

The Commentator

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Douglas Southall Freeman High School



PHOTO: ELLIE SOMERS

Science Teacher Earns Grant

Alex Moss
Online Editor-in-Chief

Next summer, science teacher Greg Townsend is going back to school — he will attend an Ecelsa Spanish school located in Peru and Chile.

In November, Mr. Townsend was awarded a \$12,000 REB-grant to spend seven and a half weeks exploring Latin America to help improve his teaching, specifically of ESL students. The grant was awarded by The Community Foundation, which awards “distinguished educational leaders from five school districts in Central Virginia: Chesterfield, Hanover, Henrico, the Richmond Juvenile Detention Education Department, and the City of Richmond.”

Mr. Townsend applied for the REB grant in 2016. Freeman

parents Debby Levenson and Kay Henry wrote letters of recommendation on his behalf. He resubmitted the application for the 2017 REB grant. Over 100 teachers applied for the grant, and 30 teachers were recognized as finalists.

“Trying to teach to the whole class can be difficult and overwhelming—not for Mr. Townsend. He just gets it,” said Mrs. Levenson.

As a finalist for the award, Mr. Townsend was asked to submit a proposal for a project to improve teacher development, with a budget between \$4,000 to \$12,000. He decided to “go big,” and he submitted a proposal that ultimately won a \$12,000 grant.

For 6 weeks, Mr. Townsend will go to school in the morning and then take a “field trip” each afternoon to practice basic daily functions (banking, shopping,

etc...) in Spanish. All the while, he will live with Latin American families in Guatemala, Peru, and Chile. The primary focus of his proposal is to learn about Spanish language and about Mayan and Incan cultures. In his free time he plans to spend four days hiking and rafting towards Machu Picchu and another four days relaxing on Easter Island.

Mr. Townsend plans to return with Spanish fluency so he can better communicate with Freeman’s largest growing minority. He also plans to gather information and artifacts to turn into 3D images of the volcanoes and mountains for his Earth Science students.

Mr. Townsend has a history of teaching beyond traditional coursework in order to help and motivate his students.

“He told me if I passed the Earth Science SOL, he would

give me his poster of Roman Reigns, my favorite WWE wrestler,” said junior April Bishop. She passed.

However, to many students, it is not Mr. Townsend’s teaching that most impacts them; it is his mindset as a teacher. “He is always trying to look at us as people first rather than students,” said senior Laura Ferreira.

Mr. Townsend faces the daily challenge of teaching a wide variety of subjects and students while delivering both knowledge-filled and impactful lessons. “His enthusiasm for the job is admirable,” said Carol Campfield, Science Department chair. Similarly, fellow Oceanography teacher Patrick Foltz believes “his commitment to students should be a model for all to follow.”

“To be a good teacher, you have to be a good person... and [Mr. Townsend] is both,” said Laura.

Freeman Remembers Nick Ackies

Caroline Daniel &
Jackson Woody
Editors-in-Chief

The Freeman family mourns the loss of Nicholas “Nick” Jerome Ackies, a 2017 graduate who was killed on Oct. 27 in Norfolk, Virginia. Nick was a standout athlete on the varsity football and baseball teams. He was enrolled at Norfolk State University on a full athletic scholarship to play Division I football and baseball.

Police were called to a residence near the Norfolk State University campus shortly after 7 p.m. in response to the sound of gunshots. Nick was pronounced dead at the scene. JayQuan Anderson, a former NSU football player, was charged with second-degree murder.

Nick’s death sent shockwaves through the Freeman community. “My immediate reaction was disbelief. I felt a lot of disbelief, shock, [and] sadness,” said principal Andrew Mey.

Nick is survived by his mother, Ruthina Ackies, and his older siblings, Christopher Reagan and Kathleen McMiller. His funeral service was held at West End Assembly of God at 2 p.m. on Sunday, Nov. 5, and a candlelight vigil was held in the Freeman parking lot at 7 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 4. Over 90 people attended the vigil, while nearly 200 attended the funeral.

“[The vigil] was beautiful. I thought that everyone that was there really loved Nick. Having everybody talk showed how much he’s really done during the time he was here and how many people he’s touched,” said girlfriend, junior Brooklyn Barnes.

Nick’s character left a lasting impression on those around him. “He was always really happy, and he embodied a positiv-

ity that a lot of people don’t always necessarily carry with them to the field or have with them...throughout life,” said Ray Moore, Latin teacher and varsity baseball coach.

His positivity impacted the teams on which he played, creating strong bonds between team members and keeping spirits high. “We had a really strong, cohesive unit [on the baseball team], and we always felt like a family at the end of the spring,” said Coach Moore. “At the end of the day, I think everybody felt like they were brothers and played hard for each other, not just themselves.”

Junior Liam Simpson, one of Nick’s former baseball teammates, said Nick was welcoming and helped improve team morale even on their worst days.

“I could strike out three times, and when I walked back to the dugout, he would be the first one there, patting me on the back and telling me, ‘It’s all good’—making me feel better,” Liam said.

Nick’s mother knew this to be one of her son’s best qualities. “Nick liked to see the best in people, and when they were in pain...he would give people another chance or two or three, knowing there was good in everyone,” said Ms. Ackies.

Nick is best remembered by his baseball teammates for his exuberant celebration after a win. “We all would sing as a team bonding moment after a good game, [but] he was always the one who would sing the loudest and be the most involved in the singing,” Coach Moore said. “His favorite song was ‘Ain’t No Mountain High Enough.’”

Nick’s spirit and athleticism transcended the diamond to the gridiron, where he captured the awe of those around him.

“I think everybody considered Nick to be a terrific athlete, and he had a very friendly, engag-



PHOTO: STRAWBRIDGE EXPRESSIONS

ing, fun-loving personality. [He was] just a very talented young man,” said Mike Henderson, P.E. teacher and varsity football coach.

As a 3-year member of the varsity football team, Nick played defensive tackle and punter. He earned all-conference honors his senior season.

This marks the third loss of a player in three years for the football team. According to Coach Henderson, these losses have taken a toll on the team and coaching staff. “It’s difficult. It’s kind of hard to put into words quite honestly. We spend so much time growing so close to these guys, and we become so emotionally attached to everybody... It’s been emotionally draining,” said Coach Henderson.

Nick was an integral part of Freeman’s athletic success.

“He had a couple of really

strong outings as a senior. One was part of a no-hitter against a good Atlee team. Against J.R. Tucker and Maggie Walker, he struck out double digits, and that’s hard to do in high school,” Coach Moore said.

Nick’s legacy reaches far beyond the chain link fences of Ken Moore field and Bill Long stadium. “He gave back to others. He did a lot for young men and women in this building and the men and women outside of this building,” said Mr. Mey.

In the eyes of Ms. Ackies, Nick’s selflessness and heart are qualities others may take away from Nick’s legacy. “You never know how someone else’s heart is unless you get to know each other. Having money or lack of money doesn’t make you who you are. It’s your heart,” said Ms. Ackies.

Tech Time Offers a Digital Advantage

Cole Ryland
Staff Writer

Anyone who worries that computers are growing too sentient for humans to handle doesn’t need to worry any longer: tech time is here. Tech Time, held by Mrs. Kaplan and Ms. Ciokan, aims to increase your technological knowledge and relieve your technological stress, whether you need to add a printer or wrap text in Excel.

A typical day of Tech Time happens for students every Tuesday during study periods. “They come in and we present the lesson, and then people...listen and interact on their computers and implement the activities in their learning,” Mrs. Kaplan said. Ms. Ciokan is in charge primarily of the tools used in technological programs. “Typically they come and bring their computers. I like to give them hands-on written experience using the tool, and depending on the tool, I either help create something from teachers’ perspective, or we put them in the students’ perspective,” Ms. Ciokan said. “Every week I am featuring a different tool, so typically I’ll send out a reminder...and say ‘This week is about Brain Pop’ for instance. ‘If you want to learn about Brain Pop, come bring your lunch and I will assist you.’”

This program is not just beneficial for learning new skills, however. It also gives teachers an opportunity to increase their development points. By attending a Tech Time lesson, teachers can earn development points to renew their teacher’s license. “Asking a teacher to give up a 45 minute planning period is sometimes more [time] than necessary, so the lunch period seemed like a good fit. They get development points for attending,” Ms. Ciokan said.

Mrs. Kaplan promises to make the program as beneficial as possible for students, stating “It will make you tech savvy.” However, she cannot do this without the help of the students. The best way to make the Tech Time experience as beneficial as possible is to spread the word and suggest to Mrs. Kaplan or Ms. Ciokan what people want to learn. “We don’t want to teach students things they don’t want to learn,” Mrs. Kaplan said. “We want it to help students with their use in technology the best they can.” So, to any students who have interest in this program or just want to learn something about technology to reduce stress and increase knowledge, you are encouraged to stop by the library on Tuesdays during study periods and to suggest anything you may want to learn.

Check out the
Commentator Online!



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New Lunch Options Come to Freeman Cafeteria

Lauren Bruns
Staff Writer

Imagine having the opportunity to try new foods everyday with the freedom to design meals specific to your own tastes. The new My Way Café program in Freeman's cafeteria is focused on improving school lunches for students and introducing a little slice of culture in each menu.

My Way Café is a new county-wide concept intended to give students a chance to customize their lunches. Peggy Gordon, Assistant Director of School Nutrition Services in Henrico County, described it as, "a concept that seeks to give the students choices that coincide with the casual dining selection they make when they go out to eat with friends."

In the program's first few weeks students were able to choose from Asian, Mexican, and Italian menus. These lunch themes are intended to change every two weeks and will encompass a variety of new food options.

Surina Thomas, Freeman's Nutrition Service Manager, described its growing popularity. "My numbers have increased a whole lot," she said. "We now have 200 more kids eating than usually do. Students who bring lunch are even coming over to buy lunch too."

The initiative hopes to encourage kids to buy lunch more often and is designed to improve the diversity of available food options. Food is prepared fresh and in front of students.

"This concept is beneficial to students because every item they select to build a meal is very

healthy," Gordon said. "All of the ingredients must fall within the guidelines for fat, sugar, sodium, and calories for a healthy teenager."

Students so far have been pleased with the lunch options. "I like how it's new every week, and you can choose if you want to participate or not. I didn't expect it to be this good, but the food seems more home-made," said freshman Maggie Goodrich.

Compared to the previous lunches served in Freeman's cafeteria, the My Way Café meals are receiving a much more positive review. "The food tastes a lot better than before," said sophomore Dameon Shults.

This program is changing students' views on school lunches. "It is good and reliable. I like to eat it now because it's better quality," said sophomore Joanna Abbey. "It's giving me a chance to try something new because I usually eat from places like Chick-fil-a. Now I have a new perspective."

"[My Way Café] is giving me a chance to try something new..."

My Way Café has been a success amongst students and faculty alike. "I like the choices," said Thomas. "Most times for lunch now I eat off the My Way menu rather than the traditional menu. Everything in the cafeteria now is 100 percent whole grain, but with My Way it doesn't feel like

you're eating whole grain. It just looks better."

Joanna also spoke excitedly about My Way Café saying, "I think the cafeteria staff is doing a great job keeping it running smoothly. I see a bunch of people trying it and liking it instead of getting everyday pizza and fries all the time. It's very filling too."

While My Way Café is still a part of the school's meal program, it is unique from the original lunch meals. "Probably the biggest difference is that previously, students did not have a part in building their meal," Gordon said. "I think when students have more input into their selections, they buy into what they are putting into their bodies."

The cafeteria staff is facing an increased workload as a result of the program's popularity. "It's crazy," Thomas said, "but now that we are getting a hang of it, it's starting to be easier on us."

My Way Café is bringing an exciting change to Freeman's cafeteria.



PHOTOS:
RACHEL
ALEXANDER

Renaissance Program Inspires a Sense of Belonging

Greer Peacock
Staff Writer

Do you ever feel like the same students get recognized over and over again? Well, Spanish teacher Sarah Snellings has a solution. "Last year, several people went to a meeting called the Renaissance Program, which speaks with different middle schools and high schools. It helps student leaders, teachers, and administrators to create a positive and inclusive community," Ms. Snellings said.

The Renaissance Program is "a program intended to redefine and reform the climate of a school through student-led activism," said Laura Jones, social studies teacher. Any student who is interested can participate in the program. "Last year, the

SCA officers and the Class of 2020 officers attended 'training,'" Ms. Jones said.

This year, the coordinators hope to get the SUCCESS students involved. SUCCESS is a program designed to help struggling ninth grades.

The Renaissance program is a "school-based program that uses national initiative," Ms. Jones said.

"The goal is to make students feel like they have a vested interest in the school, which, in schools with successful Renaissance programs, has led to improved attendance, fewer discipline issues, and an overall improvement in school spirit and student participation in various programs, not just the Renaissance Program," Ms. Jones said.

The Renaissance Program inspired Ms. Snellings to create a program that would recognize all

students for achievements "big and small," she said.

