



PHOTO: LAURIE KAPLAN

Return to In-Person Learning Pulled into Question

Mr. Abril's room was outfitted to adhere to the county's guidelines.

Ella Hurlbert
Staff Writer

County-Wide Timelines and Safety Plans

With rising numbers of COVID-19 cases sparking new lockdowns and stay-at-home orders across the country, Henrico County Public Schools (HCPS) has altered plans to reopen school buildings for in-person learning.

The first phase of student return was set to begin in November. Prior to the introduction of the new timeline, students in grades PreK-2 were to return on Nov. 30, followed by students in grades 3-5 on Dec. 7, and middle and high school students in February. The initial timeline was altered in December, setting the return dates for students grades PreK-2 on Jan. 11 and grades 3-5 on Jan. 14, leaving the middle and high school schedule the same.

However, following a HCPS Health Committee meeting on Jan. 4, the timeline set in December has been further altered.

"We are [now] looking to bring our students back in phases starting in January," said Andy Jenks, Chief of Communications and Community Engagement for HCPS. Students in grades PreK-5 who opted to return to school started Jan. 25. For the first time, the plan for middle and high school students was amended. Included in the most recent timeline changes is the removal of the post-marking-period half day on Jan. 29 for all students. Jan. 28 and 29 are now asynchronous learning days for middle and high school students.

Accompanying the new timeline is a series of safety requirements and a list of necessary equipment to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

"Personal protective equipment is very important," said Mr. Jenks. In addition to mandatory masks and face coverings, schools will use plexiglass partitions or plastic dividers in main office areas, classrooms, and other seating situations. "Cleaning and disinfecting products, as well as copious amounts of hand sanitizer ... are being provided centrally to all schools everywhere in the county," said Mr. Jenks.

The HCPS Health Committee recommended various measures to limit the spread of COVID-19. One-way traffic in hallways, HVAC air flushing, 4-5 foot distancing for classroom seating, and "cohort" groups for students are all included on the HCPS website as safety measures. In addition, students' schedules will allow for new "Virtual Wellness Wednesdays," in which all students will learn from home to allow for deep cleaning of school buildings.

The new regulations, although necessary to reopen schools, will affect all students, 54 percent of whom elected to return in-person. "It's going to feel apocalyptic," said junior Sagar Murthy. "Even more so than staying home."

Junior Lucy van Lenten shares Sagar's opinion, although she believes that students will "get comfortable in the new environment." News of the pending schedule changes have also complicated the return of students and staff. The administration team has "been meeting in teams to tackle different aspects of returning face to face," said Kate Striker, history teacher and administrative aide at Freeman. "Those groups report back to the larger team as a whole, and we tweak plans as needed and as new information is presented." In addition to the fluid nature of not only student schedules but of the return timeline as a whole, the cancellation of winter sports has some students questioning whether a return in February is even possible.

"I doubt they'll send us back in person," said junior Aidan Gibson. "Spikes in cases in our area have already cancelled winter sports."

Sophomore Morgan Stoudt agrees that the timeline will be further altered due to "a surge in cases following Thanksgiving and Christmas that we'll still be dealing with into early February."

Regardless of whether HCPS will ultimately adhere to the present timeline, "right now, our plans [to return] are intact," said Mr. Jenks. Having said this, "if we need to adapt, we will, because we're keeping the health and safety of our students, teachers, and community at large in the front of our minds."

Freeman's Return Plan

Individual school administrators and staff are crucial to making sure students can return safely. While the county makes the timelines and general rules, it's up to each school to apply them to their campus. Changes like new student schedules and classroom safety structures vary per school.

Plans for student schedule alterations at Freeman are constantly changing; nothing is set in stone. Students may lose their original teachers with the changing schedule, but the likelihood of such adjustments is currently unknown. "It's looking more and more like there will be fewer [teacher changes] than we originally anticipated, which is good," said John Marshall, Freeman's principal. "I think every student should be prepared for at least some degree of teacher changes," he said, as Freeman is committed to making sure students retain their original courses. "You've got ... half of a year's worth of that class," said Mr. Marshall.

That being said, Ms. Striker affirmed that "the goal is to replace teachers with others from Freeman" if a student should lose their current teacher.

"One of the good things about Freeman is [that] everywhere you turn, there's a fantastic teacher," said Mr. Marshall. "Folks will be going from one great teacher to another ... you will land in a place that is welcoming." However, as schedule changes are inevitable, the day of in-person return will "[feel] like another first day of school," said Mr. Marshall. "We're preparing for that."

When returning on the first day of in-person school, "safety is going to be our first priority," said Mr. Marshall. "We're going to be serious about the rules."

Changes in student and staff protocol are being issued in frequent Schoology updates from Mr. Marshall. The most recent updates regard everyday schedules and hallway transitions. New diagrams of traffic flow in the hallways are being released to students as they are finalized. Current plans for transition time involve social distancing in the hallways, contact tracing of restroom breaks, one-way traffic in all hallways, and substituting the quad for the small gym as a space for student travel. Because the new hallway protocol could lead to longer student travel time, students may apply for an "Against the Flow" pass to travel the opposite direction in a hallway.

Students will not be allowed on campus before 8:45 a.m. every morning and are to enter through the bus loop doors, the math hall doors, or the Green Acres doors. Grab-and-go breakfast will still be an option for students. Students will report to their first period classes every morning where they will engage in ten minutes of quiet study time to allow students from multiple bus runs to safely arrive

at school.

In the afternoon, students will be dismissed in waves based on their mode of transportation. Student drivers will exit first at 2:45 p.m., followed by bus riders between 2:45 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. Car riders and walkers will bring up the rear at 2:50 p.m. Where you exit is determined by your last period classroom.

New regulations determined by the county have required several alterations to the physical aspects of Freeman. "We have been working day and night to rearrange the building," said Mr. Marshall. According to Mr. Marshall, "We are doing a lot of furniture moving and a lot of logistical planning" to create safe and socially-distanced classroom environments for students and staff.

Further furniture moving is required to accommodate lunchtime at Freeman, said Mr. Marshall, "which looks like it might take place in several of the big spaces in the building," such as the cafeterias and the gyms. Freeman staff is also installing signs to increase student adherence to safety regulations. "[We're] putting a bunch of signage up [and] covering the water fountains," said Mr. Marshall. "When we come back to the building in February, it's going to look a little bit different than 2019 did, and that's okay ... new signage and physical spacing of desks make things look quite different."

Differences in campus appearance aside, the Freeman community is excited to welcome students back to school in person. "Every staff member in the building is missing students considerably," said Mr. Marshall. "We like seeing smiling faces ... first and foremost, we miss you guys."

senior softball player Kala McGehee, adding that "it taught the team that we have to work to get what we want."

Over the winter, with finishing touches being put on the field, these issues will soon be no more.

The change in topography is not the only major change happening on the field. "They redid the dugouts, giving them water space, bat space, helmet space, bookbag space. They got a new scoreboard, foul poles, and a new permanent fence that doesn't need to be put up and taken down every year," said Ms. Criswell.

This renovation came in part due to lobbying from parents, in particular Mark Tyler, the softball representative for the Booster Club. "Mr. Tyler was the major force; he was very instrumental in making [the renovation] happen," said Ms. Criswell.

Mr. Tyler graduated from Freeman in 1988. "Athletics were a huge part of my experience at Freeman; I played three sports and was a captain on all three," said Mr. Tyler. He added that "the friendships and memories [from] playing sports at Freeman had a major impact on me."

"After the upper field renovation, I brought up the fact that there isn't a dedicated softball field at Freeman, and the team would greatly appreciate having one," said Mr. Tyler. At the end of the season, the fence would be taken down, and the space would once

again be used as a practice field for other sports.

The field ended up costing approximately \$185,000. Ms. Criswell explained, "Most of the funding came from the board of supervisors, with some additional funding from the Booster Club and team fundraising."

Players and coaches will not be the only ones to receive an updated experience, as spectators can expect the same. Mr. Tyler said that "before, the bleachers were pretty far down the baselines and made the viewing angles very poor." Mr. Tyler continued, "It was hard to see the home plate, because the bleachers were so far out in the outfield." Thanks to the renovation, "all the bleachers and viewing area are clustered around the home plate, so fans will have a view of the entire field, instead of having that poor sight line looking around the dugout from the outfield," said Mr. Tyler.

Overall, the team looks forward to when they can finally use the field. "I think that the new field will definitely raise spirits, since us seniors haven't played a home game on that field since we were freshmen," said senior softball athlete Maggie Linthicum.

To some, the renovation goes beyond athletics. Maggie said, "I think that the new field renovation will bring more publicity and validity for women's sports at Freeman."

Softball Field Receives Renovation



PHOTO: TIMMY DILLARD

Hank Thompson
Staff Writer

After being left unused for almost two years, the DSF softball field has received a "long-awaited" renovation.

This renovation comes following numerous issues with the field's drainage. The field was built on a slope, with any rainwater flowing into the home plate, in turn creating a flooded and unplayable surface.

As Suzanne Criswell, Freeman's Athletic Director, said, "If you can't get your infield ready to play, you can't play a game."

The issue received much attention over the years, and there were many attempts to fix it. Ms. Criswell said, "I've been an athletic director for seven years, and we've 'band-aided' the field for all seven years. We would get it laser-lined and get dirt brought in ... but nothing would correct the problem."

This issue proved to be a challenge for administrators and coaches alike. "Coaches and even past coaches would come up and work on that field and try to get it ready for games, but there's no way to displace water," said Ms. Criswell. "It was very, very difficult."

This design issue affected players as well. "Our old field was a piece of work. At the end of practice, we would upkeep the field by raking it out to keep it in good shape," said



CTE Launches Life Ready Expos

Annabelle Glassman
Staff Writer

Since a crowded high school gym is not an option this year, the Henrico County Career and Technical Education program (CTE) adapted their Life Ready Expos for the virtual world.

So far, the CTE program has hosted events for the energy, natural resources, agriculture, human services, and business management and technology clusters in December and January. Occupation clusters are groups of careers that revolve around the same topic or base subject. Tables and posters were replaced by breakout rooms on Microsoft Teams. Students rotated through rooms with representatives from colleges, private companies, and government agencies to discuss their career paths and options within specific occupation clusters.

Mac Beaton, director of the Henrico CTE program, said "when you leave high school, you should have a pathway in mind when you go to college so that you know what you're going to college for." No matter what plans students have, the goal of the CTE program and the Life Ready Expos is to ensure that students know why they have chosen their path. "Whatever you do next, there's a reason for going to do it," Mr. Beaton said. This event, he said, is different from the traditional college and career fair because the Expos are "focused more on career pathways." According to Mr. Beaton, "what we've found over time is that parents and students want to know what the world of work is like."

The Expos' focus on career paths' twists and turns was demonstrated through Matthew Jones, a science teacher at Fairfield Middle School. Although Mr. Jones is currently a teacher, he used to work for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) as a soil conservationist. At the Natural

Resources and Agriculture Expo, he described his path to NRCS and later to teaching. While presenting at this event, Mr. Jones said his goal was "to make sure that I can give back to the students that are going to give back to me as I age."

Also at the Natural Resources and Agriculture Expo was Maymont's Director of Park Operations and Horticulture, Peggy Singlemann. "I'm passionate about encouraging the next generation to join this wonderful industry," she said. According to Ms. Singlemann, her goal was to inform students about "the broad spectrum of opportunities that they have to ... learn more about these careers," and to "provide different directions for students to explore."

Junior Ryan Evans attended the Natural Resources and Agricultural Expo because he said that he "hoped to be able to narrow down what career [he] wanted to pursue in agriculture." At the event, "I found a college that I could apply for, I got invited to apply for an internship at Maymont, I was introduced to a program that would help me find a career in the agricultural career cluster, and I learned about a local farm based in Mechanicsville," said Ryan. For someone looking towards their future, "attending the Life [Ready] Expo was really fun and exciting," Ryan said. "I've never had exposure to agriculture in standard school, so this introduced me to lots of opportunities."

Overall, he said he would recommend this event to other students because "it's a great way to learn about your interests and even find jobs in the field."

There are more Life Ready Expos to come throughout the school year. So far, there are scheduled dates for the clusters of Health Services (Feb. 9), Industrial and Engineering Technology (Feb. 23), and Arts and Communications (March 9).

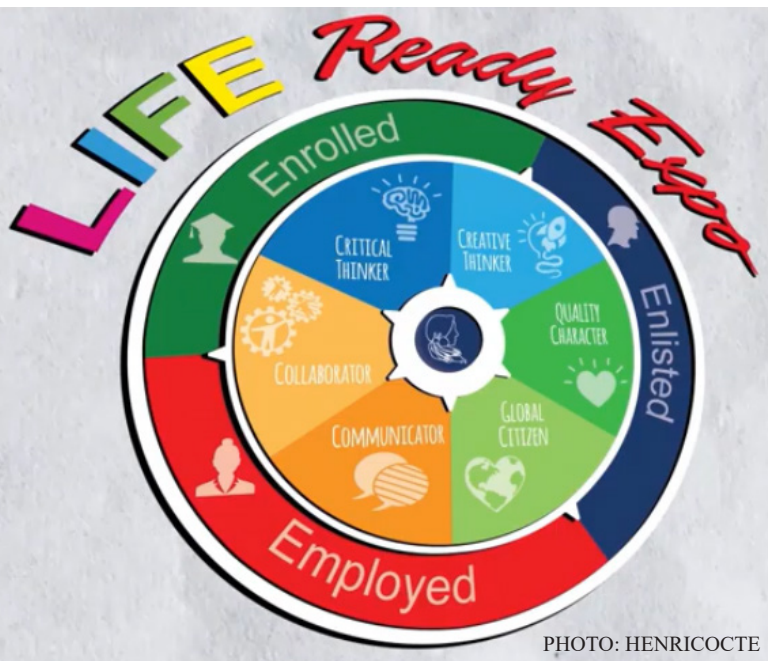


PHOTO: HENRICOCTE

The logo for the HCPS Life Ready Expo

Freeman Project Continues Work On Outdoor Classroom

Isabelle Hevron
Staff Writer

Whether it be baking cookies for the Westport Rehabilitation and Nursing Center, or fixing up the basketball nets at Maybeury Elementary School, the Freeman Project students are looking to help out the school and community. Their current focus, an ongoing project that was started late in the 2019 school year, is to build Freeman's first outdoor classroom.

