

THE COMMENTATOR

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Freeman Teachers on 'Right to Work' Policies

April Miller
News Editor

Amidst the press for de-unionization for increased wartime production in WWII, the Virginia House of Delegates passed the "right to work" law in 1947, which allows employees the right to work for an employer without paying union dues. However, this law has been broadly opposed by unions because in its emphasis on individual freedom, it hinders the formation of unions. Recent pushback has led to a recent House of Delegates resolution to repeal this law, although it is up to the school board to vote on whether the potential change in legislation will apply to teachers. This school board vote may be held in upcoming months.

Virginia, despite being ranked first in the country for business, is ranked 50th in both workers' rights and teacher salary. "It's a symptom of a larger problem," said Mr. Abril, an English teacher here at Freeman. "This wage gap is reflective of how people see the value of educators in the state," he said. "I'm from California, where we take pride in [being in a] union," he continued. "The level of protection unions bring, in addition to the pay raises, is unparalleled.



PHOTO: CLAIRE MORRIS



PHOTO: CLAIRE MORRIS

Pictured left, Ms. Hunnicutt, pictured right, Mr. Abril

These days, being a teacher, you're always under the microscope, and unions just bring a level of protection you need in this profession."

"It's a misleading name," said Ms. Hunnicutt, who teaches English 10. "'Right to work' implies that it's easier to get a job, but what it really does is prevent teachers from joining a union to strengthen our voices." While she feels strongly on this issue, she sees both sides of the situation. "I understand that some people

don't want to pay the [union] dues, and don't want to be entirely beholden to their decisions," Ms. Hunnicutt continued. "I just wish we had more power so that our wages reflect our expertise and our commitment to the good of the community," she said. "We had a long stretch of time in my tenure where we were not given adequate raises, which makes our long-term salary suffer. It's almost impossible to make up that deficit."

"Our teachers are just not being

paid very well. They're stressed, and it's transferring into the classrooms," said senior Gio Mazzeo. "If our teachers could join a union, their pay would go up, [and] it would address some of the shortage issues we're facing today. Right now, no one wants to go into the profession." While he acknowledges the cons, Gio feels unionizing is worth the drawbacks. "Strikes could happen, sure, but who would mind a week off of school? [The] benefits greatly out-

weigh the costs, in my opinion."

Sagar Murthy, another senior, agrees. "Just like any other part of public life, teachers need unions. They play a crucial role and must be respected," he said. "Teachers can get paid almost twice as much more in the private sector, but they choose to stay because they care about us and our growth," he continued. "They are creating amazing individuals and minds, and they should be rewarded," Sagar said. "It's a joke around school- we buy [the teachers] new Promethean boards, but we don't pay them."

While teachers can not join an official union in Virginia, there are other alternatives. "Each county has its own educational association. Ours is the HEA (Henrico Educational Association)," said Ms. Hunnicutt. "But it's not very powerful- and I'm not [going to] pay dues to an organization that doesn't help me and isn't tax deductible."

Not every teacher shares this opinion. "I would buy into [the HEA]," said Mr. Abril.

The prospect of a teachers' union is a polarizing issue, and has been for decades. For better or for worse, however, change is happening. Teachers are closer to unionizing than they have been for almost 70 years. Now, the decision is up to the school board.

The Return of Wellness Wednesdays



PHOTO: MAGGIE NEWTON

Freeman students in their Freeman Focus class

Maggie Newton
Staff Writer

Freeman's school day is roughly seven hours long. Add on time for transportation, which could be anywhere from an hour to two hours- maybe even longer. Then, add on time for sports, after-school jobs, activities, family time, eating, homework, and the eight hours of sleep that teenagers are supposed to get. After doing that math, you get roughly 40 hours. Unfortunately, there are only 24 hours in a day. To help combat the

issue of students' struggling mental health, Henrico County Public Schools (HCPS) created a modified Wellness Wednesday, effective the week of November 15th.

Junior Michael Harris said he "really enjoyed last year's Wellness Wednesday because it gave a break in the middle of the school week and ... time to catch up on some assignments." Last year, Wellness Wednesdays were implemented by Henrico County to help the mental health issues that arose with virtual and in-person learning. The absence of students in schools also allowed for cleaning and sanitization to prevent the spread of CO-

VID-19. Students stayed at home every Wednesday for emotional and academic support. The modified Wellness Wednesdays are specific for each school, but they all serve the purpose of dedicating time to social and emotional learning and giving students the opportunity to succeed academically.

The new Freeman Focus "gives students more opportunities to make up quizzes or tests or get caught up on homework assignments," said Freeman's vice principal, Mr. Tim Sanders. Students now have the opportunity to make up work inside school, meet with their teach-

ers, and go to club meetings.

Starting November 15th, Freeman Focus was changed slightly to maximize student's opportunities for success with academic, social, and emotional health in mind. Freeman Focus was extend-

"[Freeman Focus] allow[s] for travel so that students can meet with teacher for make-up work or extra help"

- Ms. Hunnicutt

ed from 30 minutes to 45 minutes and returned to its previous time: before last period each day.

Freeman Focus will now "allow for travel so that students can meet with teachers for make-up work or extra help," said Ms. Hunnicutt, English teacher and founder of the Freeman Writing Center. She also hopes that "more students will come [to the Writing Center] for help now that Freeman Focus is extended and at a later time."

According to Mr. John Larkins, Freeman's version of Wellness Wednesday is "an extended Freeman Focus everyday." He believes that 45 minutes gives students enough time to make up tests and quizzes. "There really wasn't enough time to do it [before]. Maybe now they [can] do that," Mr. Larkins said. "It's just

a little extra time, particularly for students who are crammed with lots of advanced classes, to take a breather during their day." He also said that the Freeman administration is planning on doing Wednesday SEL (Social-Emotional Learning) lessons.

