs. Pantele is here to stay at Freeman!



PHOTO: VRS

Freeman's new assistant principal, Ms. Pantele



PHOTO: @panteles\_odyssey on Instagram

The Hofburg Palace from Ms. Pantele's travels to Vienna, Austria

## Hollywood Hype: Streaming Networks Spur Writer's Strike

**Poppy Friske**  
Editor-in-Chief

On May 2, 2023, the Writers Guild of America (WGA) officially went on strike in protest of the developing labor dispute with the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers (AMPTP).

In support of the strike is the Screen Actors Guild and American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (SAG-AFTRA). Members of SAG-AFTRA, like those in WGA, are required to earn a certain amount of money annually in order to qualify for membership each year. Unlike a labor union, which only regulates a member's pay and negotiates their wage, guilds provide health insurance and a pension.

This security was achieved as a result of the 1960s writers' strike, which gave writers and actors the stability to eventually retire.

From the writers' rooms to our living rooms, the technical aspects of the entertainment industry can become blurred. As streaming services, such as Netflix, HBO, and Hulu, have gained tremendous popularity over the past decade, the "median weekly pay for showrunners on streaming shows is 46% lower than for those who work on broadcast shows," according to Axios. Screenwriter and producer Jamie Pachino, whose work on CBS's "So Help Me Todd" was interrupted by the strike, has maintained her membership in the guild since 2002, credited to the money she's earned writing for shows on cable networks. From co-producing the Amazon Original "Sneaky

Pete," to serving as the supervising producer on NBC/Universal's "Chicago PD," Pachino has kept busy. "The nature of the business is that sometimes you're working and sometimes you're not," said Pachino. "And so those reruns keep you going when you're in between jobs and ... it helps you qualify for insurance and membership." As streaming services assume ownership of series, she and her fellow writers can no longer receive compensation for reruns, posing a threat to their residuals.

In the months since going on strike, the production of new episodes has stopped, but audiences' anticipation for their binge-worthy favorites remains. From the star of Hulu's hit series "The Bear," Jeremy Allen-White, posting Instagram photos of himself protesting with fellow actors to "Jeopardy"



PHOTO: CNN, Frederic J. Brown/AFP/Getty Images

Writers picket in Hollywood, California

writers being forced to reuse questions, it is evident that the gears of the entertainment industry have come to a grinding halt. Pachino and her fellow crewmates on "So Help Me Todd" had just wrapped up Season 1 of the drama series when the SAG-AFTRA strike was announced. "We haven't written anything. We're not allowed to write anything," said Pachino. "When the contracts are resolved, we'll all get back in the room and we'll scramble to get as many episodes written as quickly as possible and into production and on air."

The inability of major studios and networks to come to an agreement with producers draws the line between another day of picketing and getting back to the writers' room. "The collection of the big studios, Warner Brothers, Universal, Sony, and networks, like NBC and CBS ... have to all come together and the body negotiates on their behalf," said Pachino. "The trick is, one of the reasons that we haven't been able to come to terms is because they can't agree."

After 148 days of picketing,

the WGA and AMPTP arrived at a tentative resolution, officially ending the strike on Sept. 27.

Despite the obvious hardships of working in film and television, Pachino believes that the collaborative aspect of producing makes protesting worth it. "It's a collective, sort of storytelling experience ... and so many amazing people bring it to life," she said. When shows air, viewers are able to consume and perceive the writers' stories through their own experience, thus connecting the audience to everyone behind the scenes.

A senior at Freeman and aspiring film student, Isabel Lafrance-Melendez was hesitant about pursuing a career in the entertainment industry after hearing about the writers strike. "[Filmmakers] have all these unique ideas ... and all these passionate stories that [they] want to tell," said Isabel. "I think a lot of times film can be dismissed as something that's just entertainment, but they can also be used to communicate ideas that need to be in the public scope."



PHOTO: @kirstenvangsness on Instagram

"Criminal Minds" star Kirsten Vangsness on strike with writers/producers

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## Red Cross Club Brings Back Blood Drives

**Matthew Wozniak**  
Staff Writer

Since the pandemic, blood banks around the world have been in a state of need, according to the National Institute of Health (NIH). In the past, the Red Cross Club at Freeman held annual blood drives but stopped doing so in 2018. On Sept. 26, 2023, the Red Cross club organized its first blood drive in five years to support the American Red Cross in this desperate time of need.

In the wake of the national blood shortage, the return of Freeman's blood drive is "coming at a perfect time," said senior Sastha Tripathi, the Red Cross Club president. "Due to the pandemic, blood donations have been down, but in the last year, it's been especially down."



PHOTO: RawPixel

### Doctor taking blood from a volunteer

The national blood supply has "fallen to critically low levels — dropping nearly 25 percent — since early August," according to the American Red Cross. "Hurricane Idalia further strained the blood supply with blood drive cancellations and reduced blood and platelet donations in affected areas."

Likely due to the COVID-19 pandemic, inconsistent contact with the Red Cross is among the reasons for the lack of blood drives in recent years. "The resources hadn't come together at the right time," said Sastha. "COVID was a big factor, plus our connections with the Red Cross changed a lot. The people who were actually going to

be helping us changed every year."

Yet, things are looking up. Post-pandemic, Red Cross leadership seems to be settling down a bit. "We finally have a group of people who we can talk to and coordinate with, and they're just as excited about this as we are," said Sastha. "We're ready to go."

Besides the challenges brought on by COVID-19, the club has undergone other changes in recent years. One of the major changes was the club's change to a new sponsor in 2022, Ms. Gostel. "There was a different sponsor last year, but she's no longer at the school," said Ms. Gostel. "I've been trying to pick up where she left off." Advising the club has been "a learning process, but I feel like it's been going pretty smoothly so far," she said. "The real trial will be the blood drive itself, but everything seems to be falling into place"

Raising awareness for events like a blood drive so early in the year isn't easy. "With the September blood drive, we didn't have a whole lot of time ... since the beginning of the school year to make it very well publicized," said Ms. Gostel. "We were meeting with our Red Cross contacts during the second and third weeks of school ... which did not leave a lot of time for actually publicizing the event"

A national blood shortage may sound like a minor event mentioned in the news, but for Sastha, it means more than that. "[One of my family members] has a certain condition that requires [them] to get blood ... but it has gotten a lot more difficult to access and [become] more expensive," she said. Even small amounts of blood can help, and one person's donation can help up to three people, according to the American Red Cross.

In fact, this is not the only blood drive that is scheduled to happen this year. The club has already begun planning a second blood drive this school year, expected to take place in February. "We will be having two blood drives. One will be on Sept. 26 and then the next one will be ... on Feb. 15," said Ms. Gostel. "There are also grants available for schools who have successful blood drives that we will be exploring with our Red Cross contact."



PHOTO: Liah Chung

### Community members cheer on runners at the finish line



PHOTO: Liah Chung

### Participant checking out a mental health resource table

## Freeman Community Gathers for Lara Curry Memorial 5K

**Liah Chung**  
Staff Writer

On Sept. 16, 2023, a memorial 5K was hosted by Trinity United Methodist Church to commemorate Mrs. Curry, a beloved Freeman teacher who passed away last year. Proceeds from the run, which were collected through registration fees and donations, will help build the Lara Teague Curry Memorial Fund, a \$1,000 scholarship for students who were taught by Mrs. Curry.

Organizers, including Bill Pike, the Director of Operations at Trinity and unofficial "race director," began planning out the race with the Curry and Teague families in January 2023 and continued planning over the summer. They partnered with Freeman High School, Third Baptist Church, River Road Church, the Henrico Education Foundation, and St. Stephen's Episcopal Church to put their plan into action.

The event began with a few words from organizers followed by a fun run for younger children. Afterward, the 5K race itself began. Everywhere, there was laughter, smiles, and conversation. Booths with mental health

resources were lined up along the front landing of the church, while therapy dogs milled around. The participants ranged from family and friends to former students and colleagues — all gathered in memory of Mrs. Curry.

The 5K ran through the same neighborhood Mrs. Curry grew up in, starting in Trinity's driveway before continuing down through Rock Creek Road, into Westham, and back up through Stuart Hall Road. Several houses along the route were playing motivational songs such as "Eye of the Tiger" to encourage participants.

Members of the community who knew Mrs. Curry when she was younger were also in attendance. One such person was Mr. Pike, whose family grew up in the same neighborhood as Mrs. Curry and watched her grow into her teaching role. "She had a real compassion and a real heart for wanting to help, wanting to help people find their way," said Mr. Pike. "She loved her subject matter and wanted to share that passion with her students."

Cassandra Ducca, an organizer and the communications specialist from River Road Church, called the turnout "amazing, [with] probably double the number of people" compared to previous 5Ks they had

hosted. With the turnout, energy, and number of people who have asked her if the run will become annual, she predicts that it most likely won't be their last time hosting a memorial run for Mrs. Curry.

Other participants included the parents of former students, who were equally impressed by the energy of the event. "[The race was] fun and very well organized," said Paul Nardo, whose son graduated from the Freeman Specialty Center. "Everybody was very positive and upbeat, just like Lara was."

Even after her passing, Mrs. Curry continues to forge lasting connections between people. "[The race] brought the community together," said sophomore Sahana Muthukumar. "Everyone was connected by their memories of Mrs. Curry, and people related on a certain level. Even if you didn't live there, they accepted you."

Former students reminisced together on positive memories of Mrs. Curry. "[She was a] radiant person with a bright personality," said senior Nitya Kumar.

**“Everybody was very positive and upbeat, just like Lara was.”**  
- Paul Nardo

"[She] would always be joking around telling stories," Nitya recalled her freshman year as "really overwhelming," but mentioned that Mrs. Curry helped her through it. Mrs. Curry was the "type of person that [you] could go talk to about almost anything," said Nitya.

Alongside these memories, a palpable sense of grief remains with those who knew Mrs. Curry. "There's still a rawness there — it's something that sticks with you," said Mr. Pike. "[But] we can learn from losses like this and try to improve our awareness and sensitivity for people."



PHOTO: Liah Chung

### Comfort Zone Camp resource table at the 5k

## New Football Policies in Henrico County

**Merrick Mock**  
News Editor

Friday night lights have come to an end at one-third of Henrico County Public Schools (HCPS). Henrico, Highland Springs, and Hermitage High Schools have all implemented new policies regarding the attendance of their football games. These schools all now require anyone under 18 to have an adult over 21 with them at all games.

The age restrictions are primarily due to the altercation issues many schools in America face daily. This includes physical hands-on fighting between students in school and also the influence their peers have on them. It is common for students not involved in the fights to film

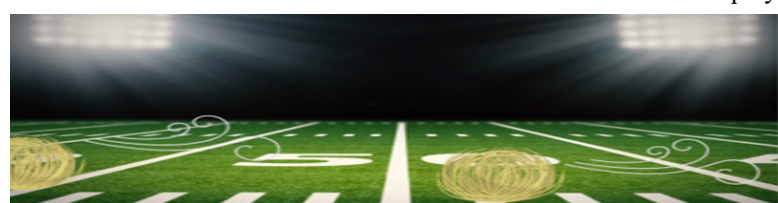
and post videos of them, making the issue worse. It is also mandatory for every spectator to stay seated during the game unless they are going to the concession stand or using the bathroom. Tickets for all games must be purchased online and the supervising adult is required to show their photo identification with their birthday. If the information doesn't match the name on the game ticket, they are not allowed into the game. However, all of these policies are subject to change as the year goes on.

Fights and altercations have been an issue for decades at high schools. According to Mr. Marshall, Freeman hasn't had many fights occur in the 2023-2024 school year, however, the holiday season is when it typically picks up. The fighting at football games is normally between

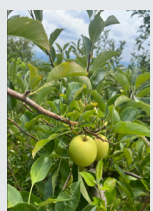
those who are not there for the sole purpose of watching the game and something they are not even affiliated with the school.

Due to the referee shortage, many football games are on Thursdays. Each high school is required to have a certain number of football games on Thursday nights. Dr. Marshall said, "The games being on Thursdays has nothing to do with us. Every school was asked to take a couple of Thursday night games." This allows for students to attend games that are not at their own high school.

