

City of Richmond Introduces New Gun Control Framework

Ella Post

Online Editor-in-Chief

In May 2021, Richmond Mayor Levar Stoney and his City Council declared gun violence a public health crisis. To combat this, he and his governing body created the Gun Violence Prevention and Intervention Framework (GVPI). The GVPI Steering Committee creates the framework with the help of recommendations from different leaders, communities, and institutions in the Richmond area. Mayor Stoney's announcement was strongly upheld by his belief that "One life lost to violence, or any cause of that matter, is too many."

In November, the "2023 Gun Violence Prevention and Intervention Annual Report" on gun violence was released, which displays the city's progress after implementing the new framework strategies. One of the main purposes for recording this data was to analyze which efforts being made by the city's leadership, community members, non-profits, local organizations, and state agencies were improving its public safety. When compared to 2022, the report said, "[T]here has been a 29 percent reduction in non-fatal shootings and the Richmond Police Department (RPD) has already seized 795 firearms that were removed from individuals during an infraction." The city has also seen a reduction in youth victims of homicide. "[T]here has been a 75 percent decrease in youth victims of homicide and a 14 percent decrease in youth victims of non-fatal shootings compared to the same time period in 2022," said the GVPI report. "Overall, when we add juvenile homicide to juvenile non-fatal shooting victims, the city has seen a 23 percent decrease in juvenile victims of gun violence in 2023 compared to 2022."

These percentage drops were not only seen because of the GVPI's techniques but also from the many partnerships between institutions and the Steering Committee to prevent these violent acts. Organizations such as the Human Services Department, Office of Community Wealth, Virginia Department of Justice Services, Moms Demand Action, Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) Health, the Vir-

ginia Department of Health, Next Up, and Child Savers continue to work alongside the city to help prevent gun violence. "We have formed very strong partnerships with our health department and VCU health in terms of support, whether it's monetarily or just getting the word out, and they supply different programs that they're able to offer, as well," said Athena Hannay, a management analyst and a member of the GVPI steering committee in Mayor Stoney's office.

The Mayor's office also funds some of VCU's gun violence prevention initiatives and youth education. "We also have a positive youth development fund that the city created and we put 'X' amount of dollars in it. Next Up is one of our strong fiscal partners, and they will take that money and administer it to all the different community organizations that we work with," said Ms. Hannay. "One nongovernmental agency called Moms Demand Action, which is a national organization in every town to prevent gun violence, has been a really strong partner in the city and effectively spreads the word about reducing gun violence," she said.

Although some percentages have dropped, obstacles still arise and homicide rates have had an increase of 12 percent. "In my opinion, one of the hardest challenges is inaction from state leadership and national leadership, because that's something that we don't necessarily have direct control over," she said. "If the federal and state governments enacted stronger, common sense gun legislation, a lot of the senseless acts of violence that cause deaths could be prevented."

Responses and solutions to this increase are actively being sought after. "We are continuing the GVPI Steering Committee work, which is analyzing the city's various programming and efforts to reduce gun violence, defining its effectiveness, then offering guidance to the city as to what they should do next to prevent gun violence; so whether that's continuing to invest in programs that we've already started, or implementing a new idea that we should try in the city to see if it helps," she said. "We also want to continue building and strengthening our partnerships with our community partners



Mayor Stoney speaks in his State of the City address.

PHOTO: RICHMOND TIMES DISPATCH

and organizations that we work with, invest in the Richmond Public School (RPS) system, and in their multiple safety initiatives."

The Mayor's office is also taking new steps to address many contributors to gun violence. In Dec. 2023, the City of Richmond received a \$750,000 grant from the Commonwealth of Virginia to soft launch a new resource center for the RPD called the Capital City Intelligence Center. "Essentially, the crime center is going to help our law enforcement officers more effectively and efficiently respond to crime," she said. "It's the RPD's first ever real-time crime center and will provide access to many new technologies."

Details about the new crime center can be found on Richmond City's website. "The technologies available include security cameras, license plate readers, shot detection, officers' body-worn cameras, and more," it said. "[These] tools will allow officers to respond to calls for service more efficiently, more deliberately, with improved operational intelligence, and with a proactive emphasis on officer, citizen, and community safety."

The Mayor's office also opened its new Office of Violence Prevention to specifically support the Department of Justice Services (DJS)

and the human services portfolio. "They address the root causes of crime and work to address both short-term and long-term needs of the Richmond community," she said. "They specifically look at preventing incidents of gun violence, reducing the annual number of violent crime victims, and addressing the root causes of crime that contribute to violence."

In particular, the RPD plays an active role in preventing gun violence. "Some strategies from the law enforcement side that we've seen are really effective is targeting hotspots," she said. "Hotspots are where the most prevalence of crime is if you're looking at homicide rates, violent crime, or at burglary, so they have tried to strategically implement, survey, and provide surveillance in those areas because that's where the most crime is happening."

Two initiatives, Operation Red Bull and Safe Summer, have seen success in dropping crime rates by targeting hotspots. "Operation Safe Summer, between the summer of 2022 and 2023, saw a reduction in violent crime by 30 percent over the course of the year," she said. "Within all that data, there has been a decrease in homicide rates, arrests, and a lot of other statistics that show how this has

worked in preventing violence."

City leaders are also trying out other ways to get the community involved and motivated to stop these issues from occurring. "Other things that we're doing from the city standpoint are gun buy-back programs where we invite city residents to come and bring us all their guns, whether they're broken or unused, and they can get a free gift card in exchange," she said. "We've been able to collect guns, which gets them off the streets and helps reduce the likelihood that the guns would be stolen or used for violence."

Another initiative that is very important to the mayor's office and the GVPI Steering Committee is investment in the creation of more youth programs. "We've invested a ton in after-school programming for youth, and ... we feel like we've seen a lot of success," she said. "We actually provide direct mental health support resources to them like counselors and psychologists."

We Matter RVA is one of their most impactful youth programs. "We Matter RVA engages middle school students that have been involved with gun violence," she said. "It's a preventative measure to set them up for success in their future." (Continued on Page 12)

Mayo Island Purchased for Park Project

Connor Almstead

Staff Writer

On Jan. 5, 2024, the City of Richmond confirmed the purchase of Mayo Island for \$15 million. After over 40 years of planning, the island will now become part of the James River Park System. The 15-acre island will be transformed into an array of recreational areas. Spearheading the project is the Capital Region Land Conservancy (CRLC).

The area first became a target for reconstruction in the 1980s, when the James River Park System was in its infancy. In 2022, it finally came onto the market for purchase, culminating in the City of Richmond's purchase of it. While the first offers were made by the CRLC, Richmond's government secured ownership shortly after by supplying an extra \$7.5 million to the CRLC's purchase.

The time frame for this project ranges from five to 15 years. Early stages of construction should begin in 2026, corresponding with the renovation of the Mayo Highway. Demolition of on-site buildings will take place under CRLC's management. They plan to "have eight acres of asphalt removed in the next



Park construction planned for Mayo Island

ten years," said Parker Agelasto, the project's executive director.

Long-term plans include natural trails, vast green fields, and large platforms for events on the island. Mayo Island is expected to become more nature-oriented, as parks have become popular stress relievers. During COVID-19, "park attendance tripled, up to two million annual visitors," said Mr. Agelasto.

Revitalization efforts for the

park will also "restore the floodplain for the ecosystem to keep flourishing," said Mr. Agelasto. Various endangered species, like the Atlantic Sturgeon, rely on the waterbanks to survive. The park's presence will serve as a protective space away from Richmond's environmental hazards.

Other environmentalists share the hope that the new park will benefit the James River ecosystem.

"Any area that isn't covered in concrete, asphalt, or rooftops can provide environmental benefits," said Mr. Jeff Meador, the Advanced Placement (AP) Environmental Science teacher at Freeman. The green spaces will also provide a habitat for woodland creatures in the trees surrounding the border.

Mayo Island sits in the middle of the James River, looking back over the city. Originally, the area

was a smaller set of islands, but British colonists filled in the gaps with alluvial soil in the 18th century. After this process was completed, the island was used as a residence during the early years of Richmond. Over the years, it served other miscellaneous purposes, such as a sawmill location, a commercial fishing spot, and a botanical garden. Now, the island remains mostly unused aside from a small piece of land that provides a storage space for food trucks.

Matthew Peart, the former DSF cross-country coach, is excited for the new park to become available. "I'll be checking it out as soon as the trails are installed," he said. Sports and exercise will be the main focus of the park. Mayo Island's facilities will provide ample space for sporting events, like marathons, soccer matches, football games, and pickleball tournaments. "The park could [become] the green jewel of Richmond," said Mr. Peart.

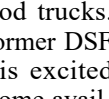
Purchasing Mayo Island is the first step in what could become a staple in Richmond culture. The presence of another nature trail and event space in Richmond is likely to attract people to the area. The future park will add "another great venue to make the city stand out among the rest of Virginia," said Mr. Agelasto.

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Freeman's New AP African American Studies Course

Hannah Tittermary
Mav Minute Editor-In-Chief

In the 2024-2025 school year, Freeman High School will offer a new Advanced Placement (AP) African American Studies course. Janeé Downs, a current World History teacher at Freeman, will be teaching the class.

This class will focus often-neglected perspectives through the lens of "the African Diaspora as well as African American experiences," said Mrs. Downs. Beginning with a study of the African Kingdoms and culminating with current societal and political issues, the curriculum details different aspects of African and African American life throughout history.

The class's introduction of alternate perspectives, according to Freeman history teacher John Larkins, is a means of inspiring a better-informed society. "If we don't ... learn about different ways to see history from other people, we will have a hard time understanding people's perspectives on current events," he said.

Mrs. Downs hopes that AP African American Studies will also



Mrs. Downs teaching her World History Class.

have a significant impact on the diverse range of students at Freeman. "It's important to provide a course where ... people of color can see themselves in the curriculum," said Mrs. Downs.

The coursework covers all facets of African American history. "No one is excluded from this course," said David Coleman, the CEO of College Board. "The Black artists and inventors whose achievements have come to light; the Black women and men, including gay Americans, who played pivotal roles in the civil rights movement;

and people of faith from all backgrounds who contributed to the antislavery and civil rights causes."

Students are already showing interest in the course content. "I am definitely taking this class next year," said junior Lainey Peterson. "It provides an opportunity for ... students to learn more about the depths and complexities of what it means to be African American ... and also how it influenced African American culture today."

To create more hands-on interaction with the material, Mrs. Downs curates class activities cen-

tered around engagement. In her World History II class, she leads a Dungeons and Dragons-style game on the French Revolution. During the game, students act as if they were living and making decisions in the Revolution. "I like to not always tell my students what to think but [instead] give them the room and space to learn that for themselves," said Mrs. Downs.

Mrs. Downs is also adored by her students. Freshman Hayes Cox said three words he would use to describe her are "energetic, funny, and nice," and that she is a good teacher because "she likes to go into detail."

Unlike other AP history courses, the AP African American Studies exam includes a project that counts towards the student's final score. "The project assesses the student's ability to establish a research topic and ... develop a presentation that compares the content and perspectives of specific and relevant evidence," said the College Board in a statement about this new exam structure. The exam also has multiple choice and free response sections.

Virginia Governor Glenn Youngkin's Executive Order 1, "Ending the Use ... of Critical Race

Theory" further complicated Virginia public schools' ability to offer the class due to current political clashes on race-inclusive education. However, the Virginia Secretary of Education, Aimee Guidera, reviewed the course and affirmed that it aligns with Executive Order 1's standards, allowing it to be taught in Virginia. Youngkin has since asked for the curriculum to be revised to better fit the Order, but this request has not moved forward.

Some students at Freeman believe that race-inclusive studies should not be politicized, "Especially because of the large population of African American students that we have at Freeman and in Virginia," said senior Christian Washington. "It's important that people understand the history of where they come from, just like we do for almost every other AP class."

There is hope that offering more diverse courses will increase student buy-in and participation in AP curriculum at Freeman. "We hope that by having this as an AP credit, we'll [show] students who might not have thought about taking AP classes before that this might be of special interest to them," said Mr. Larkins.

Freeman Science Shoots for the Moon: The Physics Department's NASA Grant

Kristen Carpenter
Staff Writer

The Freeman Physics Department is on the road to making history after receiving a grant from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). The grant allowed them to experiment with regolith, commonly known as "moon dirt." The concept of farming on the moon and, eventually, other planets, has been a subject of increased scientific interest in recent years. Through NASA's "Plant the Moon" project, Freeman students will be able to contribute to this research.

Tom Gallo and Orien Altman, Freeman's physics teachers, were both interested in partaking in the NASA opportunity when the science department chair, Patrick Foltz, reached out to them. They decided to apply and were accepted. "The funny thing about it was they didn't really tell us that [the Freeman physics department] got it," said Mr. Altman. Instead, Mr. Altman and Mr. Gallo randomly received an email from NASA reminding them to complete a Professional Development (PD) Session. "Plant the Moon," is funded through NASA with the goal "to try

to grow plants in moon dirt, which is really hard because moon dirt is pretty toxic," said Mr. Altman.

Senior Jaielyn Pipes is one of the project managers from Mr. Altman's class. "The entire goal of this project is to [discover] a way to sustainably find and create food for astronauts while they're in space," said Jaielyn. "[Astronauts] want to be able to sustainably [farm on the moon] and make sure that they aren't negatively impacting the environment." Since lunar regolith is dangerous to the human touch and extremely difficult to cultivate, science students must carefully test various plant species to see if they will grow.