SEL lessons will take place every Wednesday to help students learn how to healthily deal with stressors. The lessons will offer time to reflect upon their mental health with discussion and lessons provided by their Freeman Focus teacher. Sophomore Dory Urquhart said the SEL makes

"It's just a little extra time ... for students to take a breather during their day."

- John Larkins

her "think about stuff [she] usually isn't thinking about," although she says she would rather do her schoolwork in the time allotted for the SEL lessons. "Some weeks are really stressful and some are not stressful," said Dory. "I probably have at least one or two assignments every night, and usually one of them is really hard." Dory says that "the extra 15 minutes will give me more time to do my schoolwork and study for tests."

Virginia Election Results 2021

Virginia House of Delegates:

District 68:
Dawn Adams (D): 53.0%
Mark Ealey Jr. (R): 47.0%

District 72:
Schuyler VanValkenburg (D): 52.6%
Christopher Holmes (R): 47.2%

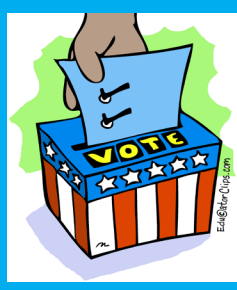
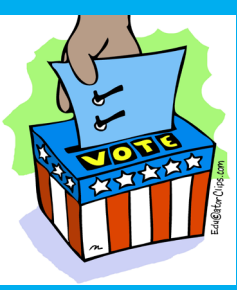
District 73:
Rodney Willett (D): 51.9%
Mary Margaret Kastelberg (R): 48.0%

Executive Branch:

Gubernatorial Race:
Terry McAuliffe (D): 48.4%
Glenn Youngkin (R): 50.8%

Lieutenant Governor:
Hala Ayala (D): 49.1%
Winsome Sears (R): 50.9%

Attorney General:
Mark Herring (D): 49.3%
Jason Miyares (R): 50.6%



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Dr. Rodriguez Joins The Freeman Family

Morgan Strudgeon
Staff Writer

This year, Douglas S. Freeman administrative staff added a new member to their team: Dr. Neemah Rodriguez. She is an assistant principal who also works on crisis and safety management at Freeman.

Dr. Rodriguez has worked in education for 35 years, citing her dedication to the profession to her love of children. Before coming to Virginia, Dr. Rodriguez worked with elementary school students in New York, but found that she enjoyed working with high school students more. "I love kids," said Dr. Rodriguez. "I like connecting with them, especially the high schoolers because they have a sense of judgment. And I like to converse with kids that can make sense of things."

Dr. Rodriguez first came to Freeman because it was where Henrico County assigned her, but she has embraced the new environment nonetheless. While this is her first year at Freeman, Dr. Rodriguez has worked in educational professions focused in Henrico County since the mid-2000s. Before joining the Freeman family, Dr. Rodriguez worked at J.R. Tucker High School in an administrative position. "This job is more of a continuation of what I was doing there," she said.

So far, Dr. Rodriguez has found Freeman to be a welcoming place.

"The teachers have some kind of a warmth that is this cohesive and it resonates to all departments [...] everybody is so polite," she said. "In terms of faculty and staff, it's very cooperative and everybody has been so helpful."

Some of Dr. Rodriguez's duties as assistant principal include operating as the site safety administrator as well as overseeing the science and physical education departments. "I am also in charge of the distribution of keys ... and assigning parking spaces," she said. The senior class, including their graduation, also falls under her supervision.

On her average day at school, Dr. Rodriguez said that she "usually gets to work at seven" o'clock each morning. "[Upon arrival] I check email, organize, make sure I'm ready for my meetings of the day," she said. After preparing for school, Dr. Rodriguez has bus duty, where she helps ensure that all buses arrive and everyone gets to school on time. Dr. Rodriguez also has lunch duty in the cafeteria every other day.

Some of her other day-to-day responsibilities include supervising the School Resource Officer(s) and managing homebound learning for students unable to attend school due to medical or personal reasons. According to ATDSF.com, she also serves as the administrator for students with last names beginning with D-K.

During the average school day, Dr. Rodriguez meets with both stu-

dents and parents regarding disciplinary actions as well as any concerns about school life. She said she "work[s] very closely with the school counseling department to make sure that all students are taken care of and thought of as individuals." During class transitions, she, along with the rest of the administrative team, stands in the hallway to make sure that there are no safety issues or interruptions.

Dr. Rodriguez mentioned her goals for working with the Freeman Family. She wants to "be more in tune with [her] departments." In addition to this, she wants to "make sure that [she] visit[s] classrooms on a regular basis to figure out what [she] can do to help student achievement."

Overall, even though the move to Freeman has been an adjustment for Dr. Rodriguez, it has been a welcome one. While Tucker and Freeman share many similarities, there are still some differences between the two schools. Dr. Rodriguez said that "anywhere you go [or] start a new job, you ... learn from those who have the knowledge that you need." She went on to say that "I do what I do. I've done what I've done, but it's done differently in different places."

While working in a school setting has become second nature to Dr. Rodriguez, she still believes that Freeman will present new opportunities to work with students and staff members and get to know a new high school.



Dr. Rodriguez in her office

PHOTO: CLAIRE MORRIS

Writing Center Helps Students 'Write' Their Wrongs

Ada Malpani
Staff Writer

I was immediately greeted by the chatter of students and the sound of productivity upon entering room 205, the home of Freeman's Writing Center. The student tutors of the Writing Center are the newest way for Freeman students to get quick and efficient writing help.

Available during Freeman Focus, this center provides students with a "welcoming, risk-free environment for students to get much-needed help in all aspects of writing from their peers," said Writing Center staff advisor and English 10 teacher Ms. Wiley Hunnicutt. The program "was designed as a way to help struggling writers, including our multi-language learners" and is available to all students at Freeman.