A student recognition wall will be up and in action in December. Ms. Snellings is the leader of this project, which is presented on a bulletin board in the Main Hall. The student recognition wall will "be a way to recognize students for making positive contributions to the Freeman community," Ms. Snellings said. The SCA, Class of 2020 officers, DSF Connect students, and the Art Club are also behind this project.

"Each teacher will choose a student that they would like to recognize and submit their names and what they are being recognized for. The students who are selected will receive a note and a prize from their teacher through SCA," Ms. Snellings said. Teachers can send in students' names and their achievements through a google form. The students

who are recognized will change monthly, Ms. Snellings said.

"Students can be recognized for something as small as sharing lunch money with a friend or as big as starting a new initiative at Freeman," Ms. Snellings said.

There will be different categories for which a student can earn recognition. These include a "Revolutionary Rebel, an Innovative Rebel, a Selfless Rebel, and a Rebel on the Move," Ms. Snellings said.

The purpose of the wall is to "make Freeman an inclusive, positive, and caring community," Ms. Snellings said.

The art club will contribute by creating the background for the display. Art teacher Rebecca Field said, "There should be many ways that our faculty can recognize the good deeds, responsibility, and kindness of Freeman students. I am so glad

Ms. Snellings came up with this idea."

"There is a potential for other clubs to get involved later. If all goes well then we will offer the opportunity to get involved to other clubs and organizations," Ms. Snellings said.

Sophomore Quinn Philips thinks that the student recognition wall will be a positive addition to Freeman "because it will give students who aren't typically recognized a place to be recognized," said Quinn.

Freshman Cat Pinotti said that the wall "will give everyone a chance to shine."

Sophomores David and Christian Andrews said that the wall will not be very beneficial. "There would be too much recognition. There is no point of recognition if everyone is being recognized," they said.

Students Answer: Who Do You Believe Deserves Recognition?



PHOTO: LAUREN LOMBARD

Emily Breeden
Freshman

"The school custodians because they clean up after 2,000 high school students all day."



PHOTO: MORGAN DOLL

Emily Carder
Sophomore

"Salaar Khan. He was quite involved in the Northam campaign and his political ventures express his genuine passion."



PHOTO: CAROLINE DANIEL

Muktar Abdulkadir
Junior

"Bobby Hubbard. He is our [basketball] team manager. He works hard, he always has water ready for us, he always gets the balls organized, and he is kind."



PHOTO: LAUREN LOMBARD

Dylan Kersey
Senior

"Ismar Planic, because he makes everyone feel really good about themselves."

Redefining Feminism in the Modern Age



Caroline Wall
News Editor

equality. I believe that women deserve the same pay and the same employment and leadership opportunities as men, who have historically held the upper hand in workplace politics and national politics.

However, as feminism has grown, the media portrayal of the movement has changed. Feminism is no longer strictly confined to women's fight for political rights and respect in the workplace. Rather, feminism has become a generic battle cry when facing critique. For some women, it has become a reason to wear more revealing clothing, to tear down men, to judge women who choose to be stay-at-home moms, forcing them to lose sight of what feminism is really about.

There are absolutely double standards for women in society and the media, but lashing out against any semblance of discriminatory treatment may not be the best way to advocate for gender equality. Women deserve respect, but we are unlikely to receive that respect if we become defensive and hateful. Yes, historically the movement is about

giving power to females to stand-up in a male-dominated world, but it is not about women taking down men. It is about women being seen as equals to their male counterparts.

Today, the media often hammers the idea of "the patriarchy" and seems to exaggerate the presence of patriarchy in everyday society. Any remotely sexist behavior by men is seen as a product of patriarchal values, but is it fair to expect men to perfectly understand women and always say the right thing? We should be encouraging men to be feminists rather than ostracizing them. We should not be punishing ignorance; we should be teaching men to respect women rather than saying that they are naturally predisposed to mistreat women.

However, while the patriarchy is sometimes over exaggerated, there are still indications of its existence, especially in what has been happening in this country recently. The news has been ridden with allegations of sexual misconduct against high ranking officials and other prominent

figures in society. These allegations point to the conclusion that many men in power have used their positions to repeatedly mistreat others, while still looking respectable in the public eye. I am glad to see that we are now in a time where the ousting and prosecuting of these offenders is of an utmost importance to our society, but it is heartbreaking and exhausting to continually learn of the gross behavior of people we believed we could trust, whose craft or service we once thought to be pure. I hope that women continue to share their stories to protect themselves and prevent future mistreatment, but mostly, I hope that this sexual misconduct ends now, as it is widely spread that this behavior is unacceptable that respect and the appreciation of consent is the only acceptable alternative.

Men and women biologically have different strengths and weaknesses and often have different ways of thinking, but that does not mean that they deserve different places in society. In fact, those skills working together are far more effective to solve prob-

lems than either skill set is alone. However, women often have to push harder to receive the proper commendation for their skills and hard work. As time has gone on, women have become accustomed to speaking louder to ensure that they are heard, and hopefully, men and society as a whole have become accustomed to fully listening to what women have to say.

Lastly, women should be respected because it is the right thing to do. Yes, women are mothers, sisters, and daughters, but most importantly, they are human beings.

I have been lucky in that I am surrounded by people who support me with whatever I chose to pursue, without care to my gender. Everyone deserves that same respect and support, but not everyone gets it. Not everyone has someone to lift them up, which is why society and the media need to help fill that void. As a society, we must remind each other that gender should not hold us back and that respect is meant to be universal.

Paying Homage to Mix it up Day



Nicholas Wright
Opinions Editor

Douglas Freeman High School, the humble-seeming lunch table is an oasis. It is there where on Mix It Up Day, that most hallowed of holidays, we together seek shelter and nourishment, we strangers who have naught in common but our common need to feed.

"In my mere 18 years of living, never were mine eyes opened to the truths of humanity until Mix It Up Day."

And, yea, verily did we feed! On sandwiches and chips, on the delectable concoctions of the cafeteria we did feed. But still more nourishing than the tastiness of material grub was the conversation and sharing of life. Little is sweeter than the voice of a friend, and the sweetest is that of a newly-made friend.

Yes! This was my day of mixing it up – a day to expand my horizons beyond what I thought possible, as good Christopher Columbus did in 1492, discovering a continent of possibility and companionship.

The clock yet ticks, ticks, ticks until the next Mix It Up Day.

It's the most magical day of the year. For a short while, everything you know is topsy-turvy. Left is right. Right is left. Up is down. "Where am I?" you might ask. "Who am I?"

I'm talking about Mix It Up Day, of course – that special day when at lunch we all, well, mix it up. We get those stylish little stickers in first period, and all day our eyes dart around the hallways, looking for little dots whose colors match our own.

This year I was on the green team. It changed my life.

In my mere 18 years of living, never were mine eyes opened to the truths of humanity until Mix It Up Day. O, how vast is the breadth of human experience, and how narrow my perception! Every unfamiliar face is but a friend yet un-made!

In the great barren desert of

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Letters to the editor are encouraged. They must be signed before they can be printed. Because of variety and space, only a limited number of letters can be published. The Commentator reserves the right not to print a letter.

NICK vs. NIC

Nick Ulrichs
Opinions Editor

Nicholas Wright
Opinions Editor

Applies to men and women ;)

No-shave November

I promise the beard's there. You just can't see it.

Congestion season

Winter

Winter? I just met her!

That time of the month

Fire Drillz

I recommend you bring a light jacket

Plastic...anything else is murder!!!

Preferred Christmas tree species

Frasier Fir: holds its needles well and keeps that fresh scent

I'm offended.

Christmas music

Mariah Carey on loop

Poor Attendance, Still got my Independence



Attendance secretary Mrs. Paige sits on the front lines against truancy.



Nick Ulrichs
Opinions Editor

When I pull into the parking lot at 8:59 a.m., I am faced with two choices: I can accept defeat and get an unexcused tardy, or I can turn around and take the absence. There is very little incentive for me to stay. My decision is made before I can even hit the brakes.

At 9:12 a.m. I promptly arrive at my house for the day and sit through a lecture from my mom.

However, I explain to her that I only get 6 unexcused tardies and 10 total absences to save myself from exams. Better to take the absence today and save the tardy for another time.

I will just have to try again tomorrow.

Attendance may be the biggest factor in how much a student can learn, so having an incentive to be absent instead of tardy makes it seem as though a student's punctuality is valued over their presence.

Many students, including myself, can get caught up in the exam exemption of senior year and forget that we still need to finish our education.

"Get here on time and value your education instead of wanting to know if you can skip out on exams," said attendance secretary Toccara Paige about seniors' habits.

A valid point, because a second-semester senior typically, but not always, values their education as much as Donald Trump values the truth.

The second semester "senior slump" is frustrating for teachers, so they have to use exams as a punishment instead of a tool to measure a student's academic growth, which is a testament to the laziness of second-semester seniors.

"Students should base their attendance on the education instead of being a senior and not missing a certain amount of days for exam exemption," said Mrs. Paige.

I guess I'm coming to school after all.

Around 9:30 a.m., I make the "overslept" excuse to Mrs. Paige, because my education is worth more than beating the next level in Assassin's Creed.



PHOTO: CARTER SOMMERS

Carter sails with Christ Church sailing team.

Sailing Sophomore

Braxton Berry
Staff Writer

For sophomore Carter Sommers, sailing is more than competition: it is a link to his past, present, future, and family.

Beyond the grind of school, volunteering, social activities, and familial obligations, Carter Sommers dedicates his free time to sailing. Carter is an avid member of the Richmond Yacht Club and an elite sailing team at Christ Church.

"In the summer of 7th grade, I was invited by Christ Church to be on an elite team that sails the Chesapeake Bay. This gave me the chance to race against nationally ranked opponents and has influenced me to admire competitive racing," Carter said.

Carter has won many individual and team awards for his skill, teamwork, and overall perseverance. "Sailing is a very technical sport that requires focus and knowledge. Sailing can be an individual sport, but when racing on bigger boats like my 420, you need someone else there to help. Sailing allows you to rely on yourself and fully trust another person...there cannot be one without the other. I believe this is a lesson I can use in both my sport and life, and I'll never forget it," Carter said.

Carter's most memorable win was when he and his team raced in Annapolis, Maryland. They participated in the Annapolis Yacht Club's race in the summer of 2016.

"This race was one of the best races of my life. Annapolis is known for having huge competitions on the East Coast. There was a team we raced from there

in a junior national regatta, and we won. There were about 6 boats on our team, so it was very much a team effort. I actually participated in the Turkey Shoot a few weeks ago and placed second," Carter said.

Rena Sommers, Carter's mother, believes one of Carter's proudest moments was when he beat his older brother in a race. "There is always a strong competition between those two," Rena Sommers said.

Sailing has been part of Carter's life for longer than he can remember. "I pretty much grew up on a boat. I was on a boat before I could walk. It has always been part of me, and I don't think that will ever change," Carter said.

Carter appreciates the ties it has to his family. His love for sailing is a family affair and a tradition.

"I have always sailed. My dad was sailing a long time before me, and his dad before him. It is an activity that connects our family. Now that my older brother doesn't sail as much, I keep that link alive," Carter said.

Carter's mother is extremely proud of her son and all that he has and will achieve.

"Carter is the most resilient person I know; he has been through many a situation that would give an older young man much trepidation. Once he figures out what he wants, and only he knows what that is going to be, he will be successful. This year is going to be his year. He understands what is required and is ready to set some goals and achieve them, Rena Sommers said.

With the support of his family and love for sailing, Carter Sommers cannot wait to see what his future has in store for him.

Exchange Student says Guten Tag to Freeman

Cameron McCarty
Staff Writer

Imagine starting high school in a foreign country, knowing no one and staying with a family you had never met. This is the reality for sophomore Stina Waller, an exchange student at Freeman from Lübeck, Germany. Stina is living with the Holstens, a Freeman family. "I really like my host family. They are super nice and a lot like my family," Stina said.

The Holstens connected with Stina through a family from Derbyshire Baptist Church. The Harden Family hosted Stina's mother when she was 15 and told the Holstens about Stina and how she wanted to spend a year in Richmond like her mother. Before this year, Stina had been to Richmond five times to visit the Hardens.

Adjusting from a schedule with 13 classes to Freeman's 7 was hard for Stina. Although her school in Germany is harder, there is less homework. "I like the schedule in Germany better because I have a week long schedule, and the classes are split. In Germany you have two days to do homework," said Stina.

Another difference between Freeman and her school back home was that all thirteen of her classes back home had the same people. "Here, in every class, you have different people. It's refreshing," said Stina.

Exchange programs are very common in Germany. This year, four students in her class are studying abroad. Both Stina's mother and father spent a year in the United States during high school. Stina's brother Justus is the same age as Henry Holsten, Stina's host brother. "Henry is very similar to my younger brother, always making funny jokes and saying weird comments. So just like home!" said Stina.

Justus is also thinking about spending a year with the Holstens. "We would love to have Justus if he decides to do an exchange program," said Mrs. Holsten.