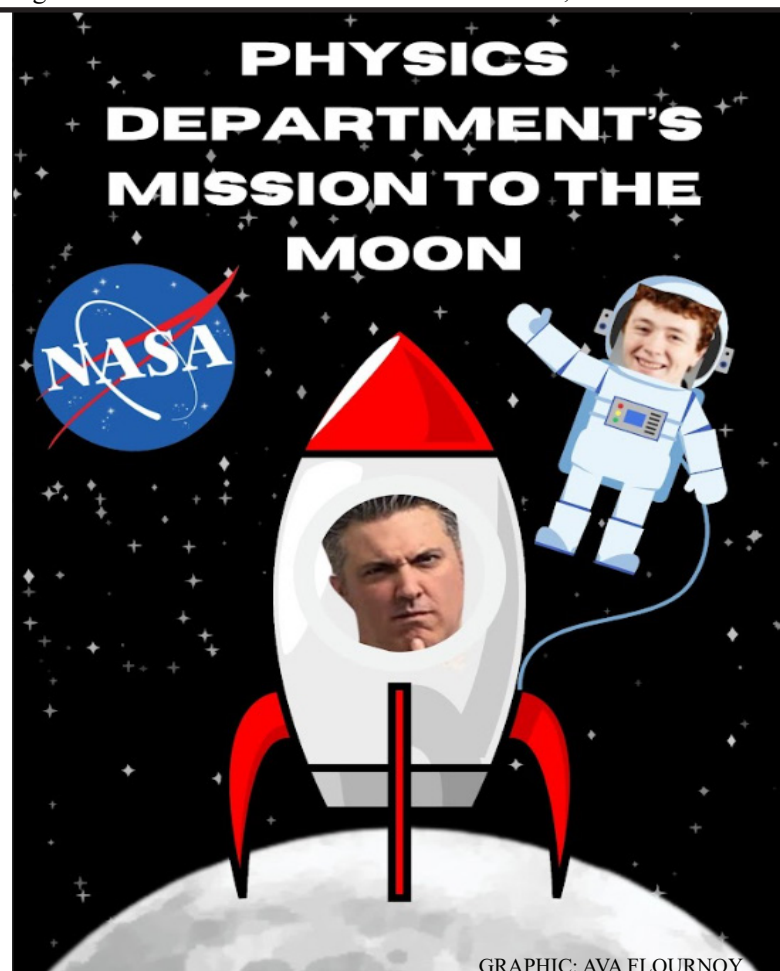
The composition of lunar regolith differs heavily from Earth's soil because of the carbon concentration, nutrient levels, and general composition. "Carbon is really important for plant growth and one thing that lunar regolith starkly lacks is carbon," said Jaielyn. The moon's soil is also nutrient deficient, unlike Earth's soil which is full of organic matter. Lunar regolith's powdery consistency and random shards of rock make it an inhospitable place to farm and grow plants.

At Freeman, two separate groups are conducting independent experiments. In Mr. Altman's class,

students will test the effects of lunar regolith on pink oyster mushrooms, while those in Mr. Gallo's experiment group are still deciding which vegetable to experiment on. Mr. Altman's class chose their experiment subject because "mushrooms contain almost all of the amino acids that humans need to survive that we don't already make on our own," said Jaielyn.

Another key aspect of "Plant the Moon" is its focus on being a student-led experiment. In both Mr. Gallo's and Mr. Altman's classes, the students are the driving force of the experiment. Mr. Gallo and Mr. Altman have expressed their anticipation towards having their students be given a chance to engage in authentic science with no definitive answer. "I love real opportunities for students to do real science," said Mr. Gallo.

"Plant the Moon" offers Freeman the opportunity to make history in the lunar science field. If the mushroom growth proves successful, Mr. Altman's physics class will be the first group to grow mushrooms in lunar regolith. Doing so would be "such a giant leap in research and really helpful for NASA," said Jaielyn. Since the experiment often centers around produce like tomatoes or lettuce, the pink oyster mushroom presents an unpre-



GRAPHIC: AVA FLOURNOY

cedented approach to the project.

"Plant the Moon" has given the Freeman Mavericks the resources needed to make a change in the world. "I love that we're taking a very human approach to it," said Jaielyn. "Choosing mushrooms because of their amino acid content also allows us to take a very specific scientific approach." The

mixture of scientific precaution and natural human exploration has created an environment for this experiment to take place. While the outcome of Freeman's "Plant the Moon" experiment is unknown, it will grant students a scientific experience where the Freeman community will have the chance to revolutionize lunar agriculture.

Democrat Don Scott Elected as First Black Speaker of Virginia House of Delegates

Maya Tluchak
Staff Writer

On Jan. 10, 2024, Don Scott was sworn in as the Commonwealth of Virginia's first Black Speaker in the 405-year history of the House of Delegates. As the House Speaker, Scott will be responsible for managing its proceedings, recognizing members wanting to address the House, protecting the minority, and opening up specific matters to a floor vote.

After Democrats took control of the House and the Senate in the November general elections, Scott was unanimously elected by Virginia Democrats. According to The Guardian, Scott stood out to Virginia Democrats because of his promise "to help lead Virginia Democrats in following through on their campaign promises."

Since Scott's election to Virginia's 88th House of Delegates in 2019, he has focused on public safety, education, employment, financial security, and is-

suages surrounding reproductive rights. Scott's campaign focused on ensuring the right to a medical abortion and keeping the Commonwealth pro-choice. In Scott's House of Delegates floor speech on Jan. 12, 2024, he de-



PHOTO: HUFFINGTON POST

Don Scott being sworn in.

scribed a potential abortion ban as "a ban that's dangerous for women and is downright wrong."

Scott's target issues of gun control and abortion highlight the divisions in the Commonwealth.

According to the Washington Post, "Youngkin [proposed] a 15-week ban on most abortions, [but] Democrats [pushed] for a state constitutional amendment to guarantee access to the procedure." Partisan divides between Republicans and Democrats have not been the only impediments to government action on these hot-button issues. As Speaker, Scott will play a role in making these decisions for the Virginia Legislature in the upcoming sessions.

According to the Washington Post, Scott grew up in Houston, Texas where he and his six siblings were raised in a single-mother household. Scott and his family struggled with a lack of financial resources and experienced poverty. In 1994, Scott was convicted, as a first time offender, on federal drug charges. In an interview with CBS News, Scott said, "I made the dreadful mistake of going to pick up some money, some drug money." After spending nearly eight years in prison, Scott climbed to the top of a workforce development company, pursued his law

degree, and opened up his practice as a personal injury attorney.

Scott's previous experiences with the justice system have impacted his perspective on criminal justice reform and voter rights. In an interview with The Guardian, Scott said "I will be [a] speaker with a felony, while other people who are just like me ... will not be able to vote. That's nuts." He also criticized how Governor Youngkin has handled the issue of voting rights restoration by recognizing that "[ex-convicts] can't vote because they're waiting on somebody like Governor Youngkin to restore their rights."

In an interview with The Associated Press, Scott expressed his hope to work with Youngkin in a "bipartisan way on kitchen-table issues." The ability to form a professional relationship is vital because, in the upcoming sessions, the Virginia Legislature has to debate culminating issues such as budget and taxes, school funding, abortion, guns, crime, and voting rights.

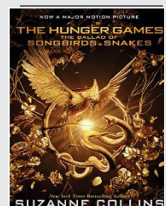
According to Capital Press

News, Black representation in politics has increased in Virginia this year. "[Virginians] are not looking at race, they're looking at who's the best candidate," said Scott.

For some students at Freeman, Scott's election represents an important step towards a Virginia Legislature that better represents Virginia's diverse populace and varied viewpoints. "Diversity [in politics] allows us to consider every view and make the best choice for the most people," said Freeman junior Anuj Damle. "A lack of diversity in politics only allows a certain set of views to be considered, and make the choice that would only align with those views."

Scott continues to provide Virginia with a perspective based on his lived experiences and will serve his constituents as the Democratic leader in the Virginia House of Delegates. In an interview with Axios News, Scott expressed his desire to "be remembered for the person that was the first African-American, but was also efficient, excellent, capable and got the job done."

Hunger Games Review



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The Ballad of Buzz Cuts and Bad Boys

Lorelei Kelley
Copy Editor

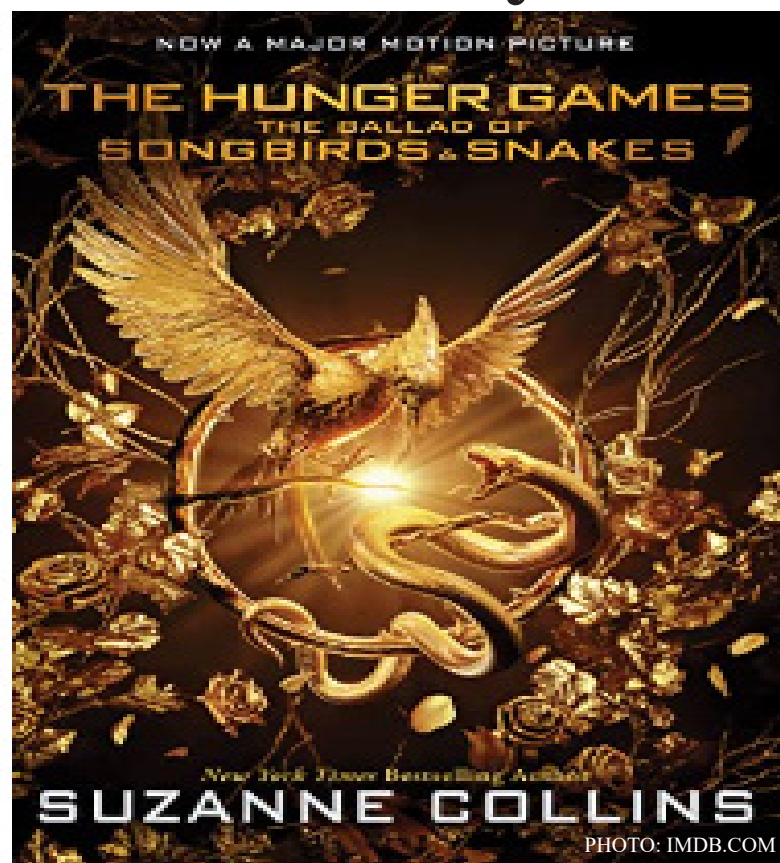
In a world devoid of morally gray men, the movie adaptation of Suzanne Collins's novel, "The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes," takes center stage as the panacea for this global issue. Since its release on Nov. 17, 2023, the film has enraptured thousands of fans of the original "Hunger Games" series. Having read the book upon its publication, I can assure you that the movie is better. What once was a barely two-star novel has transformed into a widely adored movie adaptation. I mean, you really can't deny the step up from Peeta's bland, boy-with-the-bread personality to Coriolanus's brooding, power-hungry angst. Except ... you can. Coriolanus "Coryo" Snow, although the villain of the original books, is now presented to viewers as a hard-to-love, impossible-to-resist main character who has everyone swooning. His moun-

tain of baggage and equally large amount of daddy issues make him irresistible to some and intolerable to others — Draco Malfoy 2.0, anyone? Combine that with the unfortunate buzzcut he receives in the latter half of the film, and you've got a character people can't help but hate to love — or love to hate, it's up to you. Desperately searching for a way to restore his family's honor, Snow turns to the elusive Plinth Prize, which would grant him entry to the Capitol University and an improvement to his already lavish lifestyle.

Much like the original series, "The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes" centers around the playing of the Hunger Games. Viewers are thrown 65 years into the past to watch the Tenth Annual Hunger Games unfold. Unfortunately, those in the theater might be the only ones watching. With viewership declining, our favorite white-haired 18-year-old — seriously, the gray caught up to Snow that fast — is stuck looking for a way to save his home country of Panem's (least) favorite form of population

control. When tasked with mentoring the female tribute from District 12, Lucy Gray Baird, Snow nearly loses hope — at least until he sees the true cunning she possesses.

While that sounds like an entertaining few hours, I found Lucy, played by Rachel Zegler, to be irksome, and the plot to be half-baked. While Zegler's choice to perform live for filming is commendable, it began to feel as though her character was just that: a voice. Although her resourcefulness and ability to garner the Capitol's favor sparked Snow's admiration for her, I discovered it to be similar to Katniss's adoration of Peeta — present but utterly confusing to viewers. Without much actual personality to bolster her character, Lucy fell flat for me in many ways. Her rebellious nature, unlike Katniss's, was not unusual in its existence. In fact, she was one of the tamer characters — minus the whole letting-a-snake-loose-on-someone incident. The overwhelming number of supporting characters ended up silencing her further, although they couldn't



Poster for the fifth movie in the Hunger Games series



PHOTO: IMDB.COM

The film's protagonist Lucy Gray, portrayed by Rachel

quite drown out her endless desire to showcase her vocal prowess. Despite that, Coryo still found it in his cold, dead heart to care for her. I suppose you never can fully account for what love does to people.

Unlike the depressed and isolated version of Snow from "The Hunger Games: Mockingjay - Part 2," young Coryo is conniving, disloyal, and entirely enamored by a few bats of Lucy's eyelashes. Soon he finds himself risking his livelihood for his mentee because "[he has] got no right to starve people, to punish them for no reason." Yes, yes we get it, Sejanus, calm down, human sacrifice is a fine form of entertainment. His obvious infatuation with her holds strong as he maintains a more-than-friendly relationship with Lucy despite knowing that it could cost him everything.

To cap off this lackluster film, an equally snooze-worthy soundtrack accompanied many of the scenes.

Perhaps the biggest highlight of the score, and the movie as a whole, was "Can't Catch Me Now," an original song by Olivia Rodrigo specifically written for the film. Aside from this, most of the music featured Zegler, turning the adaptation into a haphazard attempt at a musical. Really, her vocal abilities should have been showcased and left in her starring role in "West Side Story."

My earlier reservations about the film proved correct and, although better than the book, the movie is nothing worth wasting your time for unless you are truly invested in seeing a t-shirt-averted Tom Blyth, finding out why Snow is obsessed with white roses (other than his vanity, of course), and witnessing an astronomical number of character deaths. After all, Suzanne Collins had to find a way to kill off all those unnecessary characters so that Lucy and her band could shine.

The Bows Need to Go

Ava Flounoy
Graphics Editor

A new TikTok trend has emerged, but this time, I am so over it. Fashion is an ever-changing topic, one that inevitably comes with lots of opinions. Recently, TikTok has been full of bows — yes, the ribbons that decorate presents and can be seen adorning a new car. Bows have taken over all corners of the internet.

Trends like to make a reappearance every now and then, like scrunchie hair ties, vintage

clothes, and corsets. Ribbons were first introduced in ancient times by the Greeks, Egyptians, Sumerians, and Aztecs as hair accessories. Throughout fashion history, they have been in and out, making a major reappearance in the 80's before fizzling out again.