This student-led program is simply "another way students can get help," said senior Walker Beck. "I know a lot of friends who have private tutors, or their parents can edit their writing ... [but] I think the Writing Center is a really good way to give the kids who don't have access to outside help a way to catch up."

Because it is student-operated, there is a larger opportunity for students to come in and get assistance. "We have so many students that teachers don't have enough time to give feedback on writing and [help in] the process of writing a paper," said Ms. Hunnicutt. The Writing Center fills this gap, as students can visit room 205 instead of trying to coordinate with teachers or staff. Having students edit their peers' writing also has many benefits. For one, "[the help] is from a student perspective," said senior Ella Appich. "[The students of the Writing Center] have been in that situation, so they can tell you from their experience what is best to do."

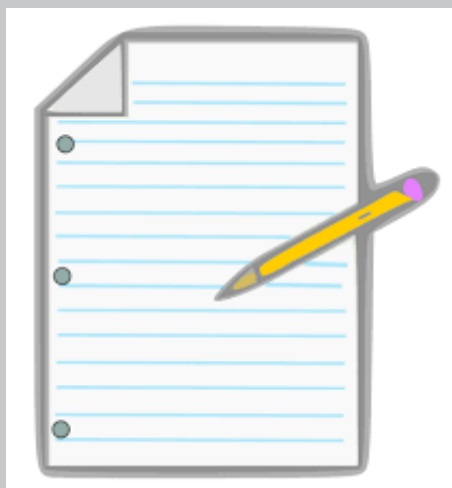
Some students also struggle with asking teachers for help. "Sometimes, it feels a little uncomfortable to ask a teacher to stay after [school]," said sophomore Poppy Friske, "and it can feel a little more natural to ask other students for help." The Writing Center is a "nice medium between a totally clueless friend and

a teacher who ... can't give you help on your level," said Poppy. Students can always count on the staff to "care about and like writing," and help students' writing in whatever areas are necessary. The student staff is always excited to help. "Everytime [someone comes in] somebody jumps up to go and help them," said Walker Beck. When it comes to student collaboration, Ella Appich said, "a couple of us will read and give suggestions ... We'll ask specifically what they want us to look over and what they want help with." The Writing Center has "been an idea in the works for a few years now" but "the real catalyst behind it was Ms. Beverly Steele," said Ms. Hunnicutt. Ms. Steele, a former Freeman teacher, began sending out applications and looking for a sponsor at the end

of last year. After finding a sponsor in Ms. Hunnicutt, Ms. Steele found a time during the school day that would work best in Freeman's schedule: Freeman Focus.

Similar to NHS (National Honor Society) tutoring, the Writing Center provides student aid in a new and innovative way. "Writing is such a large part of all classes," said Ella Appich. "I think it [the Writing Center] is beneficial for anyone, it doesn't matter whether it's an English paper or a science lab."

To get help from the Writing Center, students should go to ATDSF.com, click on the Writing Center icon, and fill out the google form to get a pass. After filling out the form, all a student needs to do is go to the Writing Center, and they will be greeted with students happy to help. If a student is struggling with writing, a trip to room 205 may be just the relief they need.



Do You...

- ✓ *Need help on an English paper?*
- ✓ *Want to improve your grammar skills?*
- ✓ *Need help on college essays?*
- ✓ *Want someone to proofread a thesis statement?*
- ✓ *Need to spice up your syntax?*

Visit the Writing Center!

Room 205 During Freeman Focus

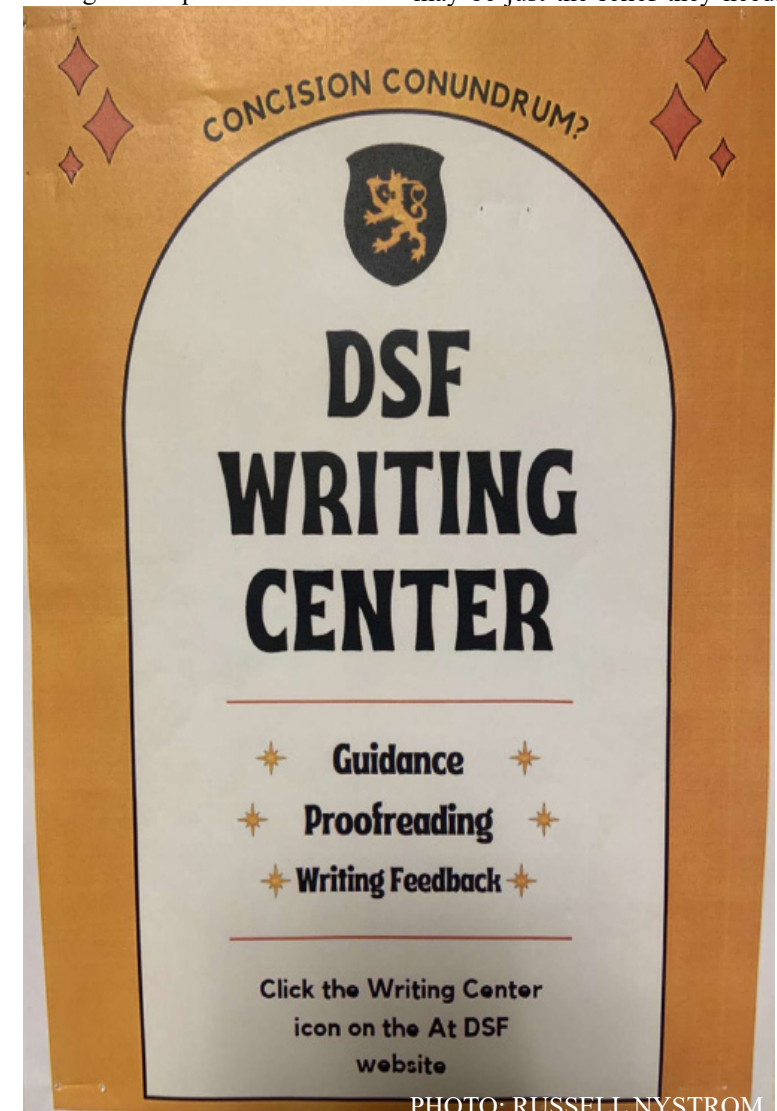


PHOTO: RUSSELL NYSTROM

Posters for the Writing Center can be found around Freeman.