At the end of this year, Stina will repeat 10th grade in Lübeck because her grades do not transfer from Freeman to her high school in Germany. Stina could skip her sophomore year because



PHOTO: JANIE HOLSTEN

Stina smiles with Janie and Henry Holsten.

of her grades, but eleventh grade in Germany is when her college transcript will start, so she has elected not to.

In Germany, college is almost free because of the tax system. Universities in Germany are structured around your career choice and what you want to study. "It is more common for people to ask what are you studying, [rather] than where you go," said Stina. After high school, she wants to go to college in Germany and study abroad in Paris. "I might want to study medicine, but you need a crazy good GPA. I also might want to teach," said Stina.

Johanneum zu Lübeck is Stina's highschool back home, a middle school and high school that is over 600 years old. The old building lacks parking lots, so 60-70 percent of the students and faculty bike to school. Stina bikes an average of 3.5 miles to school every day. "People are not as willing to drive you everywhere," said Stina. Germany is more bike friendly.

Stina plans to go on the Chorus trip this spring to Florida. She is excited to go because she has never been to Disney before. Her close friend from Germany is doing an exchange program in Orlando, and they hope to reunite in Disney. At the end of her program, Stina wants to go to Seattle. "I would love to go to Seattle and see the West Coast," said Stina.

Here at Freeman, Stina is no stranger. She is on the cross country team and winter track team, and she plans to try out for the lacrosse team in the spring. Running is an outlet for Stina. She runs with two other exchange students from Denmark, Freya and Kristine.

"Freya and I agreed that here we always have something to do. On the weekends we always have plans and try to make the most of the one year we have. [It's] unlike home when you don't have anything to do so you just watch Netflix. When I am invited somewhere and I am nervous because I don't know anyone, I always tell myself what the other option is, and that is normally just hanging around the house," Stina said.

Not only an athlete but Stina attends Young Life weekly and is involved with a youth group with her church as well. "I love it. It is so much fun. I love how everyone is always happy, and it was a great way to meet people."

Before coming to Freeman, Stina was scared that she was not going to fit in, but "being thrown into something you don't know at all, my ability to adjust to different things has gone up since being here. And small talk is something I have gotten a lot better at," Stina said.

"The people are my favorite part about Freeman. Everyone is very welcoming and open," said Stina.

Junior Seth Forrest Gets Poetic License

Emily Anstett
Staff Writer

For some people writing poetry in English class is a dreaded affair, but for junior Seth Forrest,

poetry is an outlet to express his creativity.

Seth began writing poetry in eighth grade but started writing more in ninth grade and the beginning of this year. "Poetry

is therapeutic for me. If you have an emotional problem, it's an outlet and helps you work through issues. As you write you can reflect on your poetry and yourself," said Seth.

This year the Creative Writing class has augmented Seth's inspiration. "I listen to other people, and they inspire me," he said. "I'm a little fish in a big pond, and I draw inspiration from that," Seth said.

In creative writing students begin each day by writing for 10 minutes "to get them thinking about words and in the mentality for class," said Wiley Hunnicutt, Creative Writing and English teacher. This year Seth will be contributing to the literary magazine, The Educator.

"He has poetic sensibilities and is an empathetic human being. He can process the world around him by using words," said Mrs. Hunnicutt.

For Seth, writing is a way to clear his head and express his

emotions.

"I come to a writing session with thoughts going crazy, and I can pour it all onto the paper. I try not to think about what I am going to write before and just let it come naturally. Afterwards it feels purifying and cathartic," said Seth.

Seth finds his inspiration in lyrics from his favorite musicians and rappers. In particular, Pink Floyd's bassist Roger Waters is inspiration.

One of Seth's favorite poems was a birthday gift to two of his friends. "I wrote a poem about who I was before knowing them and who I became because of their friendship. It was a high personal achievement seeing their faces," said Seth.

Seth's poems have themes that allow him to reflect on his life. "A lot of it focuses on being unsure on where I'm going and what I want. I write about insecurity and high expectations and the conflict of doing what you

have to do and what you want to do," said Seth.

Whether it is feeling unsure about the future or dealing with the high expectations of school, Seth's poetry gives him a way to express his feelings. Mrs. Hunnicutt has given Seth an outlet to write creatively in school, separate from following the pattern of a literary analysis. "Mrs. Hunnicutt gave me a platform to showcase my poetry," said Seth.

One of Seth's biggest struggles is "remaining inspired," he said. "I use negative and emotional feelings to write about. It's hard to sit down and do it, but reading poetry and song lyrics help inspire and motivate me," said Seth.

Currently, Seth is looking to publish some of his poetry online. However, you can read some of his poems on his Instagram account @sethwrites. "Anyone can come and talk to me about writing. I love that kind of thing," said Seth.



PHOTO: LIZA MOODY

Seth writes poetry in Creative Writing.

Board Substitutes Bring New Perspectives to Freeman

Mark Graff
Staff Writer

In how many occupations do retired workers come back to their own job? Many retired teachers find that being a board sub gives former teachers a way to continue their passion while having flexible hours and assignments. These long-term subs come from all different walks of life and are able to bring their experience back to the classroom. Freeman has seen many board subs in the past few months, with many teachers out on maternity leave or for other reasons.

Retired history teacher William Pillow now board subs for half of the year. "It's part of my retirement. You do 28 days, and they pay you too much money as an ex-teacher to turn down," he said.

Most recently, Mr. Pillow is subbing for Hana Hecht, a history teacher who is currently out on maternity leave. The transition was a little more complicated than usual, as Ms. Hecht had to leave earlier than expected. "She was out on family leave... so the school's not supposed to contact her. She wasn't prepared to leave... but I'm starting to get the hang of how she starts the

classes now," said Mr. Pillow.

As a board sub, Mr. Pillow is able to have more flexible work schedule than when he was teaching full-time. "All my days are at Freeman, I'll be finished by Christmas. I don't do anything second semester," he said.

Meredith Swain, a former English teacher, is now board subbing at Freeman after teaching middle school in Falls Church, VA and high school in Stuarts Draft, VA. For her, Freeman is a different experience than what she is used to. "It was difficult for me at first only because I had never taught on a 45-minute schedule. I had always taught

with 80 minutes, so 45 goes by really fast," she said.

Ms. Swain never worked at Freeman, but she grew up in Henrico County, so coming here to board sub has been a great fit for her. "I've really enjoyed Freeman. It's really different from places I've taught [in the past]. I've taught in a really rural school district and a really urban school district, but now I'm in a suburban school district. I grew up in Henrico County, so it's pretty comfortable and familiar to me," she said.

Though having a board sub can be difficult on both the sub and the students at first, many stu-

dents have positive experiences with their new teachers. Robert Gregory was the substitute for Anne Trexler while she is on maternity leave. Sophomore Sarah Bender is in Sociology.

"It can take a while to adjust [to a new teacher], but overall it's interesting to have new perspectives and teaching styles in class," said Sarah.

Because they have to quickly adjust and prepare for these substitutions, the board subs have a demanding job. Still, their love for teaching and school has given both them and the students a great solution for teachers on leave.

Junior Has a Passion for Horseback Riding

Julia Cassidy
Staff Writer

If you are ever looking for Junior Blake Vidunas, chances are she can be found riding her horse Sprite, a thoroughbred dark brown ex-racehorse, at Henebry Farm in Goochland.

Blake rides competitively, trains horses as a show jumper six days each week, and is a member of the Deep Run Hunt Club. She also does other riding disciplines including fox hunting, cross-riding, and dressage. Horseback riding is an important part of who she is. “Blake sleeps, eats, and thinks riding and horses... She would live at the barn if she could,” said Blake’s mother, Kelly Vidunas.

Blake’s equestrian passion started with her mom. “My mom rode growing up, and I think I just kind of took after her and wanted to ride too,” she said. She started to ride when she was in fourth grade in 2010. Her first riding coach Jeanne Dunford is another one of her inspirations. “[My coach has] been there for everything for me,” she said.

A typical day for Blake includes going to school where she takes a schedule full of challenging courses including AP US History, AP Physics I, Honors English, and Calculus. She then goes to the barn and trains for about 3 hours before going to the gym. “I normally get home around 8 p.m. and start my homework at 8:30 p.m. [I can] be finished at 12:30 a.m., and then [I can] go to bed,” she said.

“Balancing school is a huge challenge,” said Blake.

Competitions are time-consuming as well. “Typically I travel anywhere between 20 minutes and 8 hours [to compete],” she said. The farthest that she has traveled to compete was at the North Carolina Tryon International Equestrian Center which

was 8 hours away.

However, Blake is more than up to the demanding schedule that horseback riding requires. “As a person, Blake is focused, motivated, independent, has a great work ethic, and plans every minute of her day,” Blake’s mom said.

Blake has gotten many injuries from this sport. “Freshman year I was riding my horse in the snow, and he slipped and fell. [My] foot landed underneath of him and got crushed, so I had two major surgeries and two screws. [I had] two months of recovery after surgery and I was out of school for two weeks,” she said.

The physical pain of being injured was not the only hard part. “You can’t do anything. I like to be outside all the time, and I like to be active all the time, and once you’re injured you can’t do anything. I couldn’t go see my horse, who is my best friend. Being separated for that long and not being able to get back on and ride again was so hard,” she said.

Despite the accident happening two years ago, Blake still feels the effects of the injury today. “That was a major setback. I’m still compensating for being injured. Getting back to riding was hard. [My foot is] still not strong—part of my foot is still numb from the injury,” she said.

However, quitting was never an option for Blake. Blake’s mom said, “As soon as the cast came off, but was still in a boot, she was back on the horse.”

Blake makes the lesson and training plans by herself and also has a training schedule that outlines everything her horse does, from his diet to his veterinary appointments. “I’m not going and listening to a coach say, ‘Go run around the track five times.’ I tell myself what to do and when I have to do it,” she said.

Learning how to train the horses has been a long process. Blake has learned through her own experiences, independent



Blake clearing barriers on Sprite.

PHOTO: KELLY VIDUNAS

research, and through her more experienced friends. “I’ve seen what they did and then realized what I have to do to get my own horse fit,” she said.

Her main advice on how to effectively train horses is repetition. “If you show it to them ten times, then by the tenth time they [get] it,” she said.

Blake’s commitment and hard work has resulted in success. “I have successfully trained and brought up two young, inexperienced horses from the ground,” she said. Blake has also trained her horse to jump as high as 4 feet. Blake’s current goal is to get Sprite, who had surgery in August and is still in recovery, in position to compete as a jumper horse in the spring.

Horseback riding has taught Blake some important things about life. “Patience is huge. You have to discipline yourself to be out there every day and be able

to discipline your horse so they respect you,” she said. She also believes that horses have helped her cope with stress and could help other people feel less stress too. “Horses are my stress relief. If I didn’t have horses I would [go] insane...Horseback riding requires a lot of discipline, but horses are very therapeutic. They can’t talk back to you, can’t yell at you. They are a complete reflection of you. If you are calm and relaxed then they will be too,” she said.



Blake and her horse Sprite.

PHOTO: BLAKE VIDUNAS

Namaste in the Library

Grace Powers
Staff Writer

Mindfulness is awareness of the moment. With all of the stress surrounding high school, Laurie Kaplan, Freeman librarian, has started holding mindfulness sessions in the library on Wednesdays during fourth period study blocks. She believes this practice is more important than ever.

“So many people are so stressed, and I know yoga helps me [cope with stress]. The [mindfulness] movement has been so popular and successful, and the Gallagher Foundation promotes it,” Ms. Kaplan said.

There are different activities at every mindfulness session. Sessions are held in the balcony of the library with the lights off. At one meeting, students began with a breathing exercise: breathe in for four seconds, hold for four seconds, breathe out for four seconds. The students then incorporated stretching, using the same breathing technique.

“We talk about breathing, [including] how to slow down your breathing and breathing exercises, stretching exercises, and just general movements of the body that you could do at your desk before a test,” Ms. Kaplan said.

Calm music played in the background, and the room itself was dim. After the stretching, Ms. Kaplan passed out several Skittles to each student. She told students to taste each Skittle without looking and try to focus on the flavor. It was a practice of mindful eating. The session concluded quietly as students walked back to their fourth period.

Ms. Brittany Nill, counseling intern, supported the program from the start. She studied the subject at VCU and led the first three mindfulness sessions. The key to success, she claims, is the breathing exercises.

“Breathing is a basic component of mindfulness. It can have a really positive impact on you; it can lower your heart rate [and] your blood pressure and calm you down,” Ms. Nill said.

Mindfulness can help students focus more in class and can help combat test anxiety. It allows students to separate themselves from the moment, so the anxiety of what is going on does not



Ms. Nill helps Brandon Cokes make stress balls.

PHOTO: ELLIE SOMMERS

overwhelm them. Mindfulness teaches students to be aware of thoughts before reacting to them negatively. Biologically, it reduces the level of stress hormones and inflammatory proteins, making the body calmer. It also regulates the grey matter volume in the amygdala, the part of the brain that controls stress. Studies from both Harvard and John Hopkins show that Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) helps people suffering from anxiety or depression.