The majority of the Freeman Proj-

ect students are working together to add onto what last year's class planned for the classroom. "It started last year with a group of people, and they made an outline to later be passed on to this year," said senior Co-President Liv Wallace. Sticking to last year's plan, the classroom is set to be built behind the band room and towards the side of the annex. This year, however, current club members have decided to forgo the plans for a roof. "The classroom is completely outdoors and most likely won't be used during rainy/freezing temperatures," said junior Co-President Drew Bryner. The Freeman Project also designed the



PHOTOS: THE HISTORIAN

Snapshots from Freeman's 2019-20 Varsity Boys Basketball team.

Effects of Winter Sports Cancellation

Cameron Cavender
Staff Writer

On Nov. 30, Henrico County Public Schools (HCPS) Chief of Communications Andy Jenks announced that Henrico's public schools would not participate in winter sports this school year.

"We are seeing a steep rise in COVID-19 cases across our region, and that can be mitigated, to some extent, in the classroom environment ... in terms of physical distancing [and] plastic dividers," said Mr. Jenks. That being said, according to Mr. Jenks, "almost none of that applies when you're talking about a lot of the winter sports, which take place indoors in environments where physical distancing is not possible."

"Overall, the reaction has understandably been one of disappointment and heartbreak at the loss of the season," said HCPS Superintendent Amy Cashwell.

Last year, spring sports were cancelled in the weeks following the start of virtual learning. Had winter sports occurred this year, HCPS was prepared to put in measures to protect participants against COVID-19.

"Winter sports would have looked different," said the county's Student Activities Specialist, John Carroll. "There would have

been no spectators ... [and] the rules of each sport would have been changed to limit the amount of unnecessary person-to-person contact and sharing of equipment," he said.

In addition to student athletes missing their winter sports season, the season cancellation could cause other potential effects.

"The only way the athletic department makes money is through ticket sales, and one of the only ways that athletic boosters make money is by selling their memberships," said Freeman's Athletic Director, Suzanne Criswell. "At this point ... those two things are not going to happen, but that was not at all a part of the decision."

The cancellation also affects student athletes by interfering in their college recruitment process. High school athletics provides student athletes with a way to be seen by college coaches who are looking for recruits. With the loss of an entire season, senior basketball player Caleb Kenney said, "I know some people whose chances to be seen have been drastically reduced due to not being able to ... play."

On the other hand, Ms. Criswell pointed out that "if you look at college recruitment right now, college coaches can't come to games, and students who are trying to go to colleges can't go to those colleges either." This year, "people are

coming up with creative ways for their talents to be seen ... I think you're going to see that this will pop up for some of our basketball players."

Furthermore, the absence of athletics could affect students' academic performance. Ms. Criswell said, "I was a much better student when I was involved in athletics ... at the time periods where I didn't have that structure in my life, I was not as good a student." For the second semester, "I think that could be an underlying issue [for student-athletes]," she said.

Winter is also a time for high school coaches to develop younger players for the future. While winter athletes won't have a chance to play with Freeman this year, one would be "hard-pressed to ... not find [an athlete] who's playing travel baseball, or Strikers soccer, or Geronimo lacrosse, or any of the other possibilities that are out there," said Ms. Criswell. Having said this, "what we are losing as a team together is the cohesiveness and the family situation that you develop on a team," said Ms. Criswell.

Though HCPS winter athletics are not happening this year, what about the fate of fall and spring sports? Fall sports are still on as of now "and [there is] no immediate change or word about the traditional spring sports," said Mr. Jenks.

seating and teaching arrangements. The classroom will be "patio-style with benches and a teacher podium," said Liv.

As of now, the group isn't equipped with all of the tools needed to build a classroom, but they are doing what they can. "We are currently in the process [of building] and looking for contractors to do what we can't," said Liv. While they are bringing in some outside help, the students are responsible for a majority of the planning and building. "It's important to keep in mind that the Freeman Project is composed of students, and while having a teacher sponsor is crucial, students are expected to do a majority of the work," said junior Ian Donnellan.

The other obstacle, COVID-19, hasn't had a huge impact on their work, since it is all outdoors. "Working is about the same as last year," said Drew, comparing the difficulty of before and after the pandemic. The team will continue working throughout the year, and they don't yet have a specific date for when it will be finished.

The group of students have high hopes for the benefits that the outdoor classroom will bring. "Having an outdoor classroom is important because it gives students a much needed break from traditional schooling," said Ian. Along with getting a break from the indoors, "I hope students will be more interested in their lessons while outside," he said. The Freeman Project is busy working on this upcoming project and plans on continuing for the rest of the year. "We are confident that the hard work will help students and teachers long after we're finished," said Liv.

NATIONAL NEWS

| ECONOMY | COVID-19 | POLITICS |
|--|--|---|
| -The pandemic snapped the United States' growth streak in the first quarter of 2020. | -Vaccinations began Dec. 14, and over 15.7 million shots have been given since then. | -Joe Biden was inaugurated as President on Jan. 20 |
| -Quarter 1: Gross Domestic Product (GDP) fell at a 4.8% annual rate | -Average of 806,716 shots given in last 7 days | -His top advisor nominations: Lloyd Austin for Defense Secretary, Janet Yellen for Treasury |
| -Quarter 2: GDP fell 31.4% | -Total U.S. cases: 25,301,166 | Alejandro Mayorkas for Homeland Security. |
| -Quarter 3: GDP rose 33.1% | -Cases in last 7 days: 1,551,850 | -Per npr.org |
| -per bea.gov | -All per the CDC, 1/27/2021 | |



PHOTO: GOOGLE MAPS

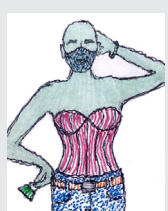
The future site of the outdoor classroom.

Long Live Snow Days!



Page 4

2020's Strangest Trends



Page 7

Freeman's Peculiar Pets



Page 8

Freshman Commits to VT Baseball



Page 10

A Cappella on Computer



Page 11

Pain.

February: the armpit of the year



Joseph Harrell
Editor-in-Chief

We made it through arguably the worst year in the history of humanity. As a reward for making it through the absolute hell that was 2020, we are now greeted by the most dreadful, depressing, and painstaking time of the year.

November and December are times of great holiday cheer. Even in a pandemic, morale is high as we come together, give thanks for what we have, and spend time with those closest to us. We feast, we give gifts, we tell funny stories. Life, as a whole, is good. However, on Jan. 2, the hangover of the holiday season begins. The ecstasy we experienced from the time of giving plummets; we now fall into an abyss of monotonous dullness.

January, February, and March can be described as the armpit of the year. Actually, these three terrible months don't even deserve to be called the "armpit of the year;" at least armpits are warm. There is nothing worse than waking up and walking out the door at 7 a.m. on a frigid February day. Even with seven layers on, the blistering breeze pierces your skin. Just think, you could be snoozing away under your warm comforter with dreams of sunny days ... but no. In reality, you're hopping in your car, which is now a human-sized refrigerator, and driving to your first day of in-person school. At this point, life is just utterly, excruciatingly painful.

To describe the transition from terrible 2020 to an even-more-excruciating Winter 2021, I would use the age-old saying "out of the frying pan and into the fire," but honestly, the warmth of the fire sounds amazing.

It's not all bad. At least, the first three months of the year have some amazing holidays. There's Presidents' Day. Where we celebrate all the old dead guys that founded the country. I mean, it's not great, but at least we get the day off school (Update: Just realized we do not get Presidents' Day off of school. This holiday is pointless. Actually it's a half day, so I guess: half-pointless.)

Then of course, up next, is a fantastic holiday, Valentine's Day. Love is in the air! For all the lucky Freeman students in relationships, have fun dropping half of your summer job salary on a present for your lucky lover. Don't go too expensive, though, because let's be real: this relationship you're in right now? It'll only last a month. Maybe, if y'all are truly an extraordinary couple, you two may eke out a year. So, remember, if she asks for a diamond necklace ... cubic zirconia will do the job. If you're lucky enough to be single on Valentine's Day, welp, have fun being reminded of your loneliness at every turn.

In March, we finally reach a good holiday: St. Patrick's Day. These three months suck so hard that a few genius Irishmen decided, "Hey! Let's party just because we're Irish!" Then, Americans were so depressed from the first three months of the year that they said, "Hey! Let's pretend we're Irish just so we can party!" However, being a teenager during St. Patrick's Day is very lame. We're too old for the youthful joy of setting up leprechaun traps, and too young to participate in adult shenanigans. (Being a school-published newspaper, I am legally obligated to say we are too young to participate in adult shenanigans. Make good decisions, Mavericks.) The only part of the holiday we can partake in is pinching people if they don't wear green. Which, honestly, is more annoying than it is fun. There's always one person who takes the 'pinch the person not wearing green' joke too far, and no one wants to be that guy.

The only redeeming holiday of the armpit of the year is Martin Luther King Jr. Day. MLK day is a day that celebrates a great man and, not to mention, a full day off school.

So, freshmen through juniors, enjoy the 8 a.m. wake-ups and freezing cold bus rides. Seniors, same to you, and on top of that, it's college-rejection-letter season. I'm sorry, but that B+ in biology freshman year just isn't going to cut it for UVA. I don't make the rules. Even through the pain that is these three months, we will get through it together, as one Freeman Family. Good luck to every student, teacher, and faculty member. Stay safe, and most importantly, find a way to stay warm.

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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.

He Said



Ashton Doll
Opinions Editor

Helps me forget about the depressing and cold wilderness outside.

Red lights, stop signs are not preventing this amazing song from breaking records.

I will always support our troops... by buying their cookies of course!

We've gotten through it together many times, but have we 4 feet apart? Oh no.

My birthday makes this month's terrible cold tolerable.

I'm free on February 14 if you wanna hang I'm not doing anything just let me know.

She Said



Keya Pokhriyal
Opinions Editor

With mini marshmallows, a solid 7/10.

Olivia Rodrigo does it again!

Lemonades are severely underrated.

Yeah, what Ashton said.

Arguably the worst month of the year.

I only know Galentine's Day x

At Last!

We're finally coming back to school... maybe



Keya Pokhriyal
Opinions Editor

Finally. For those of us eagerly anticipating the return of in-person school, the future looks bright. Our return to in-person school, however, will be characterized by dramatic but necessary changes; from the institution of plexiglass barriers to distanced desks, in-person school in 2021 will look and feel unimaginably different than every school year before it.

One significant change will be the number of students at Freeman. Freeman has the most students of any Henrico County high school who plan to return to in-person school, with a whopping 54% of

Freeman families indicating that their children will be returning to school in person.

This means two things. One, Freeman, perhaps, will not seem all that empty.

Two, given the great number of students planning to return to in-person school, desks in classrooms will simply not be able to be distanced 6 feet apart. Instead, desks will be distanced 4 to 5 feet apart, as approved by local health officials.

Mandatory social distancing is only one of the many COVID-19 protective measures being implemented at Freeman.

For instance, desks will have plexiglass dividers, which will allow students to see each other and communicate easily without the fear of being coughed or sneezed on. The county's remarkable efforts to ensure students, teachers, and staff return to school safely have not gone unnoticed.

Clearly, masks will be required. Wearing a mask, however, is

far from unfamiliar to any of us, though it is bizarre to think how much life has changed since that fateful Friday last March.

For me, one of the biggest questions that emerged from my debate to return to in-person school was whether or not I would be able to socialize with my friends. Nevertheless, given the circumstances, I completely understand if opportunities to socialize, like lunch in the cafeteria, are curtailed—we are lucky just to be able to go back to Freeman (hopefully).

There are several factors to consider when planning the safe return of students to school during a pandemic. The precautionary measures being taken are necessary—public safety should never cease to be the number one priority in our schools.

I hope all goes according to plan and we are able to return to Freeman. Until then, I will be attending school from the comfort of my bedroom.



Students participate in an in-person pilot program.

PHOTO: JOHN MARSHALL

The Great Camera Debate

Riley Wilkes
Sports Editor

The camera debate has been in almost every virtual classroom this year. At first glance it seems simple: the teachers want the students to turn them on, but the students do not want to. It is understandable why each would feel that way. In the end, it is the student's final decision. If they want to eat cereal while learning about the Bill of Rights, then they should be free to do so without the fear of their classmates watching them. Hello? Fourth Amendment!

In all of America, teachers have done a great job of convincing students that they are required to turn their cameras on. A survey performed by the Education Week Research Center found that "more than three quarters of teachers, principals, and district leaders whose schools or districts provide live remote instruction say that if students have working cameras on their devices, they must keep them on during class."