Seniors who are 18 are able



Apple Picking on Carter Mt.



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A Deep Dive Into Class Rank



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Are We Out of the Woods?



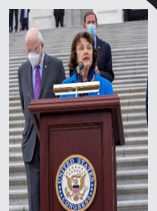
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# Carter Mountain is Apple-Lutely Fantastic

**Sarah Chilton**  
Staff Writer

Ranked among the best apple orchards in Virginia, Carter Mountain does not disappoint. Locally crafted goods, homemade food, fresh fruits, and panoramic mountain views are all staples at the orchard in Charlottesville, VA.

On Saturday morning, a friend and I decided to make the trip up to explore Carter Mountain. There is so much to do there and I easily spent half a day on the mountain. You can shop in the country store, buy their famous apple cider donuts, eat ice cream cones, get meals at local food trucks, look at the pumpkin display, buy boxed apples, and pick your own (PYO) apples.

At first, I was overwhelmed by the number of things to do, but as I walked around and got a feel for the place, the sound of background music, friendly chatter, and mountain breeze calmed me. The air was chilled and the atmosphere exciting as families and people of all ages milled around in the main area.

My first stop was the market, which sells homemade apple products, decor, spices, merchandise, produce, and more. I didn't get anything because I was trying to keep the cost low, but with so many intriguing items, I'm shocked I didn't leave with a bag full of stuff.

Around lunchtime, I got an \$11 barbeque sandwich from Vision BBQ, a local Charlottesville joint that will be at the orchard every weekend during the fall season. Their homemade peach mustard sauce was delectable and I took



PHOTO: Sarah Chilton

A hot apple cider donut, with a peach ice cream twist

it down to a shaded picnic table to eat. As I enjoyed the sandwich, I looked out over the valley below, which provided a stunning view to accompany the meal.

Once fueled, I embarked on my apple-picking journey, where I pre-purchased a small bag for \$12 and headed off to the selected rows of trees. The apple trees in the orchard are over 100 years old and have been run by generations of the Chiles family. The grounds of the orchard were lined with hundreds of green apples and many families scattered throughout the rows. As I was picking, I looked towards the distant horizon where the cloudy weather made it hard to tell where the sky ended and the mountains began.

Once I finished picking, I, of course, had to sample the apples. The only variety available when I went in early September was Golden Delicious, which was juicy and crispy with a subtle flavor. The small bag proved to be more than enough for two to share as it held over 18 apples. As the season progresses, more varieties will become available, including the brand new "crunch-a-bunch" apple which is debuting this season and is yet to be in grocery stores. PYO apples and pre-picked pumpkins will be available until late November.

Finally, I got to sample the food I'd been waiting for and smelling all day. I picked up an apple cider (\$2), a peach ice cream twist (\$4),

and a hot apple cider donut (\$2). The cold apple cider was a bit underwhelming but the food items were incredible. The peach ice cream melted very quickly, but it was nonetheless incredibly creamy and flavorful — totally worth it.

The highlight of the whole trip was definitely the apple cider donuts. They're fried, covered in sugar, hot to the touch, and have a crunch on the outside coupled with an inner fluffiness that melts in your mouth. The donuts were absolutely delicious, a solid 10/10, so I picked up another half dozen to bring home for \$8.

The donuts are known throughout the country. If you visit in October, you can look in the parking lot to see "license plates from everywhere," said Brian, the general manager at Carter Mountain. Don't worry, there's certainly enough to go around with the thousands of donuts made from scratch on-site every day.

Speaking of October, it is the best time to visit Carter Mountain. Many apple varieties will be ripe, the weather will be beautiful, and fall will be in full swing, with the orchard open from nine to six, seven days a week. When I went, there was no charge for entry, but during the peak fall season, it's \$8 in advance for anyone 12 or older on weekends (Sept. 16 through Nov. 5).

If you get a chance to visit and want even more of the Carter Mountain experience, try their other locations: Chiles Peach Orchard, Chiswell Farm and Winery, and Spring Valley Orchard. A day of stunning views, smells of freshly baked donuts, and cool mountain air is exactly what you will find at Carter Mountain Orchards. I wouldn't want to spend a day any other way.



PHOTO: Sarah Chilton

Bags of Golden Delicious apples

# Patience on the Pavement

**Scotty Gregory**  
Staff Writer

"Ding, Ding, Ding!" Ugh, finally. My stress-filled school day is over and I get to go home and relax. People are walking really slowly, it's 90 degrees out, and this walk feels everlasting. I make it to my car, and it's hot, but quickly cools off with the help of my glorious air-conditioning. I finally pull out of my parking spot and come to an immediate halt. This is where I will be stopped for the next 10 minutes. Ah, the parking lot. We all dread it, which begs the question; what can be done?

The parking lot structure is extremely inefficient, which causes me to be cut off left and right. Talking to students, I've realized that it generally takes anywhere from eight to 20 minutes to leave the parking lot. This all depends on where you park, where your last class is located, and how many people decide that this is the perfect time to get all of their stress or anger out on other cars in the lot. The biggest obstacle is the attitude problem. Some are in a hurry and would do just about anything to get out of that parking lot first. Others are too nice and let six people out in front of them. It will always be hit or miss (pun intended) when it comes to your luck of getting



PHOTO: Scotty Gregory

Freeman's parking lot on a typical school day

*"The best solution is a lot of manpower we don't have."*

- Dr. Marshall

out fast. However, there are some possible solutions. After talking to both Dr. Marshall and Mr. Bob Daly, one of our school resource officers, it is obvious that they are trying to fix the situation, but it has proven difficult. Many different solutions have been considered, including a right-turn-only lane, a third exit, and prohibited parking on Camden Drive. Let's further analyze these solutions, shall we?

Having only right-hand turns from both exits would allow cars to freely flow out of the exits, but it comes with many challenges. The main issue is simple: enforcement. It is difficult to control so many students without the necessary faculty. "The best solution is a lot of manpower we don't have," said Dr. Marshall. Then comes the headache of regulating the neighborhood streets. The traffic through these back streets would increase exponentially. While neighbors are fully aware of Freeman's dismissal rush hour, they would most likely prefer not to be bombarded with hundreds of student drivers at 4 o'clock every weekday. This would also require every student to reroute their way home, an inconvenience to

most of the student body. I think that this idea is on the right track to helping our situation, but it doesn't quite knock it out of the park(ing lot). See what I did there?

Another solution, proposed by Mr. Daly, is to have no parking on Camden Drive right outside of the parking lot. "The problem is Camden," he said, "If there was no parking [availability] right by the exits, I think that might help the students out a lot." When students have to wait for parents beside the parking lot to move, the exiting process is significantly delayed.

However, there are additional challenges to solve before this restriction can be implemented. Prohibiting parking on this side of Camden would require the county's approval. Without the go-ahead from Henrico County, we can't simply install "No Parking" signs. "I don't have the jurisdiction that I wish I had on Camden drivers," said Dr. Marshall. "Mine stops at our entrances."

Another solution mentioned by Dr. Marshall is the installation of a third entrance between the existing two. This idea would help the outward flow of traffic tremendously, but it is a hard thing to come by. This would include significant construction and planning that would have to be done during the summer. The renovation process could also lead to more of a hold-up on the outer two exits since there would be a greater flow of traffic coming from the middle exit.

So many great ideas! What I'm left wondering, however, is if the

problem is really the parking lot structure or the students. It is well-known that everyone wants to get out of the parking lot as quickly as

*"The problem is Camden."*

- Mr. Daly

they can. Obviously, not everyone is friendly in the parking lot, and it sometimes resembles a war zone. People create fourth and fifth lines to the exits, cut others off, and butt their way in. It is every person for themselves. But it doesn't have to be. If everyone were to act respectfully and apply common sense in the parking lot, things would turn out much smoother. Using the zipper method, taking turns letting people out, and working to maintain order would lead to a much smoother end-of-day process. "Everybody using the zipper method, following the rules, and being kind and patient are the things that will make everyone get out sooner," said Dr. Marshall. That's something to think about for everyone reading this (hint, hint).

The issues with the parking lots will remain an ongoing problem. There are always going to be trade-offs to whatever solutions we entertain, and not everyone is going to be happy. The important thing to know is that our Freeman Family is working on it, and they are doing everything they can to make this process easier on students!

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## ‘That’s What She Said’ SAT: Stupid, Awful Test

**The Mad Mav**  
Staff Editor

Children, gather ‘round! Allow me to spin the tale of a treacherous beast that stomps into high schools, only to terrorize the students of the world. It rears its ugly head a few times a year, maybe even once every month. When the monster is in the room, everyone becomes eerily silent and wields a wooden weapon, sharp-pointed and aiming to kill. Students make a \$60 offering to the demon, begging it to take mercy on them — it hardly ever listens. This story, kids, is about a nasty, gruesome, horrifying thing ... the SAT.

The SAT is probably one of the most ridiculous things to ever exist, and I say that as someone who’s taken it. I mean, all that paper ... and for what? We don’t even answer the questions in that fat packet! There’s a whole ‘nother tree corpse just for the answers. For bubbled-in letters. Really, College Board? Do better.

However, no matter how big of an environmentalist I am, my actual issue lies with the concept of the test itself. The entire purpose — if there is one — is to test the intelligence of the test taker through a series of multiple-choice questions and a handful of math problems. Imagine you have the world’s greatest artist or the best writer — how about the best drummer in the school? How on earth would

anyone be able to understand the brilliance of these individuals through a couple of questions? Like, hello? Nothing about these tests actually determines your intelligence, it just proves how much money your mom and dad felt like spending on the SAT. And here’s the real kicker, kids: people pay thousands of dollars to be taught how to take the SAT. And I actually mean thousands. Literal heaps of money to be programmed like a robot to do what robots do best: become exactly what everyone wants them to be. I mean, if this so-called test (more like a test of my patience) is supposed to tell us how smart we are, why do we have to become dumb in the process?

Maybe I’m just bitter. Or maybe I’m right and no one wants to admit they were trapped by the College Board. Either way, the SAT is a waste of time, space, and money. It blows my mind that my chances of getting into a college are determined by how long I spent on Khan Academy to tell me I went up (or in my case, down) a skill level. Really cute, America. Really cute. It’s all ridiculous. I don’t want to waste more breath (or ink) on this. What a world we live in.

XOXO,  
THE Mad Mav



## Chick-fil-A Spices Up Their Menu With New Specials

**Lizzie Herod**  
Online Editor-in-Chief  
A&E Editor

We all know Chick-fil-A for its basic yet tasty chicken sandwich. But on Aug. 28, Chick-fil-A introduced two new seasonal specials: the Honey Pepper Pimento Chicken Sandwich and the Caramel Crumble Milkshake.

Pimento cheese has always been a southern staple in my house — enjoyed with crackers and on sandwiches. To me, the idea of combining the heated creaminess of pimento cheese, the spiciness of jalapenos, and the sweetness of honey with the legendary chicken sandwich sounded delectable. Obviously, I had to run to Chick-fil-A and see what it was all about.

When I unwrapped the chicken sandwich, it looked like just the right amount of pimento cheese on top to give the proper amount of kick and flavor. As I took my first

bite, I was not disappointed by the powerful duo. The taste of the regular chicken sandwich was elevated by adding the pimento cheese. The sandwich easily could have gone south if the bun was soggy and not properly toasted with the added cheese layer. However, the bun was nice and soft with just the right amount of toastiness, but still soft enough so each bite I took didn’t leave any crumbs or mess, which is an important factor when eating on the go.