The Calm app and Mindful.org are two sources Ms. Nill uses to find activities. She said her anxiety usually occurs right before she goes to bed, so she uses mindful breathing techniques from these two sources to calm down. She also works closely with Ms. Kaplan to find activities for mindfulness sessions using books such as “Uncovering Happiness” by Elisha Goldstein.

Ms. Nill looks forward to creating a gratitude activity similar to one she completed in her VCU class. In such an activity, students would make a simple list of things they are grateful for to get a fresh perspective amidst their busy lives.

Senior Calyn Stanley recommends the mindfulness sessions and wishes she had started sooner. She said that students attending will get out of it what they put into it, so they must over-

come any preconceived notions. “I thought it was going to be in line with Buddhism or something like that, but it’s really not spiritual at all. It’s basic everyday practices that you could take into everyday life,” said Calyn.

Calyn now uses breathing exercises before tests. She also uses other mindful activities daily to lower her stress. The experience has also allowed her to get acquainted with students that she would not meet in her classes.

Student Brandon Cokes has also attended. Brandon said being mindful helps keep his brain relaxed throughout the school day. He is excited to attend the next meeting.

Student Kelsie Cerros enjoys the relaxation and calm of the meetings as well, and she said it already helps her with her focus and breathing.

“I use it at home not to be stressed or when I’m having a hard time. It will help me to continue to relax and to be calm,” Kelsie said.

Ms. Kaplan and Ms. Nill are open to having more students attend meetings and hearing mindfulness ideas from students. The goal of mindfulness, Ms. Kaplan said, is to create “healthier students and healthier minds.” If you are interested in mindfulness, pick up a brochure in the library or see Ms. Kaplan Wednesdays before school for a pass.

Guess Who?



Sophomore Boy

1. Youngest of 4 siblings (has 3 sisters)
2. Loves Nintendo
3. Wants to own and operate his own coffee shop in retirement
4. Would like to go to JMU
5. Enjoys longboarding and running



Senior Girl

1. Born in Washington D.C.
2. Plays Tennis
3. 1/2 deaf in right ear
4. Has a dog named Gunner
5. Had Waleed Suliman over for Thanksgiving

See the answers on the Commentator Online at: dsfcommenter.org

Travel the World While Staying in Richmond

Natalie's Brings a Taste of Lebanon to the West End

Review:

Natalie's Taste of Lebanon



3601 Cox Rd A, Richmond, VA 23233

Rachel Alexander
News Editor

Paprika, pepper, cumin, cardamom, and cloves... the unique blend of spices in every dish captivated my nostrils with diverse aromas. Natalie's Taste of Lebanon is the restaurant choice for both aspiring foodies and seasoned restaurant critics, including anyone interested in or

experienced with Middle Eastern food. Here, dish staples of the region, such as shawarma and kebab are must-haves: the meat is marinated to perfection and the vegetables paired together deliciously. I enjoyed the Ferrouji Mish, a tender piece of charbroiled chicken cushioned on a

bed of rice. The meat is savory, and the rice, which includes a mix of beans and steamed greens, makes an excellent complement. The Shawarma Chicken with Rice was enjoyed by others at my table, and the pickled vegetables included in the dish are an extra treat.

In nearly every restaurant, eagerly-awaited food is predated by bread. Natalie's did not disappoint. The bread that is served appears to be a cross between Middle Eastern pita and Indian naan. I had to restrain myself from eating too much. The flatbread comes with an uncommon spice blend, called Za'atar. A flavorful fusion of sesame seeds, thyme, olive oil, and salt, this herb dipping sauce was something I had never tried before. Our server quickly replaced

our dwindling flatbread supply within five minutes—bless her.

Speaking of restaurant service, quality customer care is undeniable at Natalie's Taste of Lebanon. Our server was friendly and helpful, quickly recommending her favorite dishes off the menu to us indecisive teens and kindly bringing out dessert samplings for us to see as we chose dessert.

One thing I will say about menu items at Natalie's Taste of Lebanon is that some include nuts. For any students with nut allergies, you will surely be accommodated as I was considering my own allergy to tree nuts. For dessert, our table ordered Martha's Namoura, a cake made with semolina flour and drizzled with rose water and orange blossom syrup. While I opted for the almond and pistachio-free option, I

found nothing lacking in the cake itself. It is baked to a hearty crisp and coated in a sticky-sweet orange sauce that adds unexpected flavor.

Overall, Natalie's Taste of Lebanon is a unique cultural dining option in the Richmond area. Located off Cox Road near Innsbrook, it is easily accessible to those looking for a meal before catching a movie at Regal Cinemas or heading to Short Pump Town Center. The comfortable, gently pleasing ambiance is ideal for an evening out, and the food indeed brings you the taste of Lebanon. I owe a thank-you to restaurant owner, Natalie, for sharing with our community the cuisine of her country and a taste of her culture: I thoroughly enjoyed my experience.



Seared salmon from Kuba Kuba Dos.

Kuba Kuba Dos is Numero Uno

Tyler Hendricks
Online Editor-in-Chief

You don't have to travel far from home to get a taste of Cuba... Kuba Kuba allows you

to temporarily immerse yourself in the tastes of Cuban culture. The restaurant is run by Manny

Mendez, a chef of Cuban lineage.

The restaurant has two locations, Kuba Kuba in the Fan, and Kuba Kuba Dos in the West End. I frequent Kuba Kuba Dos due to its proximity to my house, and it never

fails to provide an excellent meal.

For me restaurants are evaluated on five aspects: taste, quantity of food, atmosphere, price, and value for price. These five qualities each represent one star the restaurant can earn for the rating.

Kuba Kuba excels in the taste category. I have tried the Cuban sandwich, the chicken-pineapple sandwich, and the "kuban" roast pork. All were absolutely superb.

Without a doubt, the pork is my favorite. The meat is moist, with a taste so flavorful that it causes the mouth to instantly salivate upon seeing it. The mix of pork, rice, beans, cornbread, and plantains contributes to a satisfying and filling meal.

The sandwiches are always a good choice for lunch, but they might leave you hungry as a dinner entrée. Each sandwich is paired with a side of plantains. Despite their delicious flavor, they will never quite live up to the glory of French fries, but they certainly are able to compete.

The atmosphere of the restaurant is pleasant. Its authentic Cuban decor

allows the patron to feel as if they are stepping from America into Cuba when they walk through the door. Patrons are greeted with lively Spanish music playing quietly in the background, and the staff's friendly and attentive demeanor contribute to a positive experience.

As for the overall evaluation, Kuba Kuba Dos earns four and a half stars. The restaurant earns a full star for taste, atmosphere, quantity, and value for price. The only thing the restaurant is lacking in is overall price. Many items on the menu are a little out of the price range of the average high school student; however, there are enough items on the menu to eat well and not break the bank. I strongly encourage everyone to give Kuba Kuba Dos a visit.

Review:
Kuba Kuba Dos



403 N Ridge Rd, Henrico, VA 23229



The beef kebab entree from Natalie's of Lebanon.

Carytown's Hidden Gem

Review:

Ginger Thai Taste



3145 W Cary St, Richmond, VA 23221

Mia Fuller
A&E Editor

Located on the corner of West Cary Street is Richmond's not-so-hidden gem of Thai cuisine.

Ginger Thai Taste is a Thai-influenced restaurant that caters to all levels of food lovers. With a large menu consisting of appetizers, entrees, and many other goodies, Ginger Thai Taste ensures that a wide array of people will leave satisfied.

The small corner lot where the restaurant stands is occasionally overlooked amongst the craziness of Carytown. I went on a Friday for an early dinner with my dad and my little sister. We arrived around 5:30 p.m. and the restaurant was completely empty, allowing us to sit wherever we pleased. We chose a small table inside that was set with every piece of silverware and condiments needed. The large windows surrounding the restaurant allowed for a well-lit interior and added to the ambiance of the restaurant. The interior was tightly packed, but not to an uncomfortable level. The tables were all very close in proximity to one another, allowing the small restaurant to fit as many customers in as possible.

Our waiter then brought out some menus, and I was immediately overwhelmed by the abundance of options. My family and I decided to get three separate dishes and share them amongst ourselves. My father decided on the Lad Na, a dish with a deep gravy-colored broth, flat rice noodles, carrots, broccoli, and a choice of meat. He opted for shrimp, which brought a whole new dimension of flavor to the dish. My sister went with the Pad See Ew, a flat rice noodle dish that incorporated chicken, egg and broccoli into its thick sauce.

We unanimously agreed that this was the best dish of them all. Something about the tangy sauce that was used elevated the dish to new heights. I settled on the classic Pad Thai, which had thin rice noodles, chicken, onions, egg, and peanuts on the side. I ordered the "medium" spice level, perfect

for my spice preference. The added bit of heat made the dish better than any Pad Thai I had ever tasted.

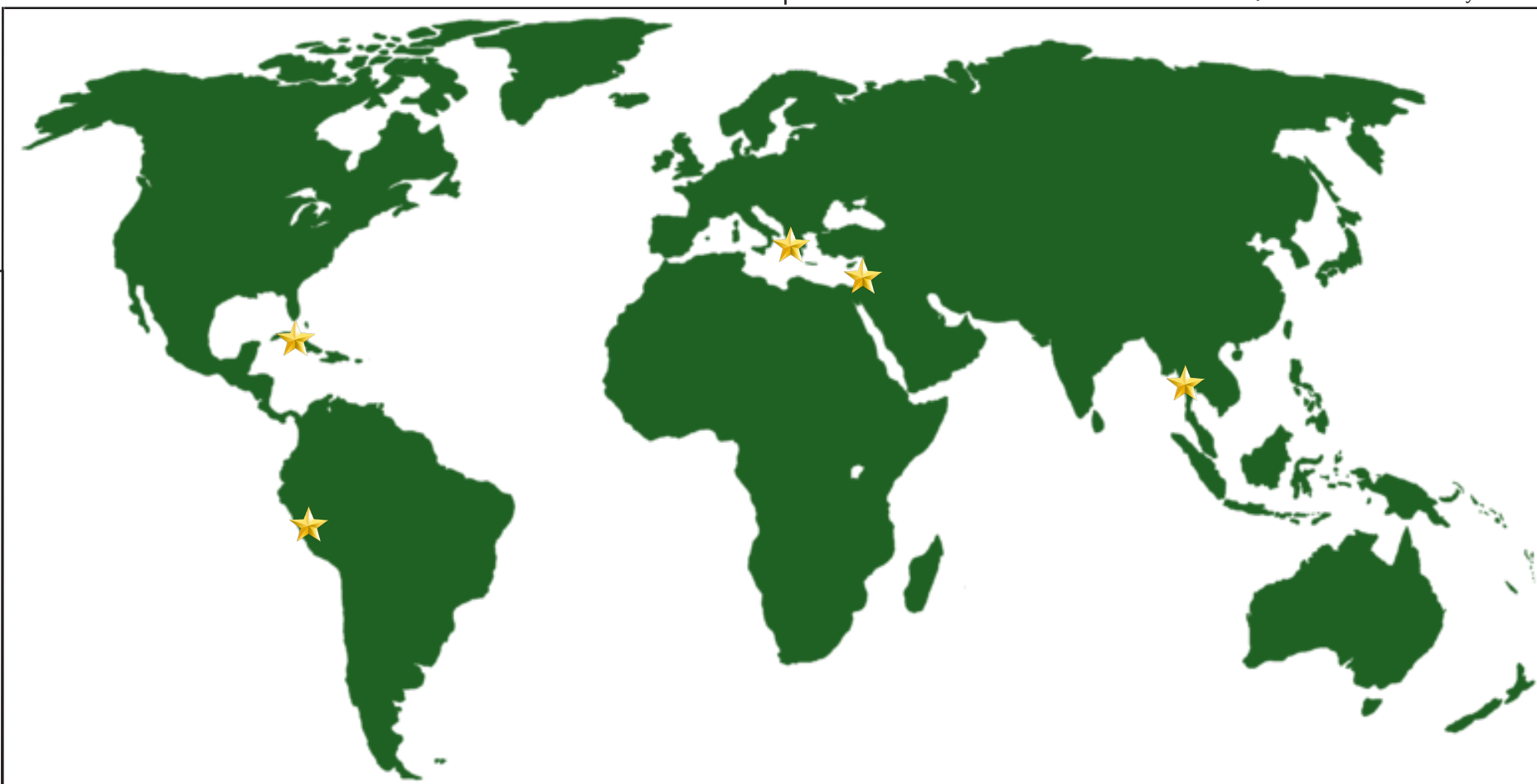
Each dish on the dinner menu cost about \$15, which was a bargain for the amount and quality of food you received.

Though the food was incredible, the best part was the Kopiko cappuccino-flavored candies that we received with the check. That sweet taste of coffee in the small quantity of candy was the perfect end to a great experience.

Overall, my experience at Ginger Thai Taste was wonderful, and I am glad to say I have found my new favorite "spot" in Richmond. So if you're sick of Mellow Mushroom or Galaxy Diner and want something different and delicious in Carytown, head on over to Ginger Thai—you won't leave disappointed.