Today, bows have made a comeback and have been "re-branded" as a quieter look rather than the loud Jojo Siwa bow. They are a part of the 'coquette' aesthetic that many users on TikTok like to display. Pink hair ribbons, white bunnies, and little teddy bears are all considered 'coquette.' Combining the images

to create phone background collages and title cards on TikTok, there's a certain visual aspect that goes along with these items.

I don't mind a simple and elegant bow in the hair, maybe even a small bow on the back of a dress, but I am scared, specifically, for the future of prom dresses. As prom season approaches, I have seen many TikToks about the dress trends for this year, with gowns sporting none other than a giant bow taking up the entire back of the dress. Some people can rock the look, but I, personally, cannot pull it off. Maybe I am just bitter about it ... but really, I can't stand them.

I will say when the bows first started to pop back up again, I was all for it. Mainly because of the influence of some of my favorite musical artists, such as Gracie Abrams, who has made it her staple item. These bows are longer and more elegant compared to the bold Jojo Siwa bows. I'm not saying that anything is inherently wrong with these neon, sparkly styles of bows — they work for some people ... just not me!

Bows are seen in various sizes, with smaller ones decorating things like phone cases and socks, while large ones cover someone's entire head. Jojo Siwa, a social media influencer known for her role in "Dance Moms," is iconic for her enormous bows. Hers consist of ribbons the size of her head with a slicked-back ponytail. Jojo has become an icon for the younger generation, and we have grown up with her just as her bows have grown in size.

Musician Lana Del Rey has also made an impact on the bow movement. Her genre and personal style are integral parts of the 'coquette' aesthetic. Ivory and red hues, lace, and Dior lip gloss all encapsulate Lana Del Rey's 'vibe.' These items work hand in hand with her signature satin bow, which she wears more for the look than the functionality. Actually, that's basically the point of a bow ... now that I'm thinking about it, maybe the issue is me and not the ribbons.

Personally, I believe it is time to say goodbye to the beloved hair ribbons for a little while. It is time to end the trend of adding bows to quite literally everything. People will put multiple bows up the sleeves of their sweaters, or cut up their jeans to add them, but all I can think of is, what happens when

the trend is over? Do these clothes get trashed? Will they never be worn again, or will they come back in 50 years for the next generation after collecting dust for so long?

I am a fan, however, of the substitutes for bows. I enjoy an occasional headband. I love a good claw clip — there are just so many options to style it and different colors and shapes are

offered. Don't get me wrong, I am currently wearing a bow in my hair, but it is a simple bow and only one ... and I hate it. The claw clip is far superior!

Who's to say that a new trend won't appear in the next couple of weeks and replace the hated I have for an abundance of bows, but for now, I am a hater through and through.



PHOTO: URBANOUTFITTERS.COM

Urban Outfitter's oversized sweater with bow details



PHOTO: PINTEREST.COM

A bow being used as a hair accessory

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Team Movie Theater

The Mad Mav
Staff Editor

Watching a movie conjures many different images in people's heads. Perhaps a vision of snuggling in bed or on the couch, clicking through whatever Netflix has to offer. However, if you're a film purist like me, you only think of the CORRECT way to watch a movie: in the movie theater. From now until the day I die, I will always be #teammovietheater.

I am so dedicated to the cause that is movie theaters that I am literally a member of Regal Unlimited. There is nothing like actually watching a movie in the form it was designed to be seen. I mean, imagine watching "Oppenheimer" on a tiny little TV instead of on a 50-foot screen. If I'm going to watch anything about atomic bombs, I better be able to see every head blown off (not that this is exciting or anything).

Now, in modern times, I can understand the love for streaming sites like Disney+ or Hulu, but they never really have the same effect as sitting in the theater. Streaming simply can't replace eating popcorn, hearing that red straw squeak as you pull it higher in your soda cup, and trying to peek at what the person sitting in front of you is looking at on their phone (you know you've done it too).

Don't forget about things like IMAX and 3-D. I can remember watching the live action "Jungle Book" in 3-D and taking my glasses off when I thought the movie got too scary. This experience cannot be replicated while you're sitting on the couch! And look, I love sitting on the couch — I do it all the time! Every time I'm on that couch watching a movie or TV, I ultimately end up scrolling on my phone or getting distracted. That never happens in the theater. What's the point of putting something on to watch if you're not REALLY going to pay attention?

I could feel as passionately as I do about this because I'm a film geek and I just love the art of the cinema. Or, maybe, I'm just always right. I think it's the second one. The movie theater is genuinely one of my favorite places to be — you guys have no idea how many bad days a trip to Regal has fixed. And, as much as I love my couch, the theater is just ... better. Just like me. Love you guys! Take a trip to the movies for me and say "hi" to Kevin. I'm serious.

XOXO,
The Mad Mav

And Dim Sum is Dim Yum

Maggie Jacoby
Features Editor

Recently, a new Richmond restaurant opened its doors, taking the idea of traditional Chinese cuisine to a whole new level. With their modern interpretation of the common practice of dim sum, And Dim Sum is one of few restaurants that has successfully replicated its heritage in a way that truly 'touches the heart.'

While there are lots of different wives' tales about how the practice of dim sum began, many share the same idea — travelers would leave small servings of different foods outside of tea houses located along the main roads in China. Dim sum was created as a way of consuming small portions of different foods designed to curb your cravings, not quench the appetite. The food was also commonly paired with tea to energize tired travelers.

Now, dim sum has become a brunch tradition for family and friends to come together, share a meal, and practice hospitality. And Dim Sum has officially opened its doors and welcomed the Richmond community with open arms. All this being said,



Soup Dumplings

let's go share a meal at And Dim Sum and give an honest review.

Walking into the restaurant, I immediately noticed how beautifully designed the interior was. While many of the original building's features were still present like the tin ceiling and the huge windows, many new attributes contributed to the restaurant's design. The inside was very unique, with pink walls, bamboo basket lighting, and cherry blossom decor. The modern black and gold accents added a nice, but not overdone elegance to the space. The restaurant also boasts an upstairs area for special events and a patio, which is perfect for when the weather is nice.

I was impressed with the wide variety of items on the menu. While the amount of choices presented was definitely overwhelming, knowing that multiple courses awaited me made it a bit easier to choose.

The first menu item I tried was under the "Bamboo Steamer Baskets" column. Each of these options comes with three dumplings in a basket and is priced at around \$9. I ordered the lemongrass chicken dumplings, which are composed of chicken thigh, cabbage, carrot, lemongrass, and yuzu. Honestly, I wasn't sure what



Wok Fried Shrimp



PHOTO: @ANDDIMSUMRVA INSTAGRAM

Various dishes from And Dim Sum

to expect, as I didn't know what lemongrass or yuzu tasted like, but these dumplings were quite delicious. The filling was very fresh and tangy, without having one flavor overpower the others. Under this category, there are also mushroom, beef, and shrimp options.

Next on the menu, were their chicken wings, which I was very excited to try. The six wings were served with a house herb dressing and cost \$14. These wings were crispy and bursting with flavor, without being overly spicy, and the house herb dressing definitely upped their game. Overall, they were super tasty and easy to eat.

The final dish I tried was the Hawaiian fried rice. This rice was served with pineapple, peppers, scallions, onion, ginger, and garlic. Listed under the "Largish" category, the portion was

fairly big but not to an extreme. Priced at \$12, I found the portion to be a good amount for the price. Customers can also add lap cheong sausage for an additional \$4, which I chose to do to get the full experience. Admittedly, I was skeptical of the dish at first, but the sweet and savory mixed together created a really delicious meal. While I don't typically enjoy sausage, it had a great flavor.

The last part of my experience, as well as the most anticipated, was choosing my dessert. My options included sesame balls, a crispy chocolate wonton, an egg tart, and a fried donut. I decided to order the fried donut and it did not disappoint. This dish included cinnamon-sugar-tossed donut sticks accompanied by a sugary sauce. If you have a strong sweet tooth, I'd highly recommend this tasty dessert.

By the end of the evening, I was officially stuffed and ready for the check. For the lemongrass chicken dumplings, chicken wings, Hawaiian fried rice with sausage, and fried donuts, my bill came out to about \$50. While this is an expensive meal for one person, the amount of food that was served made the price justifiable.

Another perk of And Dim Sum is the inclusivity of the menu. The restaurant offers gluten-free, vegetarian, and vegan options for both dinner and dessert. The food is very fresh and composed of high-quality ingredients. While I went during dinner time, they also have a brunch, beverage, and happy hour section on their menu.

After my experience at And Dim Sum, I can confidently say that I highly recommend the restaurant to anyone who enjoys Chinese cuisine. With delicious food, amazing staff, and an attractive atmosphere, it was hard to find anything to complain about. I encourage everybody to indulge!



The interior of And Dim Sum

PHOTO: THE RICHMOND TIMES DISPATCH

Spilling the (Carytown) Tea

Lizzie Herod

Online Editor-in-Chief
A&E Editor

In the heart of Virginia's capital, Carytown is home to dozens of local shops and restaurants. Among these is the herbal oasis Carytown Teas. As one of the only local loose-leaf tea destinations in Richmond, Carytown Teas is a must-try. Although I'm not a tea fanatic, I have always enjoyed a nice cup of tea before bed, in the morning, or when I'm feeling under the weather. Trader Joe's tea is a staple in my household, so I was excited to venture out of my comfort zone and try something new.

As I entered the shop, my eyes went straight to the vast array of tea tins adorning the shelves. There were so many different flavors, giving customers a large selection to choose from. The aroma of the store was delightful, the scent of herbs and spices hanging in the air.

Carytown Teas offers more than 250 teas, with blends from all over the world. It is fascinating to think that the tea you're drinking was handcrafted with ingredients from South Africa or France. What makes Carytown Teas unique is that they partner with many tea producers. From small family farms to high-end tea estates, Carytown Teas ensures that customers receive healthy, organic tea blends.

Andrea Post, a co-owner of

Carytown Teas, was standing at the front table to welcome me in. She gave me two menu items, one of which had all of the tea house blends and another which consisted of various herbs available for purchase to make personalized blends. There was also a special menu with strictly medicinal

blends of teas selected for their health benefits. It was apparent that Mrs. Post was very knowledgeable about the history of the teas, as well as their shelf life.

I was a bit overwhelmed when deciding what to buy since the selection was so grand. With so many types of tea available,

I couldn't decide among the choices of black tea, green tea, white tea, matcha tea, and more. Thankfully, Mrs. Post helped me narrow the choices down. Since I enjoy cinnamon flavors during the winter, she recommended a fan favorite: Hot Cinnamon Spice. This tea consists of three cinnamon varieties, orange peel, sweet clove, and rich black tea blends. To mix things up, I wanted to try a tea with a fruitier taste, so she grabbed Winter Raspberry, a green blend that contains sencha with raspberry and hibiscus.

Instead of having a cup there, they give you the option to go home and make it on your own time in the comfort of your own home. So that's what I decided to do. After making my purchases, Mrs. Post informed me on how to properly make the tea at home and provided me with a take-home style to-go pouch so I could easily transport and store my tea. I had the Hot Cinnamon Spice one night and the Winter Raspberry the next. Both were overflowing with natural flavors that refreshed my taste buds. Tea is the perfect beverage to drink any time of the day when you're craving a detox or reset.

If a sit-down relaxation experience is more your style, Carytown Teas also has a sitting area where you can chill or do work. The cozy atmosphere makes this a wonderful place to go after a long day where you can read while drinking a hot cup of tea. This loca-

tion gives customers the benefits of their high-quality teas and a much-needed escape from the chaos of daily life in one space. If driving through the traffic of Cary Street isn't appealing, Carytown Teas now sells their tea on Libbie Avenue at Apothec, an aromatherapy supply store. Carytown Teas also supplies essential tea tools such as tea bags, mugs, strainers, frothers, and more. I'm looking forward to trying out the two types of tea bags Andrea Post generously gave me.

Even if tea doesn't sound appealing to you, I would suggest giving this shop a try for its multitude of health benefits. Aside from simple green teas, Carytown Teas offers sweet and bitter flavors like Chocolate Lovers and Chocolate Mint that have the same health properties. Chocolate Lovers is a black tea blended with cocoa and rosebud while Chocolate Mint includes cocoa, spearmint, and peppermint. Flavors embedded in each of these teas benefit heart health, boost energy levels, and are rich in antioxidants.

Overall, my experience was splendid, thanks to the enjoyable setting, attentive staff, and delectable teas. If you are an avid tea drinker or simply looking for a new beverage, I would 100 percent recommend Carytown Teas — it's the place to be! I will definitely be heading back to Carytown Teas and Apothec to quench my thirst in the future!



GRAPHIC: AVA FLOURNOY

Artist Profile: DSF Alumna Dani Henry

Poppy Friske
Editor-in-Chief

Its walls adorned with student murals and its display cases stocked with ceramic figurines, Freeman's art hall is an oasis of innovation. Behind each door are not only students but passionate creators and visionaries. While art serves as simply a hobby for some, Freeman alumna Dani Henry felt inclined to pursue her craft in college and beyond. Since her freshman year, Dani was determined to become as involved in the high school art scene as possible. "I always loved to have art as an elective and for something that I could

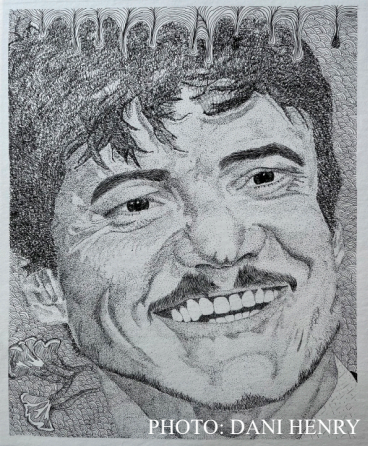


PHOTO: DANI HENRY

One of Dani's sketches.

do in my free time as well," said Dani. "In school, it could be intertwined, and from there I got involved with everything."

Freeman art teacher Beth Jones described Dani as "...a determined and confident artist." Her reputation, like all graduating art students, left a tangible impression on the school in the form of a senior mural. "Dani was always willing to try something new and would take on any challenge," said Mrs. Jones. "She was always [eager] to do a little extra research or get interesting material for her work." For four years of art classes, eventually leading to Advanced Placement (AP) Art her senior year, alongside her positions as an art club member and president of the National Art Honor Society (NAHS), Dani stayed busy. Through it all, her eyes were on one goal: an art degree.