Students are hesitant to stand up to their teachers because this situation is so unprecedented that they don't know what the consequences will be. Freeman junior Lucy Larkin commented, "I am pretty sure they legally can't make us turn them on ... I feel uncomfortable when they force us to do it. But, I don't know how to say 'no' without causing a scene." Lucy is just one of many students who know their rights, but are reluctant to mention them to a teacher. This illustrates the power dynamic between a teacher and a student - what's new?

Teachers see turning on cameras as imperative to connecting with their students. Freeman economics teacher William Seegar believes "a major component of my job is about developing relationships." He continued, "In this environment it is already difficult enough to feel connected, when students don't turn their camera on it makes it difficult for us to establish a sense of community, connection, or even individual connection." One of the beliefs that students have is that teachers try to make them turn on their cameras as a way to show who's boss. Mr. Seegar, however, does it for his own rationality. "There are days that I don't interact with anyone unless it is via a virtual medium. I am asking you to care about what I am doing and essentially care about me and my mental wellbeing," said Mr. Seegar.

It also presents an issue with students who enjoy their teachers, but also feel uncomfortable with the camera live. Freeman senior Kate Bivens mentioned why she felt that way; "I feel awkward when no one has it on because I don't want to be the only one, but if I don't turn it on I feel bad for the teacher." This subject is presenting a moral dilemma for students. In the end, whether you turn on or off your camera, it's not going to be the end of the world.

The big question is whether teachers have the authority to force or penalize students who do not turn their camera on. The answer is no. It is a violation of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act as well the Fourth Amendment. Classic online school problems.



ILLUSTRATION: EMMA BURTON

Long Live Snow Days!

Timmy Dillard
News Editor

What is a snow day? Why do we love them so much? These are questions with quite simple answers, yet the memories that come with them are as complex as the snowflakes that make these wondrous days happen.

Let us take a trip back to 2015. This was a golden age of snow days—one where we can appreciate the memory of in-person school, where transportation concerns existed, and where the sight of a white-covered ground was cause for joyous uproar. That school year, there were ten snow days total, and we haven't seen such a downpour of snow since.

Those days, you used to rush to your favorite sledding hill and have the time of your life every snow day. The snowball fights you had, hidden behind snow forts, felt like a battle for domination of the neighborhood. After the day was done, there was no better form of relaxation than a nice, cozy fire to warm your soul.

Here we are in 2021—to say that things have changed for the worse would be an understatement. Many sources of joy have been removed from our everyday lives; one of them could be snow days. With no student transportation for the county to worry about, there

is less of a chance for us to hear Andy Jenks' legendary voicemail telling us that school is cancelled for the day. Instead, when we see the majestic scene of a glorious snowy morning, we lose hope and sit back down to spend another day in front of a screen.

At least, that is what a coward would say. Last year took many things away from us—sports, handshakes, CWs, movie theatres—but one thing that is too sacred to give up on is snow days. We must have the strength to persevere through these tough times by enjoying our snow day activities, while still learning virtually. Will it be difficult? Yes. Will my attendance be affected? Maybe - I still don't know how attendance works.

I know what you're thinking: How can a snow day be a snow day if I am still on a call with my class? Well, that's a tough question to answer. However, what if I told you that your laptop does not have to be glued to your desk?

All it takes to have a jolly ol' day in the snow is to get creative with how you protect your laptop from getting wet. With a little bit of thought, any combination of towels, Saran Wrap, or duct tape can get the job done.

Need to read Macbeth to the class while also trying to sled slopes at insane speeds? Just se-

cure your laptop onto the front of the toboggan with some duct tape, cover it with a small towel, and you are off to the races. Trying to discuss world history while in the heat of a snowball fight? Carve out a box in your fortress for your laptop to sit in safety. Struggling to hear your teacher explain stoichiometry over the pleasant crackling of the fireplace? Just download the notes and study them later—that fire takes top priority.

In all seriousness, snow days are a treasured jewel of every student's K-12 career. Henrico County Public Schools (HCPS) has even stated that in the event of a particularly snowy day, they will proceed with cancellation protocol as if we were in-person. Supposedly, us students and members of the HCPS community can rest easy knowing that mercy was taken on us. No one deserves to go through that nightmare I just guided you through.

Yet, this past Monday, we witnessed an undoubtedly snowy day right before our very eyes, with no snow day to accompany it. The people of this community were given a rude awakening with the county's decision, especially after they hinted at a snow day on Instagram the day before. Nevertheless, the county knows that everyone's (violent) eyes are on them to make the right decision in the future.

HT

SS

PH

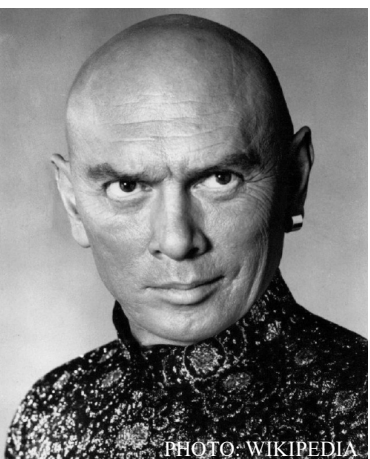
RD

Students' faceless initials leer from Microsoft Teams.

Ranked: Celebrities' Bald Heads

While ranking these celebrities is a difficult task, I will give my all to ensure these rankings stay true. They will be graded on a few things: quality of bald head and other attributes that may add or detract from their overall baldness. I have analyzed countless views and angles of these gentlemen's heads, so trust my opinion on this matter.

1. Yul Brynner



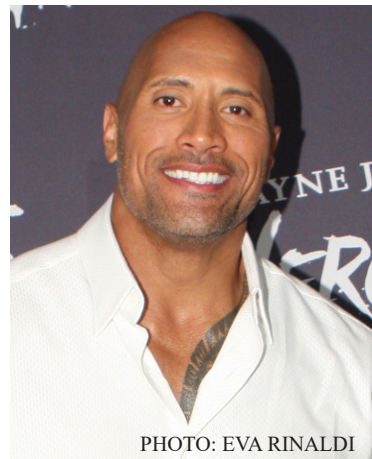
A talented actor in his time and a bald icon for eternity, Yul Brynner wins this fierce competition. He shaved his head for a role and kept it as a personal mark. Its unique shape and shine give it a perfect score. **10/10**

2. Pitbull



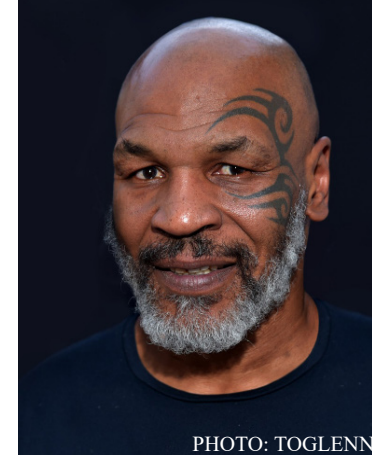
International rapper Pitbull receives close second. His head shape is the best of this era. Due to this, he receives a **9.5/10**.

3. The Rock



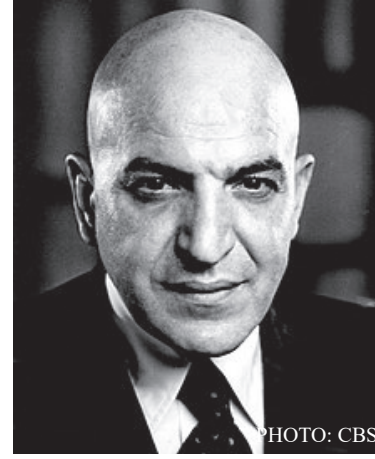
The Rock has one of the best bald heads of this era, but he can only reach third place due to the strong competition. Although he does not achieve the crown, Dwayne receives a **9/10**.

4. Mike Tyson



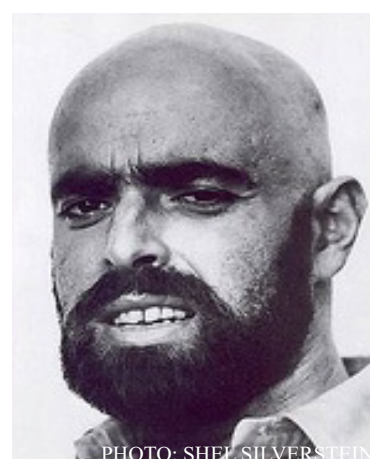
Similar to most of these men, Tyson's head was built to be bald. The tattoo adds significantly to make his head unique. **8.8/10**

5. Telly Savalas



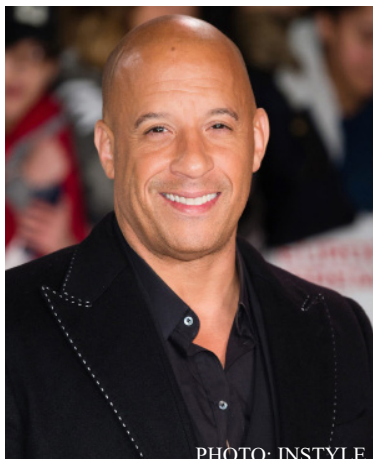
Telly Savalas used his bald head to play one of James Bond's most notorious villains, Ernst Stavro Blofeld. His ears only add to the unique baldness. **8.7/10**

6. Shel Silverstein



The contrast between Silverstein's head and his thick beard only help his image. I had to choose this iconic back cover of 'The Giving Tree'. **8.5/10**.

7. Vin Diesel



Vin Diesel's head is slightly more rounded than the gentlemen below him, giving him an advantage. It lacks unique features, but is great nonetheless. **8.3/10**

8. Stanley Tucci



Stanley Tucci holds a similar case to Telly Savalas. They share similar ears, but Tucci is lower due to less unique features and head shape. **8.3/10**

9. Jeff Bezos



Jeff's bald head is not on the same playing field as the others. My immense fear of this man places him in the top 10. The financial power he holds is insane. He receives an **8.1/10**.

10. Howie Mandel



In an ideal world, Howie would have at least gotten 9th place, but my fear of Bezos pushed him behind in line. He receives an **8.0/10** for his wonderful, yet normal head.

Jackson Rabon: Behind the Lens

Brooke Ward
Staff Writer

Junior Jackson Rabon stepped onto the field as a junior varsity football player his freshman year at Freeman. An avid lover of sports since watching ESPN as a child, Jackson knew from a young age that he wanted to be involved in athletics. He worked hard for the Freeman football team, but decided it was time for a change after suffering multiple concussions. Not ready to turn his back to the sport he loved, Jackson decided to pick up the camera.

Beginning his high school sports career focused on the ball, and ending it focusing a camera, Jackson has become a part of Freeman's sports teams in a different way than he expected. "After Jackson chose to stop playing football, he still wanted to be a part of the sport. Being behind the lens seemed to be the right fit," said Sabrina Rabon, Jackson's mother.

"One of my friends asked me to come out to record and edit a Bon Air Basketball League game, which our friends were playing in," said Jackson. This experience was Jackson's first exposure to sports photography, kindling his love for the hobby. "I started to take it seriously when a bunch of football players asked me to come out and shoot a practice," said Jackson. After that initial request, Jackson was invited to multiple games and workouts to showcase the players' talents.

Photography morphed into Jackson's outlet to continue the sport he loves. "While I'm going to miss having Jackson as a player, there are a number of ways he can help our players with exposure and creating keepsakes," said Coach George Bland Jr., the Freeman football coach.

Being a sports photographer involves photographing, filming, and editing highlight videos. Jackson takes pictures and videos, then spends time editing them to enhance the quality of the media. "Between editing, filming, and photographing, photographing is my favorite because I can capture emotion," said Jackson, "I'm trying to capture more than just a picture." His pictures showcase the highs, lows, wins, and losses that players experience in just one game. "The emotion on and off the football field is incomparable to any other sport," said Jackson. For this reason, football is Jackson's



PHOTO: JACKSON RABON

One of Jackson's shots from a photo session at Hermitage.

favorite sport to capture.

Jackson uses a Canon EOS 7D camera, which allows him to take pictures as well as videos. "I love the simplicity of it along with the ability to master it," said Jackson. His first step is to take the pictures or videos and the next is to edit. "I edit photos with Adobe Lightroom and videos with Adobe Premiere Pro," said Jackson. After that, his media is ready to be posted or sent to the players.

Jackson's photography Instagram account has become a space where he can post the pictures he takes and the films he edits. "I wanted a place where I could showcase the pictures and videos I take," said Jackson. Jackson's accessible Instagram allows the players to see themselves in edited highlights and share these photos and videos with coaches, scouts, and their social media followers. "I save the pictures on my phone and, sometimes, post them on my Instagram," said Dell Vidunas, a junior on the Freeman lacrosse team. Many of the athletes leave gratifying comments under Jackson's posts that show their gratitude for his work. "I love the amount of support from likes and comments he receives from his fans, clients, and mentors," said Mrs. Rabon.

"Jackson has a huge heart and wants to please," said Mrs. Rabon, "I think that's why photography gives him pleasure, because he can make those around him happy." Many of Jackson's pictures and edits focus on players from Freeman who are also some of Jackson's closest friends. "I think it's cool to see what I look like

when I play," said Dell.

After being introduced to this style of photojournalism, Jackson decided to join Freeman's yearbook staff. "I love the class so far. Mr. Abril and the rest of the staff have welcomed me with open arms," he said. Jackson plans on taking his photography even further. "Depending on my college choice, I'd love to photograph a college-level sports team as a side hobby," said Jackson. He's also interested in expanding his range. According to Jackson, "my photography focuses on sports right now, but the plan for the future is to expand my focus."