Overall, I would give this sandwich an impressive 9.8/10 because of the scrumptious, yet non-overwhelming flavor of the pimento cheese and the classic, crispy, Chick-fil-A chicken. This sandwich will be enjoyed during the fall season and is something Chick-fil-A should consider on a more permanent basis. It’s a combination that is hard for other fast-food restaurants to replicate. It quite literally spiced up the menu and created another



PHOTO: Chick-fil-A

Chick-fil-A’s Caramel Crumble Milkshake

## Aren’t We More Than a Number?

**Ellie Grace Robinson**  
Opinions Editor

Class rank has been around Henrico for what feels like an eternity. When the fateful number is released during the summer before senior year, it can make or break the hundreds of students it affects. While Freeman’s upperclassmen are completely absorbed in manically ordering transcripts and praying to deities, this year’s freshmen are no longer required to share class rank with colleges. As such, I felt it was time to delve into the subject, investigating how the Freeman family feels about this minuscule, but mighty number in the grand scheme of all things educational.

Freeman’s Head of Counseling, Mrs. Smith, has been a school guidance counselor for 10 years. In both of the school divisions she has worked, class rank has been utilized consistently throughout each year. However, there has been a wave of change in Henrico County Public Schools (HCPS), and following a school board vote in June of 2022, current Henrico County freshmen will not be receiving a class rank. “I am personally happy that class rank is going away... and it is safe to say that the other school counselors at Freeman feel the same,” said Mrs. Smith.

Mrs. Smith is glad to see class rank go. “I would argue that class rank is not a strong indicator of college preparedness,” she said. “Strong work ethic, good study skills, critical thinking skills, problem-solving skills, and time management are stronger indicators.”

Luke Wolski, the senior class salutatorian, has a lot to be proud of. Thanks to the six-inch space between his ears, his work ethic, and his willpower, he has climbed the class rank ladder and now sits second in the class. In regards to the concept of class rank, he said, “It’s a bit of a mixed bag...it does let you show where you are in com-

parison to others, but I think that too much focus on it might not be necessarily a good thing.” He also elaborated by saying he “think[s] that it does cause some unneeded stress and maybe a little too much of a competitive mindset at times.”

Carson Aker ranked 103 in the senior class, came from a different high school. She experienced problems with trying to transfer credits from her previous school to Freeman, and said, “It kind of messed everything up and I didn’t get credit for a lot of stuff, so I feel like [class rank is] not something that should be taken into account because it’s not fair for every single student.”

Avery Grubbs ranked 108, said, “I’ve had straight A’s [with] maybe one or two B’s throughout my entire high school career. And it clearly doesn’t reflect [that] being that far down. It’s all about taking APs and I don’t think the weighting is necessary.” Keynote: if you’re not a fan of pretending to pay attention while someone drones on about something they’re passionately against, don’t get me started on AP classes and College Board.

In contrast, Henley Shumadine, number 38 in the class, doesn’t mind being ranked and plans to keep her number on her transcript to be sent to the colleges to which she is applying. “I think [class rank is] okay as long as [students] have the option to not include it on [their] application,” said Henley. “It’s a good motivating factor... as long as the option to take it off is there.”

For those pulling hair out over class rank, some words of wisdom from Luke Wolski: “don’t unnecessarily compare yourself to other people” and instead, “just do the best that you can for yourself ... Try not to [get] overwhelm[ed].”

If that’s not enough, it’s now public knowledge that “class rank is generally not important whatsoever in college admissions. For years, the most important factors in college admissions have been grades and strength

### CLASS RANK



1



120



250

of schedule,” Mrs. Smith said.

While class rank can provide a roller coaster’s worth of ups and downs, it really is a trivial comparison when matched up against all of the other fantastic characteristics that go into each student at Freeman High. Yes, you are more than just a number. You are so much more. My biggest takeaway from writing this article is that class rank does not matter any more than you make it matter. Keep grinding, and know that what lies ahead of you is a future that you create, one that cares not about class rank, grades, AP classes, or anything else.



PHOTO: Chick-fil-A

### Chick-fil-A’s Honey Pepper Pimento Chicken Sandwich

er diverse option for customers.

The classic vanilla shake and ice cream from Chick-fil-A is hard to beat, but I was excited to see if the new fall flavors of caramel, butterscotch, and blonde crumbles would enhance the regular vanilla shake. Right off the bat, I was impressed with Chick-fil-A’s ability to come up with another flavor for the fall that didn’t involve pumpkin spice.

As I began to sip the thick, creamy shake, I was pleased by its smooth texture. However, the flavor itself was very rich and overpowering. To accompany the underwhelming texture, the shake left an artificial aftertaste in my mouth. That being said, I’m not a caramel fanatic to begin with, so if you take fondness in caramel flavoring, you most likely would enjoy it more than I did. I actually wasn’t able to finish the milkshake due to its richness, which is quite rare for me.

I will admit the crumbles were a nice addition to accompany the fluffy whipped cream and the cherry on top. The appearance of the milkshake was delightful but not so much the taste. Overall, I would rate the milkshake a 6/10 because of the overwhelming artificial flavor. In this case, Chick-fil-A needs to stick to the original milkshake. Caramel lovers may find it more satisfying, but my taste buds prefer the pure, classic vanilla version. In some cases, change is not necessary, and this is one of those times.

The total cost of the Honey Pepper Pimento Chicken Sandwich and the Caramel Crumble Milk-

shake added up to \$13.07 with tax. I think that’s a good deal for a nutritious sandwich and a sweet treat.

There was obviously a lot of thought behind these two new items because we rarely see new food or dessert meals enter the menu. I still believe that the classic, simple, chicken sandwich with pickles will be a fan favorite and the most popular choice. However, the new sandwich globally expanded the menu and became my updated go-to order.

Some students here at Freeman High School shared their opinions about the new items through

an Instagram poll. 60 percent of the polled students enjoyed the sandwich, while the other 40 percent didn’t. The milkshake reviews were pretty evenly split, as 56 percent of students liked the milkshake and 44 percent said they could do without it.

I will definitely be repurchasing the Honey Pepper Pimento Chicken Sandwich, but I’m not sure I will be buying the Caramel Crumble Milkshake again. Overall, if you’re a Chick-fil-A fan you should definitely check these items out before they are removed from the menu.



# Crazy for Cinema: A Look into Freeman's Film Club

**Libby Mercer**  
Staff Writer

From "Pretty In Pink" to "Seven Samurai," Freeman's film club, the Cinemaniacs, have seen it all. Cinemaniacs is a place for movie lovers and film industry enthusiasts alike to discuss and watch movies they enjoy or want to see. Described by teacher sponsor Mr. Abril, the club operates as a 'film seminar' where club members discuss the acting, cinematography, and technical elements of the assigned film for the week. Past movies the Cinemaniacs have watched include: "How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days," "A League of Their Own," "The Birdcage," and "Ray." There's something for everyone at Cinemaniacs!

The leader of this club is senior Holly Jahn. Holly joined Cinemaniacs in her freshman year when meetings were still held virtually and has been the president of Cinemaniacs for three years. During her sophomore year, she got the club back up and running in person and has been leading it ever since. Even though Holly runs the show, movie suggestions are picked using group recommendations and a club poll. The Cinemaniacs watch a variety of mov-



PHOTO: DSF Cinemaniacs

## DSF Cinemaniacs Club logo

ies covering all genres, including, but not limited to: comedy, international, animated, and horror.

Since the Cinemaniacs watch movies of all sorts, members are able to broaden their movie horizons and watch films they would have never thought to watch otherwise. "Judas in the Black Messiah" was [a movie] that I don't think I ever would have watched if I had seen it on a streaming service, but it was really good and it was really powerful," said sophomore Duke Friske.

Members of this club join due to their love for movies. For some, movies can be life-changing. For

Mr. Abril, that life-changing movie experience was seeing "Silence of the Lambs" in theaters. "One of my favorite movie-going experiences was 'Silence of the Lambs,'" said Mr. Abril. "The crowd was screaming and it was so suspenseful. It just braided everything I love about movies together: good acting and good directing."

The Writers Guild of America strike started on May 2, 2023, and reached a tentative agreement on Sept. 27, 2023. This event not only affects writers and actors in the guild but the tech workers, as well. Fans following this event have seen the drastic impact of this strike on the productivity of the movie industry. Since the strike began, many studios have been forced to postpone release dates or cancel projects entirely. Anticipated movies like "It Ends With Us," and "Avatar 3" have not only been delayed in terms of a premiere date, but writing, production, and even creation have also been paused.

Another point of contention has been the difference between major streaming services, such as Netflix, and small studios, like A24, in terms of employee treatment. "[Small] studios who don't have as much money are still making the funds to pay and it's interesting because these big money makers won't pay people," said Holly.



PHOTO: Libby Mercer

## Members of the DSF Cinemaniacs Club smile for a photo

While these big movies are delayed, there are plenty of great movies to watch in the meantime. Try "Sacha the Bailiff," Mr. Abril's favorite obscure Japanese film. "I love Japanese cinema and that to me is just perfection; it really is the visual element too," said Mr. Abril. If that's not your style, try Holly's favorite, a 2000s classic called "Stardust," starring Claire Danes and Charlie Cox. "Stardust" follows the main character, Tristan, as he ventures to the 'realm of fair-

ies' to retrieve a fallen star. A favorite of Duke's, "Boogie Nights," is "bizarre [with] great music and great stories," said Duke.

The name Cinemaniac refers to a person who loves movies — a description that truly represents the film club here at Freeman. Cinemaniacs is run by passionate movie lovers, which makes the club both enjoyable and informative. Whether you fit the definition of Cinemaniac or not, Freeman's film club is worth checking out.

# El Cap: A Freeman Family Favorite



PHOTO: Maggie Jacoby

## Freeman's field hockey team enjoys a post-game meal at El Cap.

**Sadie Edlavitch**  
Staff Writer

After a long day of classes and after-school sports, there is nothing better than hitting up your favorite Mexican restaurant with your best friends. Of the nearby options, El Caporal, more commonly referred to as El Cap, has been a fan favorite among the students at Freeman for many years — drawing in huge crowds with its close proximity to the school and large menu. The 'family-oriented' restaurant, which opened in 2004, has become a Freeman Family staple over its almost 20 years in business.

El Cap offers authentic Mexican dishes and beverages at an affordable price — something that appeals greatly to Freeman students. With its wide variety of food options and friendly environment, many consider El Cap to be a true Freeman Classic. "The employ-

ees are always super friendly and nice," said junior Audrey Sisler. "They make you feel welcomed into the restaurant immediately."

Many of the student-athletes at Freeman take advantage of El Cap's close proximity to Freeman. "If we need to think of a place to have a team dinner, it will always be El Cap," said junior Oakley Cotropia, who plays three varsity sports at Freeman and enjoys being involved in her community and at Freeman. "[No matter] the sport I am playing, there are many days and nights spent at El Cap with the team and coaches as well."

Yet, El Cap is frequented for more than post-victory team dinners. "My friends and I will go to El Cap on special occasions, such as birthdays as well as after [team victories]," said Oakley. It is not just the menu that is diverse, but the reasons for grabbing a bite to eat there as well!

Although the restaurant is clearly a student favorite, teachers and coaches also frequent El

Cap. "My favorite memory at El Cap was when Coach Plunket, took us there after a game and paid for the whole team's dinner," said Audrey, a DSF varsity field hockey player. "It was truly such a special moment for me."

Audrey and her friends are devoted customers at El Cap who plan to keep visiting. "I plan on going to El Cap even after I graduate from Freeman and may no longer be living in Richmond," said Audrey.

However, it is not just the proximity to Freeman that makes El Cap a desirable dinner spot for Freeman Students. Paige Suter, a sophomore at Freeman, remarked that the employees of El Cap make the experience more enjoyable. "In the few interactions I have had with the workers at El Cap, they have always wanted to make conversation with me, my friends, and my family," she said. "Whenever they try to speak Spanish with us, we always try to engage in their conversation." She hopes to learn more Spanish as she continues to visit El Cap.

Due to the frequent visits from students, staff, and alumni alike, the restaurant has become a hub of social connection within the Freeman community, especially on game days. Employees and owners know all about the athletic programs at Freeman and have helped out with fundraisers in the past. It serves as a place for friends to share stories, sports teams to celebrate, and locals to gather — all over steaming hot plates of Mexican food. The popularity of El Cap at the school is no accident, the restaurant has worked hard to establish itself as a local hotspot. It has proved its way since the start and will continue to be a 'Freeman cult classic' due to its involvement with the DSF community. Some will go for the food, some will go to chat with their friends, and others will go to be in the environment that El Cap provides. "They are invested in the school and we love them because of that," said Audrey.