Behind the camera: Bill McClure
Page 5



Giving thanks at DSF
Page 6 & 7



DSF Students involved in politics
Page 8



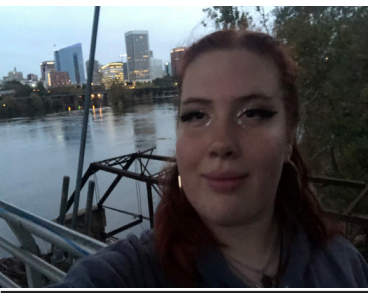
Get ready for tip off!
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Review: Red (Taylor's Version)
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Freeman's Laptop Problem



Emma Ridolphi
Photographer

So much at Freeman has changed since the COVID-19 pandemic, including our laptops. This year, students were surprised and (temporarily) relieved by updated Dell laptops. Finally, after a grueling year of negative changes, we were observing what was to be a positive change at Freeman.

The old laptops were heavier and bulkier, occupying ridiculous amounts of space in our backpacks. They felt like more of a hassle to use, and barely fit on our desks. The screens weren't as bright and their quality had decreased significantly after years of intense use.

The new laptops, however, are much lighter. They don't strain our backs. They are slim and slide neatly between our folders and binders. They are easy to pull out and take up much less tabletop space than the previous ones.

In theory, these advantages should rank our new laptops ahead of the old ones, right? Sadly, no. The old Dell's may have been heavier, but this was because they had larger battery. The current ones are slim and light due to a much more compact battery. While it is refreshing to have portable laptops that don't occupy as much space in backpacks and on desks, it is even more frustrating to have my laptop die by fifth period because I opened more than a few tabs. Somehow, I find myself missing the annoyingly bulky laptops and their days-long battery life.

I've also noticed other students experiencing more issues with the latest laptops, specifically screens breaking easier, laptops freezing, more lag time, glitches, and other complications. I've also experienced some of these problems. I

continue to have issues with my screen flickering, going dark, and then coming back to life. My laptop also freezes often, a common complaint amongst students. Laptops used at Freeman in previous years were not nearly as problematic for me, nor for the other students.

Additionally, the new laptops seem to have a lower resolution than the previous ones. The screen appears more grainy and blurred at times. This wasn't a serious issue in past years. Senior Kayley Wine reported a problem described earlier, saying that "the new laptops randomly go black and don't come back on for up to 30 minutes," also echoing the common sentiment that "the old computers are better because the new ones don't hold power."

Despite shared sentiments of distaste for the new laptops, some students prefer them and are willing to sacrifice the less than ideal operating system for a lighter, slimmer laptop. In several classes, I've heard students praise the new laptops for how easy they are to grab out of backpacks and use on other surfaces, like sofas and beds. Senior Zoe Ardush prefers Freeman's modern laptops. "I like the new ones better," she said, describing them as "lighter," and "nicer." But even with these advantages, she acknowledges their slower software. "Even though I prefer the new ones, I do realize the old ones worked better overall," commenting on the significant decrease in quality.

With the advent of these laptops, the freshmen who never experienced our previous laptops come to mind. They likely find these laptops sleek and accessible, nicer than the ones they may have used in middle school. But they don't realize what we had in prior years. Yes, our old laptops could be a pain, (physically, for the most part) but they never experienced the arguably better software of the old laptops. One day down the line, they may receive even newer laptops. Most likely, they will complain like we have, and there might even be another overzealous defense of the old ones in The Commentator, just like this.



PHOTO: ANNABELLE GLASSMAN

A look at Freeman's laptops

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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.

She Said



Isabelle Hevron
Opinions Editor

She Said



Cindy Xie
Opinions Editor

Holiday Edition

Definitely yay	Stuffing. Yay or nay?	Nay, I'm good
Overhyped. I just wait for Cyber Monday	Black Friday Shopping.	Catch me at Short-Pump Mall at 7:00am
Eating a ridiculous amount of food.	Best part of Thanksgiving?	Being with my family friends!
Apple (but Pumpkin is still good)	Pumpkin or Apple Pie?	Pumpkin is superior
Watching the Macy's Day Parade	Family tradition?	Playing pool and cards
Only if it's homemade	Gravy?	Always, who wants a dry turkey?

Don't Forget About Thanksgiving!



Annabelle Glassman
Editor in Chief

By the time you are reading this, it will be December. Though less than a week has passed, Thanksgiving will be but a faint memory of dry turkey, awkward family interactions, a few football games, and the annual reminder that the Rockettes exist as they kick across the screen for the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. Mentally, you have likely begun embracing the winter holiday mindset. Whatever radio station you listen to has switched over from their regularly scheduled programming to the ten-song Christmas collection (seriously, how many times can you listen to "Santa Baby" or any of the "Alvin and the Chipmunks" songs without going insane?). The Christmas sections at stores have increased from the small, awkward corner in the back that has been red and

green since August, to a monopoly front and center of the store. The Starbucks menu has made the official transition from the pumpkin spice latte to the objectively superior peppermint mocha.

But here's the thing: I have a feeling that you didn't really give Thanksgiving the attention and love that it truly deserves. So, here it is, your reminder to appreciate the holiday that is oh-so-frequently overlooked in favor of the flashier ones that sandwich it: Halloween and Christmas.