Pad See Ew and Pad Thai from Ginger Thai Taste.



Super Rico Introduces Peruvian Cuisine to Richmond

Lauren Tull
Centerspread Editor

Instead of traveling 3,000 miles, you can experience true Peruvian culture right here in RVA at Super Rico. Located at 2542 Sheila Lane, Super Rico is 6 minutes away from Pony Pasture and 7 minutes away from Stony Point Mall. Whether you've worked up an appetite hiking and rock hopping along the James River or from shopping "till you drop, Super Rico is the place to go.

I went to Super Rico on a Monday night with my mom and sister. After judging it from the outside (I know it's taboo, but I couldn't help it), I was hesitant. Super Rico is nestled in the middle of a long strip mall, crowned by an unlit neon sign. However, the interior was much more pleasing to the eye than the outside. It was brightly lit, clean, and pleasant.

There were many small tables that would fit a lot of people, though only three were filled late on a Monday night.

The menu includes a variety of authentic Peruvian entrees, but it also has a few more typical options if you are not willing to branch out from your everyday diet. This restaurant is perfect if you are "ballin' on a budget" but still want a filling meal. For just \$8 you can get a mountain of food that could satisfy two hungry people. Most entrees have a main component accompanied by your choice of two sides, like yuca, fried rice, black beans, or corn.

I am the type of person who could eat Chipotle every night of the week, but, after eating at Super Rico, I will now have to split my time. The "Super Burrito" with chicken gave Chipotle a run for its money, and it did not fall apart while eating it, which is a win. For \$8 at Chipotle you can get



The massive taco bowl from Super Rico.

hear the water of the Urubamba River rushing past, the crowing of a rooster, and the conversations in rapid Spanish. My sister opted for a taco salad, which ended up being bigger than her head. It was served in a massive hard shell bowl and was arranged artistically so it was as pretty as it was delicious. She thought it was excellent, and she "10 out of 10

When I took a bite of my mom's Lomo Saltado, which is Peruvian stir-fry, I was immediately transported back to my summer trip to Peru. Suddenly I could

would recommend."

Last summer, my family spent 12 days in Peru. We hiked and camped for four days to reach the summit of Machu Picchu, stayed in the Amazon Jungle, and hugged llamas in the Sacred Valley of the Incas. I grew to love the culture and people of Peru, and I was sad to leave the country (and its delicious food). I can attest—Super Rico serves authentic Peruvian food that tastes just like it does in South America.

While paying for my dinner, I caught a glimpse of a purple drink in a cooler, which I instantly knew was chicha morada. Chicha morada is a typical Peruvian drink made from a special variety of corn that gives it its distinctive color. It's a refreshing fruit juice, and it even has a hint of cinnamon. I drank it every night while in Peru, and it was such a pleasant surprise when I found out Super Rico makes

homemade chicha morada. Their chicha morada is incentive enough for me to go back to the restaurant.

Richmond has a plethora of Mexican and Chinese food restaurants, but there are not many Peruvian restaurants. I was pleasantly surprised to find one so close to home that was legitimately Peruvian but also cheap and delicious.

Peru should be on everyone's travel bucket lists, but if a trip to South America isn't feasible for you right now, a trip to Super Rico should temporarily satisfy your craving.

Review:
Super Rico



2542 Sheila Ln, Richmond, VA 23225

It's All Greek to Me!

Review:
Greek Cuisine
West End



403 N Ridge Rd, Henrico, VA 23229

Liza Moody
Photography Editor



PHOTO: LIZA MOODY

A Santorini platter from Greek Cuisine West End.

Unassuming may be the first word that comes to mind when you first notice the restaurant Greek Cuisine West End nestled between the Hair Cuttery and Dairy Queen off of Patterson Avenue. There is nothing spectacular about the exterior, and when you enter it, it appears to be an average local restaurant decorated with hints of Greek origins, such as a photo series of Santorini on display and a Greek key print running along the top of the wall. Simple and generic—traits that are common in many hole-in-the-wall restaurants.

When my dad and I walked into the restaurant, I noticed that only one table was filled. The young employee working behind the counter greeted us with a quiet "hello," and we were seated promptly. I started off with an appetizer of dolmades, or stuffed grape leaves, with a side of tzatziki. Each dolma was about six inches long, bursting with delicious herb-infused rice and paired perfectly with the smooth, yogurt-like tzatziki.

For my main course, I ordered pasticcio, which is similar to thick, creamy lasagna, while my dad ordered a dish called the

"Santorini Platter." Our meals arrived quickly and I was impressed by the size of the portions—I could have easily split my dish with another person or two. Although the rich pasta melted in my mouth as I took a bite, the dish did not wow my taste buds. I enjoyed my meal, but if I ever return, I would be open to trying another option.

At that point, I looked around and noticed that two more tables had filled up, and there was a woman waiting by the door for a takeout order—a smart move considering how small the restaurant is. It was getting late, so I grabbed the check and was about to head out when a delicious smell wafted in my direction. What I smelled was the delectable aroma of baklava.

Baklava is one of my favorite Greek desserts, so I can be quite particular about what I am getting. My family is part Greek, and every Christmas we receive a box of homemade baklava from my aunt who lives in California. Since I have not had Baklava since last Christmas, I decided to go

ahead and order a piece. I asked for my baklava to go, and after a long wait, I saw the waitress rounding the small partition that separated the kitchen from the seating area with a small, white takeout box in her hand. I was shocked by the large size of the box. Although I could hardly wait to taste it, I saved it for later. When I arrived home and opened the box, my eyes were greeted with the largest slice of baklava I had ever encountered. It was massive! Honey flowed like lava out of the delicacy as I took a sweet, crunchy bite... the top layer of the baklava was made out of phyllo dough and reminded me of a delicate, flaky, apple-pie crust. Greek Cuisine's baklava is a strong competitor against the baklava my aunt bakes annually.

The baklava won me over, and I know I will be returning soon. Greek Cuisine West End has carried the flavors of the Mediterranean to Richmond's doorstep.

Winter Spotlights



Name: Kerrigan White

Sport: Girls Basketball

Grade: 10

What Kerrigan is looking forward to: "Just improving our record and reputation."

About Kerrigan: "Kerrigan is a great athlete, very fast and strong. She has really matured since starting her freshman year, and I think she will have a really good season," Shannon Galt (12).



Name: Grey Pappas

Sport: Boys Basketball

Grade: 12

What Grey is looking forward to: "I can't wait to see Isaiah Todd's face when I posterize him against John Marshall."

About Grey: "Grey is going to play a key part for our team this year as a senior leader, both on the offensive and defensive fronts," Chris Gilliam (12).



Name: Mia Girardi

Sport: Girls Indoor Track

Grade: 12

What Mia is looking forward to: "We have a lot of really great girls and we are going to have a fast 4x800 relay."

About Mia: "She's a great leader who pushes everyone to run to the best of their ability each day," Karson Girvin (10).



Name: Jarrett Gouldin

Sport: Boys Indoor Track

Grade: 11

What Jarrett is looking forward to: "I'm really excited for indoor! I'm hoping I can be fast enough to run on our 4x800 relay team."

About Jarrett: "He's pretty good. But I'm better," Cullen Munro (11).



Name: Sallie Christopher

Sport: Gymnastics

Grade: 11

What Sallie is looking forward to: "I'm looking forward to the meets. We work really hard throughout the week and it pays off at the meets."

About Sallie: "She is such a positive influence and a great addition to our team," Mallory Girvin (12).



Name: Conner Martin

Sport: Wrestling

Grade: 12

What Conner is looking forward to: "I'm hoping to place in the top 6 in the region and make it to the state tournament."

About Conner: "He is the captain of the team and everyone looks up to him," Edwin Gutierrez (11).



Name: Maya Atkins

Sport: Girls Swimming

Grade: 12

What Maya is looking forward to: "I'm looking forward to seeing how the team will grow from last year."

About Maya: "Maya is an incredibly talented swimmer. She is really good at freestyle, and her breaststroke is incredible," Maura Graff (11).



Name: Nicholas Viers

Sport: Boys Swimming

Grade: 11

What Nicholas is looking forward to: "Working together as a team to defend our conference title."

About Nicholas: "Nick works really hard and is going to be a big point scorer for the team this year," Colin Whiting (11).

Weightlifting Coach Pushes Students to Excellence

Katie Cooper
Staff Writer

Behind every great athlete stands a great coach pushing them forward.

Every Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday after school, Freeman athletes congregate in the weight room and await workout instructions from strength and conditioning coach, Aaron Wood.

Coach Wood is a certified strength and conditioning coach, and has been coaching at Freeman since the fall of 2016.

Basketball, tennis, baseball, wrestling, field hockey, and lacrosse are some of the teams that Coach Wood trains at Freeman. Due to the school's resources, all of these teams are able to train with Coach Wood together.

"Freeman is blessed to have such a huge facility that a lot of other Henrico schools don't

have," said Coach Wood about the weight room.

Student athletes face a series of different tasks with Coach Wood in the afternoons. They begin with an outdoor warm-up to elevate heart rates and warm up joints. Afterwards, they head inside to begin lifting and exercising.

Each workout has a different focus. There is a different targeted muscle group to work on every day. Coach Wood helps the athletes individually: "I look for the people who look like they need the most help to get things right."

Before the athletes can begin to get stronger, however, they all need to have the same basic foundation of exercise to improve their strength. But as different sports sect into their own categories, each athlete from their own sport requires different and specific exercises to help improve individual performance.

It is difficult to do all of this at once. It is Aaron's job to make sure they are doing it right.

"You pick specialty exercises that are specific to whatever sport you're working with; with baseball, for example, the rotator cuff takes a lot of abuse, so there are targeted exercises to strengthen it," said Coach Wood.

Coach Wood works for Elkin Sports Performance, an athletic sports training business based in Richmond. Elkin has a wide variety of clients.

"We train kids as young as 7 up to four or five NFL players in the off season," said Coach Wood.

Before joining Elkin, Coach Wood managed investments for several years. However, when he realized he wanted to do something he liked more in his career, he went back to school to become a trainer.

"I've been an athlete my whole life, and I knew I didn't want to

sit at a desk for the rest of my life," he said.

Before joining Freeman, Coach Wood had his doubts about being a coach for the Rebels: "I didn't know if I was going to be any good as a coach," he said.

His own doubts were not reaffirmed by his athletes.

Sophomore Emily Evans plays tennis and trains with Coach Wood. She said, "He's super nice, and he always pushes us to do our best, but never over our limit."

Senior Joe Riggs said he had doubts about Coach Wood at first, but respects him now that he has helped Joe become a better athlete.

"Aaron helped our whole basketball program get bigger, stronger, and faster. He even went the extra mile and set up an individualized program for our varsity players. He was a great help," said Jason Howard, the freshman basketball coach.

Coach Wood not only trains his athletes in the weight room, but he also watches them in action.

"It's cool to see kids lift more than they did at the beginning of the semester, but watching them play and get to do what they've trained for...I think that's the most rewarding part of it," Coach Wood said.

Even though he has only worked with Freeman athletes for the past year, Coach Wood admires their dedication to athletics.

"At the end of the day, all a strength coach can ask for is effort and commitment from the athletes they coach, and that's something Freeman athletes have given this fall season," he said.

On the field, court, track, or in the pool, the athlete may be the star of the show. But without the help of coach working behind the scenes, the athlete is just another extra in the ensemble.

Fall Wrap-ups



Boys Volleyball

The team had a successful run in post-season play. Boys Volleyball made it to the the State Semifinals.



Boys Cross-Country

Boys team finished with a strong season. Ryan McCracken (12) and Sam Geissler (11) finished top-15 at the Regional competition.



Football

The team showed promise throughout the season with home wins against Midlothian, Atlee, and Tucker.



Golf

Team finished as Regional Runner-Ups. Trevor Elliott (11) and Patrick Murphy (12) advanced to Individual State Tournament.

Swimming Takes Over Fall Signing Day

McBride Rawson
Staff Writer

Rebels Swimming was the center of Signing Day with representation from four athletes. This is only the second year that Freeman Swimming is an actual VHSL sport, but that hasn't limited the success of these athletes.

Seniors Carter Bristow, Ian Densley, Grace Edwards, and Maria Vinson all officially signed on November 8. As members of both NOVA and Rebels Swimming, the four are reaching higher levels of competition together. Next fall Carter will be moving on to the University of Virginia, Grace to Boston College, and Ian and Maria both to Roanoke College.

From the podium in front of the athletes and at the end of the library, Kevin Steele, guidance counselor, commenced the Letter of Intent Ceremony. The athletes eagerly awaited their turns to speak. Following introductions from Suzanne Criswell, director of student activities, each athlete and their parents offered brief statements.

As each family praised the athletes and outlined the journey leading up to that point, anticipation for the moment of signing continued to build.