# BOOst The Halloween Fun

**Sarah Chilton**  
Staff Writer

Trick or treat? October has started and the eeriness of the Halloween season is in full swing. To celebrate this spooky season, here are some ideas for Halloween-themed food, costumes, and activities that won't break the bank.

To begin, here are some ideas for foodies who like to enjoy sweet treats from their cozy home. These customizable classics are deliciously made with ingredients you probably already have.

First is candy bark. To make it, grab some chocolate bars and toppings of your choice such as nuts, pretzels, M&Ms, and crushed candy. Then, melt half of the chocolate and spread an even layer of it onto a baking sheet. Add half of the toppings onto the melted chocolate and repeat both steps to make a second layer. Let it cool for one hour then break apart and store. You could even take it a step further and color white chocolate with orange, purple, green, or black food coloring to make it more Halloween themed!

Second up are caramel apples. All you will need to make them is an apple on a skewer and/or utensil and some caramel candies or sauce. Melt the caramel, dip the apple in until fully coated, leave it to set on a nonstick surface, and you're done! To spice it up a bit, try coating the warm caramel apple in a crushed topping (like orange, black, and green sprinkles) or adding an expression with edible googly eyes.

With any extra chocolate or caramel from the first two recipes, drizzle it over kettle/regular popcorn and mix in m&ms, pretzels, and candy corn to create "monster munch."

For an easy ghost's mores dip, you can layer crushed graham crackers, chocolate bars, and marshmallows to be baked in the oven and given spooky chocolate faces.

For the fall in general (and slightly healthier option), roasted pumpkin seeds and pumpkin bread are always delicious too.

Don't know what to wear to the Halloween themed homecoming football game? These quick costumes have got you covered for all levels of commitment. If you want to keep it simple, some go-to options are the classic black



PHOTO: Martha Stewart

## Pumpkin carving in progress.

cat, angel, and devil. All three options only require you to wear black, white, or red clothing of your choice with the addition of some whiskers, cat ears, angel wings, or devil horns. Or if you need a group costume, crayons and condiments are an easy go-to. You will only need some paper, markers, tape, and a one color outfit. For a more niche and creative costume, try a pop culture reference like one of Taylor Swift's eras or a version of Barbie/Ken. If you despise dressing up but still want to feel included, stay warm on a cold October night in a onesie. Lastly, if you're an attention seeker or love to go all out, be the life of the party as an iconic inflatable dinosaur or character.

Free on an October weekend? Here are some activities that are sure to be a hit. Some solid options for a relaxing weekend are pumpkin carving and movie marathoning! Head to a local pumpkin patch or any grocery store to pick up the perfect pumpkins and spook-ify them. Cut a circle around the stem of the pumpkin to remove the top and scoop out the guts. Then make a design and carve away! Put a candle in the middle to light up the jack-o-lantern when it is finished. Make sure to save the seeds for roasting! If you're with friends, try turning it into a competition to see who can make the best one. When you're done, grab some blankets, snacks, and turn off the lights for a horror movie marathon. If you scare easily, go for the Halloween comedies instead. To save yourself the trouble of never knowing what to watch, try a random movie generator online, Netflix generator, or look to see what the Goochland Drive In Theatre is showing.

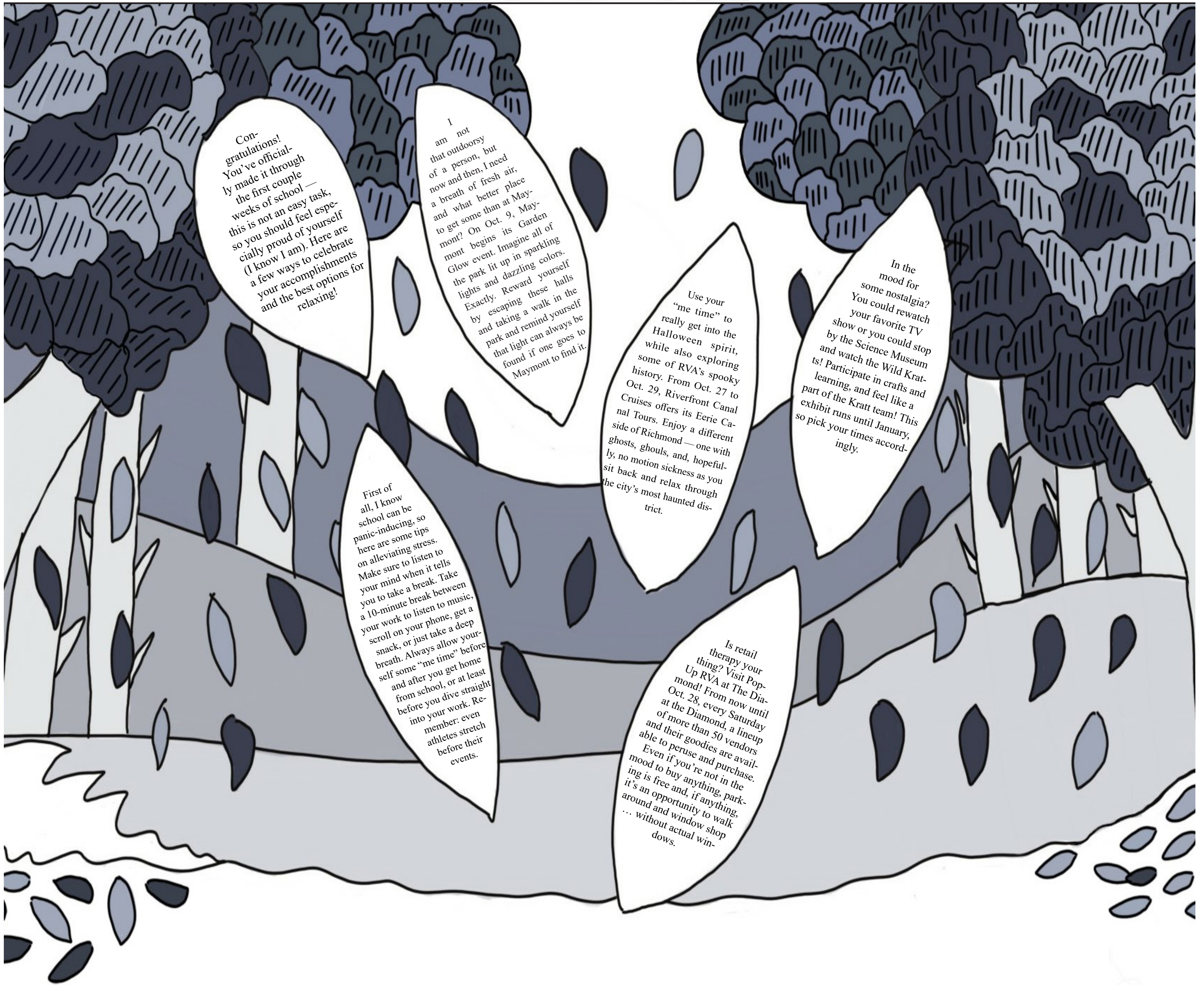
This year, make your life full of "pumpkin spice, and everything nice" from the comfort of your own home. Don't be afraid to try something new, and make sure to fill your bags with more treats than tricks. Have a Spooktacular fall!



PHOTO: Cosmopolitan

## Jack-o-lanterns light up the Halloween season.





Congratulations! You've officially made it through the first couple weeks of school — this is not an easy task, so you should feel especially proud of yourself (I know I am). Here are a few ways to celebrate your accomplishments and the best options for relaxing!

I am not that outdoorsy of a person, but now and then, I need a breath of fresh air, and what better place to get some than at Maymont? On Oct. 9, Maymont begins its Garden Glow event. Imagine all of the park lit up in sparkling lights and dazzling colors. Exactly. Reward yourself by escaping these halls and taking a walk in the park and remind yourself that light can always be found if one goes to Maymont to find it.

Use your "me time" to really get into the Halloween spirit, while also exploring some of RVA's spooky history. From Oct. 27 to Oct. 29, Riverfront Canal Cruises offers its Eerie Canal Tours. Enjoy a different side of Richmond — one with ghosts, ghouls, and, hopefully, no motion sickness as you sit back and relax through the city's most haunted district.

In the mood for some nostalgia? You could rewatch your favorite TV show or you could stop by the Science Museum and watch the Wild Kratts! Participate in crafts and learning, and feel like a part of the Kratt team! This exhibit runs until January, so pick your times accordingly.

First of all, I know school can be panic-inducing, so here are some tips on alleviating stress. Make sure to listen to your mind when it tells you to take a break. Take a 10-minute break between your work to listen to music, scroll on your phone, get a snack, or just take a deep breath. Always allow yourself some "me time" before and after you get home from school, or at least before you dive straight into your work. Remember: even athletes stretch before their events.

Is retail therapy your thing? Visit Popmond! Up RVA at The Diamond! From now until Oct. 28, every Saturday at the Diamond, a lineup of more than 50 vendors and their goodies are available to peruse and purchase. Even if you're not in the mood to buy anything, parking is free and, if anything, it's an opportunity to walk around and window shop ... without actual windows.

# ARE WE OUT OF THE WOODS?

# Secret Squares ... Not So Secret Anymore

**Shishira Nakka**  
Centerspread Editor

The best things in life are the ones that we discover. A pet lizard from under the deck, a four-leaf clover, a good deal — they are surprises, but just what we need. As for Secret Squares, a local Detroit-style pizza joint, the same principle applies.

Willoughby Obenchain is the creator, chef (though he denies it), and father of Secret Squares. In 2020, Obenchain started making 'practice pizzas' and giving them to his friends when he claimed he 'couldn't eat any more.' "I [need]



PHOTO: Richmond Magazine  
Chef Willoughby Obenchain.

ed) to practice making them just to become better myself so that I can make a better product," he said. It was through this process that the name 'Secret Squares' was born. "As folks had it, they told their friends about it like 'oh, you've got to try some of Willoughby's pizzas,' so it kind of became like a secret you pass around," said Mr. Obenchain.

These slices of heaven (literally) are now available to order, and ready for pick up on the Tuesday of the following week. Every week, there are unique flavors added to the menu. Past flavors include bánh mì, cheeseburger, and fig and bacon. "There are certain variations of different sandwiches and things that work on the pizza versus [those that] don't work on a pizza. So, it gives a fun template to work with," he said. "Some of it is just going with it and seeing if it works, which I think is a lot of fun."

Obenchain aims to source all of his ingredients as close to home as possible. "[Getting ingredients that are] seasonal and local is my

kind of goal in starting this early on," he said. "I want to source as much of the things that I can locally, to support local farms and also support local agriculture and sustainable agriculture." In every bite of pizza, the flavors practically tap dance on the tongues of the six thousand followers that the Secret Squares Instagram has.

I tried the tomato, pesto, & burrata pizza, and boy, oh, boy, it was a treat! Crispy crust, the perfect ratio of pesto to tomato, melty cheese — ever been to heaven? I haven't, but I have had this delectable slice. Truthfully, this pizza is one of the best things I have ever eaten. And I've eaten a lot of pizza — Domino's, Papa John's, Blaze Pizza, and so many more. It is this knowledge and experience that makes me the perfect reviewer, and this reviewer says this pizza is legit.

The Secret Squares journey started with a desire to be a part of a community. "Pizza is something I really enjoy and being able to have a connection with it in a creative way [links] me with my community," he said. Mr. Oben-

chain also noted that "hav[ing] a way to [contribute] with [food] that is [his] own, is the most important part." With that desire came its own toil — a mental one, that is. "People talk about hard work all the time and apart from physical stuff, like my wrist [hurting] from making dough, I think it's real mental," he said. It's a big mental game [because] you're really putting yourself out there. You're [trying to find] the motivation to do it after you had a not-so-great week or two."