While the origins of this holiday are slightly dubious, Thanksgiving has done a lot to redeem itself since the original one that ended, well, let's just say not spectacularly for one of the two parties involved. These days, Thanksgiving is devoted towards spending time with your family, being grateful for all that you have, and, for some people giving back to their communities. This final day of calm, simple, wholesome time spent around the dinner table is the perfect primer for the upcoming season. One final day of peace before a month of over-commercialization, calendars that defy all laws of space and time, and teachers attempting to cram in entire units of content before we forget everything we've learned since September in the span of less than two weeks. People are too quick to overlook the joy that Thanksgiving can bring. Whether it's starting Black Friday shop-

ping on the night of Thanksgiving or putting up Christmas trees before the turkey is even in the oven, I hear too many stories of Thanksgiving breaks that entirely ignore the whole point of the holiday and focus on the upcoming December holidays instead.

Personally, my family goes pretty hard into the whole Thanksgiving thing. We have two days chock-full of traditions, from the food we eat to our annual Black Friday hike to get out of the chaos of Short Pump for the day. For this week, we cling tightly to our traditions, eating the same two flavors of pie we've eaten ever since I was five years old (lemon and pecan pie from Westhampton Bakery, in case you were wondering), having my younger sister and I pull apart the wishbone at the end of the meal (she somehow always wins this tug) and spending time with the family members who we exclusively see at this time of year.

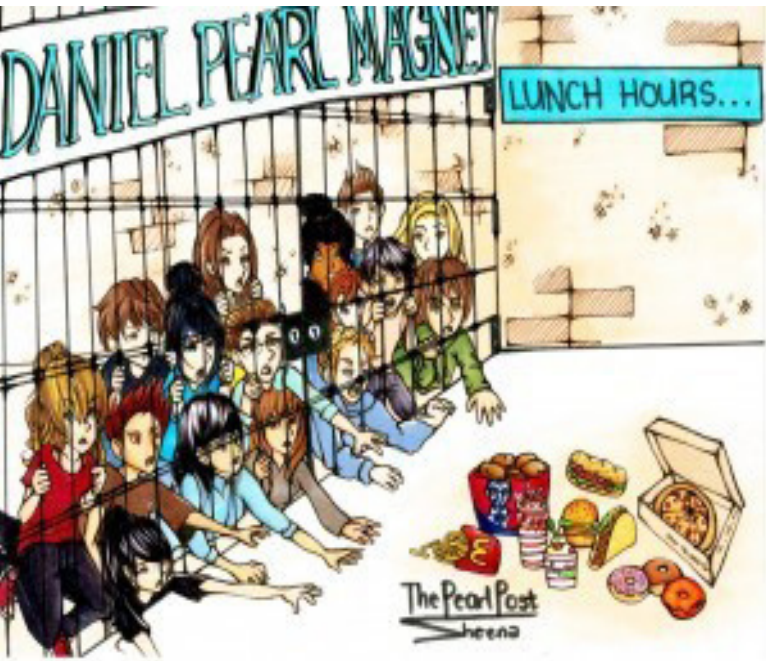
With the past year being what it was, really celebrating this Thanksgiving is more important than ever. As cliché of a sentiment as this is, it rings true in this situation. While this year's festivities might not have been like they were in 2019, they were most likely better than they were in 2020. For the Glassman family, this meant a return to an in-person celebration instead of the Zoom call that had to suffice last year. There is plenty to be grateful for, and what better way to celebrate it than on the entire day that is given to giving thanks?



PHOTO: PBS

"A Charlie Brown Thanksgiving" is a classic holiday special.

Let Us Eat Off-Campus!



Cartoon by Sheena Gonzalez from The Pearl Post.



Sydney Tyler
Sports Editor

We all know that the same leftovers in a thermos (that have been sitting in a lunchbox for hours) can get a bit repetitive after the first few weeks of school. However, there is a simple solution to this lunch-time crisis faced everyday by Freeman's students: off-campus lunch.

Imagine: you can leave school to get Chick-Fil-A, Chipotle, Panera ... the lunch options are endless. Freeman's location is ideal for cuisine options with the vast variety of eating establishments close to campus. While I think we would all be in favor of a longer lunch, the 30 minutes we have is more than enough time to swing by your restaurant of choice and get back to class in time.

The benefits are immeasurable. Wouldn't you be happier if you got a mid-day break from the halls of Freeman High School, even if just for lunch? After spending two periods stuck inside the school, it is obvious that this change would boost student morale throughout the day. I'm even confident that this change in scenery would bring students back from lunch more energized and ready to learn. And they, at the end of the day, isn't the goal to make students as productive as possible during the long seven hours they spend in school?

But there are even more benefits; there are few things I miss about online school, but one thing I miss dearly from the days of Microsoft Teams is being able to eat lunch wherever I wanted. Now, the Freeman cafeteria is our daily reminder of what once was. It is certainly es-

sential to the success of students to have the opportunity for off-campus lunch in order to smooth the transition back into normal school.

Let's take this conversation outside of just the school. Think about how this change would benefit the community. Local businesses and entrepreneurs would benefit dramatically from this change. Imagine the power about 2,000 high school students can have on the economy during five lunch periods a week. So really, it's only right that as a school we do the selfless thing and satisfy our students while also helping the community grow and prosper.

Speaking of community, one day, each and every one of Freeman's students will be engaged members of the community. Isn't the whole point of school to prepare students to be just that? A typical adult activity is going out to lunch with colleagues. Adults use lunch as a business strategy to change environments, meet with clients, or just take a break. So why not get into the practice of employing this superior business strategy now? Students would also learn real world skills such as time management and responsibility when returning to school after lunch.

I know what you're thinking: Sydney, how in the world would we ever be able to implement such a thing? Good thing I have the ultimate guide to off campus lunch for the Mavericks.

I understand that there are many concerns about allowing students to leave in the middle of the day. So, instead of off-campus lunch being a right, it should be a privilege that can be given or taken away at any time.