Her acceptance to Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) set that plan in motion, with its status as one of the top art schools in the country adding to the appeal. "The art program is truly like no other," said Dani. As a second-year art student, Dani attends one to two studio classes a day, each spanning about three hours. There, she studies still life pieces to practice her realist sketches, while her other class focuses on digital mediums.

Often drawing inspiration from "...thoughts, feelings, and things around [her]," combined with her admiration of painter Georgia O'Keeffe, Dani has cultivated her personal art style. While she prefers more traditional illustrations, sticking to her trusty colored pencils, the VCU art program has inspired Dani to branch out and explore other varieties. "You get to study each realm of some of the main ways that you can do art," said Dani. "I was able to work in 3D arts and sculpture, [which] was really fun." In addition to her time in the studio, Dani is "...also into fiber arts, so [she] crochets and knits." Her Instagram business account, @crochet_creations_by_dani, features an array of colorful handmade coasters and plushies.

The smaller class sizes in the undergraduate art program have allowed Dani's skills to progress rapidly. "You are a lot more intimate with the professors and are able to get really good feedback while you're completing the work," she said. Under the tutelage of such advanced instructors, VCU students are given the opportunity to showcase their work and meet other artists. At a schoolwide craft fair, Dani sold her crochet creations, which was "monumental for [her]," she said. "A lot more people should go to [VCU] to be



PHOTO: DANI HENRY

Dani showcasing her crochet projects.

able to be a part of that event."

One of the most notable aspects of the VCU art program is its study abroad program. This past summer, Dani traveled to Italy with a group of her peers. "[The trip] was incredible and definitely a reason that I wanted to choose that program," said Dani. Preceding her sophomore year at VCU, this cultural and artistic exploration exposed Dani and fellow artists to the work of the famous Italian Renaissance painter and sculptor Michelangelo — one bucket list item, check!

While the challenges of college, not to mention a European excursion, may seem intimidating to current Freeman art stu-

dents, Dani's advice is to follow one's passions. "Do your best not to get burnt out and just roll with all of the different things that art can throw your way," she said. "It can get really frustrating, but your end goal [being] that art will bring you satisfaction from creating pieces will definitely allow you to overcome it."

As for right now, Dani is leaning towards a career in illustration, possibly for children's books, or in concept design. "I know Dani will succeed at anything she puts her mind to," said Mrs. Jones. Armed with determination, dedication, and drawing utensils, Dani has the Freeman community behind her as she pursues her artistic endeavors.

PRISM's Panel on Inclusivity

Ellie Grace Robinson
Opinions Editor

Freeman's PRISM club has been around for many years. However, the club had to restructure following the pandemic because of new sponsors, new leadership, and so much time without in-person meetings. Senior Ryland Ward has been PRISM's president since its return to the building. In 2023 and 2024, the PRISM club has been seen at the homecoming parade and the club fair, having birthday celebrations and holiday parties, and getting together roughly twice a month. On Jan. 30, 2024, they held a Q&A panel on inclusion where teachers, administrators, and counselors were represented. Panel members an-

swered some pre-prepared questions regarding how to make our school feel like a safe, supportive community for all students.

According to Ryland, the plan for the panel has been in the works since the beginning of the school year. "What a lot of people, especially queer students, were saying was that they don't always know who to go to for support at Freeman," she said. "They don't know who's a safe adult and they don't know what procedures are in place to help support them." After talking to some friends, "the idea [for the Q&A] kind of came together as 'how can we spread the word that there are adults at Freeman that are here to support you? And [in what] ways can they help you?'" she said.

The Q&A panel occurred in the auditorium during Freeman Focus. Vice Principal Cara Jean

O'Neal, school counselor Morgan Meadows, teachers Tom Gallo, G, and Katie Thayer, who is also part of the administrative team, were all present. Guest speaker, Kyle McCollum, a former DSF teacher and a current education specialist with the school district's Office of Equity, Diversity and Opportunity, also joined the panel.

One question posed to the group was: "What are some ways in which you have created an inclusive and affirming environment for students?" In their responses, Mr. Gallo and Mrs. Thayer both admitted that their curriculum course loads — physics and statistics respectively — aren't the easiest subjects in which to incorporate these themes. However, they both had insight into how they helped students feel included. Mrs. Thayer said she uses the "okay, cool" rule. "If students tell me they want different pronouns, I try very much to say okay, [cool,] write it and remember it," she said. "I try [to] do as much of the little stuff as I can to make it feel like a more welcoming environment."

Mr. Gallo emphasized the immense change he has seen since

he started teaching 22 years ago. "I see tremendous improvements because of people who are willing to take that first step and have that conversation," he said. "So HAVE IT ... be a part of your educational community and start having those conversations." He also said that teachers want to be advocates. If a student is having issues and struggling to go to administration because it seems too daunting or overwhelming, remember that "it's your teachers' job to help you with that, so find a teacher that you trust," said Mr. Gallo. He also mentioned that he is always a safe teacher to go to. "If it was me, I'd walk you right down there [and] I'd find the time to make sure that your voice is heard," he said. "I'm pretty sure I can say that for [most] of the adults in this building ... you're the reason we're here."

It's important to note that Freeman's staff is taking many steps towards inclusion for all students, specifically those who are part of the LGBTQ+ community. Students have been interviewed and asked to share feedback with teachers about their experiences. Administrators have also been sitting in

on classes, ensuring that teachers and students are maintaining an inclusive environment. "I know how hard it can be sometimes to come and share ... But I like to think that when things are brought to our attention, they are addressed," said Mrs. O'Neal.

If you're upset that you missed the panel, have hope! "I definitely [think] we could consider a follow-up event," said Ryland. Additionally, if you have ever considered joining PRISM, "Join! We would love to have you," she said. She touched on the misconception that students need to be a part of the LGBTQ+ community to be there, but that the PRISM club really is for everyone. "It's for anyone who is open-minded and wants to meet some new people," said Ryland. "We have people that come just to hang out [or] because we have food ... and it's really just a good time."

If you see things you want to be changed and you have a desire to personally advocate for the LGBTQ+ community, "[PRISM] can hear ideas you have, ... and ... try and implement [them] within the school," said G. "We're always open for new ideas."



PHOTO: ELLIE GRACE ROBINSON

Ryland Ward, the president of PRISM.



GRAPHIC: AVA FLOURNOY

Neighbors Helping Neighbors: Tuckahoe Volunteers to the Rescue

Liah Chung
Staff Writer

The time between a life-threatening injury and arrival at the hospital is often pivotal to a patient's fate. Tuckahoe Volunteer Rescue Squad (TVRS) is a free emergency medical service that operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year to provide immediate, quality care for people throughout the greater Tuckahoe area. Run completely through community donations and by dedicated volunteers, this non-profit has kept alive the idea of "neighbors helping neighbors" for over seven decades.

Most of the approximately 90 volunteers at TVRS are either in college or have full-time jobs. Yet, these individuals still dedicate at least 12 hours a week to the squad — for free. Current president John Tatum said that although members come from "all walks of life," they are "there because they want to help you." To be a volunteer, "all you [need] to do is have the desire to learn and get your certifications," said Mr. Tatum.

These certifications include cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) credentials and a four-month Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) class in basic training.

Despite, or perhaps because of, the high-stress environment, TVRS is a unified team full of camaraderie. Volunteers often spend time together outside of work, bowling, playing kickball, or simply seeing a ball game. "You pretty much become family because you ride with the same people every week in your group so you get to know each other," said Mr. Tatum.

Mr. Tatum's history with TVRS began 24 years ago when he was injured at the county landfill. "I was there for 45 minutes [until] they could get me to the hospital," he said. "TVRS responded to that call." Talking with the volunteers on the way to the hospital, he said, "If I ever can walk again, I'm going to come to volunteer and pay [it] back."

Mr. Tatum's favorite part of the job is "knowing that [he is] making a difference, [and] being there for someone," whether that be through caring for an individual or

consoling a family through the loss of a loved one. "I've gotten a letter from one patient that I helped years ago [who] didn't think he needed to go to the hospital [but] I talked him into going," said Mr. Tatum when describing one of the most impactful memories from his time in TVRS. "He actually had a major heart attack that night, and if [he] hadn't been at the hospital, he probably wouldn't have survived."

While extremely rewarding, the job can also be risky and nerve-racking. "The day I stop getting nervous will be the day I stop riding," he said. Every call is different and requires a certain protocol and treatment. Sometimes, when dealing with dangerous threats such as domestic violence, a gunshot, or a stabbing, police will secure the scene before volunteers enter. The scariest part is "getting a violent patient" who refuses help, said Mr. Tatum. "Mental illness is definitely a factor that's out there that we all need to do better with."

The squad first started operations with 60 members and one ambulance from a garage at Epiphany Lutheran Church on Horsepen Road and Monument Avenue. Over the next few decades, TVRS continued to grow in numbers and impact. Since then, they have accumulated resources and funding which they used to expand into an official station with more efficient technology and vehicles that make

it the service squad it is today.

TVRS works very closely with the police and fire departments. They all have the same level of training, equipment, and dedication, so "you're not going to get better care from one versus the other," said Mr. Tatum. He estimates that TVRS saves the county \$3 to \$4 million a year because of the costs they absorb by operating their own emergency medical service.

In his time with TVRS, Mr. Tatum has learned that "everybody needs help sometimes ... [so] treat people the way you want to be treated," a phrase he and his driven, reliable team of volunteers certainly embody.

Anyone interested in joining the Tuckahoe Volunteer Rescue Squad can contact membership@tuckahoerescue.org or visit tuckahoerescue.org to learn more.

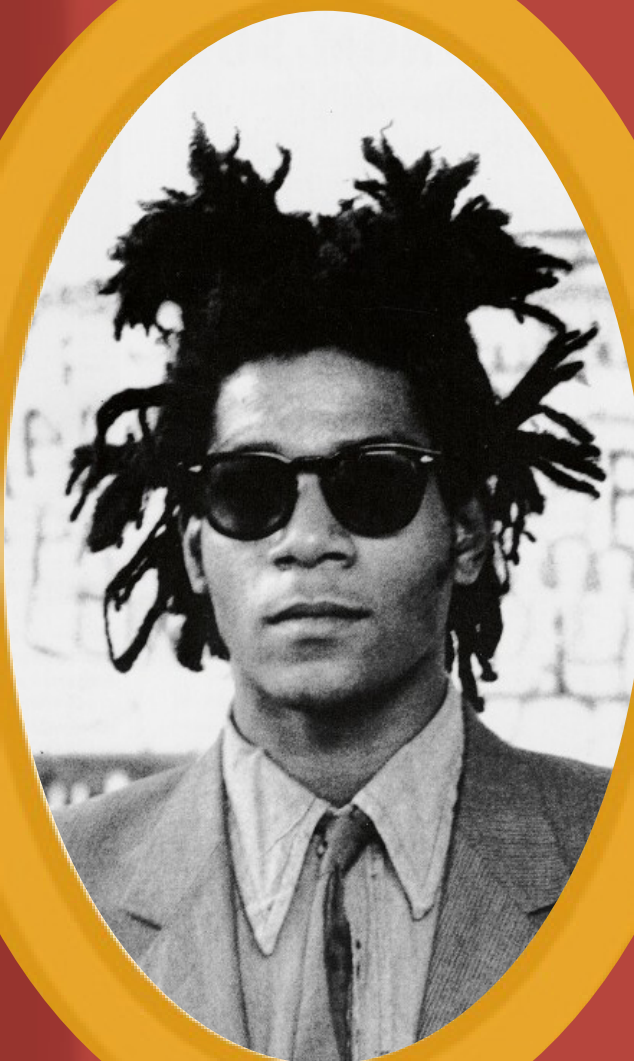


PHOTO: TUCKAHOE RESCUE SQUAD

Volunteers from the Tuckahoe Volunteer Rescue Squad.

Jean Michel Basquiat: Maverick with a Spray Can

Katelyn Morrow
Staff Writer



Jean-Michel Basquiat, an African American artist, also known as the “rebel with a spray can,” left an impact in the 20th century through his socio-political artwork. Basquiat ushered in a new era for Black artists by creating art thematically focused on his struggles with sobriety and the challenges of being a young African American artist in 1980s New York. While he passed away at the age of 27 due to an overdose, Basquiat had many accomplishments. The young artist is considered to be a unique, ingenious creator who evolved from underground graffiti to sought-after gallery pieces. Basquiat faced many challenges during his youth. For a short time, he lived with his middle-class family in Brooklyn. He was not close with his father and, when he was 11, his mother was admitted to a mental hospital. Basquiat was quite uncontrollable and unruly, which led to constant suspension and moving from school to school. At the age of 17, he left home, dropped out of school, and lived on the streets. To overcome the difficulties faced during his youth, Basquiat’s art was an outlet. Art was specifically important to Basquiat to criticize the histories of colonialism. Throughout his life, he created more than 600 original paintings and 1,500 drawings. Basquiat had several famous paintings, but the most well-known piece was an untitled work that sold for \$110.5 million. This untitled work depicts the face of a skull in vibrant colors and unmatched lines, expressing the feeling of internal struggle. This painting is now the second-most expensive contemporary painting ever auctioned in the United States. His contemporary style was classified as neo-expressionism, launching an art movement centered on the themes of racism, colonialism, classism, and other power structures that had drastic effects on United States society. Due to the importance of Basquiat’s life and work, a film was produced to decode his life story. This 1996 feature was a directorial debut that tells the tale of Basquiat and his postmodernist and neo-expressionist art. Basquiat was an important artistic figure in the 1980s and is still an inspiration to artists today. Without his quick artistic adaptations and bold expressions, art would be headed in a different direction today.