After all had spoken, the long-awaited moment finally arrived. With the camera rolling, pictures flashing, and crowd watching, the athletes simultaneously signed their papers and donned their hats. With the ink finally on paper, Carter, Ian, Grace, and Maria officially set the course for the next four years of their lives.

Reflecting on the moment, Ian said, "It was a lot to take in. It was just weird to see everyone out there for all of us. It was exciting."

Reaching this point was a long journey loaded with 4:30 a.m.



Grace Edwards, Carter Bristow, Maria Vinson, and Ian Densley smile after signing to swim in college.

practices for all these athletes.

For Carter, "All of her hard work both in the pool and out of the pool has enabled her to reach this position," said her mother, Meg Bristow. The lofty goal of swimming in college has been present in Carter's mind for many years now. "In middle school I knew swimming was something I wanted to continue for a long time... I knew that college was the end goal," she said.

Now that she has achieved her goal of college, Carter strives for more. "One of the big, long-term goals I want is to qualify for the Olympic Trials," she said. "It is something I can do at UVA; their program is strong."

The opportunity to qualify for the Olympic Trials was not the only factor in picking UVA. "It had the balance of academics and athletics that I wanted in a school," said Carter. "I'm looking forward to being a part of that whole atmosphere that they have developed." On top of all the benefits that UVA offers, Carter immediately experienced a "gut feeling" that it was the proper place for her.

For Grace, the love of swimming

has extended throughout her life and her family. "I've always loved swimming," she said, and her family has supported that lifelong love of swimming. She credited her parents for supporting her throughout her career, and, she said, "My older sister paved the way for me... she was the one who started getting up early first."

Grace is enthusiastic about her future at Boston College.

"I'm really looking forward to the college swimming experience and the chance to be a part of such a close team," she said. With the team, she is looking forward to the atmosphere and coaches. Grace said, "The coaches are young, new, and motivated to improve the program." During her time in Boston, Grace wants to set her sights on victory. "I would like to eventually final in the ACC champs my senior year," she said.

Looking back on her swimming career, Grace recognized the training she put in. Reaching this point required "a lot of early mornings, a lot of lifting weights, a lot of hard practices, and no sleep," she said.

All of these sacrifices have manifested into Grace's college commitment.

For Ian, his swimming career has been defined by his perseverance. Swimming from the age of four, his lifelong career was interrupted by a serious injury.

"In April 2016, I found out that I had a stress fracture in L4 of my lower back and then I had to wear a back brace," Ian said. The L4 is the second-lowest vertebrae in the spine and requires a long recovery time. Ian said, "The following September I found out that the first [fracture] didn't heal, and I had another one, so I had two L4 stress fractures on either side of my back. I had to wear a big, plastic cast-brace."

In the face of adversity, Ian overcame his injury and, this past February, made his return to the pool. An injury like this may appear to be the end of a career, but Ian said, "My injury actually helped me stick with the sport."

Roanoke was a clear choice for Ian. "The coach at Roanoke was my first coach, and I really liked his coaching style." He continued to say, "I really like the programs they have."

Ian is excited to take his next

step in his life. "I'm really looking forward to a new fresh start," he said. He will not, however, be the only Rebel with a fresh start at Roanoke next year.

For Maria, swimming came naturally. "Maria fell in love with the water while she was learning to swim at age 1," said her parents, Holly and Anthony Vinson. After falling in love at such a young age, Maria stayed dedicated.

Before high school, Maria acknowledged swimming in college as a possibility, but, she said, "I knew it was something I really wanted to do freshman year."

When looking at colleges, Roanoke stood out. "When I went onto the campus, I felt at home and thought it was beautiful and loved everything about it," Maria said. "After I committed with the coaches in August, I started crying because I was so happy." Maria is just excited to take this next step in life at a place she loves.

In her upcoming years at Roanoke, Maria said, "I hope that Roanoke wins the ODAC Division." Aside from her goals for swimming in college, Maria is "trying to study either elementary education or exercise science." Her experience from swimming also translates to other aspects of her life. As Mrs. Vinson said, "Maria has learned time management... how to deal with adversity, how to be humble, and how to deal with defeat. What Maria has learned from swimming, she will carry with her all her life."

Through hard work and commitment, Carter, Grace, Ian, and Maria have all achieved their dreams of swimming in college. Shortly after signing, Grace said, "It's awesome. It takes a weight off your shoulders." With their commitments officially on paper, these athletes' hard work has finally paid off.

Junior Takes a Shot at Freeman Field Events

Kate Yarbrough
Staff Writer

Although the basis of Olympic shot put may seem simple—throw it, as far and as high as you can—it is much more complicated than it first appears.

For junior Lisbeth Rivera, several hours of each week in the winter are dedicated to this relatively uncommon track and field event. In the spring, she also throws discus—a similar sport, but with a disc rather than the shot.

"There's a lot of technique that goes into it. It's so much more than throwing a ball," Lisbeth said. "One movement is everything."

Lisbeth started throwing shot put and discus the same year she started track and field, in seventh grade at Tuckahoe Middle School. "I just wanted to try something new and see if I could put myself to it and improve," she said.

"I've done it for so many years—it's just so interesting. As complicated as it is, I just love doing it," Lisbeth said.

Throwing a shot put involves something called "the glide," and "It is a very difficult thing to do," said her coach, Jud Beard. "It gets you from the back of



Lisbeth practices her technique.

the circle to the middle of the circle... and all three of my girls are very, very good at that now because we work on it every single day."

Going to competitions is always a stressful yet exciting event. "I always want to be the best I can be. Every meet, I'm looking at past meets and trying to improve myself each time. It is always exciting to see how far I can throw in each event," she said.

"When I tell people I do shot put and discus, they will sometimes be skeptical, saying



PHOTOS: OLIVIA WRIGHT

that I don't look like I am built for it... But when I'm at a track event and they see me, they are often like, 'Oh! Okay, I see why you do that,' just because of how much I like it," she said.

Only three consistent members are on the girls shot put and discus team, making them a tight knit group.

Lisbeth and her two teammates, juniors Grace Powers and Olivia Wright, are each other's biggest supporters.

"They know the struggles; they know all the obstacles we have

to go through, and... they just understand," Lisbeth said.

"It kind of sucks [to have] the amount of people we have, but we get more one-on-one time, and it's fun since we're so close with everybody," said Olivia.

Coach Beard taught and coached at Freeman from 1980 to 2006, but he was not planning on coming back afterward. "When I was called and asked, 'Would you consider this?' I said I'd come back for a little while and see how things go," he said.

"The girls have done very well, and it has made me want to come back and continue to coach. I don't need to do this... but the girls have worked hard for me, and that's what it takes," he said.

Coach Beard helps the girls not only learn their technique but also how to apply it. "When we see other girls [at meets] that look much larger than us, we think that they're going to be better than us. But, he always tells us that it doesn't really have anything to do with size," Lisbeth said.

"I told [the girls] that you can compete against those bigger girls... but it has got to be through quickness," Coach Beard said. "That's where you're going to get your distance."

Despite the support from her coach and teammates, it is not always easy for Lisbeth to be in

the right mindset during practice and meets.

"Just being positive [is a challenge for me]. Sometimes, one of my steps goes wrong and the entire day I'm like, 'Wow, am I really good at this? Should I be doing this?' But Coach [Beard] is always really supportive," she said.

Shot put is not as prevalent in female athletes as some other events. It was only made an Olympic sport for women 69 years ago in 1948, a miniscule number in comparison to the 121 years of men's Olympic shot put.

Regardless, Lisbeth found inspiration to continue shot put and discus at Freeman from another Freeman Rebel.

"She graduated in my freshman year, and her name was Rebecca [Webb]. It just came to her. Whenever she was in the circle and doing her technique, she always made it look so easy. I would mimic what she was doing, and she'd show me anything I was struggling on," said Lisbeth.

Lisbeth is dedicated to complete her time at Freeman bettering her technique. "I've done half of my high school career, and I don't want to stop now. I'm going to keep getting better because I just want to see where I'm at in two years," she said.

Fall Wrap-Ups



Competition Cheering

The team competed in invitationals and continued to work hard and be successful throughout multiple injuries.



Field Hockey

After losing 12 seniors last year, this young team worked on rebuilding skills. This included wins against Tucker and Hermitage.



Girls Volleyball

This team started the season undefeated 6-0 and ended the season strong, making it to regional quarter-finals.



Girls Cross Country

Girls Cross Country finished strong, placing fourth in regionals. Mia Girardi and Karson Girvin received all-region titles.

Twins' Athleticism Inspires

Caitlin McSorley
Staff Writer

The term "multi-sport athletes" may be an understatement for sophomore identical twins, Ariel and Kristine Ogden.

The girls participate on the Freeman cross country, swim, winter track, and spring track teams. Outside of Freeman sports, the girls swim a 10-week summer season for Ridgetop Recreation Association, and take ice skating classes.

This year was their second season on the JV cross country team, where they participate in the 5K event. "They have some limitations they had to overcome, and it is inspirational to see them working hard and fighting through everything," said Brian Reutinger, head cross country coach.

Both Ariel and Kristine have autism, which adds challenges to learning new sports. "We are always breaking it down, breaking it down," said Mrs. Ogden, the girls' mother, referring to their swimming. For instance, she taught them the motion of freestyle by holding ping-pong paddles for them to touch with every stroke.

Mrs. Ogden attends the practices of the girls for every sport. "The coaches have always been very open to me. They know I can give the instruction because I understand autism," said Mrs. Ogden. For instance,



PHOTO BY: MARY ANN MAGNANT



PHOTO BY: MARY ANN MAGNANT

Ariel (left) and Kristine (right) compete in the MileStat Invitational on Oct. 14.

she taught them the motion of freestyle by holding ping-pong paddles for them to touch with every stroke.

Like Mrs. Ogden, the girls' teachers understand how to tackle new challenges with them.

"Ariel gets her point across using sign language, gestures, and a communication device," said Lourie Sledd, one of their teachers. Kristine said her first word at age 7. "She said 'ball,' and we all started crying," said Mrs. Ogden. "Then it was all Helen Keller, and she'd go get something and bring it down, and hold it in front of us [to learn the name]," said Mrs. Ogden.

Despite the obstacles the girls face, both of them are successful athletes. Ariel's strongest sport is running. In the fall she ran a 24.23 in her first cross country

meet at Pole Green XC Classic, and a 6:36 mile in spring track last year. She also completed the Richmond half marathon two years ago.

Kristine, whose favorite sport is swimming, said she prefers "Two laps, freestyle." On the Ridgetop summer swim team, Kristine earned the "Most Improved Girl" award this past summer and the "Best Attitude Girl" award in 2015 and 2016.

"Ariel and Kristine brought their A-game to every practice [last season]. Their meet success proved just how hardworking they both are," Chris Tiller, the Freeman assistant swim coach, said.

Ariel and Kristine contribute more than athletic success to every team. "They work really hard...whenever people work

hard they push everyone around them to keep up, so they really motivate us," said junior Laine Mumford, cross country teammate.

Even though the girls do not compete on a skating team, they spend their weekends on the ice. "They started skating in a beginner class two to three years ago and would do free skate after. Now they are in an advanced class," said Ryley Ogden, the twins' older sister. "They can skate backwards, do jumps, and arabesque [a trick of bending while balancing on one skate]," said Mrs. Ogden.

Ariel and Kristine are an inspiration to the people around them. "They don't know they are doing things that other kids can't do, but the other kids know it. I like other people being able

to see kids with disabilities do things that other people can't do," said Mrs. Ogden.

Mrs. Ogden sees the support of the girls' teammates. She said, "The student athletes have been great with the twins. It makes me proud to have been a Rebel and that the twins are now Rebels too."

Ariel and Kristine are not only committed to athletic success, but apply their determination to the classroom. Mrs. Sledd said both students "love learning new things."

It may be each girl's personality that truly puts a smile on everyone around them. "They are just so sweet and kind," said Mrs. Sledd.

"Sometimes they will hold your hand," said Laine.

"Ariel is more reserved," said Dani Davis, one of the girls' instructional assistants. Ariel's favorite things are the color orange, ice skating, ice cream, photography and ceramics class.

"Kristine smiles all the time...she is free-spirited, and outgoing," said Mrs. Sledd. Kristine's favorite things include the color green, the movie "Despicable Me," cookies, oceanography class, coloring, and chorus. Kristine can be humorous, and when asked "What's up?" the answer "chicken butt" is almost a guarantee. Kristine likes school and athletic teams for the same reason. "[I] like seeing people," said Kristine.

After all the effort Ariel and Kristine put in, Mrs. Sledd said they "enjoy giving a high five."



PHOTO BY: LIZA MOODY

Omari goes behind his back in a close game against Glen Allen on Dec. 5.

Freshman Makes Big Impact

Juliana McKean
Staff Writer

Mind over matter matters. 5'2 freshman Omari DeVeaux is not the stereotypical basketball player, but he reaches high regardless of his height. Primarily a point guard but also adept as a shooting guard, Omari is a fearless, dynamic player who works hard to better himself.