Although Obenchain's wrists may ache, the stomachs of his customers never do. To feed those around you is a big way to help your community, especially when you do it as well as Secret Squares. It is easy to make pizza, however, it is not easy to turn it into a piece of art, and this pizza is art. Trust me, art recognizes art, therefore ... I'm right. Turning something as seemingly simple as a slice of pizza into a key that turns the locks of many Richmonders' homes and hearts is not easy, but you've done it, chef. What, too cheesy?



PHOTO: Willoughby Obenchain  
Tomato, pesto, and burrata pizza by Chef Obenchain.



PHOTO: Willoughby Obenchain  
Obenchain's tomato, pesto, and mozzarella pizza.



PHOTO: Willoughby Obenchain  
Chef Obenchain's spin on pepperoni pizza

# Freeman Welcomes "Lifelong Learner" Señora Gonzalez

**Hannah Tittermary**  
Mav Minute Editor in Chief

Señora Gonzalez, a new Colombian Spanish teacher at Freeman, incorporates her personal experiences into class and creates an open environment for students to not only learn the language but learn about Hispanic culture as well.



PHOTO: Hannah Tittermary  
Señora Gonzalez in her classroom

A self-proclaimed "lifelong learner," Sra. Gonzalez studied English in Colombia and taught there for 14 years. The new experience of living in the United States will help her learn the American language and culture, a topic that has always been of high interest to her. When choosing what to study in college, her top priority was English with the hope of becoming a teacher. "[From this,] I real-

ized that I love teaching, especially teaching languages," she said.

Having worked as an English teacher in Colombia before her move, Sra. Gonzalez has years of experience teaching language but is now seeing a new perspective on bridging barriers. Whether it is across cultural misconceptions or communication barriers, she is incorporating her wish for a unified class community into her lessons.

In class, students learn about more than just the Spanish language, but the culture and traditions as well. "I have learned a lot about [Colombian] traditions, [such as] the food they eat and the colors they like to wear," said freshman Stella Sowers. Sra. Gonzalez mainly speaks in Spanish during class, which is helpful because the students are more "surrounded by the language, [making it] easier to learn," said Stella.

Sra. Gonzalez tries to use materials from her own country in her lessons. "There are culturally important dances, foods, and people ... it's what I want to share with them," she said. According to Sra. Gonzalez, Colombia is much more than the violence people see in the media. By using materials from her country, she shares a holistic vision of Colombia, not simply the one

we are given in news headlines.

Beloved by her fellow teachers, there is only high praise for Sra. Gonzalez's teaching style. "The students are getting an opportunity to share things about our culture here at Freeman with her," said fellow Spanish teacher, Sra. Snellings.

Students also love Sra. Gonzalez. "She's very nice and open-minded to what [her students] have to say," said Stella. "[Sra. Gonzalez] is very nice about correcting [us] if [we] say a word wrong in Spanish." According to Stella, Sra. Gonzalez's class is fun because it is an open space to work and talk with other students.

Additionally, Sra. Gonzalez brings a new perspective to students regarding public school systems. In Colombia, specific classes are mandatory, as the entire grade takes the same classes. Students must wear uniforms and there are fewer resources available to them. "I am delighted with all the technology [at Freeman]," said Sra. Gonzalez. "Each student has the opportunity to have a computer." She is also happy to see the variety of clubs, sports, and activities offered at Freeman.

Students also tend to have more respect for teachers in Colombia,

according to Sra. Gonzalez. "The [students] just respect me because I'm the teacher ... I do not have to repeat the rules of the class over and over again," said Sra. Gonzalez. However, at Freeman, students do not always follow rules, such as having no phones in class. Though this may be different, she still loves the energy and readiness to learn of the students in her classes.

"I think [it's] amazing living in the culture; understanding, traveling, meeting new people, and seeing new places," said Sra. Gonzalez. Sharing this passion in her classroom, those who know her agree that she was a born teacher and explorer.

# Encore! Ms. Gardner Sets the Stage for a New Year

**Cate Woodrum**  
Staff Writer

Ms. Gardner, an alumna of the Freeman Class of 2017, has always been drawn to the performing arts. Soon after graduating college, Ms. Gardner realized that she wanted to be an educator. She returned to DSF last year, fulfilling a permanent substitute position. She worked alongside former theater director Mrs. Spears, often substituting for theater classes and eventually becoming assistant director. Through her previous involvement in the drama program, Ms. Gardner learned the inner workings of running Freeman's theater department and prepared to take over this year.

Since the beginning of this school year, Ms. Gardner has

worked to make an impact on her students and the theater department. Her experiences have aided her in fulfilling the needs of the theater department early on, dodging what might have been a much longer learning curve. From her students' perspective, the transition has been seamless. "This could have been a struggle but because of the large role Ms. Gardner played in theater previously, she has done a phenomenal job," said senior Jamie Han.

Her ability to understand the student experiences at Freeman has proved to be a useful skill in her teaching. "I was in AP Government with Mr. Fabian, I was in AP [United States History] with Mrs. Striker," said Ms. Gardner. "So I was there. I know... I got through it."

According to her students, Ms. Gardner's compassion has made



PHOTO: Cate Woodrum  
Thespian society meeting in Ms. Gardner's room

her a well-liked addition to the Freeman Family. One such student is Rowan Creech, a junior at Freeman and an active member in the theater department. "[Ms. Gardner] is always on the same page as her students," said Rowan. "She shapes her teaching style around bringing people who are interested in theater together."

Other students have expressed positive feedback on the more rapid pace of the fall play. "This is the most productive I have ever felt as an actor," said Jamie. "[We are] just going into October and already doing full run-throughs which is unheard of." To reach these deadlines, Ms. Gardner is working with the entire department to bring the show together.

Ms. Gardner seeks to cultivate an environment that will inspire young performers on and off her

stage. "My goal is to develop those soft skills, interpersonal communication, [and] how they communicate empathy," said Ms. Gardner. As the director of both the fall play and the spring musical, she works with her students to create "memorable and enjoyable" productions.

She also hopes that student actors will respond well to this new form of theater education. "There's really no way to do theater alone," she said. "I try to make the class as collaborative and student-driven as possible, while still giving them what they need."

Students who have been in theater for their entire high school careers explained the importance of the changes Ms. Gardner has made. "Ms. Gardner is putting a real focus on the directors, so we're taking on a bigger leadership role," said Jamie. "I'm learning more

than I ever have." As the year begins and productions start to come together, Ms. Gardner's impact is being felt across the department.

Outside of theater, Ms. Gardner teaches College Prep English and sponsors the Thespian Society. To join the Thespian Society, students must have participated in at least two productions and have appeared on stage at least once. With her lively classroom and ongoing teaching style, it's no wonder Freeman's performers are excited for the year to come. "[Ms. Gardner] is going to be a great director," said sophomore Lucie Urquhart, a theater student and member of the Thespian Society. "I cannot wait to be a part of this year's productions." Ms. Gardner and her acting team are already looking on the horizon toward this year's production.



PHOTO: Maggie Jacoby  
Freeman's new theater teacher, Ms. Gardner

## Senior Cole Chizuk Leads DSF Football Team On and Off the Field

**Maya Tluchak**  
Staff Writer

Since joining Freeman's Varsity Football team in 2021, Cole Chizuk has made a big impact on and off the football field. Nominated for the Richmond Times Dispatch's Player of the Week in August 2023, Chizuk was key in winning early victories for the team. However, his season was unfortunately cut short due to an ACL injury but that has not stopped him from being an integral member of the team.

Cole began playing flag football in the fourth grade as a fun, light-hearted activity. Cole's mom was apprehensive about the dangers of competitive football and stopped Cole from playing it as a kid. "I felt that the sport was too dangerous," said Mrs. Chizuk. "[But,] Cole was born with the love of the game." After a lot of convincing, his mom finally let him try out for the Tuckahoe Middle School football team, where he began to play competitively as one of the two sixth graders on the team. From playing recreational flag football to becoming a star on the Freeman field, Cole has continued to excel at the game. Cole's dedication and hard

work are noticed by many of his teammates and coaches. "He works just as hard as anyone else, just as if he is still grinding for a spot," said senior Jake Lohmann, one of Cole's teammates. This drive led him to his position as a starting cornerback and starting slotback. He was also named the Times-Dispatch Player of the Week on Aug. 31, 2023.

On the field, Cole is a valued member of the DSF varsity football team. "[His] work ethic and competitive spirit is incred-

*"He never takes a day off."*  
- Jake Lohmann

ible," said Coach Bland, the DSF football head coach. "He is relentless in his effort and at practice. He never takes a day off."

Cole accredits his work ethic to his younger brother, Nolan Chizuk, a freshman at Freeman. "He's probably the reason why I play," said Cole. "I want him to be better than me, so I push him to go extra hard."

In Freeman's first-season game against Atlee High School, Cole led the team to a 45-0 victory, scoring four touchdowns, one of which



PHOTO: Richmond Times Dispatch

Cole in action at the Atlee game

was off a defensive interception. Cole claims this spectacular win is due to the team's hard work during the summer. "The chemistry between us helped us have a really good game," said Cole.

In addition to team chemistry, pre-game rituals are important for many athletes. "I listen to a lot of country music before the game ... and my mom and I do a handshake before I go to the games," he said.

Although Cole has a love for the sport, what makes his football career most memorable is his love for the team. "These boys are more than a team ... they are brothers," said Mrs. Chizuk.

One of Cole's closest friends on the team is Jake Lohmann, the starting senior wide receiver and safety for Freeman. "We compliment each other well on and off the field," said Jake. "What makes Cole a good teammate is how unselfish he is and how he is willing to make sacrifices for the team." According to his coaches and teammates, Cole's ability to excel individually while always having the team's inter-

ests at heart is what makes him such an asset to the Freeman team. Sadly, in Freeman's victory

*"I just wanted to stay in the game."*  
- Cole Chizuk

against James River High School, Cole had a sudden and unexpected end to his season. "I went up for a jump ball, and I was in a plant and twist ... I thought it was a cramp in the back of my calf," said Cole. "But then I made a pick a few plays later and my knee popped." Cole continued to play after the injury occurred. "I just wanted to stay in the game," he said. Cole later found out that he had suffered an ACL injury.

Despite the season-ending injury, Cole hasn't stopped making a positive impact on the team. "Having your senior year cut early due to injury is something that is not easy

to deal with, but Cole constantly shows up and helps us get better," said teammate Jake Lohmann.

His strength both on and off the field is recognized by more than just his teammates. "Cole will never let a setback like this break him or define him," said Mrs. Chizuk. "It will only bring him back with more fire, strength, and raw drive to play the game."

Although Cole's season has come to an end, he is dedicated to his focus on recovery. "We'll see what happens. I'm taking it day by day," he said. "I've been working with a lot of the younger kids that are playing now so just helping them out is my main goal."

Cole still attends all the team practices and games, while privately working with the younger kids on the team to fill his spot on the field. "He stands and cheers at the sidelines for not only his teammates but his little brother and his buddies that all play JV," said Mrs. Chizuk. "The core of who Cole is is the same on the field as it is off. He is an athlete through and through."



PHOTO: Stacy Chizuk

Cole gathers with teammates before a play

## Outdoor Climbing in RVA

**Afton Hessian**  
News Editor

With the introduction of climbing gyms in Richmond circa 1998, the climbing community in Richmond has rapidly expanded. Richmond is not only home to many climbing gyms, but also to crags, which are outdoor climbing areas. When the sets at gyms get old, climbers in Richmond can go outdoor climbing at Manchester Wall, the Belle Isle Quarry, and the Cove.

Manchester Wall, affectionately known as Manny, is made up of the remnants of the Richmond & Petersburg Railroad across the James River from Brown's Island. There are routes on the main wall and

the three adjacent pillars. Manny offers over 40 lead, top rope, trad, and mixed routes ranging from 5.5-5.11a. This variety makes it accessible for climbers of every ability, though most routes would need to be led or trad climbed to set up a top rope. One of the best qualities of Manchester Wall is its location with views of the downtown Richmond skyline. There is also a 5.5 lead route on first pillar with seven clips, making it a good introductory lead route.