Through the Lens of Lorna Simpson

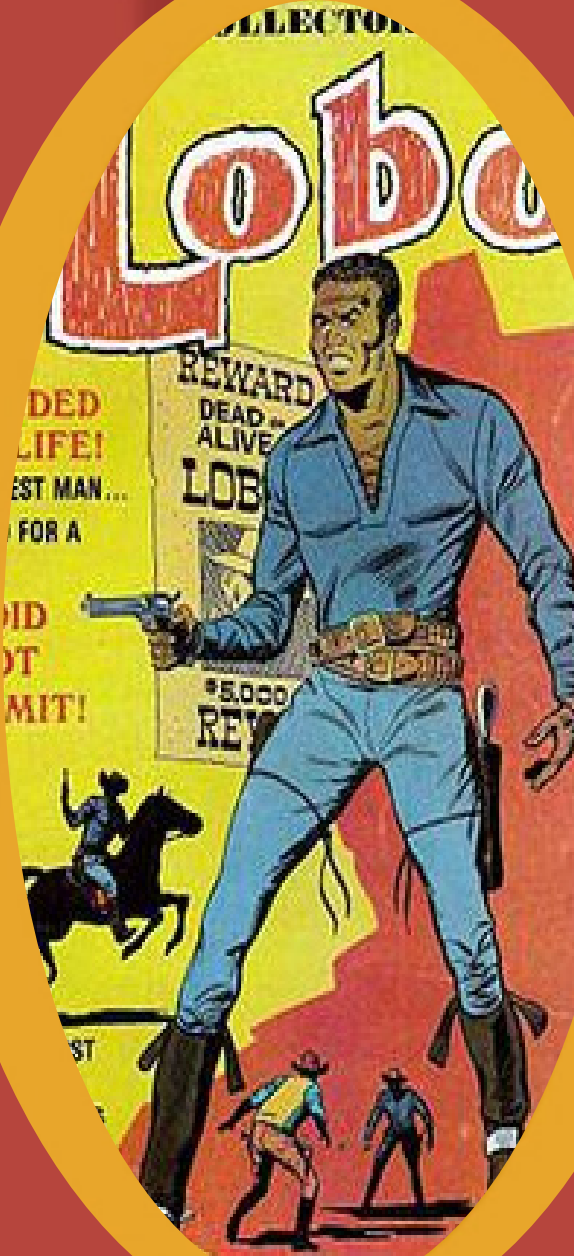
Izzy Minkler
Staff Writer



Lorna Simpson is an African American photographer and multimedia artist who gained recognition during the 1980s when she and a group of other artists released a series of works exploring the theme of identity politics. Emphasizing the lives and experiences of marginalized groups, this concept aims to make others aware of the issues and unfairness faced by minorities. As an undergraduate at the New York School of Visual Arts, Simpson studied in multiple mediums, from painting to photography. After she graduated, she began to travel around the world, honing her skills and defining her mode of expression. She landed on photo-text, which became her signature technique. While delving into this new art form, Lorna mainly worked with posed studio shoots. These images typically featured African American women with partially covered faces, exploring the perception of Black women in American society. In 1990, Lorna Simpson became the first African American woman to exhibit at the Venice Biennale, an international arts festival. She exhibited again in 2015, showing a series of multi-paneled paintings that went in a different direction than her previous photo-texts. Her work is an examination of race and gender issues with a minimal, sophisticated interplay between art and language. In a series of photographs and collages, Simpson examines the cultural significance of Black women’s hair through the lens of femininity and artistry. Her vast array of collections made her a greatly respected and influential figure in the world of fine arts. Simpson’s collages, photo-texts, and sculptures have been displayed in esteemed galleries across the globe. Exhibits on her portfolio through the years have been featured at the Museum of Modern Art, the Museum of Contemporary Art, and Haus der Kunst. In 2019, she was awarded the J. Paul Getty Medal for leadership and advocacy in her field and the expansion of her genre. Simpson broke barriers in the art world, helped other artists follow in her footsteps, and became one of the most influential conceptual photographers of her time.

Black Power in Print

Cate Woodrum
Staff Writer



In 1965, Dell Comics released the first issue of “Lobo,” a Western-themed comic featuring the titular Lobo, a Black cowboy, as the hero. This was the first comic to ever feature an African American character as the main character and cover image, marking a huge step in Black history. Throughout comic book history, Black characters have been integral to multimillion-dollar storylines that have shaped entire childhoods. In recent media, Miles Morales, the hero of the Spiderman comics, is part of an internationally recognized comic book series spin-off that offers a refreshing depiction of young African American struggles. Miles lives in Harlem, a historically black New York City neighborhood, rich with African American culture. Another example is Cyborg, from the popular Teen Titans storyline. He often speaks on the adversity that comes with being a cyborg in his society as a metaphor for the discrimination faced by minority groups. In comic books, superheroes often reflect societal ideals of the time. Prior to the 20th century, only one type of hero fit these norms — white protagonists. Without the presence of these childhood figures, African American communities may have been stunted in their ability to break into society and fight back against modern-day racism. In the 1900s, increased African American representation pushed Black culture into more mainstream media. The strength of a dream is not something that can be taken for granted. Comic book characters like Lobo, Miles, Cyborg, and many more have all had a hand in shaping young minds to the importance of diversity and the empowerment that comes with it. This Black History Month, alongside the black activists, writers, and performers, let’s celebrate the characters who gave those little boys and girls the power to dream big.

Women of “Hidden Figures”

Sadie Edlavitch
Staff Writer



In the 1960s, Project Mercury astronauts Alan Shepard, Gus Grissom, John Glenn, and others earned the title of being the first men to travel to space. Behind the scenes, they were supported by many uncredited female National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) workers who did the calculations for the orbital trajectories. Adapted from Margot Lee Shetterly’s book of the same name, the 2016 film, “Hidden Figures,” highlights the contributions of some of those unsung heroes. Based on the true story of the Project Mercury exploration, the movie focuses on the accomplishments of three women: Dorothy Vaughn (Octavia Spencer), Mary Jackson (Janelle Monáe), and Katherine Johnson (Taraji P. Henson). Viewers follow these mathematicians and engineers as they face many racial and gender-based stereotypes in the NASA department. Tasked with calculating the momentous launch of astronaut John Glenn into orbit and guaranteeing his safe return, Vaughn, Jackson, and Johnson grapple with the reality of holding the astronauts’ lives in their hands. To achieve this goal, NASA invested in one of the earliest machine computers, manufactured by IBM, to efficiently compute the large quantity of calculations required for such an endeavor. During a time when so many feared this new technology, these three women seized the opportunity to improve their skills in the science field, despite having the odds stacked against them. The African American men and women working at NASA in the 1960s were not recognized as humans. Instead, they were referred to as “computers,” an utterly dehumanizing label. Several decades before Vaughn, Jackson, and Johnson’s employment, NASA’s Langley Research Center began recruiting African American women with college degrees to calculate orbital trajectories, but their efforts remained hidden from the public eye. Segregation policies during this time also required that women work in separate sections, referred to as the ‘West-Area.’ They were often denied access to amenities such as programming books, classes, toilets, coffee, or any form of extra help. Despite the importance of their work, these women received very little recognition and respect in the workplace. In spite of these challenges, the African American women at NASA displayed a great amount of resilience and determination. They broke down the barriers and proved their capabilities through their talent and intelligence. “Hidden Figures” shines a light on Vaughn, Jackson, and Johnson’s remarkable contributions to both the scientific community and the Civil Rights Movement.

Freeman's LovEvolve Mural: Painting for Positivity

Libby Mercer
Staff Writer

The four letters in the word “love” don’t always combine to mean affection, infatuation, or admiration. With some rearranging and duplication, those same letters spell “evolve,” bringing a new meaning to the word. Local artist and small business owner Sunny Goode uses this unique message to spread love with her LovEvolve design all over the world. Lily Brooks, a junior at Freeman, recently painted a mural with the same design in Freeman’s cafeteria to spread the positive message.

Lily got the idea to bring the LovEvolve mural to Freeman from her boss, Ms. Goode. “I work at a store called LovEvolve that paints murals all over the country,” said Lily. “They have one at St. Catherine’s, so I thought ‘Why not paint one here?’” The LovEvolve murals have made their way across Richmond and other areas of Virginia. You can spot one of the murals on Grove Avenue and now you can find one right here at Freeman! The murals, however, are not just local. One can be spotted at “Full Circle Yoga” in Atlanta, Georgia, and another at the “Nashville Children’s Alliance” in Nashville,



PHOTO: LIBBY MERCER

Lily Brooks and some helpers painting the new LovEvolve mural in the cafeteria.

Tennessee. Ms. Goode hopes that one day there will be a LovEvolve mural in every state and, eventually, one in every school. For now, she is chipping away at that goal one wall at a time.

Once the idea was approved by Dr. Marshall, Lily began working with Ms. Goode to bring the mural to life on the walls of Freeman. When deciding where to put the mural, the most logical choice was the cafeteria. Since the walls of the cafeteria had been blank for so long, Lily “decided to put some art on the walls.” The painting process took about three hours,



PHOTO: LIBBY MERCER

with a team consisting of Lily, Ms. Goode, and local painters Darryl Peyton and Thomas Mayo.

The process was a combined effort by the team of four. They worked to make sure the mural was properly placed and that the paint was the perfect shade of navy blue. “[Painting] was a collaboration of all of us working together to decide how and where the letters should be placed,” said Ms. Goode.

The LovEvolve design came from Ms. Goode when she was in a creative block. “I was sort of playing around with the letters L-O-V-E,” she said. “When I was



PHOTO: LIBBY MERCER

making that artwork, I recognized that the letters used in love are the same letters used to spell evolve.” The LovEvolve design and message are not solely found in painted murals across states. “I came up with the idea to wrap the babies in love at the hospitals and it was really to introduce new families to the ten signs of a healthy relationship,” said Ms. Goode. By using the pattern for these swaddles, she spreads her joyful message to community members of all ages.

Aside from painting murals, Lily spends her time at Freeman creating art in the classroom. In

Mrs. Hurlburt’s Art IV class, her unique art style is able to shine. Her work is more detailed than the LovEvolve mural, showing her versatility in art. Lily uses art to “change the culture of the school,” said Mrs. Hurlburt.

Students who enjoy the LovEvolve mural should be on the lookout for Lily’s “One Love” club. “[The club] would be intertwining [the signs of a healthy relationship] to Freeman’s environment and making people more aware of the healthy and unhealthy signs of a relationship,” said Lily.

LovEvolve is uplifting and spreading love through its murals. “It’s a visual reminder every day that [you are] loved, and to love people when they’re upside down, backward, or having a hard time,” said Ms. Goode.

The LovEvolve mural is a cheerful sight in a sometimes stressful place and a reminder of happiness. “I think art can have a positive message,” said Lily. “Using [art] ... to draw awareness to certain social issues is very important.”

LovEvolve is consciously using art to spread its hopeful message. Whether you feel upside down, right side up, or like you’re constantly spinning in circles, the LovEvolve mural is a cheerful reminder that there is lots of love in the Freeman community!

Get into the Groove at the Tin Pan

Anna Meiller
Mav Minute Editor-in-Chief

From local Celtic bands to a string quartet, The Tin Pan is a restaurant-turned-concert venue near Regency Square Mall that showcases all kinds of music. This intimate setting features live music on a nightly basis in a dine-and-watch environment.

Freeman English teacher Brian Durrett has performed in multiple showcases at The Tin Pan with his band, Flashlight Tag. “It was grand for a multitude of reasons,” said Mr. Durrett when speaking about his experiences performing.

In Flashlight Tag’s winter performance, which was held at The Tin Pan, the band brought guests onto the stage and had many entertaining games alongside their musical performance. “You really can’t do that [type of live show] in the other venues we play,” said Mr. Durrett.

Another integral part of Freeman, the jazz band, has played in concerts at The Tin Pan. There, parents and friends of the jazz band have the opportunity “to have dinner with [their] friends ... in a listening room,” said Mr. Durrett. “These allow listeners to pay close attention to [their] children [and friends] who are performing on a stage that’s built for a musical performance.”

Both performance groups were blown away by the staff and the accommodations of The Tin Pan. All of the sound engineers at The Tin Pan “cater to the group, getting the best stage sound experience possible,” said Mr. Durrett.

The Tin Pan’s website has an extensive calendar with various genres showcased in the lineup. “Students should check out

their events calendar because they have some great, great people coming,” said Mr. Durrett.

The cost for entry to The Tin Pan varies from performance to performance. However, the average price per ticket looms around \$30 with a wide range from some free experiences to more expensive events surpassing \$80.

The food menu curated by The Tin Pan offers a variety of options served by a staff that does “a great job of keeping their customer’s needs met,” said Mr. Durrett. While some might have reservations about the staff being too noisy for a listening room, at Tin Pan, the waiters are “not obtrusive, but they do the job that needs to be done in the listening room,” he said. It should be noted that all checks will have a 20 percent gratuity added to the bill.

Most shows will start at 8 p.m. with doors opening at 6 p.m. “[Customers] have ... time prior [to the show starting] for dinner, drinks, and socialization, and then the show starts,” said Mr. Durrett. Those who purchase their tickets before the show on the website get the closest seats to the stage, while the restaurant acts on a first-come-first-serve basis.

There is no dance floor, and you are expected to stay seated during the show, giving The Tin Pan the feel of “a [traditional] concert [like] a classical music concert at The Altria,” said Mr. Durrett, “[at The Tin Pan, you will find] the kind of audience [who] sits captive and quietly listens to a symphonic performance.”

The live music aspect in The Tin Pan’s close-knit environment allows for “the sense of community [to be] tremendous,” said Mr. Durrett. “It gives us a space to bring our community in to celebrate with us.”



PHOTO: THE TIN PAN

A look into a live performance at Tin Pan.



PHOTO: THE TIN PAN

Guitars displayed on the stage at the Tin Pan.

Aida Poore’s Ink-credible Future

Scotty Gregory
Staff Writer

When senior Aida Poore thinks about her future, it is no longer filled with uncertainty. She is now sure that she will be doing a tattoo apprenticeship right here in Richmond. During her senior year, she has been working at Cary Street Tattoo to pave the way for her future plans.

When she was a sophomore, Aida committed to the hope of being a tattoo artist rather than heading to college. This meant she had to figure out the next steps for her future. Since Richmond is a hub for the tattoo industry, there is a high demand for apprentices. Aida went to multiple tattoo shops in Richmond in hopes of finding some places that she could apply to. “I took her to 10 of the 13 shops that she visited,” said her boyfriend, senior George Tobin. “We went to a lot.”