"When I play, I think of myself as just as tall as anybody else, and I'm not scared to go up against somebody that's 6'5. To prepare myself, I'll go to the YMCA and play against older guys just so I can get better, tougher, and stronger," Omari said.

Omari has been dedicated to the sport since birth, citing his baby pictures that include a basketball. However, he didn't start playing for a team until he was older. Now, Omari plays for Team Loaded, an AAU travel basketball team, in addition to Freeman's JV team.

Basketball is a family affair for the DeVeaux family, as both of Omari's parents played. Omari's brother, born in 2016, has already been introduced to the family's favorite sport. "I can

see that he wants to play. I'm kind of teaching him so that when he grows up, he'll be better than I was," Omari said.

Omari is grateful to his parents for getting him involved in the sport, but he also recognizes the sacrifices they have made to allow him to thrive.

"My biggest inspiration is my parents. They work hard for me to do the things that I do, like they would go out of their way just to take me to practice and stuff. I want to work hard just like them," he said.

In addition to looking to his parents for inspiration, Omari enjoys watching basketball to learn from role models. He loves Duke, and he names Grayson Allen and Trevon Duval as his current favorite players. "They're hard working, and they just have that passion and killer instinct when they play," he said.

Omari demonstrates a strong work ethic just like his role models according to Jason Howard, coach of the freshman basketball team. He projects big things for Omari this season. "Omari will be a big help both on and off the court. He's a natural leader and can score. Both of those strengths will help him win his team games this season," he said.

Omari is most looking forward to playing Godwin, Tucker, and John Marshall this season because he has friends that play for each team. He is shooting high this season, hoping to win a division championship for Freeman. For him, the most important thing for a player is to maintain a good attitude and work ethic through both smooth sailing and when facing adversity.

"It's just a fun sport to play, and I look forward to improving throughout the season," he said.

Boys JV Basketball Schedule

12/14/2017 at 7:30 PM
DSF vs. Hermitage

12/16/2017 at 1:00 PM
DSF @ Albemarle

12/19/2017 at 6:15 PM
DSF vs. Monticello

1/3/2018 at 7:30 PM
DSF @ Glen Allen

1/6/2018 at 10:30 AM
DSF vs. Mills E. Godwin

1/9/2018 at 7:30 PM
DSF vs. John Marshall

Sibling Rivalry: From Living Room to Wrestling Mat

Laney Van Lenten
Staff Writer

While the majority of school is excited about the upcoming food during the holiday season, brothers, senior Tyler Thomas and sophomore Conor Thomas, are worried about making their wrestling weight.

"When it comes to the wrestling season, I go on a pretty strict diet. Low carbs, lean meats, cut up salads, that sort of thing," Tyler said. "In middle school, my diet consisted of almonds and applesauce," Conor said, laughing. "Now I've learned how to control my weight better."

Making weight is an important part of wrestling; however, not everyone in the family takes this as seriously as the boys do.

"That's what I don't like about wrestling, how you have to make weight," said father Russ Thomas.

Despite these strict rules, both boys enjoy wrestling as their primary sport. Conor began wrestling in middle school after seeing his older brother, Luke, wrestle.

"My oldest brother wrestled in high school and middle school, and I just kind of wanted to follow in his footsteps," Conor said.

For Tyler, seeing both his brothers wrestle, as well as a push from former Freeman wrestler Brett Reid got him involved.

"I said 'Sure, I'll think about it,' and I showed up to the information meeting tenth grade year, and that's how I ended up wrestling," Tyler said.

Although both brothers play for the Freeman baseball team, wrestling is their true sport.

"Since I've started wrestling, I like it more," Tyler said. "I think wrestling will be my main sport in college," Conor said.

Both appreciate wrestling as an individual sport.

"I don't have to worry about everyone else on the team. I have to be better than the guy, I have to know what I'm doing, I have to act before he does," Tyler said.

"I like the fact that if you lose, it's on you. There's no one out there to help you. It's an 'I' kind of sport," Conor said.

Despite this shared value, both boys are still incredibly competitive, and use each other to build their skills.

"We like to debate about who's better, but I think I'm better," Tyler said, laughing.

Both boys have high expectations for their seasons. Tyler aspires to go to states as a member of the varsity team, and Conor aspires to qualify for semi-finals in the regional competition as a member of the junior-varsity team.

"I'd like to see Tyler qualify for states, and place there," Assistant Coach Jim Butcher said. "Conor's a little younger, and he still has a few years of experience

**"We like to debate about who is better, but I think I'm better."
-Tyler Thomas**

to gain, but he should make it pretty far."

"Improvement is the most important thing to me. Sophomore year is a building season for me. I'm trying to build myself so I'm prepared for next year and senior year," said Conor.

Conor's season was derailed early on, with a minor concussion the first week of practice, but his family and coaches remain hopeful that he will be able to get back on the mat soon.

Wrestling together has brought the boys closer. Conor brought Tyler into the wrestling environment and taught him the basics, while Tyler quickly adapted and created his own wrestling style, keeping the competitiveness up the entire time.

"We always try to make our dad pick who's better, but he never does," Tyler said.

Varsity Wrestling Schedule

12/15/2017 at 5:30 PM
12/16/2017 at 9:00 AM
DSF @ Lee-Davis Tournament

12/17/2017 at 6:00 PM
DSF vs. TBA, Henrico, Mills E. Godwin

Sophomore Takes Stage as Lady Macbeth

Megan Kelleher
Design Editor

For sophomore Caroline Ferguson, "Macbeth" is more than just a senior year required read. It's an outlook on the future which she wants to pursue.

Caroline starred as the female lead, Lady Macbeth, in Freeman's production of "Macbeth" on November 16-18th, but her acting and singing career began far earlier than her mainstage debut this fall.

When she was young, Caroline participated in musical productions with SPARC Theater Company, as well as Christian Youth Theater (CYT). "It's when I really started getting onstage," she said. Summer productions and theater outside of school became "almost like camp," she said.

Between in-school talent shows, outside productions, and school musicals, Caroline has acted and sung in nine productions. "It's been a lot," she said.

In previous productions, Caroline has often played the "dumb, blond girl" in musicals. She was



Caroline Ferguson (right) as Lady Macbeth.

previously Sharpay in Tuckahoe Middle School's production of "High School Musical."

However, her portrayal of the role of Lady Macbeth has opened up a new realm of acting possibilities.

"Lady Macbeth is a whole different character I get to play," she said. The stark contrast between Lady Macbeth's assertive lines and her previous roles as a ditzy

blonde has proved to be "challenging as an actress," she said.

The language in "Macbeth" is difficult, and the actors have to read the play, "look at each line, and know what it means before you can even start memorizing," she said.

"[Lady Macbeth is] one of my dream roles—she's so complex and so hard to do that if you pull it off, it's a great accomplish-

ment," Caroline added.

Other members of the theater department have observed Caroline's acting evolve throughout the preparation for "Macbeth."

"I always knew Caroline was talented, but throughout the process of this production I [have seen] how she has grown as an actor," said junior and stage manager Ariella Press.

Theater is important to Caro-

line. "It's like a little family," she said.

Working with the cast and crew has been "so fun—everyone is just so nice," she said. Every practice has proved to be a "lesson. You're teaching the freshman how to function because it can be hard for them," Caroline said. Especially with talented teachers such as Mrs. Spears, freshman "don't really understand the difference between middle school production and high school production." Even "seniors learn a lot from [the freshman]," she said.

Even if acting may not be considered stereotypically "cool," Caroline lets her passion for the theater drive her ambitions.

"Especially when people see [the board of headshots], they say 'Oh you're one of those people!'" Caroline doesn't let the opinion of others get in the way of her theater aspirations.

As for her future in the theater, Caroline "want[s] to make it big." She sees herself "either singing or acting," and knows for sure that acting is "what [she] wants to do with [her] life," she said.

Students and Teachers give 'Macbeth' Rave Reviews

"The set design looked awesome!" - Tabitha Piwowarski (11)

"The play stayed very true to Shakespeare's writing."

- Ceecee Fishburne (12)

"Caroline Ferguson delivered her lines so comfortably that I am convinced that's how she talks in real life. Also, I am still having nightmares about the witches. They did a great job."

- Mr. Booher



Franklin Pugh and Kenzie Gilson in Macbeth.

Freeman Artists Express Creativity

Zoe Costello
Staff Writer

Junior Finds Passion in Art

Junior Annie Vo can be found in the back corner of the art room, hunched over her desk, working quietly and focused.

She is currently working on a 3D abstract assignment. For the project, they are making boxes and putting something that represents a part of their life in each box.

"It's sort of like a self portrait," she said. "For one box I'm doing art, because that's a part of me. I used a metallic wire to create a tree, and I'm going to use painted cotton balls to make the leaves. It's going to be really colorful."

Art has always been a big part of Annie's life.

"I've been interested in art my whole life. When I was little, I had composition books at my house, and I would always draw in them," she said.

Annie shares her artistic ability with her family. "My mom does nail art, and my dad isn't an artist, but he can draw," she said. Her younger sister, Jessica Vo, also takes Art 7 at Tuckahoe Middle School.

Annie is currently taking Art III. "Art is always fun for me, but this class is a little more rigorous than the others," she said.

Art is Annie's favorite class, and the only thing she dislikes about it is the due dates. She considers herself a perfectionist, and sometimes takes a longer time on projects so she can get it just right.

"Annie is a really hard worker" said Elizabeth Jones, her art teacher. "She sometimes takes a little longer to do things, but she always comes back with really well done stuff."

Her most recently completed work was a still life piece, which was the first project of the year.

"I took a picture of apples at the grocery store; it was pretty hard since it was still life," Annie said.

When the project was due, she only had quarter of the picture drawn. "She worked on it until the end of the quarter, and then turned it in, but it was well worth it," Ms. Jones said.

"I'm pretty satisfied with the work," Annie said. "I think it came out pretty well."

Annie intends to practice realism and drawing with graphite. She gets inspiration from just about anything.



Annie Vo painting in Art III.

"Sometimes an idea just comes to you—I can't really describe it. When I want to draw something, I just do it," she said.

While Annie does not have a least favorite style of art, she has the hardest time with painting.

"I don't think I'm very good at it," she said.

Annie shares her passion for art with her interest in technology. She took Computer Art as a class in middle school.

"My teacher chose my computer art to be in an art show once. That was pretty cool," Annie said.

She is also interested in coding. "I tried learning coding for a little bit, but I don't know much about it," she said.

For now, art isn't just a temporary hobby. She hopes to use her art in the future and possibly go VCU.

"I want to do something technical and artistic, like graphic design or game design," she said.

Annie can sometimes find it difficult to balance her schedule and school with her art, but she always makes time for it. "You can make something really cool," she said. "It's just really fun. You don't have to think too much about it; you can just do what you want, make something cool, and express yourself."

Maggie Flournoy
Staff Writer

Freshman Artist and Filmmaker

With straight cut bangs and long brown hair, self-described '80s era lover and film fiend freshman Grace Minson is not just attracted to one form of art.

"I like a lot of different mediums," she said. Her artistry includes, but is not limited to, photography, collages, and filmmaking.

I like how art shows vulnerability and intelligence without having a set guideline of rules to follow," she said.

One of the main ways Grace expresses her creativity is through photography. "I started taking pictures that I'm proud of this summer," Grace said. Grace prefers taking her pictures with her film camera, but said "It can get kind of expensive sometimes." She tends to take pictures of subjects she believes would "make a good shot in a movie."

Collages are a large part of what Grace creates. "I have a tendency to save random things and use them in my collages," she said. "I have a drawer in my room full of bits of paper in plastic bags, star confetti, and torn out magazine pages."

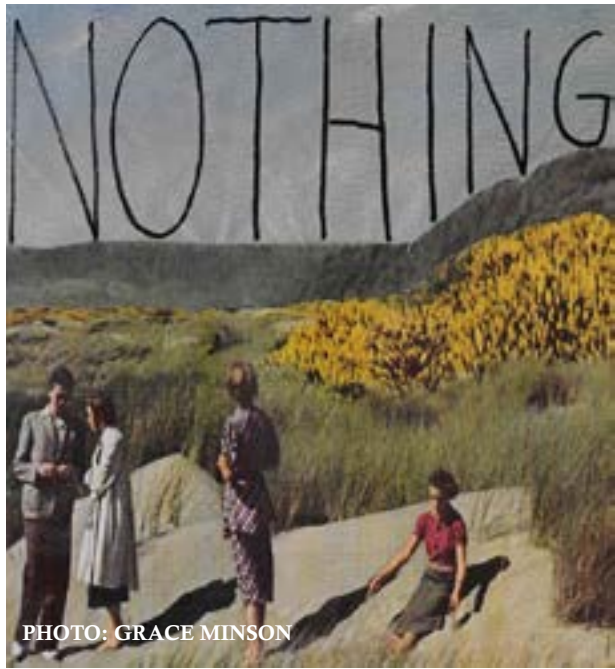
Grace is currently in Art II, but began taking art classes in middle school. "I made an altered book last year in art class, and I'm pretty sure that's my favorite thing that I have made," Grace said. "I created spreads [on an older, repurposed book] symbolizing music, ideas, and art that I was interested in."