Administration could put together a strict set of guidelines you must meet to qualify regarding attendance and behavior. Teachers will also take attendance both before and after lunch for B and C lunches. For A and D lunches, teachers will collect attendance either before or after the lunch block. This way we can ensure that everyone returns to school after their lunch period to continue their school day normally. So Freeman administration, the ball's now in your court, and there's clearly a right answer: let us off campus for lunch!



PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

Top fast food brands in the United States



PHOTO: PIXABAY

A War Against Wednesdays



Claire Morris
Photographer

Nobody likes Wednesdays. That is just a fact of life. While Mondays and Tuesdays are not ideal, they at least have the advantage of coming off of the weekend. You are somewhat well-rested and can still function like a normal human being. Thursdays and Fridays are close enough to the weekend that you can see the light at the end of the tunnel. The encouragement of Saturday and Sunday gives you the second wind you need to cross the finish line. Wednesdays, however, have no redeeming qualities. It is a slump (or hump if you ask the GEICO camel). Even the

name is spelled with the intention to confuse and frustrate kids. School on Wednesdays is a waste of time as kids are tired and unmotivated. There is no amount of coffee in the world that could make Wednesdays productive.

That is why we need to move to a four-day school week. A schedule where we have a day off when we really need it: Wednesday. This plan is not without its faults, as the time lost would need to be made up through longer school days or shorter summers, but the benefits make it all worth it.

No school on Wednesdays would split the grueling week into two manageable sections. Classes could meet twice a week every week. Odd classes on Monday and Thursday, and even classes every Tuesday and Friday. Not only would this give an equal amount of time to every class each week, it would also eliminate the need to keep track of the flip-flopping schedule. Students don't need any more stress on Sunday nights. Procrastinating on homework is enough to drive them crazy without the added confusion of an ever-changing schedule.

In addition to giving more structure to the week, free Wednesdays would provide students with a much-needed break in the middle of the week. It would become something to look forward to, a source of motivation to get through the week. No longer would Wednesday be a drain of energy, instead it could become the light at the end of the tunnel for Tuesdays and a shot of Red Bull to power through Thursday.

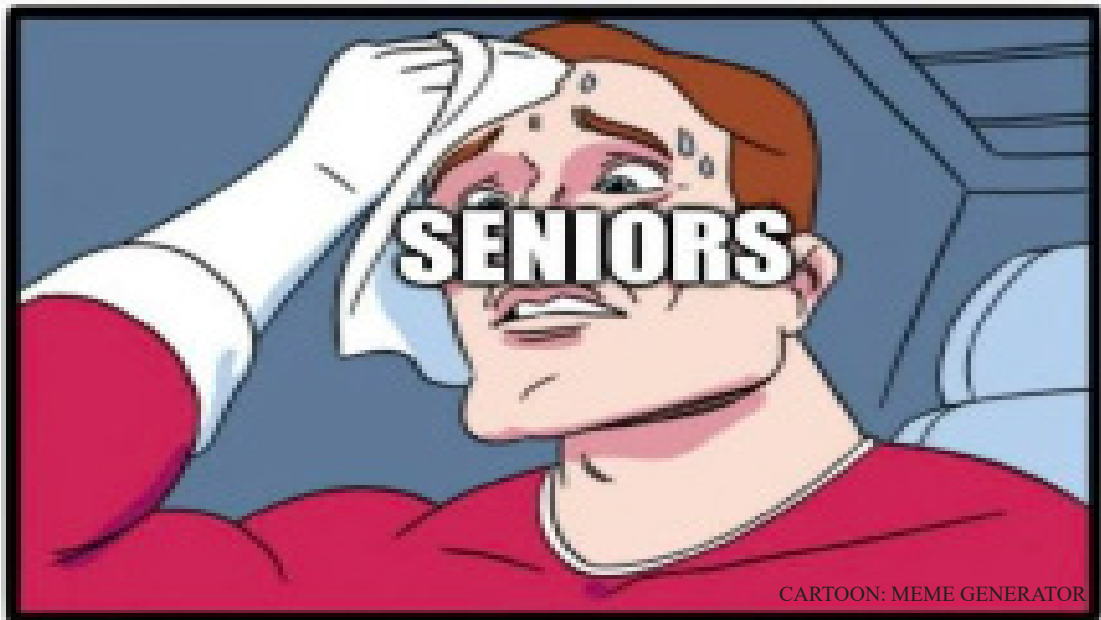
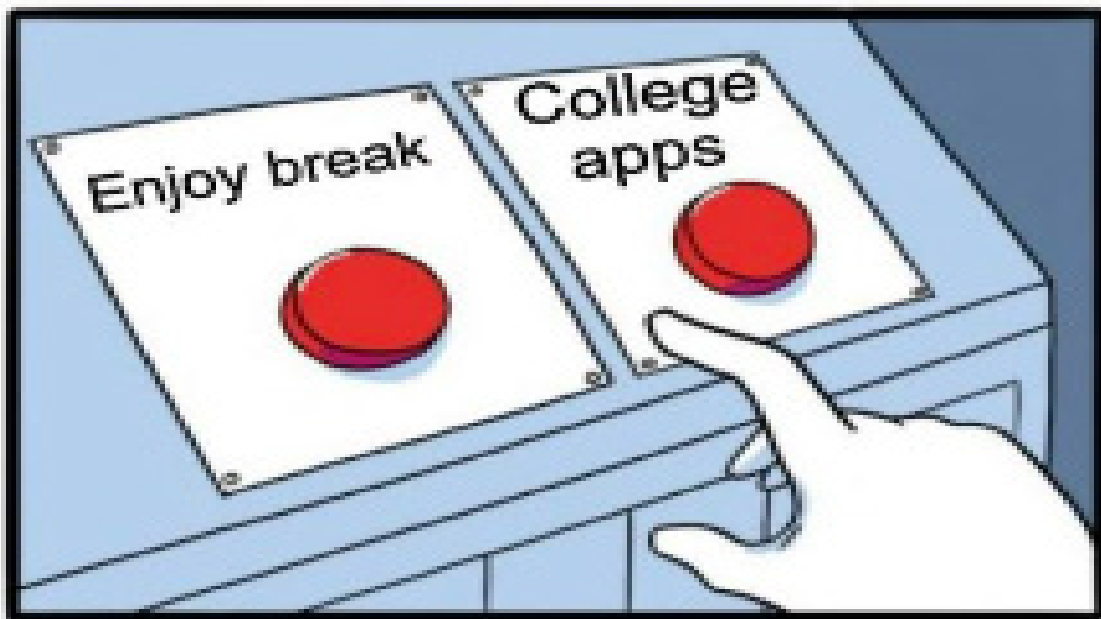
The four-day week could also increase attendance at school. Parents could have the flexibility to schedule doctor's appointments on Wednesdays instead of during school hours. There would also be fewer sick days, and not just because there are 14% less school days to be sick on. This free day would provide a stress-free time to fully recover. A day that students could stay in bed without the worry of late work and make-up tests.