So far, Aida is thrilled with the choices she has made for her career path. At Cary Street Tattoo, she mainly helps out with cleaning and sterilizing. Although it is not the most technical part of the job, it is necessary for her to work her way up in the profession. For now, she is able to practice with a machine on fake skin. Her boyfriend also bought her a tattoo machine for Christmas, so she can now practice at home and in the shop. This will provide her with plenty of exposure so that she is fully prepared for her future endeavors.

The biggest takeaway of the apprenticeship is the opportunity to be around professionals. Seeing the ins and outs of the profession has kept her motivated. “Working around professionals has made me really inspired,” said Aida. Currently, she is focused on obtaining her license, with the hope of apprenticing at more shops in the future. By exploring the differences in professional techniques, designs, and practices, she will be able to develop her own unique style.

Some of Aida’s earliest memories are from when her family would go out to restaurants. “I started by coloring on the back of all the menus. That’s kind of my first memory of teaching myself to draw,” said Aida. Art has been a huge aspect of her life for as long as she can remember.

Throughout her life, art has been the one thing that she has kept consistent. “Hobby-wise, it’s the only thing that I have always done,” said Aida. Art has always been something that she was able to turn to when times were rough. Her hope to be a licensed tattoo artist is always a light at the end of the tunnel.

Now, Aida spends the majority of her time working on her art. With plans to pursue a career in the arts, she is constantly working on building up her professional portfolio. “I’m spending all of my free time that I have just trying to whip out painting after draw-

FREEMAN’S NEWEST TATTOO

ARTIST:

AIDA POORE



GRAPHIC: AVA FLOURNOY

ing after painting,” said Aida.

Not only is she building her portfolio, but she has also started sketching more frequently as she is often inspired by pieces she sees at the shop. George said that the biggest change he has seen since she committed to the industry is her frequency. “Her art in a lot of the styles that she practices has improved,” he said, due to the long hours she has put into her art.

While she has always been busy making art, tattoo designs are different from her typical pieces. “There is only so much you can

do with a machine and needle, so it’s a lot more simplified and a lot less detailed,” said Aida. Tattoos also have to be done in a timely manner since the process is very irritating to the client’s skin, so it takes precise skill.

When asked if he thought that Aida’s art matched her personality, George’s answer was “absolutely yes.” Aida is optimistic about where she is and how her career is going to pan out, a great example of how when we pursue what makes us happy, we get the most joy in return.



PHOTO: AIDA POORE

Aida’s sketch of a butterfly tattoo.



PHOTO: AIDA POORE

A sampling of Aida’s animal tattoo sketches.

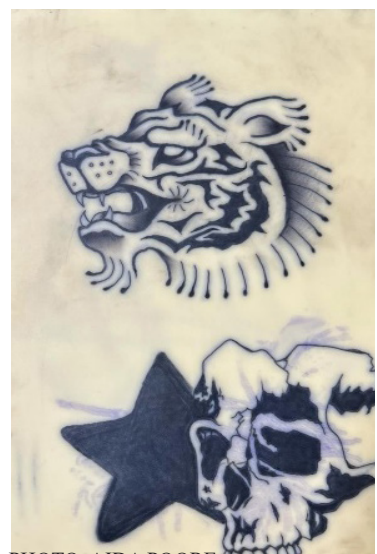


PHOTO: AIDA POORE

A Monumental Move to Virginia

Celia Acey
Sports Editor

In Dec. 2023, Virginia Governor Glenn Youngkin and Ted Leonsis, owner of Monumental Sports & Entertainment, announced their plan to move the Washington Wizards and Washington Capitals to Alexandria, Virginia. Although an official deal has yet to be finalized, Youngkin said to the public, "It's an agreement — a very formal handshake." The new development will be located along Alexandria's Potomac Yard, parallel to the site of Virginia Tech's soon-to-be Innovation Campus. The project will comprise 70 acres along the scenic Potomac River.

The decision to move came after Leonsis expressed frustrations

with the Capital One Arena and the District of Columbia's (D.C.'s) lack of investment in the building. He also pointed out the rising level of crime in D.C., as a contributing factor in the decision.

Many fans believe that the Wizards and Capitals fan bases will decrease due to the move. "I think there will be [fewer] fans, because D.C. was a big pull for people, and Alexandria is in the middle of nowhere," said Bessie Nelson, a Freeman junior and Capitals fan.

Many Alexandria residents have begun to express their opposition to such a large complex being brought to their city. "It's still not a done deal. The General Assembly has not acted and I don't think there is universal support among the General Assembly," said Virginia State Senator Adam Ebbin, who represents the Alexandria, Arlington, and Fairfax areas.



PHOTO: JBG SMITH

Map of the new proposed facility

The entire project includes not only the brand new arena but a separate, smaller performing arts venue, underground parking, a conference center, a Wizards practice facility, and Monumental's corporate offices and media studio. As for the Capital One Arena, the city of D.C. owns the land and officials hope to bring more concerts and college basketball games to the arena. There have also been discussions of the arena becoming home to the WNBA Washington Mystics, according to The Washington Post.

With the total cost set to be about \$2.2 billion, commissioned investment bank JP Morgan estimates

the net cost to taxpayers to be about \$1.35 billion. Alexandria officials said the deal would create about 30,000 jobs; however, it is unclear how many of those would either be indirect or temporary.

Some say the loss of the Wizards and Capitals could be financially detrimental to the already struggling city. An article by nbcwashington.com estimated a loss of as much as \$25 million per year in tax revenue. The city of D.C. currently has an offer of \$500 million on the table to renovate the Capital One Arena, in an effort to convince the teams to stay. "This proposal represents our final offer and is the next step in partnering

with Monumental Sports to keep the Washington Wizards and the Washington Capitals where they belong — in Washington, DC," said D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser.

On the contrary, Derek Hyra, a professor in public administration at American University, said that despite Bowser's desire to make D.C. a sports capital, "the economy of Washington does not revolve around sports."

Under the terms of its current lease, Monumental cannot move the Wizards and Capitals to Virginia until 2027. ABC7 reported that the teams could break ground by 2025, with plans to relocate the teams in 2028.



PHOTO: WASHINGTON POST

Capital One Arena

The End of an Era for Alabama Football

Matthew Wozniak
Staff Writer

The head coach, as a team's leader, can truly make or break a team's performance. For nearly 20 years, the University of Alabama's football coach has successfully led the team to victory after victory. Nick Saban, the head coach of the Crimson Tide for the last 17 seasons, an-

"A lot of coaches strive to have a team like his."
- Sam O'Hara

ounced his retirement last month after the 2023-2024 season.

Saban's dominance as a head coach in the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) is one for the record books. He is one of the only coaches ever to win more than 80 percent of his games, with a career record of 297-71-1. With his seven National Championship titles and a 15-year streak as the number one team in the AP Poll, it's no surprise that Sports Illustrated ranks him as the second-best col-

lege football coach of all time.

Retirement isn't something that Saban is taking lightly. Citing health concerns, he felt like continuing to coach wouldn't be fair to his players. "Last season was difficult for me from just a health standpoint, not necessarily having anything major wrong, but just being able to sustain and do things the way I want to do them, the way I've always done them," Saban told ESPN reporter Chris Low. "It just got a little bit harder. So you have to decide."

Following his 1989 debut as the University of Toledo head coach, Saban bounced between various teams, coaching both college and professional teams. Just a few years after coaching Louisiana State University to their first National Championship in 2003, Saban began his record-breaking run at Alabama. The Crimson Tide was the final team Saban coached, and the team where he had his longest tenure. "The University of Alabama has been a very special place to [my wife] and me," he said in a statement released on Jan. 10, 2024. "It is not just about how many games we won and lost, but it's about the legacy and how we went about it. We always tried to do it the right way."

A team's coaching staff often gets overlooked by fans, but the Alabama team has consistently



PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

Nick Saban celebrates after winning his sixth national title in 2020

stood out from the rest. "A lot of coaches strive to have a team like his," said Freeman freshman Sam O'Hara. "He just had a different connection than most coaches have with their players."

While at Alabama, Saban coached four Heisman Trophy winners, tying the record for most won by players under a single coach. This relationship has also shown itself in his success in preparing his players for the National Football League (NFL), with 49 of his collegiate players going to the NFL after college.

Before Saban took over the head coach job, Alabama had a decade-long stint at mediocrity. Barely squeezing out a winning record under three different coaches, they needed a big

change to bring the program back to the forefront of college football, and Saban was just the man for the job. "He brought Alabama up from being a mid-tier team to a championship contender every year consistently," said Sam.

Without Saban, the team's future is uncertain. The University of Washington's former head coach Kalen DeBoer is slated to take over Saban's position, but as popular knowledge suggests, it's never easy being 'the guy after the guy.' Being the successor to such a prominent coach means that no matter how well he performs, he will always be compared to his record-setting predecessor. It's not an entirely negative outlook for him, though. Saban has still left him with a lot

to work with, and "what [he] has done to build that organization has left him with a great young team and great offensive and defensive coordinators," said Sam.

Saban's impact on Alabama athletics is felt far beyond team. "Simply put, Nick Saban is one of the greatest coaches of all time, in any sport, and The University of Alabama is fortunate to have him leading the football program for the past 17 years," said Greg Byrne, the University of Alabama Director of Athletics. "He is the consummate coach, mentor, and leader, and his impact is felt far beyond the football field." Nick Saban's career might have ended, but his record-setting run means that he will be remembered by most fans of college football.

Freeman is Flipping Out Over the New Dive Team

Merrick Mock
News Editor

In 2023, Freeman's first dive team became the newest winter sport for students to participate in. After a year of working through the logistics of introducing a new team, Coach Gromling has put together a full-fledged dive team. The team consists of both boys and girls and practices in tandem with the swim team. Despite its small size, the Freeman dive team has met great success so far this season.

At last year's swim State Championship, Coach Gromling decided it was time for Freeman to have a dive team. "We found ourselves on the side of neglecting sports here at Freeman," said Coach Gromling. "Every other top high school program had a dive team that could score points at regionals and states." He began by reaching out to Diane Maiese, the main dive coach at Dive RVA. Maiese and a few DSF swim team parents helped to work out the details and ensure that the team was created.

The season began with a week-long tryout period similar to other



PHOTO: DSF YEARBOOK

Sophomore Kate Post preparing to dive

sports at Freeman. The athletes were assessed on their capabilities alongside how well they responded to Coach Gromling's guidance. The final dive team consisted of five girls and five guys.

The small size is partially due to the one sport per season rule, set in place by Freeman's Athletic Director, Coach Harmon. Although many students have an interest in doing two sports each season, the large time commitment required by most sports makes doing so infeasible unless practices occur at separate times. This caveat allowed for students who partici-

pated on the dive team to also be active members of the track team.

Not having their own diving pool has proved to be another challenge for the dive team. Freeman's dive team does not have direct access to any diving pool in Richmond, so they rely on Dive RVA's dryland facility to train. Once they have learned their dives, they use the St. Catherine's pool to practice.

The team is very thankful for Diane's kindness in allowing them to use the St. Catherine's diving pool. Grace Harbach, a junior on the dive team said, "Working with Diane these past few

months has been an amazing experience; she is motivating, caring, and pushes us to our highest potential in and out of the pool. I am so grateful to have her as a coach." Although swimming and diving are considered to be one larger team, they do not typically compete together due to the lack of diving facilities in the area.

Coach Gromling has dedicated the majority of his time before and after school to his swimmers and divers. Practices for swimming and diving occur from 7 a.m. to 8:15 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Managing two teams now has made his schedule extremely busy but the athletes make it all worth it. "I grew up with the sport and I love the sport so I want anyone who is willing and able to do it to compete," said Coach Gromling. "If I can facilitate that then I am just happy to be there."

The swimmers and divers are very appreciative of their coach. "Coach Gromling is always there to support us and he gives the perfect advice when I am struggling on a dive," said Blaine Nelson, a junior on the dive team.

Since the dive team only consists of ten divers, they have grown close in a small amount of time, "We have become our

own little community and have also met other divers from outside schools like Chesterfield, Cosby, Manchester, and Deep Run," said Grace. Even with the less-than-ideal circumstances, the team continues to work on the team structure and atmosphere.

DSF IS
DIVING
INTO
STATES



GRAPHIC: AVA FLOURNO

“The Bear” Sinks Its Claws Into Awards Season — And Freeman!

Shishira Nakka
Centerspread Editor

When we think of Jeremy Allen White, we think of one thing: Calvin Klein. A few of us, however, also think of his popular television show, “The Bear.” As a dedicated fan (so before the underwear advertisement), I appreciate the show for many reasons. One of those is the fact that members of the service industry are finally getting recognized and given the credit they deserve.

“The Bear” follows Carmen Berzatto, played by Jeremy Allen White, as he returns to his hometown in Chicago after the death of his older brother. He is a Michelin star chef with shiny biceps to match, and they — I mean, he, does his best to survive his family’s hysterics, manage the stress of his restaurant, The Beef, and fight his own demons. As he begins his journey of running The Beef, he hires Sydney Adamu, played by Ayo Edebiri, and suddenly finds a partner ... for the restaurant, of course. We get to watch Carmen, affectionately known as Carmy, lose his mind and break into a sweat and tears as he barks at the back-of-house crew (Episode 7, anyone?) This awards season, “The Bear” won five Golden Globes, four Emmys, and the hearts of Americans.

Many viewers felt that the show accurately portrayed what it’s like to work in the service industry, a profession that employs many Mavericks. Among that crowd is senior Dabnie Brantley, an employee at a local gastropub in Richmond, Toast. “[“The Bear” is] very dramatic. It’s probably a lot more dramatic than a real kitchen, but at the same time, it’s



“The Bear” official Season 3 poster

not — if you work in a kitchen, you have to be some degree of insane,” she said. “I have actually yelled at people like [Carmy does]. For example, [I’ve told] grown men what to do, which is kind of nice.”

As a line cook, Dabnie works many different positions within the kitchen line, as well as working as a morning baker, where she makes biscuits hours before other employees arrive.

What attracts Dabnie to the job is her love for cooking. “I want to eventually own my own restaurant [or] bakery,” she said. She realized this job was meant for her during a moment she had at Toast when she baked a pumpkin pie. One of her managers informed her that a customer was interested in buying not just a slice, but the entire pie Dabnie had baked. “I think that just really made it clear,” said Dabnie.