Manny is the most trafficked outdoor climbing location in Richmond, so finding available routes could be difficult, especially in summer. Another downside is that conditions are often not ideal in summer, with the main wall and first pillar in

direct sunlight, making cleaning lead routes unpleasurable.

Less than a 30 minute walk away from Manchester Wall is another option: the Belle Isle Quarry. Most of the climbs at the quarry are top rope, and can be set up by rappelling from trees above the routes. Of the 12 most popular climbs, only one has bolts and the climbs range from 5.5-5.9. The quarry is most accessible to people newer to the sport, and could be climbed by people of all ages.

The Cove has some of the best bouldering in RVA, alongside boulders on the Buttermilk trail. It is located just outside of Maymont and after hopping a few fences, climbers are exposed to a cove of sprawling boulders. Since the cove is less trafficked, there are still boulders without first ascents. Boulders at the Cove have varying hold types and movements, including dynos, mantle topouts, and crimpy traverses.

If climbers want to escape the city, there are great climbing locations all throughout Virginia and West Virginia. Only two hours away from Richmond is the Forest, a collection of boulders in the Blue Ridge Mountains. Ranging from V0-V11, the forest offers a diverse set of climbs, many with sharp credit card crimps, overhung slopers, and occasionally sketchy traverses. Local climber and former member of Peak Team, Kole Adams, had a first ascent at the Forest in February. His climb, IAA, is graded a V10, and is one of the hardest climbs in Gumby at the Forest.

An additional two hours from the Forest is one of the largest crags on the east coast, the New River Gorge. The New has boulders and ropes of all grades, and also holds the hardest route east of Colorado: Full Metal Brisket. The climb is located at Summersville Lake, a classic crag also known for its deep water solos in summer. The New is also the country's newest national park, so mountain biking, hiking, and kayaking can be done.

Climbing is everywhere in Richmond, so grab a friend with a rope or crash pad and go outside!



PHOTO: Afton Hessian

Sunny day at the Belle Isle Quarry

### Upcoming Sporting Events at Freeman



▼ OCTOBER ▼ 2023

<b>FRI 20</b>	<b>VARSITY FOOTBALL AWAY VS GODWIN</b> ▼ THEME: CANO
<b>TUES 24</b>	<b>GIRLS/BOYS VOLLYBALL VS GLEN ALLEN</b> ▼ GIRLS @GAH BOYS @DSF
<b>THURS 26</b>	<b>GIRLS/BOYS VOLLYBALL VS HENRICO</b> ▼ GIRLS @HHS BOYS @DSF
<b>FRI 27</b>	<b>VARSITY FOOTBALL HOME VS HANOVER</b> ▼ HOME COMING GAME THEME: H.A. L.G.W.I.N

For more information: ▼ [colonialdistrictva.org](http://colonialdistrictva.org)

### STUDENT SECTION REMINDERS

- find a place in the stands rather than congregating in our open areas!
- be respectful to the opposing teams!
- don't throw things!
- have fun and show Freeman school spirit!



# Women's World Cup: Red Card for Rubiales

**Katie Hall**  
Editor-in-Chief

On Aug. 20, 2023, the Spanish Women's National Team secured its first World Cup title with a 1-0 win over England. Shortly after Spain's victory, fans were shocked to see Luis Rubiales, the president of the Royal Spanish Football Federation, kiss Jenni Hermoso of the Women's National Team without her consent. "It was very disturbing. I was kind of in shock," said senior Lisa Elovaara, a member of Freeman's Varsity Soccer Team. "Winning a World Cup is supposed to be a big celebration ... and that just completely took the attention away from the actual accomplishment."

The incident prompted a global response, with widespread calls for Rubiales' resignation. According to the Washington Post, "Rubiales blamed the turmoil on 'fake feminism ... [and] said the kiss was consensual and accused Hermoso of lying.'" Fans of the

Spanish Women's National Team and the Spanish government rallied around Hermoso. Following weeks of backlash, Rubiales officially resigned from his role on Sep. 10, 2023. Jenni Hermoso filed a lawsuit against Rubiales and was granted a restraining order on Sep. 15, 2023, by Spain's High Court.

In an interview with The Atlantic, United States Women's National Team (USWNT) star Megan Rapinoe commented on the World Cup incident. "That signals such a deep level of misogyny and sexism ... What kind of upside-down world are we in?" she said. Although Rapinoe has become one of the most notable soccer players in the world for her athleticism, her activism has propelled her to global fame. She is known for her advocacy efforts, especially for the fair treatment of women in athletics.

In 2022, Rapinoe and the USWNT achieved a pivotal victory for female athletes with the success of their equal pay movement in the United States. "The women have won four World Cups and the men have won none in the US

... now they're actually getting the recognition for it," said Lisa.

The USWNT's equal pay movement quickly spread around the world. "The US women's team definitely has influenced the way other Federations treat their players," said Mr. Lewis, a social studies teacher at Freeman. "But I don't think the women's team were the first ones to do only that."

Mr. Lewis shared the story of Ada Hegerberg, a globally ranked soccer star who sparked the Norwegian equal pay movement in 2017. Hegerberg's story is often unheard of, but her actions initiated significant changes in Norway's pay disparities. According to CNN, "men and women now receive the same financial compensation for representing Norway following an agreement that doubled the remuneration pot for women from 3.1 million Norwegian kroner (\$330,739) to six million kroner (\$640,150)."

While victories like the USWNT's and Hegerberg's signaled a shift towards better treatment for female athletes, there are still



PHOTO: CNN

Spanish National Team celebrates after a win.

a variety of roadblocks preventing equal treatment. "In every level, women's sports...face a lack of investment. The people that are experts are not investing the time or money," said Mr. Lewis.

Although the equal pay movement showed significant progress, Lisa explained the importance of continued investment in women's sports. "There are other obstacles, not just equal pay. Men's soccer around the world has a lot of funding, and a lot of money

put into it," she said. "And it's less [for] women's soccer, which then means fewer opportunities [and fewer] women playing."

The unsolicited kiss at the World Cup sparked new conversations about women's treatment in sports, aside from financial disparities. "I think it's primarily because people don't take female athletes seriously," said Mr. Lewis. "My hope is ... that [Rubiales's resignation] signals ... this [is] no longer going to be tolerated."

## Freeman Student Section: As Electric As Ever

**Izzy Minkler**  
Staff Writer

The 2023 fall season has officially started with a bang! Football season is in full swing and the students at Freeman are thrilled to be back. Friday night lights are shining again and Freeman football is off to a great start with a 3-0 record. The student section with the help of the Mav Man can make or break a game, and Freeman is no stranger to an electric student body. Many students know the struggle of coming just a few minutes after kickoff and being relegated to the outskirts of the mass of themed teens. After braving the mess that is Freeman's parking lot, the last thing you want to do is squeeze yourself into the bleachers where you will inevitably end up standing sideways with someone's elbow jabbing into you. The student section may be cramped,

stuffy, and loud, but there's no place Freeman students would rather be on a Friday night. Experiences found in the student section can vary from class to class. The freshmen are constantly pushed up against the fence and are subject to shouts from upperclassmen to "move back." The sophomores, who have recently moved up and are slightly vindictive towards the freshmen only just escape the clutches of the fence. The juniors have moved towards the front and have almost forgotten their fence days. Finally, the senior pit, where only the bravest upperclassmen venture. It is they who lead the chants and bang the trash cans. An absolutely essential part of having an electric student section is the Mav Man — one of Freeman's most sacred traditions and most coveted roles. Each year, a senior is chosen and must follow the very strict requirements for the role. The lucky senior obtaining the role must not play a fall sport or par-

ticipate in basketball, attend every single game, and wear a white hard hat. This year's Mav Man is Nicholas Gavin. Many students are thankful for the Mav Man's contributions to the energy of the student section. "The Mav Man really makes it easier to follow along with what's happening in the game," said freshman Nora Burke.

This year a new means of increasing student engagement has been added: Instagram Polls. The DSF Students account posts a story on Monday or Tuesday of each week where anyone can vote for the theme they want for that week's game. This new increase in community input is popular with many students, but a few have voiced their opinions on the polls. "It's annoying when there are two good themes against each other, but we only get one," said sophomore Millie Mccabe.

Another key group in maintaining the energy of the student section is the cheerleaders. The cheerleaders lead the student section and keep the students engaged and excited during the entirety of the game. However, the cheerleaders need reciprocation, or else their job becomes very difficult. "Everyone is really good about dressing in the theme, if someone showed up to the neon game with their entire body painted neon pink, no one's going to question it," said junior Kenzie Edmonson, a varsity cheerleader. "That's Freeman for you, we will go all out." That's just it, Freeman's student section consistently goes above and beyond on Friday nights.



PHOTO: DSF Yearbook

Freeman's student section showing their school spirit.

**DSF SPORTS COMMITS**

**N NAVY**  
Max Vest

**Ψ**  
Claire Stuhlman

**D**  
Anna Bitsko

**W**  
Jake Lohmann

**D**  
Eva Gardner

## Simone Biles Soars Back Into Competition

**Lorelei Kelley**  
Copy Editor

On Aug. 27, 2023, Simone Biles returned to the competition scene and won her eighth national all-around title at the US Gymnastics Championships. Since 2013, Biles has competed in hundreds of meets and won a combined 33 medals from World Championship and Olympic competitions alike. This return follows her withdrawal from the Tokyo Olympics in 2021 and subsequent two-year break from the sport. Her choice to back out of the Tokyo finals sparked a wave of news surrounding athlete mental health — a cause she continues to champion.

The incident occurred when Biles got a case of the 'twisties' during a vault warmup. "[The] twisties are really dangerous because it means you don't have your air awareness anymore and you don't know when to stop twisting," said junior Abby Johnson, a member of the Freeman gymnastics team.

"It's like a mental block in a sport but more dangerous, so Simone had to pull out for her safety."

After Biles announced that she was pulling out of all final competitions in Tokyo, the USA Gymnastics (USAG) team is-

sued a statement that said, "We wholeheartedly support Simone's decision and applaud her bravery in prioritizing her well-being." The statement confirmed that Simone was leaving to "focus on her mental health" — a subject not often discussed in the athletic realm prior to this event. The support USAG showed for her actions mirrored an overwhelming show of support from former gymnasts and fans alike.

However, not everyone reacted well to the news of her departure. Some media sources went so far as to label her a "quitter" and a "national embarrassment." Despite much of the media turning on her, most gymnasts remained on her side. "I don't agree with the people who were angry at her ... they've never experienced gymnastics before; it's a very mentally challenging sport," said junior Emma Crone, a Freeman gymnastics team member and state competition qualifier in 2023. "It's not just your body — gymnastics has both physical and mental challenges."

Her return to gymnastics has proved to be an inspiration for many young gymnasts. "[Simone] has a lot of fun with her gymnastics," said Abby. "She is really positive towards her teammates and seems like a fun person to be around."

Alongside her newfound fun, Biles has brought new and old signature skills with her to the competition floor (and other apparatuses). On floor, she competes the Biles (a double backflip in a laid-out position with a half twist) and the Biles II (a triple twisting double back tuck). On the balance beam, she performs her unique Biles dismount — a double twisting double back tuck. In 2023, Biles introduced a never-before-competed vault: a Yurchenko double pike. This vault made history as the most difficult vault ever successfully competed by a fe-

male gymnast and scored a 16.100 with deductions, according to The Guardian. Fellow gymnasts watching this moment also agree. "She is insanely talented and deserves to be where she is," said Emma.

Since coming back to the competition scene, Biles has not stopped discussing mental health in athletics. Specifically, she has discussed what coaches can do to help athletes get through any mental challenges they might be facing.

This sentiment is shared by younger gymnasts as well. "It's really important to have a two-way relationship where

your coach respects your opinion, but you also value theirs," said Abby. "When you say you need a day off or need to take a break from something they know when to respect that and when to push you in the right direction."

Biles' advocacy has helped to get the mental health struggles many gymnasts face onto a larger platform, but there is still much left to do. Pressure from coaches and sports can take a toll on athletes in more ways than one. Much has improved, but "we still need to keep working," said Abby.