Mrs. Rabon is excited to see all that Jackson accomplishes in the future as a photographer and person, being that he is "positive, dedicated, and loyal to a fault."

Surrounding Counties Coffee Review

Located at 8801 Three Chopt Road, Surrounding Counties Coffee is a new coffee shop located just down the road from Freeman that offers delicious coffee along with an array of tasty baked goods and food. This coffee shop is sure to become a convenient and delicious source of caffeine and snacks for Freeman students heading into school when students return to the building!

REVIEW

COFFEE



FOOD



PRICE



AMBIANCE



COVID SAFETY



PHOTO: ELLA MORTIMER

"Sweetie Petey" iced coffee with sweetened condensed milk (\$5)



PHOTO: ELLA MORTIMER

Rosemary and sea salt bagel with cashew ricotta spread (\$5)



PHOTO: ELLA MORTIMER

Subrosa Bakery toast with cashew ricotta spread, greens, radishes, pickled onions, and sesame (\$8)

Winter Around RVA

Stony Point on Ice:

The mall installs an ice skating rink for you to enjoy (while social distancing) with your friends or family.

Lewis Ginter Gardenfest of Lights:

The garden gets decked out in lights and decorations for the season. Fun to walk around!

Maymont:

During Holiday Merriment, the park is decorated for the holidays. Take a hike and enjoy the scenery!

Visit Colonial Williamsburg:

It's only a 1 hour drive to the shops, restaurants, and historical sites!

Explore VA's hikes:

Local trails such as Humpack Rock provide great views and a safe way to spend time with friends!

Wintergreen Snow Tubing:

If you're not into skiing, try spending the day at their giant snow tubing park.

PHOTO: FINEARTAMERICA

Spicing It Up at Junoon Indian Cuisine

Katherine Hynes
Staff Writer

The Olde Towne Shopping Center at the corner of Broad and Cardinal has introduced Richmond's newest splash of cultural dining. Enjoy a plate of chicken masala and garlic naan at Junoon Indian Cuisine, the latest Indian eatery in Richmond!

Junoon Indian Cuisine, located at 7801 W. Broad St., opened in August 2020, replacing the previous establishment, Kabab Bistro. Situated next to Buffalo Wild Wings, Junoon is a small, family-owned establishment with a range of authentic Indian platters. With a five-star rating on Yelp, Junoon's menu includes everything from soups and salads to desserts and tandoori breads. The restaurant also incorporates vegetarian and gluten-free options in their menu.

Junoon is a Hindi word meaning "passion." According to Junoon's website, restaurant owner Bachitar Singh and his "culinary team have developed an exemplary menu" fueled by this emotion.

Open Monday and Tuesday from 4 p.m. to 10 p.m. and Wednesday through Sunday from 12 p.m. to 10 p.m., Junoon is available for dine-in, take-out, and delivery. While ordering online through their website is an option, Junoon can also be found on UberEats, Grubhub, and Seamless.com.

Only a seven-minute drive from Freeman, Junoon is a frequent destination for junior Jahidi Kourroma. Jahidi described the restaurant as "benevolent" after chomping down on the tandoori chicken. "I would rate the restaurant an overall nine out of ten, because the food was really good, but I feel there is always room for improvement," Jahidi said.

Another dish Junoon offers, the garlic naan, is an all-time favorite for senior Amanda Gagen. "I like the naan because it has lots of flavor and is only \$3," said Amanda. After dining at the restaurant with her family, Amanda said that "the food was seasoned and savory and the service was amazingly fast."

According to Junoon's website, the restaurant offers "a range of mouthwatering entrées, hearty

mixed platters, authentic curries, and side dishes to compliment all of them." Sophomore Ann Collier Ferguson confirmed this statement when she rated the restaurant a ten out of ten. "I thought I wouldn't like it, since I'm not a big fan of Indian food, but I was really impressed," she said. Ann Collier usually orders the chicken vegetable soup with a side of basmati rice. "The spices and sauces worked really well together," Ann Collier said.

Junoon Indian Cuisine is just one of a number of top-rated foreign food establishments around Richmond. Though the pandemic has largely stopped Americans from travelling internationally, these restaurants still allow Mavericks to get a taste of different cultures.

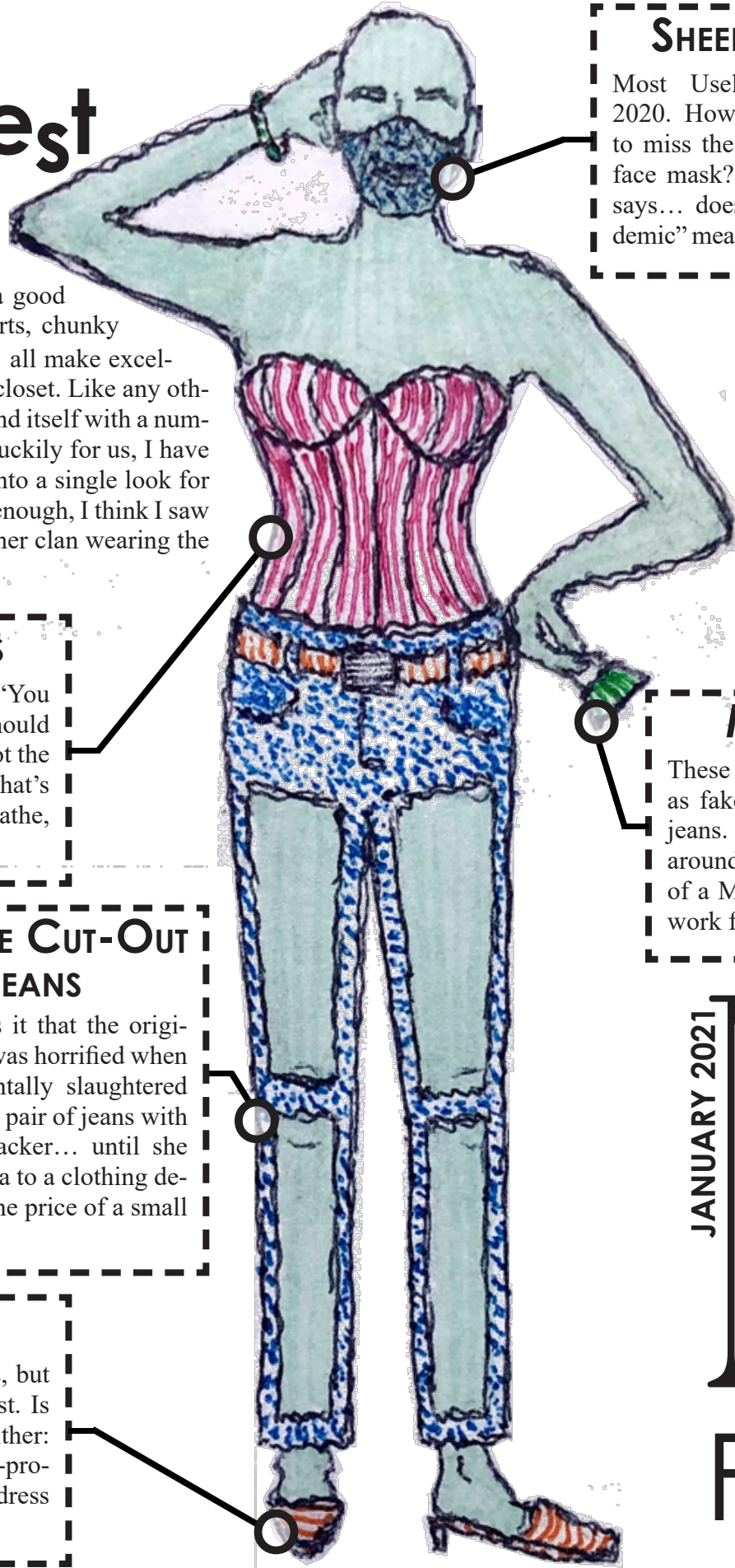


PHOTOS: JUNOONVA

Vegetable soup and garlic naan, two available dishes.

2020's Strangest Trends

On the whole, 2020 was a good year for fashion. Midi skirts, chunky sweaters, wide-leg jeans... all make excellent additions to anyone's closet. Like any other year, however, 2020 found itself with a number of fashion atrocities. Luckily for us, I have compiled these atrocities into a single look for easy ridiculing. Strangely enough, I think I saw one of the Kardashian-Jenner clan wearing the same outfit recently....



CORSET TOPS

Someone really said, "You know what decade we should do next? The 80s! No, not the 1980s--the 1780s!" Uh, that's a no for me. I like to breathe, thanks.

EXTREME CUT-OUT JEANS

Legend has it that the original owner was horrified when she accidentally slaughtered her favorite pair of jeans with a Weed Wacker... until she sold the idea to a clothing designer for the price of a small yacht.

KITTEN HEELS

Normally, I love the 90s, but these can stay in the past. Is it a flat or a stiletto? Neither: it's a sad little poorly-proportioned excuse for a dress shoe.

SHEER MASKS

Most Useless Product of 2020. How do you manage to miss the entire point of a face mask?! "Breathable," it says... does the word "pandemic" mean nothing to you??"

MINI BAGS

These give off the same vibes as fake pockets on women's jeans. We have crap to carry around, folks! A bag the size of a Mento is never going to work for us!

Roasting Revisiting Freeman's 2011 Fashion Choices

In 2011, the Commentator created a centerspread on fashion, highlighting seven students' distinct styles. Ten years later, we're revisiting those styles and giving our thoughts on what was trendy back in the days of Katniss Everdeen and Good Luck Charlie. (To see the original spread, go to tinyurl.com/commentator-fashion-roast, or visit dsfcommentator.org, click on "Print Issues," and scroll down to Volume 57, Issue 4.)



Man, is this even an outfit? All I see is a baggy jacket and a cool haircut. Camo jokes aside, this outfit walked so Billie Eilish could run. The baggy clothing and monochrome scheme definitely gave the star inspiration.

This outfit reeks of pumpkin spice lattes. I just know that anyone wearing this always has Starbucks in hand, even if they've been carrying it around all day and the milk has started to curdle.

The side-braid, the leather jacket, and the leggings really show off the impact of the Hunger Games in 2011. Katniss Everdeen became everyone's favorite hero, so much so that you could see multiple Katnisses walking around school on any given day, including the one above.

Lumberjack meets hipster. The hat, the flannel, the beard, so many things hinting at the potential of chopping down trees after school, while the bright blue skater shoes and scarf scream "I hang out at quirky suburban cafes." The only thing saving this look is that epic Karate Kid pose.

This outfit has stood the test of time. Many boys who walk the halls of Freeman today wear this exact outfit. While the button-down and khakis are as bland as it comes, honestly, it does have more spice than basketball shorts and a graphic tee.

This outfit is far too sophisticated for school... in the best way possible. That fabulous overcoat shows that this kid is ready to get to work and means business. He probably won every debate in class and definitely lead his We The People team to victory.

Three words: wannabe Disney star. This outfit was definitely strutted by Alex Russo from Wizards of Waverly place. I mean, we've all been there, and we've all tried to look like our favorite Disney character, but this girl takes it to the next level.

M A V S

FADS OF FREEMAN

Freeman's Most Fashionable Mavs

Daisy Fuller
Staff Writer

Whether it's rocking a new look in the halls, or posting "fit pics" on Instagram, Freeman students embody their individuality through fashion. From indie to grunge, preppy to casual, Mavericks are here to test the boundaries of fashion.

One senior leading the pack in style innovation is Gabe Riley. Gabe defines

his style as "streetwear, but I also like to mix in basic pieces to not have as many logos." Gabe reps brands such as Supreme and Yeezys, but he also enjoys a "cotton-blend hoodie" from time to time. For fashion inspiration, Gabe often pulls ideas from celebrities like ASAP Rocky and John Mayer.

Another style trailblazer is junior Fernando Urquilla, who believes that fashion is limitless. "I really like to dress outside of boundaries," he

said. "Personally, I believe clothing is not fit to a certain type of [person]." Fernando prefers second-hand stores, such as his personal favorite, Rumors on Broad Street. When it comes to fashionable accessories, Fernando said, "I definitely like rings; I feel like they really pop with any outfit." Fernando often receives inspiration from famous YouTubers such as "bestdressed."

As for fashionable underclassmen, sophomore Abby Crowe can often be

found shopping at local boutiques or chains such as Free People. In particular, Abby said she recommends "Bittersweet; it just opened in Carytown." As for Abby's current looks, she said, "I like having simple shirts and mixing them with fun jeans." Her main fashion inspiration is Princess Diana, but for everyday ideas she looks to social media, especially Pinterest.

Another Freeman fashion icon is freshman Catherine Weir. Catherine described her style as "alternative or alt." Currently, Catherine said that she is into "silver chains; I'll layer three to four of them for my necklace, as well as a wallet chain on my belt." As for her go-to shoes, Catherine said,

"either my black high-top Converse or platform Doc Martens." Catherine also enjoys making her own jewelry. "I make my own earrings out of dollhouse pieces," she said.

These four Freeman students utilize fashion as a way to express themselves. Although each student has different inspirations, styles, and backgrounds, each agreed on the importance of embracing one's fashion choices with confidence. "Definitely go out of your comfort zone," said Fernando. "Don't care about what other people think; as long as you love it, that's what matters."



Clockwise from left: Fernando, Catherine, Abby, and Gabe show off their individual styles.