Free Wednesday is the answer to our unproductive, stressful school week. It would provide structure, motivation, and stability to students and teachers alike. It is the only way for Wednesday to redeem its tarnished reputation.



PHOTO: READER'S DIGEST

Senior Struggles



CARTOON: MEME GENERATOR

Bill McClure's Photography Unites and Excites Freeman

Maddie Carpenter
Features Editor

Bill McClure is not an unfamiliar name to many athletes at Freeman. A photographer and co-owner of McClure Photography, LLC, he often visits Freeman sporting events to photograph the Maverick athletes.

McClure first got into photography at a young age. "At some point in my elementary school years, I picked up my father's Kodak Brownie Hawkeye camera and began to take pictures," he explained. Since then, his interest in photography has only grown.

Over the years, McClure's passion for photography has flourished. "There are many things I love about photography, including at the most basic- I love the feel of a camera in my hands," said Mr. McClure. His favorite aspect of photography is seeing the final images. After he sees his finished products, Mr. McClure asks himself: "Does it speak to me? Does it tell a story? Does it capture a fleeting moment? Does it contrib-



One of McClure's photos from a football game on November 12.

ute to building a memory bank: of joy, of beauty, of sadness?"

One of his main claims to Freeman recognition is his photography of the Freeman football team. One of the football coaches, Coach Bland, has known Mr. McClure for about five years and is grateful for what he has done for the football team and Freeman athletics as a whole. "He is

a generous supporter of our athletes as his photos provide lifelong memories," said Coach Bland. "[His] passionate pursuit of sports photography should be an inspiration for all of us."

Mr. McClure's grandson, senior Owen Fallen, is also the starting quarterback and a large reason why Mr. McClure loves to photograph the football team. How-

ever, football is not the only sport of Owen's that Mr. McClure has photographed. "From YMCA soccer to current Freeman football, he's been at almost every single sporting event of mine capturing special moments," said Owen.

Mr. McClure and his grandson have a very tight-knit relationship. Owen describes the impact that his grandfather has

had on his life as "incredible."

"I've looked up to him as a role model, leader, and motivator," said Owen. "He has taught me that whatever you put your mind to, if you do it with meaningful and relentless effort, you'll achieve many things."

While his football pictures may be what Mr. McClure is most known for at Freeman, they barely scratch the surface when it comes to the variety of subjects he photographs. "I do portraits, events, travel, nature, street, documentary," said Mr. McClure. "[I photograph] people, horses, nature, and things that tell stories, such as murals and graffiti."

Mr. McClure has had a unifying impact on Freeman as a whole. His photographs help tell stories. Some can be found on the walls of local sandwich shop Bernie's. Others can be found on the Instagram of student athletes, Bill McClure (@mcclure.photo), or within Freeman itself. Coach Bland said, "The action shots, special photo shoots, and overall support play such a crucial role in making Freeman a special place."

Seniors Reflect on Courtyard

Riley Speidell
Centerspread Editor

From Halloween to front row at football games, senior privileges are a staple at Freeman High School. This school is built on tradition, one of these being eating lunch outside in the Senior Courtyard. The Courtyard is an outdoor space equipped with picnic tables, trees, and lights, creating a small get-away from the clamor of the cafeteria.

With this privilege being for seniors only, many students spend their first few years of high school looking forward to their chance to sit outside. Senior Charlotte Hare said "[she] was super excited to be able to sit in the Senior Courtyard this year. It's nice to have the privilege to get to sit outside in the sun and with everyone else in our grade."

Sam Moran, also a senior, thinks of the Senior Courtyard as a, "fun way to remind [himself] that [he is] a senior and ap-

preciate the senior experience." Sam's classmate, Sydney Greiner, was also looking forward to the courtyard. "I was ecstatic to sit in the courtyard, especially because of COVID-19, I was uncomfortable sitting indoors and I also love being outside," said Sydney.

Many seniors are taking full advantage of this opportunity. Sam and Sydney both say that they sit in the courtyard every day. Charlotte said she also sits in the courtyard on a daily basis, "unless it is too cold or if it's rainy," and Sam plans to sit outside, "until [he has] to literally wear gloves."

Compared to other senior privileges at Freeman, sitting in the courtyard can be overlooked. Dressing up for Halloween is more interactive than eating outside, but the senior students still appreciate their exclusive lunch location. "[The courtyard is] more mundane, but also more useful and I enjoy it more frequently and I value it more than other [privileges] that happen only once," said Sam.

One item on the list of traditions

at Freeman is sitting on the front lawn during lunch. While this privilege has not been active for several years, it was reinstated this year for junior students. Though the current seniors were not given this chance, some students didn't mind missing out on the opportunity. "It didn't bother me that the juniors got the privilege of sitting outside," Charlotte said. "The seniors have the courtyard and the juniors have the front lawn and as long as they keep the courtyard to a senior privilege, it is not a problem for the juniors to also get to sit outside."