PHOTO: OLYMPICS.COM

Simone Biles mid-pose during her routine.

## Creativity Flourishes in National Art Honor Society

**Kristen Carpenter**  
Staff Writer

The National Art Honor Society (NAHS) at Freeman High School is a qualification-based organization for students who enjoy making art and being creative. Led by Angie Portillo, Dabnie Brantley, and Ava Keppler, the National Art Honor Society (NAHS) offers a space for students to gain national recognition for their creative skills while working alongside others who value art. “[NAHS] is a great resume builder; it’s really fun,” said senior Dabnie Brantley. Dabnie and Angie are the presidents of NAHS. Ava, another senior at Freeman, is the vice president. Each had their own reasons for joining. “I initially joined the club because I wanted to help with the murals,” said Angie. “I believe they help build community in our space.”

Dabnie was drawn in by her passion for art. “I felt that it was a natural progression from being in my other art classes,” said Dabnie. For her, NAHS offered a way to continue her art education outside of the classroom. A combination of the two, Ava joined both to help the Freeman community and expand her artistic abilities. “I wanted to become more involved in Freeman and focus on my artistic skills,” said Ava. “NAHS gave me the perfect opportunity for that.”

Similarly to other honor societies, NAHS has specific requirements for applicants. To be considered for the club, students have to be in either Art III, Ceramics III, or a higher-level art course. After being inducted, students must complete at least 15 hours of art-based community service throughout the year.

To help members fulfill the required service hours, NAHS helps behind the scenes with many Freeman activities and events including homecoming and trunk or treat. NAHS also helps design the sets for the school plays and paints murals around Freeman that can be found in the art hallway. Finally, NAHS holds an art show each spring where Freeman students can learn, play, and create along with NAHS members and art students alike.

Each of the NAHS leaders has helped with these in the past. For last year’s art show, Dabnie was



PHOTO: Amber Keppler

### Angie, Ava, and Dabnie at the NAHS induction after the 2023 art show

in charge of creating self-portraits for students who attended. “I had fun meeting a variety of students and seeing how many portraits I could create,” said Dabnie.

According to Angie, Dabnie, and Ava, there are many reasons to join the National Art Honor Society. “NAHS is a great way to become more involved in the art community at Freeman,” said Ava. “You also get a rainbow cord at graduation which is unique from other clubs.” Members are also able to try their hand at a variety of art forms they might not be able to do in their standard art classes. For Ava, NAHS allows her to work with ceramics — something she wouldn’t otherwise be able to do since she does not take Ceramics.

Yet, the importance of the Freeman community remains essential to NAHS. Besides the murals, NAHS brings the Freeman

Family together through their art shows and helps with school-wide events. “Being a member of NAHS allows you to leave your imprint on the school,” said Dabnie. “It’s a way to truly connect with the community around you.”

NAHS also offers opportunities for people to explore different ways to incorporate art into their future careers. Ava plans to major in graphic design while Angie expressed in architecture alongside graphic design. Dabnie conveyed a broader interest in the arts. “I couldn’t imagine life without art,” said Dabnie. “I plan to always keep it in my life.” Whether students want to make a profession out of their artistic abilities or just want to create for fun, NAHS has something for everyone.

This year’s next tasks for NAHS are Trunk or Treat and the Homecoming Parade. NAHS is widely known for its decorative Homecoming floats. Other projects include a collaboration with Tuckahoe Middle School to improve the art courtyard and paint a mural in it. Yet, the biggest event of the year is the art show. Planning for this event has to begin early since each art student regardless of NAHS membership contributes at least one original piece of their choice to be displayed.

If you are passionate about art or are interested in learning more about it, you should consider working towards becoming an NAHS member. “[People] should always make the time for the things that they love,” said Angie. “NAHS offers that opportunity for those who love art.”



PHOTO: Ava Keppler

### 2022 NAHS Homecoming Float

## Spilling the “GUTS”

**Julia Connor**  
Staff Writer

On June 26, 2023, Olivia Rodrigo announced to her fans that she was recording a new album: “GUTS.” Prior to its release, Rodrigo released two hit singles from the album: “vampire” and “bad idea right?” The album was released on Sept. 8, 2023. Follow me as I explore the ins and outs of several tracks on this newish album.

My personal favorite song on “GUTS” is “lacy.” Her lyrics are raw, her emotions are clear, and the importance of the topic to her is obvious throughout the song. The song is softer than the others with hints of jealousy that add to the song’s complexity. My favorite lyrics, “Like ribbons in your hair/ My stomach’s all in knots,” are part of the chorus and show the lyrical genius of Rodrigo. Her use of imagery to convey an inescapable feeling of anxiety hits home and the lyrics stir empathy and understanding within the listener.

The songs “logical” and “love is embarrassing” both reminded me of Olivia’s freshman album, “SOUR.” While “favorite crime” on “SOUR” is the most emotional song on the album, “logical” took that title by a landslide on “GUTS.” I find that they both have a message about a love gone bad and the inability to escape a toxic relationship. Another theme of “SOUR” is that of being lost and confused while in love. A similar theme is reflected in the song “love is embarrassing,” where Olivia sings about how terrifying love can be when it is one-sided.

Released on June 30, “vampire” was the first single to be released on “GUTS.” It spread quickly to mainstream radio stations and TikTok, so I heard it frequently before the release of the album. Prior to the album’s release, I really enjoyed “vampire,” but after “GUTS” was released, it lost its stand-out nature. The same is not true, I feel, for “bad idea right?” This is the second single released off of “GUTS” and it escaped the massively overplayed fate of “vampire.” Even after the entire album was released, I still really liked the song. It is upbeat with a good rhythm which I still enjoy immensely. The upbeat, catchy chorus makes “bad idea right?” an unforgettable brainworm of a track.

Lyrics from “ballad of a homeschooled girl” and “the grudge”

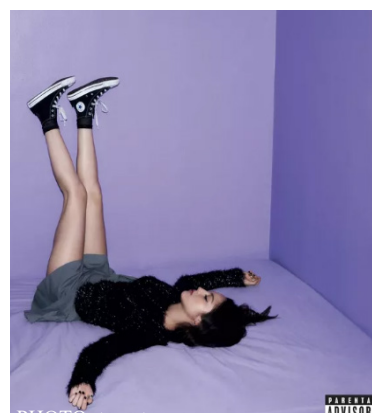


PHOTO: target.com

### “GUTS” album cover

exemplify Rodrigo’s writing genius and ability to make specific lyrics and verses shine. In “ballad of a homeschooled girl,” Olivia sings, “every guy I like is gay.” It is an unexpected lyric but it portrays her grungy persona in this song perfectly. In “the grudge” somber, reminiscent lyrics provoke emotion from the listener. The lyric “We both drew blood, but, man, those cuts were never equal,” is an outstanding example of this kind of heartstring-pulling lyricism. Her vocal tonality makes these lines stellar, offering listeners her wide vocal range and a voice that emphasizes the truth behind this verse.

I found “making the bed” to be Olivia’s most meaningful and clever song on the album,” as Olivia relates her life back to the old saying, ‘You’ve made your bed, now you have to lie in it.’ It seems that the singer is unhappy with her life but knows that it is her own fault so she just has to live with it. Considering the drama that cropped up around her first album, “SOUR,” it seems as if she is admitting it was all her fault. Rodrigo further expands on the hate and drama “SOUR” brought to her and others, which, to me, makes the song very powerful.

Overall, I enjoyed this album especially since it showcased Rodrigo’s growth as a writer, a vocalist, and a person. In “GUTS,” she included more soft, emotional songs compared to the revenge-based and anger-fueled lyrics that characterize “SOUR.” In my opinion, “GUTS” is a more versatile album than “SOUR,” which is why I would choose “GUTS” as my favorite of the two. The songs are diverse in their morals and meanings, making “GUTS” more relatable. I believe that Rodrigo’s incredible songwriting and voice make “GUTS” another award-winning album.

## Pros and Kahans

**Ava Flournoy**  
Graphics Editor

Noah Kahan, a now well-known musician from Vermont, has quickly climbed to the top of various music charts in recent months. Due to a sudden increase in popularity on TikTok, Kahan’s music is trending all over the world. Noah sings about his mental health, love trials and tribulations, and his fight to keep going while giving the songs a pop-ish rhythm that makes them easy to sing along to.

Kahan could be known for a plethora of reasons: his relatable lyrics, jokes on stage, or even his dog Penny, but listeners should note the musical talent he holds and how open he is about his struggles.

In his older music, Noah digs into his insecurities and vulnerability. Released in 2019, “Mess” is a prime example of his own personal problems and how he reconciled with them. He sings, “And we’ll get drunk and she’ll say/You’re a mess, you’re a mess.” He needs someone to point out his problems in order for him to recognize them and try to face them. Whether it be a girlfriend or an old friend from home, Kahan is desperate for someone who will really see him for who he is to get him the help he desires.

Noah also sings about the different feelings he experiences while loving a person: the good, the bad, the ugly; all of it. In his song “All My Love,” he sings, “I’m the same as I was, it’s all okay/There ain’t a drop of bad blood, it’s all my love/You got all my love.” He remarks on the bittersweet moment of seeing the person he loves grow out of him while he seems to stay the same. He only wants the best for them as they continue on with their life without him.

Noah Kahan likes to keep it real. He often calls out his own behavior and how he is not proud of it, especially in his hit song “Dial Drunk.”



In the lyrics, “I ain’t proud of all the punches that I’ve thrown” and “I’m rememberin’ I promised to forget you now/But it’s rainin’, and I’m callin’ drunk,” Kahan explicitly shows that he knows he shouldn’t be calling the woman he loves but he just can’t help himself.

“Call Your Mom” is another tear-jerker from Kahan about a loved one struggling with their mental health to the point of him calling to save them from ending it all. When he sings, “Don’t wanna drive another mile wonderin’ if you’re breathin’/So, won’t you stay?” he is calling out to his friend who is struggling profoundly while expressing his support for them. He places emphasis on how there is more to life for them and they shouldn’t end it so soon. This song is known for being one that causes fans to slowly wipe away their tears when he plays it live.

Though Noah’s songs have serious and deep meanings, his social media platform is an entirely different story. Kahan likes to make self-deprecating jokes about his life, music, and ego. One example is a Tweet from Sept. 15, 2023,

when he writes, “Can you die from being super sleepy?” This side of Noah is a fan favorite. Even when he celebrated hitting one million followers on Instagram, he tweeted, “Goodbye therapy, I have 1 million followers on Instagram now. Self-loathing destroyed!” Kahan makes his social media presence funny and the fans love it.

Another draw of his social media platform is his dog: Penny. In truth, Noah’s dog may be just as famous as he is. Featured on his most recent album cover, “Stick Season,” Penny the German Shepherd can be seen sitting next to Noah. Penny is an iconic member of Noah’s life and songs. In a recent interview, he mentions how he got Penny during COVID and she became a light in his life. Though his lyrics may be extremely depressing, sorrowful, and emotional, Noah Kahan knows how to turn sad circumstances into catchy tunes for all the folk-pop music fans to listen to.

Though his lyrics may be depressing and emotional, Noah Kahan knows how to turn sad circumstances into catchy tunes for all the folk-pop music fans to listen to.

**Afton Hessian**  
News Editor

Noah Kahan is a man loved by some for his indie-folk-infused pop songs, and despised by others for his attitude about the North.

Kahan’s sudden popularity is mystifying, and the only reasonable explanation is that the general public is having Mumford and Sons withdrawals, and needs another new 20-something man with floppy brown hair to fill the void. Unlike Mumford and Sons, however, Kahan is from Vermont, and he would like everyone to know!

Kahan has many theories about New England, and if there’s one thing he loves, it is to share those theories with the world. “Growing up in a place where it’s cold, I truly do think has a sociological impact on how people behave,” said Kahan in an interview with Zach Sang. he then uses it to justify his ineptitude in relationships — all because he was chilly as a child. He sings to this idea in “Northern Attitude,” pleading “Forgive my northern attitude, I was raised out in the cold.” Surprisingly, Noah, billions of people grow up cold without becoming “gruff,” as he so eloquently puts it.