PHOTO: CATHERINE WEIR



PHOTO: GABE RILEY

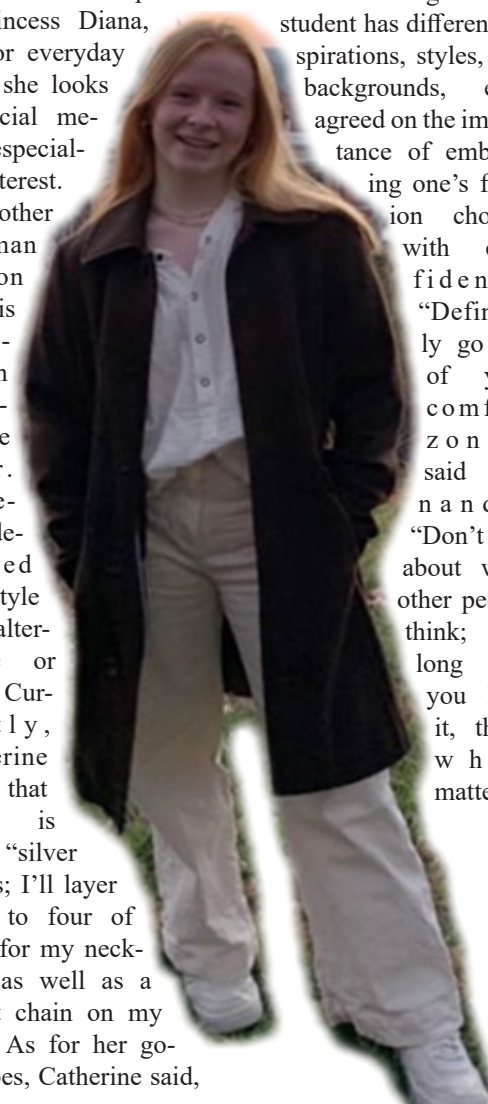


PHOTO: ABBY CROWE



Chanel vs **Topshop**
PHOTO: CHANEL vs PHOTO: NORDSTROM
Suede Calfskin & Embroidery Sneakers \$1,050 vs Topshop Cherry Chunky Sneaker \$75

GUCCI vs **ASOS** vs **Saint Laurent** vs **Mango**
PHOTO: NORDSTROM vs PHOTO: ASOS vs PHOTO: SAINT LAURENT vs PHOTO: MANGO
Double-G Buckle Calfskin Belt \$350 - \$550 vs Double Circle Waist and Hip Jeans Belt \$14.40 vs Motorcycle Jacket in Plunged Lamb-skin \$4,386.23 vs Lapelled Leather Biker Jacket \$119.99

Louis Vuitton vs **Michael Kors** vs **Dior** vs **Forever 21**
PHOTO: PINTEREST vs PHOTO: PINTEREST vs PHOTO: THEHONEYCOMBERS vs PHOTO: THEHONEYCOMBERS
LV Keepall Bandouliere \$1,880 - \$3,550 vs Bedford Travel Extra-Large Logo Stripe Weekender Bag \$283.50 vs Rounded Cat Eye Pink Sunglasses \$342.10 vs Rounded Pink Sunglasses \$7.90

Which Decade of Fashion Are You?

Have you ever wondered which decade your fashion inspiration comes from? Do you dress like a 20s flapper girl or more like a 70s hippie? Take this quiz to find out!

1. You're getting dressed for school, what is your go-to outfit?
- A) Vintage sequined dress
 - B) Puffy poodle skirt
 - C) Flowy shirt with bell-bottom jeans
 - D) Multi-colored jacket with high waisted



PHOTO: CLIPART LIBRARY



PHOTO: ESPRESSO COLOR

2. Which type of shoes are your favorite?
- A) High heels
 - B) Mary Janes
 - C) Birkenstocks
 - D) High Top Converse

3. What is the one accessory you can't live without?
- A) Bejeweled headband
 - B) Cat eye sunglasses
 - C) Flower crown
 - D) Scrunchies



PHOTO: OVERSTOCK



PHOTO: GENIEBROS (FL)

4. How will you be wearing your hair?
- A) Short, wavy bob cut
 - B) Curled to the max
 - C) Long and straight
 - D) Crimped

5. Which makeup look will you be trying out?
- A) A glittery smokey eye
 - B) A bright red lip
 - C) Iridescent blue and green eyeshadow
 - D) Extremely thin eyebrows with a nude lip



PHOTO: LISTEN2THIS

Mostly As: You belong dancing the Charleston with your flapper friends. Your style is like the golden age of the roaring 20s!

Mostly Bs: Jukeboxes, soda fountains, and drive-ins galore. Your fashion sense is cruising around in the 50s!

Mostly Cs: Ever wish you could have been at Woodstock? You match the vibe of the groovy 70s!

Mostly Ds: You fit into the era of walkmans playing the Backstreet Boys. Your fashion inspo comes from the 90s!



PHOTO: PINTEREST



PHOTO: PINTEREST



PHOTO: PINTEREST



PHOTO: WEBSTOCKREVIEW

Junior Reaches New Pole-Vaulting Heights

Kieran Wall
Staff Writer

Junior Kelly Mollenauer pole vaults, a sport in which she sets high bars of achievement for herself—literally. Five years ago, junior Kelly Mollenauer quit club gymnastics and began pole vaulting, because she “[was] getting too tall,” said Kelly.

The majority of pole vaulters follow Kelly’s track, starting off as gymnasts and eventually transitioning to pole vault when they get too tall or want to try new forms of athleticism. She was encouraged to join the Richmond-area Xtreme Heights Pole Vault Club by friend and teammate Meredith Baham.

“We actually had our first practice together at the end of seventh grade and we both fell in love with the sport,” said Meredith.

Once Kelly began practicing with Xtreme Heights, she was hooked. “It’s like you’re flying,” said Kelly, enthusiastically describing the experience of soaring over the bar. “If you ask any pole vaulter, they like the adrenaline and feeling of flight.”

When preparing for a big jump, Kelly feels a myriad of emotions, but fear is not one of them. “A lot of people don’t get into pole vaulting because they are scared,” said Kelly. Over the years, Kelly said she has learned to “be fearless and commit to the jump.”

Kelly participates in a number of pole vaulting competitions with Xtreme Heights, ranging from local to national. “We compete for the school for indoor and outdoor track, and then we also have our own Junior Olympic events in the summer,” said Kelly.

Pole vaulting meets typically consist of a series of rounds in which the bar is raised increasingly higher. Each competitor has three attempts to make the round’s height, or they are eliminated.

Despite the format, “[p]ole vaulting is a very non-competitive sport,” said Kelly, “it’s you against the bar, you are just trying to get a new personal record.” She continued, “when I go to meets I don’t even look at who I’m competing against.”

Felicia Mollenauer, Kelly’s mother, explained that pole vaulting “is much more relaxed compared to most sports; it is not a subjective sport, so ... there’s no beauty points.”

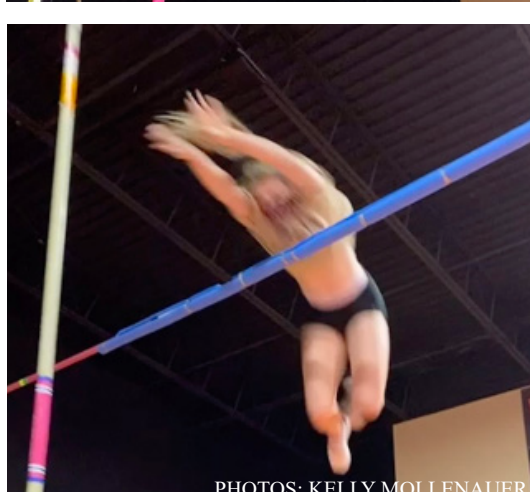
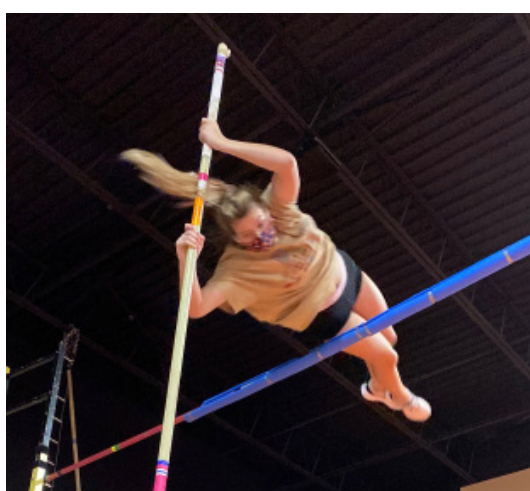
In January 2020, Kelly competed in the National Pole Vault Summit at Reno, Nev., where she set a new personal record and placed second amongst pole vaulters from all around the country. “It was a big moment,” said Kelly.

Like any athlete, Kelly has had challenges throughout her pole vaulting career. “I had a big knee injury at the beginning of freshman year, [so] I was out for both the indoor and outdoor season,”

said Kelly. “I didn’t think I was going to come back.”

Kelly’s teammates compelled her to return, however. “The team wasn’t the same without her, so we all encouraged her to come

back,” said Meredith. Kelly also found support in her parents. “I encouraged her to give it another try,” said Kelly’s mom. Backed by her teammates and family, Kelly decided to return to pole vaulting.



PHOTOS: KELLY MOLLENAUER

Action shots capture Kelly as she vaults.

Freeman’s Peculiar Pets

Have you spotted any of these pets behind students’ and teachers’ cameras?



“Sugar gliders are actually related to kangaroos”
- Lora Young (10)



“Someone left it on my front porch in a basket.”
- Jack Phillips (11)



“Paco’s favorite song is ‘Kids’ by MGMT.”
- Grace Stinnett (10)



“He loves to be held and sleep on your shoulder or in your lap.”
- Biology teacher Emily Walthall

“I’m glad I did, because I came back better than before,” said Kelly, reflecting on her choice.

The team and community at Xtreme that encouraged Kelly to return is one of her favorite aspects of the sport. “We all motivate each other; if someone starts doing better, you want to catch up,” said Kelly. “We hype each other up at meets, even if we are not competing.”

According to her teammates, Kelly contributes to the supportive environment of the team. “When someone is having a bad day or bad practice, she [Kelly] always seems to make them feel better,” said Meredith. “She radiates the positivity that we all need.”

In addition to pole vaulting,

Kelly is on the Freeman cheer and gymnastics teams, meaning during the winter months she participates in three sports. When balancing school and sports, Kelly said, “I just have to separate my schedule and sometimes get home super late.” She said, “Pole vaulting has definitely taught me time management.”

Kelly hopes to continue pole vaulting, potentially for a university team. “I’m considering it if I continue to improve,” said Kelly on the prospect of pole vaulting in college. For now, Kelly is focused on beating Freeman’s school record. “The current record is 11 feet 3 inches,” she said. “I’ve vaulted around 10 feet 6 inches ... I think it’s attainable.”

Senior Shines Onstage

Riley Speidell
Staff Writer

It’s the night of dress rehearsal for Freeman High School’s production of “The Crucible” and the court scene is in action. Here comes Holden Seward, playing Giles Corey, yelling that he has the court papers, but Holden’s paper prop is not in place. Instead, he has ... a tissue? “I had a tissue in my pocket, unused but all crumpled up so I pull[ed] the tissue out ... we kept going through the scene because Ms. Spears didn’t call ‘cut,’” Holden said. From this role in “The Crucible” at Freeman last year all the way back to his very first role as Mufasa in Tuckahoe Middle School’s “The Lion King,” Holden Seward has been an active member of the thespian community.

Although theater had always interested Holden, the first time he was actually on stage was in eighth grade. Junior Niamh Preis worked on this play with Holden when she was in seventh grade and said, “He really is very talented and it’s super obvious the first time you meet him.” The Simba to Holden’s Mufasa in “The Lion King” was Robbie Acree, a junior at Freeman. “We’ve had a really close relationship since then from being cast as father and son,” Robbie said.

Holden’s musical career began with singing. “I’ve been singing since my voice was ‘very high,’” said Holden, in an exaggerated inflection. “I did a lot of stuff with my church, and it was just me singing.” His choral experiences led him to explore theater further. While he admits that he was “kind of on the fence about doing [plays] in middle school, [he] is definitely glad [he] did.”

Because his first live performance wasn’t until later in middle school, Holden’s deeper voice led him to receive specific roles earlier

in his acting career. “It was a bit crazy doing [plays] in eighth grade, because I was the only one with a changed voice ... and that kind of gave me some roles,” said Holden, including Mufasa in “The Lion King.”

“Macbeth,” Holden’s freshman year, and “The Crucible,” his junior year, are Holden’s favorite Freeman productions. He was one of just a few freshmen involved in the production of “Macbeth” and said that “it was a really fun show—it was a hard show and I had a really hard time, but I really enjoyed it.” In “The Crucible,” Holden was more involved in the behind-the-scenes work, but also acted. Holden directed a small group of students to sing between scenes in addition to acting as Giles Corey.

Mary Spears, the head of Freeman’s theater department and a mentor to Holden, said, “He had to play an old man and I think that was really challenging for him, but I thought he did a really good job ... I mean he’s been good in everything he’s done.” In reference to the same part, fellow actor Robbie said, “He played the role perfectly and it was just hilarious to see him play that role.”

Holden said that his most difficult role was during his sophomore year in “Picnic at Hanging Rock,” in which he played the role of Michael Fitzhubert. Fitzhubert is British, and Holden struggled to find an accurate accent with which to portray him. “It was pretty much me doing my own dialect and I had a hard time with that. It was a very demanding role, like I had to [act] injured or asleep, and looking back on it, I wish I had done it a bit differently,” Holden said.