“I love making food and I love seeing other people love my food.”

One of the reasons Dabnie enjoyed watching “The Bear” was the connection she felt to it. “I think the heart that Carmy has is kind of the heart that I have,” she said.

“‘The Bear’ is probably a lot more dramatic than a real kitchen, but at the same time, it’s not — if you work in a kitchen, you have to be some degree of insane.”

-Dabnie Brantley

“The Bear” has had such a large impact on society that even someone who has never seen an episode can feel like a part of it. “[Carmy] is stressed out all the time so, I guess that makes sense,” said senior Chris Beale, who works at the Freeman-favorite restaurant (seeing as it employs half the school) Taste.

Even though Chris has never seen “The Bear,” he’s heard that

Carmy is always in a frenzy, which describes working in the service industry. When asked to describe working at Taste in one word, “constant” was his reply. “You’re never really on a break,” said Chris. “There’s always something to do whether that’s to [prepare] food, make food, or clean — you never get a break to talk to your employees. Basically, you’re always doing something.”

Although working at Taste is not always easy, it has taught him lessons he’ll take with him everywhere. “I think it made me a more productive and organized person. It’s also taught me a lot about working with other people,” said Chris. “Making sure that people can rely on you is a big thing for me.”

Television watchers all over the world have fallen in love with “The Bear” for its acting, comedy, and emotions. However, for some viewers, the show is a way to feel seen as workers in service industries. Whether at Toast, Taste, or another place, it is not easy to work in a restaurant, and this truth cannot be denied. “The Bear” understands that fact and shares it for the world to see.



Carmy (Jeremy Allen White) in the kitchen of “The Beef”

A Twisted Take on a Classical Tale: The Richmond Ballet’s “Dracula”

Sarah Chilton
Staff Writer

Vampires, blood, death, and fights are often not the first things that come to mind when thinking about ballet. However, the Richmond Ballet’s performance of Ben Stevenson’s “Dracula” from Feb. 16-18 at the Dominion Energy Center for the Performing Arts brought new life — or rather undead life — to the subject. Never before seen in Richmond, this three-act story follows Count Dracula as he abducts two village girls, Flora and Svetlana, to add to his collection of vampire brides. However, one of the girls, Svetlana, is in love with a village boy, Frederick, who must fight Dracula to save her.

“This ballet has a little bit of everything, so it is good for people who have never seen ballet before,” said Valerie Henning, a retired dancer for the Richmond Ballet. Accompanied by music from the Richmond Symphony and special effects such as flying and small fireworks, the show is “much more theatrical than most other ballet productions,” said Valerie. Tickets for this two-and-a-half-hour show started at \$25 on Richmond Ballet’s website.

Preparations for a ballet of this magnitude started in early January after the company’s yearly production of “The Nutcracker.” According to Cody Beaton, a professional dancer

and 17-year member of the Richmond Ballet, they “normally have about five or six weeks [to prepare for] big story ballets.”

With Dracula, it was “a bit more challenging because it’s not a production that any of us have ever seen before or performed before,” said Valerie. These intense, five-week periods consist of full-day rehearsals from Monday through Saturday, with the practices lasting from 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Even when they’re not in the studio, “it’s a job that follows you home,” said Valerie. Dancers often have to take Epsom salt baths, eat well, and take care of their bodies from the strenuous activities they do each day.

In preparation for the show, the company learned all three acts in only two and a half weeks. Then, they continued to practice and perfect it. The company couldn’t rehearse in the theater until a week ahead of time, though, because the opera had a show the weekend before.

From there, they got the equipment set up for flying and walked through all three acts. The company finished the week with only two days to rehearse alongside the orchestra, followed by two dress rehearsals preceding opening night. It was “a very, very fast rehearsal process once we [were] in the theater,” said Valerie.

For these dancers, ballet isn’t just a pastime or a profession, but a passion that connects them with others. Both Valerie and Cody met



The Richmond Ballet’s “Dracula” poster

their husbands while dancing at the Richmond Ballet and found many of their closest friends there. “What would keep me here in Richmond after I’m done dancing is all the friendships I’ve made through the ballet,” said Cody.

This strong sense of community is not just present in the professional company but with the Richmond Ballet as a whole. Catherine Conway, a senior at Freeman, is a dancer in the School of Richmond Ballet. Through her years dancing at Richmond Ballet, she has experienced firsthand this sense of connectivity. “Members of the company will come down to our technique classes a couple of times a year and as students, we actually get the opportunity to talk to them about what it’s like being in the company,” said Catherine. “The company itself is a close-knit community ... and they create a space that feels like a family.”

For Dracula in particular, the community was larger than normal. “Every dancer [was] used and every dancer [had] multiple parts,” said Valerie. Even some who aren’t in the company participated, such as Valerie, who was invited out of retirement to

fly in the production because of her experience flying as a butterfly in The Nutcracker 15 years ago.

In the ballet, Cody played Flora, one of the village girls who gets bitten and turned into a vampire by Dracula. However, “it doesn’t really follow the traditional Bram Stoker [story],” said Cody. The show recounts the conflict between Dracula and Flora after she is bitten. Alongside this, the ballet explores the stories of Svetlana and Frederick, the couple whom Dracula wants to turn into vampires. “The story is a lot darker than some of the stories that we’ve done before,” said Valerie. “I think it [surprised] people.”

For Cody, the best part of performing story ballets like “Dracula” is “immersing [herself] in that character” and exploring what it’s like to be somebody else. “The adrenaline that you get when you perform is pretty magical,” she said. However, that doesn’t come without its struggles.

Even after 17 years of professional dancing, touring around the world, and in Richmond, Cody still battles her nerves before every performance. “When you’re ner-

vous, you tend to think about all the bad things that can go wrong, and figuring out how to shut that down and not think about [it] is part of the process,” said Cody. To combat this, Cody said she likes to internalize the idea that she’s “carefree and not stressed about anything,” convincing herself that it will all be fine.

Nerves aside, with this ballet “there [was] a lot to be excited about, plus it [was] new,” said Valerie. “Nobody in Richmond [had] ever seen it, which [was] exciting.” With five total performances across the course of three days, Ben Stevenson’s undead Dracula came alive in Richmond for a limited time.

A non-traditional take on a Valentine’s Day love story, “Dracula” is a timeless tale brought to life through the art of dance. For the Richmond Ballet, their next local performance is “Studio Two,” with shows from March 19-24 at the Studio Theatre at Richmond Ballet. Tickets for these performances will start at \$25. After such an extravagant first show of 2024, Richmond is left waiting to see what the ballet company will do next.



PHOTO: TULSA BALLET

An act from the Tulsa Ballet’s production of “Dracula”

Challenging the Narrative on Indigenous Representaion in Hollywood

Katie Hall
Editor-in-Chief

At the 81st Annual Golden Globes, “Killers of the Flower Moon” actress Lily Gladstone made history as the first indigenous actor to win Best Female Actor in a Drama Motion Picture. In the Martin Scorsese-directed film, Gladstone portrays Mollie Burkhart, a member of the Osage Nation, a Native American community primarily located in Oklahoma. Gladstone starred opposite Leonardo DiCaprio, who played the role of Mollie’s husband, Ernest. Alongside other Hollywood stars, including John Lithgow and Robert De Niro, the cast delivered a critically acclaimed performance, prompting a number of Academy Award and Golden Globe nominations. “Leonardo DiCaprio and Martin Scorsese are some of the biggest names in Hollywood,” said senior Holly Jahn, the president of Freeman’s Film Club, Cinemaniacs. “The idea that they want to help tell indigenous stories like this is amazing.” Aside from directing the film, Scorsese also co-wrote the script. “[He] truly understood the history ... and was able to tell a true and accurate account of [what] happened



PHOTO: TIME MAGAZINE

Lily Gladstone and Leonardo DiCaprio in “Killers of the Flower Moon”

to the Osage people,” said Holly. “Killers of the Flower Moon” illustrates the painful story of the manipulation of and violent attacks against the Osage people following the discovery of oil reserves on their reservation. This period from the early 20th century is widely regarded as the “Reign of Terror.” The film builds on a nonfiction book of the same name, written by journalist David Grann. Although both the book and film displayed the same narrative,

Grann’s version revolves around the investigative perspective and the true crime aspects of the story. For the film adaptation, Scorsese crafted an alternative presentation of the piece, extenuating the warring themes of violence, love, and betrayal. “Martin Scorsese ... shifted the main focus from the FBI agents [emphasized in the book] to the relationship between Mollie and Ernest,” said Holly.

While Lily Gladstone is not a part of the Osage Nation featured

in the film, she is a member of another indigenous community, known as the Blackfeet Nation. She began her speech by sharing a few words in the Blackfeet language as a tribute to her roots.

According to the Associated Press, Gladstone acts “like a bridge between a shameful Hollywood past and its hopeful future.” Her leading role is a true rarity in Hollywood. Studies conducted by the University of Southern California display the reality of Native

American representation in television and movies. Their data shows that Native Americans account for only 0.25 percent of characters with speaking roles in films.

In her Golden Globes acceptance speech, Gladstone shed light on the decades of misrepresentation and mistreatment faced by the indigenous community in the film industry. “In this business, Native actors used to speak their lines in English, and then the sound mixers would run them backward to accomplish Native languages on camera,” she said.

She emphasized the importance of having “[indigenous peoples’] stories told by [them] selves in [their] own words, with tremendous allies.” Her performance as Mollie Burkhart garnered widespread acclaim for the film and solidified her place as a respected voice for the indigenous community.

Following her win at the Golden Globes, Lily Gladstone was nominated for the Best Actress category of the Academy Awards. “She is opening new doors for indigenous and Native people on screen ... I am really hoping that she wins the Oscar,” said Holly. The 96th Oscars will air on March 10, 2024. If she wins, Gladstone will become the first Native American actress to ever win an Oscar.

Empty Bowls, Full Hearts

Julia Connor
Staff Writer

In March 2024, Freeman High School ceramics students will be selling their handmade bowls through the program Empty Bowls, which supports impoverished citizens. Students craft these multi-purpose bowls to help the local community. Each bowl can be of great use because they are all microwave, dishwasher, food, and drink-safe. The program was first start-

ed here at Freeman 10 years ago by art teacher, Beth Jones. “I started at Bruton High School in Williamsburg for my first four years,” she said. “I’ve been doing this program every other year since I started as a teacher, ... so I’ve done it seven times throughout my teaching career.”

Mrs. Jones first learned about Empty Bowls while attending Old Dominion University, when she was a participant. “[Empty Bowls] is a grassroots charitable program where a school, individual artist, university, or community group makes things or bowls out of clay

and sells them for charity fundraising,” she said. Richmond’s Feed More organization is an “overarching local food charity here,” said Mrs. Jones. Feed More will be the recipient of the funds raised from the Empty Bowls project.

Through this fundraiser, ceramics students can learn art skills while partaking in community service. “They learn how to roll slabs, make functional items, they learn finishing techniques, and they learn how to work off of a theme,” said Mrs. Jones.

Abby Sapon, a junior taking Ceramics II, has learned these skills firsthand. During the project, she learned how to use a new ceramic technique and applied it to her creations. Her jellyfish-themed bowl was crafted with an “underglaze.” “It’s called bubbles,” she said. “You blow on your bowl and it looks really cool.”

By participating in this fundraising event, students will also learn useful skills that they can apply to their future lives. “We’re learning to create and what to do with their creations,” said Mrs. Jones. “I’m encouraging [students] that they can do good with the [art] they learn to do and take their skills, abilities, passions, and things they’re good at to utilize it for helping other people,” she said.

Other art students are enjoying this new project. “I love being able to do what I want with

my bowls, using whatever colors I please,” said Claire Foley, a senior in Ceramics III. When planning her designs, she decided to have a theme for her pieces. “All my bowls will include an aspect of nature,” she said.

Each bowl takes students a month to complete from shaping to the final glaze and firing. “They put a lot of time and effort into these bowls from start to finish,” said Mrs. Jones, who sees the effort all students put into their projects. “One bowl might take the kids a month to make from thinking of the idea, designing it, getting their clay ready, building it, decorating it, putting it in the kiln, and waiting for it to be fired,” she said. It is important to have fairly priced bowls based on the level of effort students put into them. “Some kids have seen their bowls come out and want to price them closer to the \$20 side, and that’s part of the process,” she said. “We have a critique at the end and the students are the ones that price the bowls.”

Although the bowls are more expensive than in previous years, this re-evaluation was necessary due to the current economic climate. “The world is full of inflation right now, and the money that [Feed More] receives from us doesn’t go quite as far as it used to, so the kids are pushing for the bowls to be slightly more expensive this year,” said Mrs. Jones.

The bowls will be sold in the cafeteria for two days in March, but the exact dates have not been settled on. The leftover bowls that are not sold will be featured in the annual art show during May.

The money made from these sales will be sent to Feed More in the spring or summertime. The lower number of donations is especially harmful because students do not have the option to get school lunch or breakfast, putting many families in need of greater support. Freeman’s donation during the summer can be very impactful for Feed More and the communities it provides assistance to.

In 2022, Freeman raised around \$800 to donate to Feed More. This year, Mrs. Jones has set a goal to raise \$1,000. “They can do a lot more with cash and they get money from the government when they buy in bulk,” she said. “They get stipends from local groups which allows them to buy about \$10 worth of food for every dollar that we donate, so they should be able to buy about \$10,000 worth of food if we can give them \$1,000.”

Thanks to the dedication of Freeman’s art department, the Empty Bowls program will expand ceramics students’ art skills and teach them fundamental life skills while promoting community outreach. Buy a bowl, or two or three, and help the ceramics classes raise money for the impoverished.



PHOTO: JULIA CONNOR

Various ceramic bowls made by Freeman students

Freeman’s Theater Department is One Class Act

Afton Hessian
News Editor

Each year, the Freeman theater department competes in the Virginia High School League (VHSL) theater competition. This year’s competition took place on Feb. 16, 2024, and featured one acts from 11 schools in the 5C division. DSF’s Advanced Theatre class performed “The Infamous Soothing System of Professor Maillard.”