His discography is comprised of a few genuinely good songs, put in between bland, yet incessant ramblings of past altercations. In most cases, it is less an issue of his musical talent and rather the lyricism he chooses to represent it. In “No Complaints,” Kahan contemplates the effect his parents had on his upbringing, and how those choices have impacted him in the present. He describes this experience by writing, “I thought I had something/And that’s the same as having something/I get mad at nothing, blame my dad for something.” Sometimes simplicity is beneficial in artistic expression, but here, as in many of

his songs, it comes off as lazy, and an ineffective use of rhetoric.

Kahan’s albums seem to delineate the persona of someone wholly uninspired by his surroundings. This fundamental lack of inspiration is actualized in lyrics that should have remained in demos, which include the following: “The college kids are gettin’ so young, ain’t they?/They’re correction’ all the grammar on a spray paint,” “I could be an old tattoo/To remind me when I get bad news,” “We write out the ends on our palms, dear/Then forget to read,” and “One day, I’m gonna cut it clear/Ride like Paul Revere.”

Kahan has a habit of attributing every possible life experience to New England, almost postulating that New England is the only place to experience depth and beauty. In an interview with Genius for his song “Stick Season,” Kahan said, “[Stick Season] is [about] the time of year where it’s gray and cold and there’s no snow yet, and the beauty of the foliage is done. It’s a time of year that’s very specific to where I grew up.” Shockingly, according to the National Weather Service, fall does exist outside of New England! Having bare trees with frost crystallizing on the brittle, dying grass occurs in other places too, outside of the homogenous community he grew up in! So many of Kahan’s songs are, at their core, merely self-aggrandizing indulgences to tout himself as superior because he grew up in Vermont.

In another world, Kahan could be seen running a Blundstones multi-level marketing scheme, pandering to unsuspecting pedestrians and pulling up his iPad for them to tip him 50 percent. He could be found popping up his inflatable dog bowl at the puppy ice cream shop, just to tell the person to his right that the maple syrup ice cream their dog is enjoying is not ‘authentic,’ and that if they want the REAL maple syrup, they will have to go to the motherland.

## Happenings Around the Globe



PHOTO: Reuters

In mid-September, tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan escalated with military action in Nagorno-Karabakh. According to CBS News, "Nagorno-Karabakh is internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan, but it has been populated and run by ethnic Armenian separatists for several decades." Thousands fled after learning the enclave region would soon dissolve, sparking accusations of ethnic cleansing at the hands of Azerbaijan's government.



PHOTO: ABC News

On Sept. 28, 2023, U.S. Army Private Travis King returned home after being held in North Korea for nearly two months. King was captured after sprinting across a heavily guarded border. According to CNN, "His return marks a rare diplomatic success between Washington and Pyongyang at a time of fraught relations."



PHOTO: Reuters

On Sept. 10, 2023, heavy rain from Mediterranean Storm Daniel caused two dam failures in Libya. The collapsed dams led to catastrophic flooding, washing neighborhoods out to sea near Derna and killing approximately 10,000 residents. The floods cut off access to the city and displaced nearly 34,000 people throughout the country.



PHOTO: BBC News

On Sept. 28, 2023, the iconic Sycamore Gap tree, located along Hadrian's Wall in Northumberland, England, was found to be illegally felled. Nearly three centuries old, the tree was a monument of the UNESCO World Heritage Site, even appearing in the 1991 film "Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves." While the perpetrator's name is yet to be released, a 60-year-old suspect has been arrested in connection to the crime.

Content by Katie Hall, Merrick Mock, Ava Flournoy, and Poppy Friske

## Second GOP Debate: A Recap

Afton Hessian  
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On Sept. 27, 2023, the second Republican debate occurred in Simi Valley, California. Candidates included former U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley, North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum, former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy, Sen. Tim Scott of South Carolina, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, and former Vice President Mike Pence.

Presidential primary debates are used to find the nominee for the party by providing a forum for policy-centered discourse. The first nominating contest will take place on Jan. 15, 2024, at the Iowa Republican Presidential Caucuses. The competition for the nomination led to a contentious debate, with candidates frequently talking over one another forcing moderators to shout over them. The tense debate reached a boiling point when a frustrated Haley told Ramaswamy, "Honestly every time I hear you, I feel a little bit dumber."

Former President Donald Trump was noticeably absent from the GOP debates, sparking strong anti-Trump sentiments among his fellow candidates. "You're ducking these things," said Christie. "You keep doing that, no one up here is going to call you Donald Trump anymore. We're going to call you Donald Duck." After criticism from Trump about the comment, Christie doubled down. "[Trump] knows what I said is true," he said in an interview with Fox News on Sept. 28.

Going forward, Trump's campaign has called for the cancellation of all future presidential primary debates, in order for the Republican National Convention to focus on defeating Joe Biden. "Anything less ... [is] an admission to the grassroots that their concerns about voter integrity are not taken seriously," said senior campaign advisors Susie Wiles and Chris LaCivita.

Following the second debate, DeSantis and Haley's poll numbers climbed. Despite this, Trump remains the frontrunner ahead of the upcoming GOP primary debate on Nov. 8, 2023.

## Affirmative Action Ruling Redefines Policies for College Applicants



PHOTO: AP

The nine members of the Supreme Court of the United States

Ella Post  
Online Editor-in-Chief

In June 2023, the United States Supreme Court ruled that colleges and universities cannot admit a student into their educational facility based on their racial background. Multiple groups of students have been affected by this decision including people of Black and Latino descent. This decision also places limitations on the school's diversity and certain peoples' access to higher education.

According to Chief Justice Roberts, the conservative majority believes that Harvard College and the University of North Carolina (UNC) did not follow the Equal Protection Clause nor back up their use of race when admitting students with a measurable answer. "The Harvard and UNC admissions programs cannot be reconciled with the guarantees of the Equal Protection Clause," said Roberts. "Both programs lack sufficiently focused and measurable objectives warranting the use of race, unavoidably employ race in a negative manner, involve racial stereotyping, and lack meaningful endpoints. We have never permitted admissions programs to work in that way, and we will not do so today."

Additionally, the majority of the Supreme Court stated that they realize race may have a significant impact on applicants' lives, but still ruled that the affirmative action policies of these education institutions contradict the Constitution. Those in the majority included Justice Clarence Thomas, the second Black person to be appointed to the Supreme Court. When asked to comment on his position, he said, "[their policies are] rudderless, race-based preferences designed to ensure a particular racial mix in their entering classes."

However, the Democratic Party inside of the court has very strong opposing views. Justice Sonia Sotomayor said that this decision "rolls back decades of precedent and momentous progress." Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson, the only justice who is a Black woman, expressed her opinion by saying the majority maintains a "let-them-eat-cake obliviousness." She showed optimism as well and said, "But deeming race irrelevant in law does not make it so in life." The Republican majority had "detached itself from this country's actual past and present experiences. No one benefits from ignorance," she said.

Despite the court's strong majority opinion, the ruling states that military service colleges and universities are permitted to use race

as a component in an applicant's résumé. Justice Jackson replied to this concern. "The court has come to rest on the bottom-line conclusion that racial diversity in higher education is only worth potentially preserving insofar as it might be needed to prepare Black Americans and other underrepresented minorities for success in the bunker, not the boardroom (a particularly awkward place to land, in light of the history the majority opts to ignore)," said Jackson.

Former and current government officials expressed both feelings of happiness and frustration due to this court decision. "The consequences of this decision will be felt immediately and across the country, as students of color will face an admission cycle next year with fewer opportunities to attend the same colleges and universities than their parents and older siblings," said Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer.

Many have felt the impact of this decision, including both politicians and college applicants. Even though these educational facilities have removed this part of the application process, some accessibility is still available in military institutions. This decision will not only affect education at the highest level but may also trickle down into high schools and private schools.

## Congress Narrowly Avoids Government Shutdown

Celia Acey  
Sports Editor

On Sept. 30, 2023, President Biden signed a stopgap bill into law, narrowly averting a national government shutdown. This temporary funding bill will allow the government to remain open until Nov. 17, 2023.

A government shutdown occurs when Congress is unable to pass the 12 appropriation bills and outline federal funding by the new fiscal year, which begins on Oct. 1 of each year. During a shutdown, only essential government operations continue, meaning that millions of federal employees and military service members do not get paid until



PHOTO: AP

Former Speaker of the House, Kevin McCarthy

the government reopens. Day-to-day impacts include postal service disruptions, museum clo-

sures, infrastructure delays, and federal food program instability.

Desperate to avoid a national shutdown, House Speaker Kevin McCarthy offered a stopgap funding bill, which did not include border security or additional funding for Ukraine. The bill passed in both chambers of Congress.

Frustrated with McCarthy's decision to compromise, Congressman Matt Gaetz and fellow Re-

publicans filed a motion on Oct. 2, 2023, to oust Speaker McCarthy.

On October 3, in a historic 216-to-210 vote, McCarthy was removed from his role as House Speaker. Voting to fill McCarthy's role is in progress. Currently, the front runner is Congressman Jim Jordan. Jordan was endorsed by former President Donald Trump and was nominated by the majority of GOP members.

## Senator Dianne Feinstein Dies At 90

Anna Meiller  
Mav Minute Editor-in-Chief

The longest-serving female senator, Dianne Feinstein, passed away on Sept. 29, 2023, at 90 years old. Feinstein's Senate career spanned 31 years during which she played an active role in a variety of legislation. Some of her most well-known work included an Assault Weapons Ban, a Combating Methamphetamine bill, and the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act.

Prior to serving as the senior senator from California, she was elected Mayor of San Francisco and was the first woman to become a member of the city's Board

of Supervisors. Upon her passing, a stream of visitors left notes and flowers outside her home.

Throughout her career, Feinstein pushed boundaries and is credited with helping open doors for future female politicians and leaders. In the 1990s, she was one of the few senators who defended the LGBTQ+ community. "Dianne was tough, sharp, always prepared ... she was also a kind and loyal friend, and that's what Jill and I will miss the most," said President Joe Biden.

Two days after Feinstein's death, California Gov. Gavin Newsom appointed Laphonza Butler to fill her seat. Butler will make history by becoming the first openly lesbian Black woman in the Senate.



PHOTO: CNN

Senator Dianne Feinstein representing California in Congress

## Auto Workers Strike Causes Billions in Economic Losses



PHOTO: Getty Images

UAW President Shawn Fain marches in downtown Detroit

Maggie Jacoby  
Features Editor

The United Auto Workers (UAW) Union initiated a widespread strike on Sept. 15, 2023, seeking better wages and benefits from their employers. As the strike stretches into a weeks-long movement, auto companies across the country are at risk of losing many of their employees.

The UAW is an international union focused on workers associated with automobiles, aerospace, and agricul-

tural devices in the United States and Canada. According to PBS News, reasons for the strike included, "the pandemic, rising costs of living, industry-changing technology, and workers' self-determination." Due to this, workers are demanding an increase in pay that matches the rising inflation rate.

Originally, the strike included 13,000 autoworkers from auto companies across Michigan, Missouri, and Ohio. The union is conducting what is called a "stand-up" strike, where they announce their plans for workers to exit job sites in advance. A week after it began, more than 5,000 addi-

tional UAW members joined the strike.

The UAW's current requests include a 46-percent increase in pay, a four-day work week, overtime pay beyond 32 hours, union representation at new electric battery plants, and the end of employment tiers.

Thus far, a few major auto companies have offered to increase wages. According to CNBC News, "Ford has offered a 20% increase over the four years of the deal, followed by GM at 18% and Stellantis at 17.5%. GM raised their offer [on Sept. 14, 2023] to a 20% wage increase." However, most employees are afraid that having a more high-cost contract between their companies and employees will lead to an increase in the price of their vehicles. This could potentially make them more expensive than vehicles produced at auto plants run by foreign corporations.

Although manufacturers fear increased prices in car sales, according to ABC News, the strike caused a total of nearly \$4 billion in economic losses over its first two weeks. So, if automakers don't decide soon how they will deal with their upset employees, America could continue to see the high economic consequences.