“Into the Woods” would have been the next performance for Freeman’s theater department had it not been cancelled when schools closed in March of last year. Ms. Spears said, “I would say that it

is unfortunate that we didn’t get to do “Into the Woods,” because [Holden] was going to play the baker, and ... that would have been a real signature role for [him].”

Despite the cancelation, Holden stayed involved by helping create a video of the four main characters singing a song from the show. This video was published on Freeman’s official Instagram account, as well as posted to Schoology.

Holden has also kept up with his art during the various stages of quarantine by working on a short film called “Altered Terms.” The film was shot last summer and is currently in the editing process. Holden said, “It’s different acting to a camera than acting onstage because, to a camera, you have to be thinking about everything you’re saying and it has to be a lot more genuine ... [Onstage] you have to promote a lot more with your voice than with your actual face.”

Additionally, Holden has been working with his band, The Headless Saxmen. As music is one of Holden’s many passions, his hope is to study music at the University of Miami because he said that “they have a good music program and [getting in] would be

awesome.”

As Holden continues his final year of high school, Ms. Spears and the rest of the theater department wish him luck in his path beyond the walls of Freeman High School.



PHOTO: EFOCUS PHOTOGRAPHY



PHOTO: EFOCUS PHOTOGRAPHY



PHOTO: OLIVIA ACREE

Left and top photo: Holden as Michael Fitzhubert in “Picnic at Hanging Rock;” Bottom photo: Holden as Giles Corey in “The Crucible”

Senior Paints Midtown Mural

Maddie Cassidy
Staff Writer

Visitors to the Fan District will be pleased to find a new mural at the corner of Meadow and Cary, created by senior Luke Logan. Over the summer, Luke painted this mural on a family friend's house.

Mark Heerens, a Freeman Class of 2019 graduate, lives in a house downtown with a blank wall on which his parents suggested putting a mural. Mark said, "They were originally going to submit the wall to the Richmond Mural Society to see if an artist would like to use it." The Heerens' mentioned this to their family friends, the Logans, who offered up their son's artistic abilities.



PHOTO: MATT LOGAN

Luke painting at night.

"We wanted it to be something current-whether it was with COVID-19 or the Black Lives Matter Movement, and then Luke took that and ran with it," said Mark.

The mural depicts an old-fashioned black-and-white image of

a man and woman kissing while wearing today's blue masks. Luke said, "The image itself is pretty ironic because they are not six feet apart. I wanted to make it a little bit funny as well, while being representative of the times."

Luke enlisted the help of his dad, Matt Logan, to begin the process of putting the mural on the wall. "We found out that the easiest way to do a mural would be to project it onto the wall to sketch the image," said Luke.

However, sketching was not going to be as easy as expected due to an industrial spotlight at a gas station nearby. The light from the spotlight meant the projector image was very hard to see. "I didn't know if this was going to work, and I thought I might have to free-hand it on the wall," said Luke. Fortunately, Mr. Logan was able to create a tarp canopy to give Luke the darkness he needed to see the projector.

Along with the spotlight issues, the late sunset meant that Luke had limited time that he could work on projecting and sketching the image. "All of this had to be done at night until his image was up on the wall and then he was able to paint it during the days," said Mr. Logan. They had to take a couple trips each week for about three to four weeks to finish sketching the mural on the wall.

Luke started painting the mural which was a learning experience for him because he had never worked with brick before. "I didn't realize it was going to be so hard and use so much paint because [the brick] just absorbs so much paint," said Luke, who continued, "Another learning curve was the grooves of the wall because I was painting it and realized I had to get as much paint on the brush as I could to make the line look continuous."

The interaction and response of the community was a highlight for all those involved. "It was cool how many different people would stop and look at the art," said Mr. Logan. "[The neighbors] said how much they appreciated what he did and how he did it."

Luke expressed similar sentiments, and said that there were "some people who came multiple times and checked in on the progress. It was pretty fun to have that experience while I was painting, especially since there is a lot of diversity around that area."

Mark Heerens said, "I think it's fantastic. It's pretty awesome people are driving by all the time to take pictures of it and there have even been some professional photographers that have been taking pictures of it from the corner."

As a passerby, senior Charlotte Cooper said, "It's definitely something to talk about whenever I drive by that part of town. I take great pride in saying 'my friend made that!'"

"I didn't realize it was going to be so hard and use so much paint."

- Luke Logan

Senior Amanda Gagen said, "I think it's so beautiful and Luke did such an amazing job on it. It's something that people will admire for years."

This was Luke's first time painting a mural, but he said that he would "definitely be open to doing more murals" in the future. "It was an experience that gave me so much knowledge and information on how to carry on with things like that in the future," said Luke.

"Sophomore year was my first



PHOTO: LUKE LOGAN

Luke's completed mural in the Fan.

year of art class ever in a school setting aside from elementary school, and I took Art I that year. Then my junior year I took Art II, and now in my senior year, I am taking ceramics," said Luke. He participates in the Art Club, and is also a member of Big Siblings, History and Human Rights Club, and Film Club.

Luke's normal medium is graphite drawings, but more recently he has been doing oil paintings.

In the future, Luke said, "I would love to take a few [art] classes ... and I would be really interested in broadening my horizons in college."

"Luke is such a great person-he's one of the funniest people I know, very smart, and a great friend," said Amanda Gagen. "He is definitely going to do amazing things in this world and this mural is only the beginning!"

Freeman's New Garden Club

Grayson Horner
Staff Writer

This year, a few students decided to take advantage of quarantine and start a brand-new club at Freeman: Gardening Club.

The club kicked off its first meeting in November 2020 with the intention of "giving students interested in plants, gardening, and the outdoors an outlet to express their passion," according to club sponsor and social studies teacher Daniel Lewis.

Mr. Lewis said that "the first meeting went great," and that during the meeting, "three students presented about gardening and their plan for the club this year."

According to junior Danielle Henry, club co-president, the meeting served as an outlet for her to "share her interest in plants and to build a community of people with common interests."

Currently, meetings include displaying gardens and plants, as well

as learning about different types of plants and how to keep them. Mr. Lewis is hopeful that once students return in-person, the club will get busy working on projects around the school.

According to Danielle, another goal for the club this year is "to have all members attempt to raise a plant from a seed at the school to see the development."

Returning in person will allow the club itself to develop. Mr. Lewis is excited to get to work

"I would love to take a more active role in working on the school garden."

- Mr. Lewis

on gardening around the school. He noted, "I would love to take a more active role in working on the school garden," referring to the garden between the Annex and Green Acres.

Despite the virtual environment,



PHOTO: DANIELLE HENRY

A plant belonging to co-president Danielle Henry.

the club still has major plans for this year. Senior Co-President Jenna Matthews said, "We are thrilled to hold a guest speaker this coming January, who will teach both about plants and the environmental impacts."

Meetings are open to all, and the club has no dues. The major goal of the club, according to Jenna, is to be "a significant asset toward Freeman High School, especially during the pandemic, because we encourage students to build connections with their environment and the plant community."

ASL Club Makes an Impact

Claire Morris
Staff Writer

The curtain is drawn back, the lights come on, and performers flood the stage. At first glance it appears to be a typical theater performance, but not only are the actors singing--they are signing. SPARC Live Art is an inclusive music and arts program located in Richmond, and it is where sophomore Nyla Addotey discovered her love of American Sign Language (ASL). Nyla participated in the Singing Hands class in 2018, in which students learn to sign the alphabet and perform to a deaf audience at the end of the year.

When Nyla arrived at Freeman last year, she joined as many clubs as possible. However, she was disappointed to find that there was no ASL club, so she started one.

taught lessons.

Nyla and her vice presidents, Skye Allen and Estela Tarabay, put together the resources and organize each meeting. "They do an amazing job at teaching each other, and it's really a great joy to watch as a teacher," said Ms. Szot.

Originally, the club only had a dozen members. "We didn't have a big turnout [at the first-ever meeting], but those who came were really passionate," said Nyla. This year, however, attendance skyrocketed, and the first meeting had over 30 people.

Vivian Addotey, Nyla's mom, has watched her daughter work hard to build the club from scratch. She explained, "I was very proud of her and her team. She is the driver of all of this. She runs the whole show."

While the club has more than doubled in size, Nyla encour-



PHOTO: JENNIFER SZOT

Members of the ASL club practicing ASL at a meeting in 2019.

When asked to be the club sponsor, government teacher Jennifer Szot agreed, even though she had no experience with sign language. "I thought, 'What a great club,' because it's such a necessary skill," said Ms. Szot. The first official meeting was in November 2019.

Members of the new club began by learning fingerspelling and the alphabet. "I preach the alphabet, because if you memorize the alphabet, you can spell anything," said Nyla. She taught herself how to sign through YouTube and uses the platform to teach members of the club.

Each meeting has a special theme. It can be anything from Thanksgiving foods to family members. Nyla creates Powerpoints and posts lots of videos and demonstrations for the members to watch and practice together. Last year, Reba Poole, a deaf professor at the University of Richmond, came to meetings and

ages more people to join. "I hope to invite more people to find out about [ASL] because it's not really talked about. It's there, but kind of hidden in a way," said Nyla. "It's a great back-pocket language to know."

Nyla has seen the usefulness of ASL in action. One such experience was when a deaf boy came down from Pennsylvania to watch the Singing Hands rehearsals. She practiced signing "hello, my name is" and made cards to welcome him. "He broke out in a huge grin," Nyla said. "It made me so happy that I was able to interact with him in his language."

Nyla hopes that the ASL club can raise awareness about the deaf community and make sign language more accessible. She said, "Everybody knows 'hola' in Spanish and 'bonjour' in French. It would be amazing if they knew 'hello' in sign language, too."

New Student Businesses

GLITZN
JEWELRY

Necklaces and earrings handmade by **Cat Pinotti**

Her packaging is so cute and her jewelry is very nice, you can tell it is of great quality."

- Junior Sophie Georgiadis, lock necklace, and blue beaded choker

Instagram: @glitznjewelry
Email: glitznjewelry@gmail.com
Website: https://glitznjewelry.square.site/

PHOTO: CAT PINOTTI



ADORANTO
MERCH

Ian Donnellan partners with YouTubers to make merchandise and websites for clients

"[Noah Ratliff and I] were bored one night and decided to put our free time into something productive."

- Ian Donnellan

Website: https://www.adorantomerch.com/
Email: contact@adorantomerch.com

PHOTO: IAN DONNELLAN

leah in glass
photography

Leah Glass' portrait photography services specialize in senior portraits

Instagram: @leahglassphoto
Email: leahglassphoto@gmail.com
Website: https://leahglassphoto.wixsite.com/leahglassphoto

PHOTO: LEAH GLASS

"I started my business to try something new and have some fun with my hobby by taking it to the next level."

- Leah

"It was a great experience. She took many pictures and they all came out amazing."

- Senior Olivia Haynes, mini photoshoot package

Freshman Commits to VT Baseball

Jack Kelleher
Staff Writer

In early November, Lee Sowers committed to play Division I baseball at Virginia Tech. This came after months of a COVID-19-affected recruitment process and years of playing baseball.

To Lee Sowers, baseball is in his DNA. While he started to play organized baseball at age five, Lee said that he had been “play[ing] with a plastic bat since [he] was two.” Lee’s passion for the game stems from “competing and trying to be the best,” and taking part in the competitive atmosphere that baseball provides.

As he spent more time playing baseball, Lee discovered that it was “the sport [he was] best at and the one [he] liked to compete the most in.” This, combined with his passion for the game, led him to pursue baseball at higher levels, joining travel teams and even winning a national championship as part of a Glen Allen All-Star team.

In addition to enjoying the sport, baseball serves another purpose for Lee and his family: to help “teach and instill the values of our family’s faith,” as Lee’s dad Martin Sowers said. These values also affect the way Lee carries himself on the baseball field, said Lee’s father, “by living out his faith, such as demonstrating humility or selflessness.” These attributes tend to be common themes among recruits like these, since they are “extremely motivated individuals, team-centered, [and] the hardest workers,” said Freeman Varsity baseball coach Andrew Moore.