The play is based on Edgar Allen Poe’s short story, “The System of Dr. Tarr and Prof. Fether,” and takes place in the 20th Century. It follows “The Hero,” played by senior Holly Jahn, as they decide to visit a private sanitarium operated by Professor Maillard, played by senior Jamie Han. Professor Maillard is renowned for “The Soothing System,” a method he has devised for treating the insane. Upon entering the asylum, the hero is greeted with a party. The events that follow evoke themes of mystery and horror as the true natures of the party guests are revealed. The play was performed at

Tucker High School, where the competition team had the opportunity to progress to states. “The play is judged on if the actors are clear on their performance basics, if the ensemble is well choreographed, how the space and design elements are being used, and how time is utilized to make it more engaging,” said Freeman theater teacher Ms. Gardner. “The play has to be well rounded, and a little bit more ensemble heavy than a traditional play because that’s what [the judges] love to see.”

“The Infamous Soothing System of Professor Maillard” was chosen by the actors, different from the director choosing it in the past. “I wanted them to feel like they were part of [choosing the play] because it’s important that your house is part of your decision,” said Ms. Gardner. “A goal of the class is to make the transition from an actor to a director, so choosing the play gives them more of a vision for what the show is going to look like.”

The directorial decisions made by Ms. Gardner are noticed by the actors. “There are lots of interesting stylistic choices in the

way that Ms. Gardner directs,” said senior Sarai Salazar. “She gives you more freedom in the character choices you can make, and even the ensemble gets to have their own little quirks ... she lets you have autonomy as an actor.”

The sound design for “The Infamous Soothing System of Professor Maillard” is infinitely more complex than in past one acts. “It’s rare that we need any kind of sound effects, except for this play,” said senior Annabelle Nee, the sound technician. “I need[ed] to record the sounds of all of the actors screaming and then I got to play that scream in the show.”

Being in theater requires a large time commitment, comparable to varsity athletics. “As a teacher, straight plays are usually around 250 extra hours outside of school,” said Ms. Gardner. Despite the amount of time it takes to put the productions on, the actors come together to create the best possible production.

“I really like making something that’s fun, and [where] all of the different characters working together is like a puzzle,” said junior Ghost Moran. “It’s really incred-



PHOTO: AFTON HESSIAN

Theater students rehearsing their one act performance

ible when it all comes together.”

A shared sentiment among the cast and crew is the importance of the theater department’s sense of community and the end goal of a successful final production. “Theater has always been something that I’ve loved doing,” said Jamie. “I love [having] an outlet to be able to have fun and be creative, which is something every adolescent needs.”

From the actors to the sound technicians, every participant in the One Acts production is working together towards a common goal. “The ability to be involved in theater like this, to compete like this, and to spend this amount of time and effort trying to get some kind of tangible reward for what you’ve done is really important to me and a lot of people in this house,” said Annabelle.

In Other News

Cameroon



PHOTO: REUTERS

Vaccine preparation.

On Jan. 22, 2024, the World Health Organization (WHO) initiated the world's first malaria vaccine rollout in Cameroon. According to the WHO, the disease is responsible for an estimated 600,000 deaths in Africa annually. After 30 years of development, U.S. researchers predict the vaccine will offer 36 percent effectiveness, as the country has the "... capacity to considerably reduce the number of cases and deaths from malaria and accelerate the elimination of the disease," said Shalom Ndoula, a Cameroonian doctor.

North and South Korea



PHOTO: AP NEWS

Naval exercises.

North and South Korea continue their back-and-forth power struggle with new military advancements. Recently, North Korea tested an underwater attack drone in response to a naval exercise by South Korea. This drone is designed to make sneak attacks and destroy ports in enemy waters.

Kim Jong Un has been increasing North Korea's testing of nuclear weapons, threatening a conflict. According to AP News, the United States, alongside some Asian countries, has strengthened its military activities which Kim Jong Un sees as a threat.

Russia



PHOTO: WIRED

Feb. 8 interview in the Kremlin.

In his first interview with a Western journalist since the invasion of Ukraine, Russian President Vladimir Putin sat down with former Fox News journalist Tucker Carlson on Feb. 8, 2024. Putin monologued for extended periods, presenting himself as a domineering force as opposed to Carlson's demeanor. Russian-American journalist Masha Gessen argued in *The New Yorker* that, "one of the most popular journalists in America came to interview Putin and looked like a deer in headlights."

Content by Poppy Friske, Anna Meiler, and Katie Hall

Senate Hearing: "Big Tech and the Online Child Sexual Exploitation Crisis"

Lorelei Kelley
Copy Editor

On Jan. 31, 2024, Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) from the social media companies Meta, TikTok, Snap, Discord, and X testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee regarding the exploitation of children on various social media platforms. Dozens of parents sat in on the hearing, holding up photos of their deceased children and recounting stories of social media's negative influence on children.

In recent years, the amount of child sexual abuse material (CSAM) circulating on social media sites has risen drastically, according to data from the non-profit tasked by the United States government with tracking these trends. The CEOs were questioned on their company's efforts to restrict the availability of such material after a record-high of 36 million reports of CSAM on social media sites were logged in 2023, according to *The Washington Post*.

When the hearing began, each CEO spoke on their company's current protections for minors. "The existing body of scientific work has not shown a causal link between using social media and young people having worse mental health," said Meta CEO, Mark Zuckerberg. He then stated that Meta would continue to



PHOTO: CNN

Parents hold up photos of their children in the Senate hearing room.

fund industry-wide efforts to safeguard minors on its platforms. Later, he was asked if he would like to apologize to the parents whose children had passed due to content they viewed on social media. Zuckerberg turned to the audience and spoke directly to many of the parents in attendance. "I'm sorry for everything you've all gone through," he said. "It's terrible. No one should have to go through the things that your families have suffered."

However, his assurances were met with widespread disdain. "Nothing that was said today was different than what we expected," said Neveen Radwan, a mother of a teenager who developed a severe eating disorder due to social media. "It was a lot of promises and a lot of talk without them really saying anything. The apology that [Zuck-

erberg] made, while appreciated, was a little bit too little, too late."

The breadth of this problem continues to expand as more minors have access to social media. According to a United States Surgeon General advisory released in 2023, nearly 95 percent of teenagers between the ages of 13 and 17 have at least one social media account. The report also found "ample indicators that social media can also have a profound risk of harm," especially in terms of mental health. Additionally, a report by the National Institute of Health linked increased social media usage among minors to higher rates of depression and suicidality in that age group. It also noted that the higher rates of participation on online platforms have directly paralleled suicide's ascension to the second-largest killer of adolescents.

Senators are hopeful that the hearing will build support for a set of bills intended to expand protections for children online, including a measure that would allow victims of child sexual abuse to sue platforms that facilitate exploitation, according to *The Washington Post*. However, the proposals have faced pushback from tech lobbyists and digital rights groups, who argue they would undermine privacy protections and force platforms to inadvertently take down lawful posts. Other proposed measures focus on giving prosecutors more tools to go after those who spread CSAM. Although votes have previously been taken on CSAM prevention bills, renewed parent advocacy for greater protections is likely to push similar proposals into Congress in the coming months.

Drone Imaging Uncovers Newborn Great White Shark

Ava Flournoy
Graphics Editor

In July 2023, researchers off the coast of California captured a historic event via drone footage — the first-ever recorded newborn great white shark. Scientists have studied the behavior of these sharks to pinpoint where they have their pups, but no one has ever seen a birth, let alone a newborn kin.

Wildlife filmmaker Carlos Gauna and researcher Phillip Sternes have made history with their discovery. The drone pictures that were recently released show the baby shark shedding off its embryonic layer, another never-before-seen event. Although they acknowledged the possibility of it being



PHOTO: THE MALIBU ARTIST

Imaging of the newborn shark spotted off the California coast.

an older shark with a skin condition, they do not think that is the likely conclusion. Having observed pregnant great whites off the coast of California where the pup was found, there is a high chance this shark is a newborn. The pup was about 5 feet

long, and pearly white, an uncommon color for great whites. This led the team to believe that it was a newborn, only a couple of hours old at most.

These creatures are ovoviviparous, meaning they are in embryonic eggs that hatch inside

the mother's stomach prior to the live birth. This could be the reason the baby shark was seen shedding its layer while swimming.

While the two were observing the sharks, they saw a larger shark descend beneath the surface into the depths, only to see the pup emerging minutes later. This supported the duo's hypothesis that it was a baby great white and not an older shark.

Drone imaging can only show so much but it is only a matter of time before the science field discovers more leads to develop their hypothesis.

Scientists believe that great whites will only birth their pups in the deeper parts of the ocean, but Gauna and Sternes's discovery might just change that.

New Machu Picchu Ticketing System Sparks Protests

Maggie Jacoby
Features Editor

On Nov. 28, 2023, the "world's saNorthwest of Cusco, Peru, in the Andes Mountains, lies Machu Picchu, a 15th-century Incan citadel. This deserted city stands at the center of the once-powerful Incan Empire and is one of the few remnants of Incan civilization. Known for its palaces, temples, terraces, and stone buildings, Machu Picchu is the most visited tourist destination in Peru.

Recently, Peru's government decided to outsource the ticket sales made at Machu Picchu to Jojinnus. Jojinnus is a private company that owns an on-



PHOTO: ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Machu Picchu site located in Cusco, Peru.

line platform used to sell virtual tickets and is run by a very wealthy economic group in Peru.

Previously, all tickets purchased for Machu Picchu were acquired from a state institution's online portal. Peru's gov-

ernment made a statement claiming that using a private platform will increase the transparency of sales. In 2023, it was reported that unregistered tickets had caused a loss of \$1.8 million.

On Jan. 24, 2024, protests began as a result of this decision. The protests block access to Machu Picchu by delaying the rail services needed to get up the mountain. Due to the safety concerns over

protestors crowding the railway line, all train transportation to the ancient city has been suspended. Now, tourists from all over the world are unable to visit the site.

Protestors fear that the new ticketing system will hurt many small businesses and employees who work in the tourism industry. Instead of benefiting the local economy, the new ticketing method will only help already successful companies profit more. Their goal is to bring the ticket system back under local jurisdiction and push for the resignation of the Minister of Culture, Leslie Urteaga, who approved the ticket change.

In Cusco, tourism accounts for the majority of the citizens' income. According to NBC News, "more than 200,000 people have direct jobs in the sector." However, until the Peruvian government enacts the called-for changes, Machu Picchu will remain a tourist attraction forced to be admired from afar.

United States Troops Killed in Jordan

Afton Hessian
News Editor

Three United States (U.S.) troops were killed at a desert base in Jordan on Jan. 29, 2024, after an Iranian-made drone went undetected. Those killed in the attacks were identified by the Pentagon as Sergeant William Jerome Rivers, 46, of Carrollton, Georgia; Specialist Kennedy Ladon Sanders, 24, of Waycross, Georgia; and Specialist Breonna Alexsondria Moffett, 23, of Savannah, Georgia. According to the Pentagon, over

40 servicemembers were also wounded in the attack. The drone attack in Jordan was one of dozens on U.S. troops in the Middle East since the start of the Israel-Hamas war on Oct. 7, 2023. It marks the first attack in which American servicemembers were killed.

On Feb. 2, 2024, the U.S. retaliated with air assaults on Iraq and Syria, targeting dozens of sites utilized by Iranian-backed militias and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard. "Our response began today. It will continue at times and places of our choosing," said U.S. President Joe Biden. "If you harm an American, we will respond."

Republicans have accused Biden of inaction, referencing his inability to deter Iranian militias. Since the beginning of the Israel-Hamas war, these militias have carried out approximately 168 hostile fire incidents on U.S. troops in the region.

The strikes carried out by the U.S. hit more than 85 targets at seven separate locations, including command headquarters, intelligence centers, ammunition storage sites, and facilities connected to Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, and local militias it supports.

The Iran-backed militia, Kataib Hezbollah, said it was suspending attacks on American troops. However, other militia groups have vowed to continue fighting, allying themselves with the Palestinian cause due to the U.S.'s continued supply of foreign aid to Israel.

Pentagon spokeswoman Sabrina Singh said Central Command continues to review the attack. "We are committed to taking necessary measures to safeguard our forces [who serve] in harm's way," said Singh.

City of Richmond Introduces New Gun Control Framework

Continued from page 1: This is an important issue to address because most gun violence occurs within youth age groups. "I think a main goal is to address this huge problem in adolescence since firearms are the number one leading cause of death," she said. Between 2020 and 2022, gun violence in adolescents more than doubled. "We've seen pretty heartbreaking deaths in adolescents because of accidents that could have been prevented," she said. The city has been advocating for different strategies to prevent these detrimental accidents. "I think safe storage and properly locking up your guns is huge and there is a big emphasis for that from the Mayor and the Chief of Police,"

she said. "They will always say 'lock up your guns' because it is a really great way to improve and reduce violence in communities."

These efforts to keep Richmond safe are an ongoing process and are constantly being monitored, updated, and revised. The office's main goals to continue focusing on are "saving lives, promoting safety, and making sure all residents feel safe no matter where they live, no matter who they are, the color of their skin, their zip code, or their religious beliefs," she said. Mayor Stoney, the steering committee, and all of the communities, organizations, and prevention programs are continuing their GVPI plans to combat gun violence in the City of Richmond.

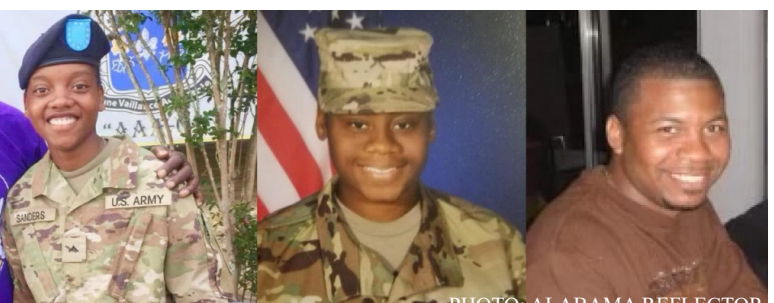


PHOTO: ALABAMA REFLECTOR

The three servicemembers killed in the attack. From left, Spc. Kennedy Sanders, Spc. Breonna Moffett, and Sgt. William Rivers.