Grace is well versed in the creation of collages, but she aspires to be a filmmaker when she is older. "I watch movies all the time," Grace said. "I like to tell myself that I'm studying."

Grace is not only a spectator in the film community—she creates her own short films as well. "I like using my Canon video camera to film," she said. "It gives it more of a Super 8 look than if I used a digital one." Grace's favorite movie is "Moonrise Kingdom." "Wes Anderson's style is so iconic and the movie itself just feels like a second home to me," she said.

Grace describes her art style as "colorful and varied," and friend Emily Ashkani, freshman, said it is "unique."

Visual art is not the only way Grace expresses herself. "I do a lot of simple music making, music writing, playing the guitar, and playing the ukulele. I really



Art piece by Grace Minson.

want to learn the piano," she said. Grace first became interested in music after listening to The Beatles, but she only began songwriting and playing instruments this past year.

Grace's favorite art piece is by Korean artist Nam June Paik and is called "Electronic Superhighway." "My sister, mom, and I went to Washington D.C. for a vacation, and I dragged them to the National Portrait Gallery," she said. "When I first saw 'Electronic Superhighway,' it was especially groundbreaking to me."

"I had never seen a combination of audio/visual concepts in an art museum before," she said.

"I love how it engages people in a way that makes you want to sit there all day and look at it."

"I've never had that feeling about any other piece of art, so I have a bit of a connection to it," she said.

**Art Hall
Construction**

**Read the Article
(p. 12)**

Students to Construct Display for Art Show

Emme Levenson
Staff Writer

You've probably walked by and seen the empty wall where a row of lockers once was in the art hall. Freeman's National Art Honor Society [NAHS] is planning to remove all of the lockers on the right side of the art hallway and create a showcase for students to display their artwork.

This permanent gallery space will be ready to showcase art for the March 24-25 Henrico County Art Show that will be hosted at Freeman.

"Every school in the county is represented and art teachers go all-out displaying the best work from the year. We are lucky that this year Freeman High School will be the host," said Elizabeth Jones, art teacher.

"We have already had multiple meetings with our feeder schools and the art specialist to plan. We are also reaching out to local

businesses and artists to participate," Ms. Jones said.

Talia Moore and Sam Ashkani, NAHS co presidents, are leading the project.

"Hopefully the seniors will be able to make the space their own," said Sam.

According to Talia, at the end of last year the engineering class started the project by tearing down some of the lockers. NAHS decided to create a special place for the senior artists. The National Art Honor Society is paying for the installation of drywall, shelves, and possible lighting, and they will be working on the project themselves. NAHS plans to use their account accrued from membership dues for the installation of the showcase. They are also hoping to paint the wall and decorate it with pins including the students' work.

The janitors will be removing the rest of the lockers, and the remodeling will hopefully be done after winter break.

Henrico County Art Show

When: March 24-25
Where: Freeman
What: Community Art Showcase

The project is not definite, but NAHS is doing all it can to ensure the plan's success. Ms. Jones is excited for her students to be able to showcase their talents.

"We want to make the hallway represent what we have in the visual arts department," Ms. Jones said with a smile. The idea was inspired by the showcase hosted by Henrico High School and Deep Run's senior art show.

The project will involve summer work, which members of the National Art Honor Society are willing to do. Principal An-

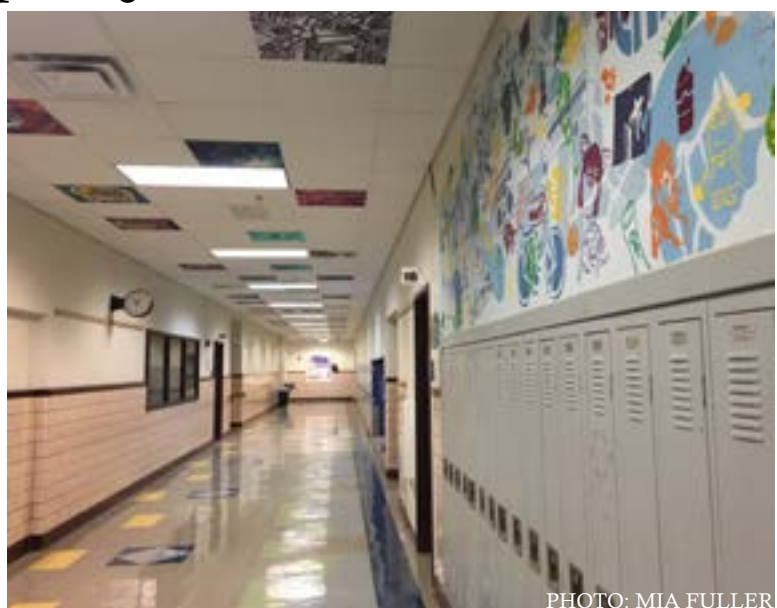


PHOTO: MIA FULLER

The lockers stand stoically waiting to be destroyed.

drew Mey is looking forward to bringing the project to life. "We are reclaiming a part of our school that needs a new face to it," said Mr. Mey.

Sam and Talia are excited to be heading the construction, as they have been a part of the Art De-

partment every year in their time at Freeman.

"The idea is to highlight the seniors who have been working through art throughout the years and [to] have this special space to show off what they've done," said Talia



PHOTO: NICK ULRICHS

General ready for action.

Terracotta in RVA

Nick Ulrichs
Opinions Editor

A lively exhibit for the world's least alive army. The Terracotta Army exhibit at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts is the perfect mix between history and art.

The exhibit goes deep into the history and culture of China both before and after the creation of the Terracotta Army. I found it very interesting, but \$20 is still a high price for a ticket to an art exhibit. I would save my money unless you are an art enthusiast.

I would recommend this exhibit for those that are 16 years old and older. It is not an exhibit meant for children. There is a lot of reading to do to understand the context of each piece, however, this information adds a new dimension to what would normally be mundane-looking art.

Chinese history is not a subject usually taught in school, so this was a refreshing break from the Founding Fathers and Civil War subjects often taught in school. China was a country a long time before the first settlers came to America so I sometimes found it hard to grasp how long ago this history happened and how fortunate we are that this way of life was preserved.

The main narrative of the exhibit is the life of Ying Zheng who became the first emperor of the Qin dynasty. He was born during the Warring States Period of Chinese history that lasted from 476 BCE to 221 BCE. His ascension to becoming the first emperor to unify China began when he was appointed Crown prince at age 10. Three years later, he ascended to the throne of the Qin state and his title became

King Ying Zheng of Qin.

He started building the Terracotta Army to protect him in the afterlife, and construction began shortly after his ascension and continued for 38 years.

While the construction was taking place, he was busy defeating the attacking states of Chu, Zhao, Wei, Han, and Yan to unify China. It took twenty years after the Qin conquered the region to completely unify the country. At this point, he proclaimed himself the First Emperor, or Qin Shihuang.

Later in his life, Qin Shihuang started his fifth and final inspection tour. He died during the tour due to his lifelong obsession with immortality. His doctors thought that by letting him ingest balls of mercury, he would become immortal. However, mercury poisoning outweighed superstition.

Why would he make others go through the work of building an entire army to protect him in the afterlife when his mission in life was to live forever?

The Terracotta Army he constructed was not just simple foot soldiers. It included charioteers, generals, officers, archers, and servants as well. Each statue was categorized into these groups based on their pose, headdress, and uniform. These statues were also painted with color that has peeled or faded over time.

Also, there was a small pit located near the tomb mound of Qin Shihuang that contained court officials. He built more than just an army to lead him in to the afterlife. It was the main authorities of Chinese society that also made up his squad for the time after he died.

For art or history connoisseurs over the age of 16, this exhibit will be the highlight of your year. Otherwise, keep your money.

The Art of Manhood: No Shaving in November

Remy Schimick
Staff Writer

Last November, the Art of Manhood club took part in No-Shave November, a national fundraiser to promote cancer awareness and raise money for cancer prevention, education, and research. Several members set aside their razors and donated the money typically allotted for shaving to the Susan G. Komen organization.

'No-Shave November' started on Facebook in 2009, but has recently expanded into a non-profit organization online. According to their website, the goal is to embrace your hair, which many cancer patients end up losing.

"It's a positive way of giving back," said sophomore Campbell Collett, a member of Art of Manhood, who participated in the fundraiser last month.

Sophomores Lowell Smith and Danny Pellei decided the clean-shaven look was more their style. Although these members of the Art of Man-

hood club both contributed to the fundraiser, November was still a beardless month for them.

"I definitely should shave," Danny said with a laugh, "but it's really good because the money goes towards a cure for cancer." Lowell agreed and said, "[Through the Art of Manhood,] I learned that [No Shave November] was for a good cause -- I just thought it was something that dudes do every month."

The Art of Manhood's club sponsor, Devon Collins, a physics teacher, also participated. "I don't remember the last time I shaved," he said.

Doug Clements, P.E. teacher and girls' basketball coach, claimed the fame for 'No-Shave November'. "I started the trend years ago. Now all the cool kids have them," Coach Clements said.

At the end of the month the club raised \$135. Students who are interested in participating next year can create their own fundraiser page on the No-Shave November website or just team up with some friends. To learn more about Art of Manhood, stop by room 171 every other Thursday at 8:30 am.



PHOTO: CAROLINE DANIEL

Mr. Mey and Jack Pollard sporting their facial hair.

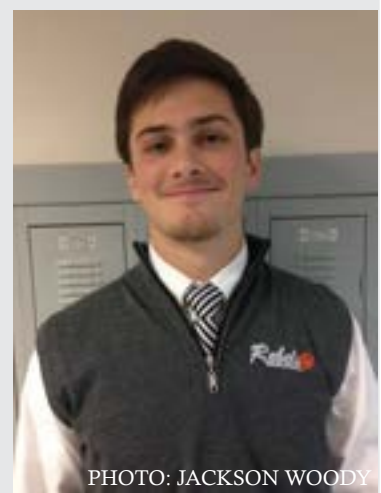


PHOTO: JACKSON WOODY

Richmond Ballet's Annual Nutcracker: A Holiday Must-See

Caroline Daniel
Editor-in-Chief

You don't need to be a fan of the opera or Downton Abbey to enjoy The Nutcracker. Though going to the ballet may sound like an activity reserved solely for octogenarian women and reluctant granddaughters in frilly dresses, Pyotr Tchaikovsky's world-famous ballet contains something for everyone.

Performed locally by the Richmond Ballet and the Richmond Symphony in the Carpenter Theatre, the ballet focuses on the story of a young girl, Clara, on the night before Christmas. Her family hosts a holiday party and invites friends to help decorate their spectacularly large Christmas tree. Each child is presented with a gift by Clara's godfather, and Clara receives--you guessed it--a nutcracker, which is clearly the most vogue item at the party.

When the party draws to a close, Clara slips away and drifts to sleep outside the illuminated Christmas tree, heartbroken. However, Clara's unconsciousness does not put a damper on the show's action. Much like in The Wizard of Oz, the world of dreams offers a fantastic and extraordinary change of scenery, replete with inanimate objects come to life. The newly animated nutcracker is now a prince who must defeat the evil rat king and his mice henchmen by commanding toy soldiers in a fight to the death. After the battle, Clara and (spoiler alert: the prince lives) the prince travel through the magic kingdom,

visiting the Sugarplum Fairy and the Snow Queen. To celebrate the defeat of the rat king, spectacular dances are performed by a Russian bear, Little Bo Peep and her (often adorably out-of-sync) sheep, and a Chinese dragon.

Elements of romance and action are emphasized by the beautiful music accompanying the show, which is available on Spotify for your listening pleasure (I know some of you listen to music while you study--why not make it holiday themed?).

The show is made suspenseful and dramatic with the addition of a professional pit orchestra, and the scenery, which changes frequently throughout the show, is remarkably detailed and projected in technicolor. It includes surreal visions of a world made from candy and snow that flutters to the floor as a glittering sleigh glides across the ground, seemingly of its own accord. The ballet reawakens the nostalgic feelings of wonder and excitement that my childhood self, much like Cindy Lou Who, felt each time

December rolled around.

I am a true Nutcracker veteran and have been to see the performance since I was three. Though its emotion-filled melodies linger in my head for days after the performance, what I remember most about the show is the blood, sweat, and tears each member clearly pours into making the show spectacular. Only the most talented of ballet companies can smoothly pull off a production complete with multiple scene and costume changes while ensuring the show is still culturally relevant and interesting. Each part is crucial, and each dancer must dedicate countless hours to the success of the whole; it is a mega-sized group project. It is a true testament to the energy and expressiveness of the performers that hearing the same story over and over is not a bore but a treat.

Despite having seen the same show 16 times (I saw it twice last year), this tried and true tale never fails to fascinate me. It will be performed Dec. 9-23 for those who wish to dive into the holiday spirit with a Christmas classic. Tickets start at \$22.50 for two hours of quality entertainment.