In the past year, Lee’s path in baseball took a turn toward college

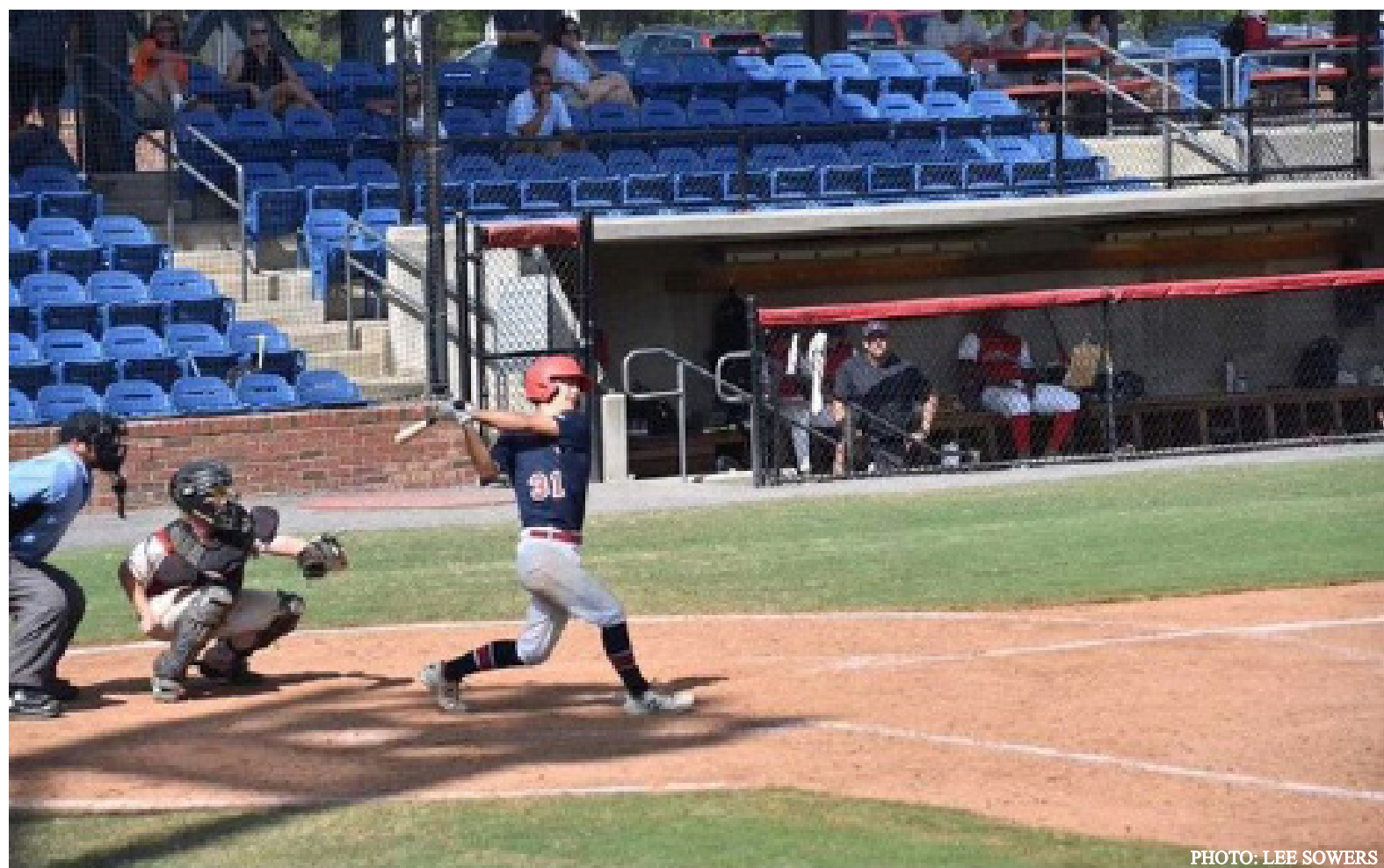


PHOTO: LEE SOWERS

After a hit, Lee watches the ball soar into the outfield.

recruitment. “If you told me last year that I would be in this position, I would have told you [that] you were crazy,” said Lee. He credits this trajectory change to the support around him and “be[ing] put in a really good position to work hard and make [himself] better.” By being able to display his talents, Lee started to draw interest from colleges, beginning his recruiting process.

Usually, during the recruiting process, coaches and scouts come to the fields and watch the players in person. However, after the pandemic hit, scouts and coaches

could no longer travel to recruits. Thus, Lee sent in videos and highlights to different colleges and coaches across the nation.

In addition to this, there are rules in place for students who try to get in contact with colleges and their coaches. Per NCAA rules, coaches cannot make direct contact with a recruit that is Lee’s age. Since Lee is a freshman, the college coaches would contact Lee’s coach, who would then give them a time that Lee would call.

After being in contact with six other schools, Lee chose Virginia Tech. When making his decision,

he said that VT—specifically VT’s baseball recruiting coordinator and assistant coach Kurt Elbin—“made him feel right at home.” A little more than a week after visiting campus for the first time, Lee decided to commit. He said that the baseball facilities, combined with the VT baseball staff and the academics of the school, made it seem like a great fit.

Despite this commitment, Lee said that he intends to work hard, viewing it as a blessing, saying “it takes away the pressure ... all I need to do is put in the work and trust the process.” As Coach-

Moore said to Lee, “The real work starts now.” However, Coach-Moore said that “[t]he intricacies concerning the way the game is played in high school more closely align with the college game than any other setting,” so much of the learning experience can take place before he heads off to Blacksburg.

While he has taken a step in his path, there is still much of it left to be traveled, and Lee looks forward to every step of the journey.

Summertime Spikeball and a “Monster Work Ethic”

Kristina Kang
Staff Writer

A game of two vs. two with a single ball, a round net, and the goal of keeping the ball from hitting the ground - introducing the sport of spikeball. The sport’s increasing popularity and the extended break due to COVID-19 has led senior Freeman students to create the first-ever Freeman Spikeball Team.

Say hello to seniors Danny Piper, Matthew Moore, and Josh Hansell, who started playing spikeball together during the summer. “It was something fun to do because it was one of these sports where none of us were really that good or had played for a long time,” said Matthew. “Eventually, we made an Instagram, and I made a logo of a spikeball with a ‘F’ in it for Freeman.”

The team began practicing more often, calling up other friends to play two vs. two. “We’ve played with a bunch of different people, because there are lots of kids

levels, and to try to better prepare ourselves both mentally and physically for tournaments and non-competitive play,” said Josh. Even when they are not together, the team practices their serves and hand motions in their bedrooms and backyards. “We all have nets in our room,” said Danny. “So, we can just practice serving in between school breaks or take it outside.”

After a long summer of practice, Danny and Matthew decided that they wanted to start entering tournaments. They chose to compete in the Atlantic Coast Fall Series, which consisted of three qualifying tournaments and a championship game, all hosted by the Roundnet clubs of Richmond, Virginia Beach, and Raleigh. At their first tournament in

disappointed, but we were happy we still placed and got points for the final tournament,” said Danny. After tournaments like these, Danny said, “we always feel like we can do better. There’s always stuff to improve on.”

At the championship tournament, Danny and Matthew did not place, however Matthew felt “alright with how [they] performed and had a fun time regardless [of their results].” Danny added, “We were happy to have qualified in the first place and get the experience. We also had a lot of fun, not only [that] weekend but throughout the whole series.”

Thomas Moore, Mathew’s older brother, believes that their “monster work ethic” is what helped contribute to their success at the tournaments. “Putting in hours every day, training their butts off, it’s like they want to be the world champion one day,” said Thomas.

After experiencing the tournament atmosphere, both Matthew and Danny got to know the people involved. “The community around spikeball is really great,” said Danny. “We’ve

been to three tournaments over the past month or so, and we’ve already made friends that we’re keeping in touch with.” Matthew added that a spikeball competition is “not like your typical sports tournament where ... these club teams ... take it super seriously all the time.” During the game, “we make jokes with our opponents when we’re playing with them, and it’s just a lot of fun, said Matthew.

In the future, the team wants to “keep pushing each other to improve” towards success, said Josh. Danny added that the Freeman team’s goal is “always just to get better, [get] more experience competing against higher-level people, and just see where it takes us.”



PHOTO: FREEMANSPIKEBALL

Matthew (left) and Danny (middle) play against Maggie Walker’s team.

around here who play,” said Matthew. Senior Charlie Unice, a member of the Maggie Walker spikeball team - which often practices with the Freeman team-said, “it’s pretty chill, but we play pretty competitively and it gets pretty heated.” The Freeman players’ dynamic is, “amazing,” according to Charlie. He said that when the players are together, “something clicks ... I don’t know what it is, but they start playing so well.”

Now, the team typically plays anywhere from two to four times a week, with a pickup practice hosted by the Richmond Roundnet Club on Mondays. “We also play with a recreational group to help us adjust to different skill

Raleigh, they did not place. However, at the Richmond tournament, they took fifth place out of the 25 teams, earning them each 10 points. Competing in the intermediate division, they secured enough points to play in the championship game that took place in Richmond on Dec. 12. “We felt the best [following the] Richmond [tournament], because obviously we’ve gone from not placing at all to placing fifth, and that was really exciting,” said Matthew. “We qualified, and I didn’t know if we were going to qualify or not. I was really happy we did, and I think Danny was, too.”

At the Virginia Beach tournament, they took sixth place, earning them 5 additional points each. “We were



Happy Trails

With strict social distancing guidelines in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19, hiking across Virginia is an amazing way to get exercise, spend time in nature, and get out of the house, all while practicing social distancing. Visit these hikes throughout Richmond to experience the natural beauty of the great outdoors!

Dutch Gap Conservation Area

PHOTO: CHESTERFIELD.GOV



Scenery & Wildlife: ★★★★★

Terrain & Intensity: **Easy-Moderate**

Location: **341 Henricus Park Rd.**

Distance from DSF: **34 min. / 26.5 miles**

The Dutch Gap Conservation Area features a unique hike around the James River tidal lagoon, contrasted with a thought-provoking juxtaposition to Dominion Power’s nearby Chesterfield Powerstation. Nonetheless, this hike features a view of wetlands and a “graveyard” of barges in the James River.

Pocahontas State Park

PHOTO: DCR.VIRGINIA.GOV



Scenery & Wildlife: ★★★★★

Terrain & Intensity: **Moderate**

Location: **10301 State Park Road**

Distance from DSF: **34 min. / 24.4 miles**

With over 90 miles of trails through forests and creeks, Pocahontas State Park offers a wonderful variety of hikes perfect for any hiker. Many hikers bring their furry friends along for the hike at Pocahontas State Park. The hike offers views of Beaver Lake, as well as the Beaver Lake Dam Spillway.

Poor Farms Park

PHOTO: ALTRAILS.COM



Scenery & Wildlife: ★★★★★

Terrain & Intensity: **Easy-Moderate**

Location: **13400 Liberty School Rd**

Distance from DSF: **30 min. / 22.2 miles**

Poor Farms Park contains countless combinations of trails through streams and beautiful forests. The multitude of trails can be a little confusing, but this peaceful hike is well worth it.



PHOTO: OLIVIA ACREE

Freeman singers performing a cappella back in the fall of 2018.

A Cappella on Computer: Freeman's A Cappella Group Goes Virtual

April Miller
Staff Writer

Due to the ongoing pandemic, Freeman's a cappella group has been forced to an online landscape. As students adapt to virtual a cappella, they are facing new challenges.

"It's a lot harder," said junior Bella Fowler. "A big part of [a cappella] is singing with each other. It's more challenging over the computer." Junior Robbie Acree said, "A big part of the group is being next to each other, singing."

Rehearsing problems aren't the only reason why students miss singing together. "We need to sing together to work," said sophomore Avery Ingram. This sentiment is shared by many, including Bella and Robbie. Robbie said, "It's a tight-knit group. Everyone is friends [with everyone]." Community is a fundamental aspect of the group, allowing students to sing with their friends and cohesively learn songs.

The Freeman a cappella group not only creates friendships but facilitates student participation. Led by senior Holden Seward, the group encourages student submissions for music, allowing students to sing songs that they enjoy. "We choose different songs that fit our group," said Bella. Some past examples of music selections include "EARTHQUAKE" by Tyler the Creator and "Ain't That A Rockin'" by Odetta. "I loved the songs we chose," said Bella.

"The group has been student-driven," said Choral Director Aaron Todd. "While I continue to oversee [the group], most of the group's leadership comes from the students themselves." In spite of the new challenges the group faces due to online learning, Mr. Todd is still optimistic, "the students' communication and collaboration with each other ha[s] been very successful," he said.

However, the group's plans are different this year. Compared to previous years, this season has been unorthodox. On top of the challenges with going virtual, the

group is faced with a tough question: what options are available to show off their songs? "Competitions this year are canceled," said Bella. "They might be rescheduled depending on COVID, but we don't know." Mr. Todd, however, is looking for opportunities to perform virtually. "We are excited and pleased to be able to share our music virtually and inspire joy, hope, and peace in our community."

The lack of available performances doesn't mean the end of the road for these students. "We're preparing for the winter concert now," said Bella. This concert will be taking place virtually on December 17. Looking to the future, Bella said, "I plan on taking chorus or choir in college, as well. It's been a lot of fun." Avery echoed this as she is planning to pursue a "musical education," as well as Robbie, who wants to "continue in college."

While the year has been difficult, students are still looking forward to continuing their musical training at Freeman and beyond. As they say, the show must go on!

Senior Performs to Raise Money for Charity

Maddie Carpenter
Staff Writer

Senior Archit Kumar has been volunteering with an international nonprofit called IndoUSRare for the past two years. Throughout his involvement with the organization, he has participated in an 'awareness run' and even organized two fundraising events.

IndoUSRare is a non-profit organization founded in 2019 that works to connect rare disease patients of Asian-Indian origin with global clinical trials. Orphan drugs are drugs that are not marketed because of their extremely limited use, rendering them unprofitable. These drugs are primarily developed in the Western world, so they only reach a small percentage of the world's population that is afflicted with so-called orphan diseases, conditions that affect thousands of people around the globe. IndoUSRare's mission is to promote the medical collaboration of the Eastern and Western hemispheres.

Archit chose to become involved with IndoUSRare not only because he thought that the organization had a unique and important mission, but also because his family has personally felt the effects of these rare, untreated diseases. When visiting India, Archit became accustomed to seeing his uncle suffer from an orphan disease called Thalassemia. Archit learned that his uncle's diagnosis was delayed for 15 years and that his access to treatment was minimal. Through this personal connection, Archit has developed a better understanding of the challenges that his uncle and many other Indians face in order to receive diagnosis and proper treatment for rare diseases. "The mission of IndoUSRare truly spoke to me, as I felt a personal obligation to improve the lives of my family in India," Archit said.

This past August, Archit, along with four other seniors located around Henrico County, organized a fundraising performance called Natya Swara, Natya mean-

ing dance and Swara referring to a musical note. The primary goal of holding this fundraiser was to spread awareness and educate the community about the process of treating rare diseases. The monetary goal of Natya Swara was \$5,000, but the event went above and beyond, raising a grand total of \$6,000.

The fundraiser was a performance of Carnatic music (music commonly associated with South India) that involved both singing and dancing. "[Archit] developed a passion for Carnatic music from a very early age," said his father, Anil Kumar. "Archit has been learning Carnatic music for the past ten years."

Mr. Kumar explained that "music does, somewhat, run in the family." Archit's aunt is a Carnatic music teacher in Northern Virginia, and Archit's uncle is a percussionist in Carnatic music and has performed in India.

Archit's performance at the fundraiser proved to have an effect on its audience.

Senior Emma Hennesey attended the August concert, which inspired her to look more closely into the issues to which Archit and his friends were trying to bring to light. "Their mission and vision inspired me to learn more about not only supporting research for rare diseases in India, but also around the world," she said. "After seeing Archit's passion for this cause and his performance, I felt empowered to help my community [by contributing to the causes] I'm personally passionate about."

Archit has no intention of easing up on his activism or his passion for Carnatic music anytime soon. "I definitely intend to continue pursuing music, and maybe have it as a 'side' to my main career," he said.

Other Freeman students can also get involved with IndoUSRare. By visiting indousrare.org, students can get a better understanding of what the organization is about and the details about upcoming events.



PHOTO: NATYA SWARA

The last act of Natya Swara - Archit is on the far left

is [Cidney's] journey to create pots and how determined she is to make 30-50 pots at a time." Because of this, Faith said her biggest takeaway from the visit was "that [Cidney] is very determined." She also noted another difference when she said, "Cidney sometimes gets to work alone, which we never do."

Through Cidney's experiences, students were able to see ceramics both at a higher level and outside of the classroom. While for some ceramics might just be an elective

in high school, Cidney got to show the students that it can be a life-long activity or even a career path. Mrs. Jones said, "For a subject like ceramics, it's hard for students to picture how they might take that into their real life. But they go to see somebody just like them that has chosen that path." According to Faith, "[Cidney's ceramics] showed that you can go really far and it doesn't just have to be a high school thing."

VCU Ceramics Classes Visits Freeman Ceramics Classes

Sydney Tyler
Staff Writer

On Oct. 8, ceramics classes got a special visit from Freeman alumna and VCU ceramics student Cidney Oleniacz. Cidney virtually joined two ceramics classes to talk about her experiences with college ceramics and its applications outside the classroom.

Cidney, a college junior, studied art education for two years before becoming a ceramics major. Prior to VCU, she was an art student here at Freeman, where she was an integral part of growing the art club. Ironically, she never took a ceramics class at Freeman, though she was very involved in the art department before she graduated in 2017.

Elizabeth Jones, Freeman's ceramics teacher, decided to bring Cidney into her virtual classroom when she learned that Cidney was working with coil pots, since the ceramics classes were learning about that pottery method.

The visit started with Cidney presenting her collegiate-level ceramics work space and equipment to the Freeman ceramics students. "I tried to use smaller, easily accessible materials to show them that you don't need all the fancy college tools to make beautiful art," Cidney said.

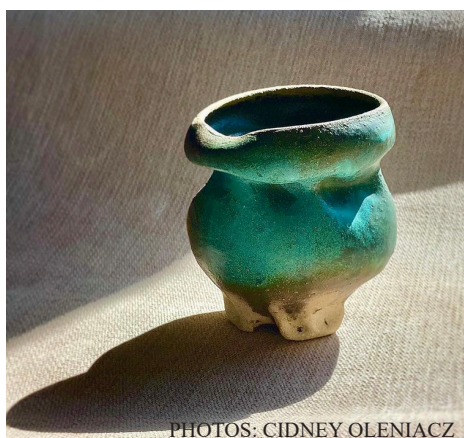
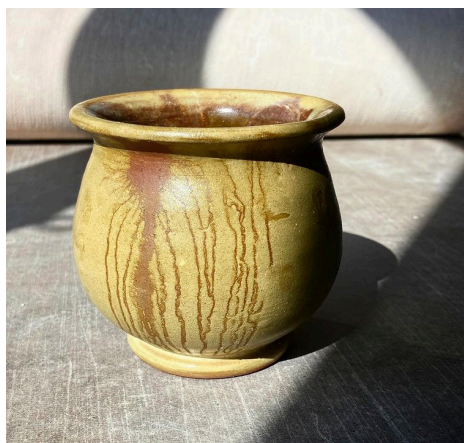
Cidney demonstrated her technique for making numerous coil pots, in which she makes a plaster mold, then presses her coils into the mold, and finally adds detail. This makes all of her projects the same shape, which allows her to create multiples of the same hand-built work. Mrs. Jones said, "She was doing a coil build very similar to what we do, but she was using a different process." Cidney also shared with students a technique in which she rubs plastic on rough areas of her work to make it softer, easier to work with, and better-looking.

College ceramics can be very different from the high school level. To show these differences, Cidney walked ceramics students through

the work that she was doing and its similarities and differences to their work. One of the biggest differences between the ceramics studios at Freeman and VCU are the kilns, which are used to fire ceramic art. VCU has numerous kilns, most notably the giant gas kiln. On the other hand, Freeman's kiln is much smaller and can only be fired at lower temperatures due to county restrictions.

Another major difference of higher level ceramics is, as Cidney said, "focusing more on the process." Cidney explained that, "we would spend time looking at the pots thinking about the look while drinking tea together before COVID." Cidney said this "really helps [with] understanding the material, [something] that you just can't get in a 45 minute class."

Mrs. Jones continued this thought when she said, "In college you really have to kind of put yourself into assignments." Cidney also said, "You get a lot more clay when you're in a proper studio, without the restrictions of the county. It's really interesting to be in." According to Mrs. Jones, Cidney's visit made it "really fun to see a comparison" between high



PHOTOS: CIDNEY OLENIACZ

Two of Cidney's pieces school and college ceramics.

Junior ceramics student Faith El-yardo said, "My favorite part [of Cidney's lesson] was when she showed us her techniques, they were really interesting." Faith explained, "it was really interesting to see their studio with social distancing and everything in place." As for the differences between high school and college ceramics, Faith noticed that "a big change

Song of the Year: Top GRAMMY Nominees

Don't miss the 63rd GRAMMY Awards, which air Sunday, March 14, on CBS! Find out who is nominated in each of the 83 categories by going to tinyurl.com/2021-grammys-nominees.



Everything I wanted - Billie Eilish



Don't Start Now - Dua Lipa



I can't breathe - H.E.R.



The Box - Roddy Ricch



Black Parade - Beyonce



If the world was ending - JP Saxe



Cardigan - Taylor Swift



Circles - Post Malone

Senior's Passion: Painting Pet Portraits

Cindy Xie
Staff Writer

Senior Jill Gomes recently turned her passion for painting into a business.

Jill has always been interested in art and enjoys painting as a hobby, but she never expected her interest to expand beyond a pastime. However, after spending much of her free time painting this summer, Jill decided to turn the leisurely activity profitable when she was "bored one day."

While Jill sells some of her paintings, she gives others as gifts, such as one that she gave to a family friend, Alison Metsker. It was a portrait of her dog, Bonnie, who passed away in November. When Ms. Metsker received the work of art, she said that she burst into tears, describing the painting as "moving, beautiful, [and] personal." She said, "The portrait really captured my dog ... it was everything." This surprise came directly from "the goodness of [Jill's] heart" Ms. Metsker said.

Ms. Metsker "absolutely loved" the painting Jill gave her and said Jill is "very talented and so amazing [at art]." Likewise, Jill's mother, Michele Gomes, said that



Jill's hand-painted portrait of a family friend's dog.

she has "fallen in love with each unique [painting] Jill has made." What makes Jill's paintings special are not only because she uses them to comfort others, but also because of "her ability to capture the personality of the subject," Ms. Gomes said.

With school back in session and work to do, Jill said that "it's hard

to fit in time to paint," but she still enjoys pulling out her paint brushes to create a new piece of art whenever she can. Ms. Gomes explained, "[I'm] proud of Jill to receive recognition for her work ... and happy that my friends have appreciated her work and want a personal piece of their animals to hang in their homes."

Review: Ukrop's Market Hall

Emma Burton
A & E Editor

Location: 7250 Patterson Ave, Richmond, VA 23229

West End Henrico has been buzzing about the development of the new Ukrop's Market Hall. In early June of last year, Ukrop's announced that their market hall would reside on the corner of Horsepen Road and Patterson Avenue. With the return of Ukrop's, the store planned to offer hot food and baked goods to the people of Henrico. The inside of the building is separated into three parts: a dining area, desserts/prepared meals, and hot food. However, the store is set up to allow those who want desserts and prepared meals to go into one entrance and hot food through another. Since the grand opening on Dec. 8, the cold and wet winter weather has not stopped anyone from waiting in line for their fried chicken. The Ukrop's Market Hall has shown success over the past few months and it's exciting to see how it will expand.



ILLUSTRATION: EMMA BURTON



PHOTO: EMMA BURTON



PHOTO: RICHMOND



PHOTO: EMMA BURTON

A sketch of Ukrop's Market Hall, as well as various exterior and interior angles.

Quiz:

What should you watch next on Disney+?



PHOTO: BACK2THEFRESH

1. What is your favorite genre of show?
a. Action b. Sitcom c. Animated cartoon d. Documentary

2. Which actor/actress do you like best?
a. Bill Burr b. Selena Gomez c. Alec Baldwin d. David Attenborough

3. If you had to watch one of these movies, which would you pick?
a. Rogue One b. Camp Rock c. The Simpsons Movie d. Our Planet

4. During shows, you like to feel ...
a. Excited b. Nostalgic c. Entertained d. Intellectual

5. How many seasons do you like shows to have?
a. Two b. Four c. 31 d. One

Mostly As "The Mandalorian"



PHOTO: CBR

If you chose mostly As, you should watch "The Mandalorian." It is an action filled show and is based off of Star Wars. It is set after the fall of the Empire and before the emergence of the First Order. If you love excitement and action, you will love this show!

Mostly Bs "Wizards of Waverly Place"



PHOTO: SCREENRANT

If you chose mostly Bs, you should watch "Wizards of Waverly Place." This is a show based off a family of goofy wizards. It is very fun to watch the adventures that they go through while they try to live a semi-normal life.

Mostly Cs "The Simpsons"

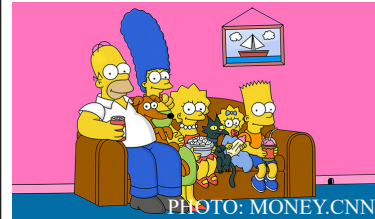


PHOTO: MONEY.CNN

If you chose mostly Cs, you should watch "The Simpsons." This show is filled with comedy and will make you laugh extremely hard. It is a great show to relax to and get your mind off of anything stressful you have going on.

Mostly Ds "Magic of Disney's Animal Kingdom"



PHOTO: DISNEYPARKS

If you chose mostly Ds, you should watch "Animal Kingdom." It's very educational and entertaining. You get to learn all about different types of animals and get to see how one-of-a-kind the theme park is.

Shedding Light onto WDSF Online

Taylor Widdifield
Staff Writer

Upcoming events, sports games, club meetings, and deadlines are all things students hear over the announcements each morning. Last year, sitting down in first period and turning on the morning announcements was routine, but this year is much different.

In past years, WDSF was a first period study hall, "but this year, it's part of the film class," senior Benjamin Edlavitch said. The class combines teaching digital media and the morning announcements into one class. "We were split into two groups that alternated, [...] one group works on the morning announcements, while the other group does the film curriculum," Benjamin said.

Virtual school has come with

many learning curves that students and teachers have had to work through. WDSF's sponsor, Amanda Linas, and her students have had to adjust to the virtual format. According to Mrs. Linas, when it came to the transition to online school, many questions needed to be answered, such as "How could we broadcast so that people could still see it?" Benjamin has been one of the students helping the WDSF broadcast since his junior year. "Luckily, we were able to find that Teams has this live stream option," Benjamin said.

Communication between the staff was another issue that online WDSF experienced due to online school. They cannot collaborate through their headphones during broadcast as they could last year. "You can't be as on top of people as you are in person," Benjamin said.

Communication during broadcast



Benjamin Edlavich posing on the set of WDSF.

wasn't the only thing that changed about communicating within the team; it's more difficult to get to know team members online. This year, "we don't know each other in person," Benjamin said. According to Benjamin, being cohesive and together is a big part of WDSF: "it has to feel like a team."

Despite the changes that WDSF

staff have had to overcome due to virtual learning, Benjamin looked forward to new innovations that could be made. "We have the ability to be very creative, especially right now," Benjamin said. The morning announcements aren't just meant for delivering information to the student body, they strive to do so in an entertaining and cre-

ative manner. "I [...] like being a personality, I like entertaining people," Benjamin said.

Junior Sithmi Rajaguru noticed the creativity that the staff put into the announcements. "They always had these funny little [...] jokes when they did the morning announcements, it was really fun watching them last year," Sithmi said. "They're a good starter to the day."

Mrs. Linas has been pleased with her students' abilities to adjust to online WDSF. "My students are very capable and creative; I'm always impressed," she said. WDSF online has strived to continue and create a sense of normalcy with virtual learning. Students hearing the announcements at the beginning of the day adds some continuity to online school, "starting the day the same way we would as if we were in the building," Mrs. Linas said.