This decision, however, irritated some seniors. "It's stupid because they're called senior privileges and getting senior privileges before senior year dilutes their importance," said Sam. Sydney added, "It's a little sad but considering the circumstances, it seems like a safer option than having more people than necessary sitting in the cafeteria at once."

If given a choice, several seniors said that they would still rather sit in the courtyard anyway because

of its practicality. "Personally, I would choose the courtyard since there are actually tables and seats," said Charlotte. The courtyard is designed to be a place for students to enjoy their lunchtime together.

While seniors love their privileges, how they conduct themselves has put these opportunities in jeopardy. The proper disposal of trash in the courtyard, for example, has been a problem in years past and is on display this year too. So much so that in 2020, senior class president, Wil Dornik, mentioned the issue in his speech at convocation. "Let's show a little diligence and at least try not to leave the courtyard like the opening scene of WALL-E," said Wil.

The students of the Freeman Project have done their best to keep the courtyard clean and, to maintain their efforts, have made and hung signs reminding students to pick up and throw away their trash. Sydney Greiner is a senior in the Freeman Project and encourages the future seniors to be mature when they inherit the

space. "[The courtyard] comes with responsibilities. Please pick up your trash next year," said Sydney.

Sydney is not alone in this belief. Charlotte also urges the future seniors to do their part in keeping the area tidy. "Throw away your trash! The courtyard would be so much nicer if there wasn't trash all over the ground," she said.

In the meantime, the Class of 2022 will do their best to make the most of their privilege this year and work to retain it for future seniors.



Seniors in the courtyard

Barbara Phillips - Behind the Scenes of being a Principal's Secretary

Lily Bowman
Staff Writer



On the daily, Mrs. Barbara Phillips finds herself sitting in the front office, occasional Chick-Fil-A tea and fries in hand, ready to take on another day as the Principal's Secretary. "The first verse of "9 to 5" by Dolly Parton [comes] to mind whenever I think of how my day begins," said Mrs. Phillips. "Well, I tumble outta bed and stumble to the kitchen / Pour myself a cup of ambition / Yawn and stretch and try to come to life'."

A normal day for Mrs. Phillips consists of scheduling meetings and phone calls for Mr. Marshall, organizing payroll for the staff, making sure the bells ring on time, coordinating substitutes, and answering any phone calls that come in from the surrounding community. "A big part of any secretary's job is answering the phone either from parents, alumni, and neighbors," said Mrs. Phillips. "One call that comes to mind recently was a request from an alumni/neighbor [who asked] if they would be able to use a few spaces in our parking lot for family members that were here [from] out of town for a funeral. We were happy to help them." Mrs. Phillips works to include everyone in the Freeman Family, even those who are outside of the physical building of Freeman.

Having worked at Freeman for 17 years, Mrs. Phillips has had various jobs. "I started here in 2004 as a part-time Instructional Assistant, then moved to a full-time Instructional Assistant, and then an Office Assistant in the main office, before I became the Principal's Secretary 12 years ago. I have had the privilege of working for 3 principals: Anne Poates, Andrew Mey, and now John Marshall," said Mrs. Phillips. Mr. Marshall has worked with

Mrs. Phillips since he became the principal at Freeman. "I would credit [a lot] to Barbara Phillips who really helped me learn the job," said Mr. Marshall. "She had done the same for Principal Andrew Mey before." Mr. Marshall said that Mrs. Phillips has created a "family-like work environment" because she genuinely cares about everyone she interacts with. "That kind of family atmosphere doesn't exist in every school workplace. Sometimes you come to work and you do your job and that's all you talk about, but here the first thing we talk about each morning isn't what's on the docket for the day, it's 'how are your kids' and 'what's the latest with our entire selves as people'," said Mr. Marshall.

Mrs. Lawrence and Mrs. Paige in the front office have also expressed their gratitude that the work environment is deeper than just their day-to-day jobs. Mrs. Paige said, "My favorite thing is social talk with [Mrs. Phillips] because we can talk about things that aren't work-related. Sometimes, when you talk about work-related things, to be honest, it's stressful, but when you talk about things outside of work, it's fun and will make you laugh." Both Mrs. Lawrence and Mrs. Paige mentioned how easy it is to talk to Mrs. Phillips.

"It's a very nice break. We get so stressed out [in the office] sometimes during the day, but having

Mrs. Phillips to rely on to calm us down and help us think through events of the day is such a nice resource," said Mrs. Lawrence.

Mrs. Paige continuously emphasized how Mrs. Phillips is the "go-to person" for anything and everything.

"We always know we can count on her because she's been here longer than anyone else and she really knows who handles what, so she can always point us in the right direction," said Mrs. Lawrence. She also described Mrs. Phillips as "friendly, helpful, and knowledgeable."

"She is a great consistent force even as things change," said Mr. Marshall. "I think that's an underrated thing, because Freeman has been a great place to work and learn for a long time." He described Mrs. Phillips as "festive" and said that "she loves to decorate, for the holidays and just in general, which helps keep a light feel around the office."

In her free time, Mrs. Phillips enjoys spending time with her family. She's a proud grandmother and loves bragging about her grandchildren, according to Mrs. Paige. When she's not juggling all of the tasks of being the Principal's Secretary, Mrs. Phillips can be found camping on the beach and recharging so that she can return to the office refreshed and ready for the week to come.

Who Am I?



- He teaches at Freeman
- He went to JMU
- He has a double jointed elbow
- He has a dog named Sadie Jo
- He was knighted at a Renaissance fair for axe throwing
- He camped outside of a Buffalo Wild Wings for a night so he could get free wings for a year

Giving Thanks



DRAWING: ADA MALPANI

Super Substitutes



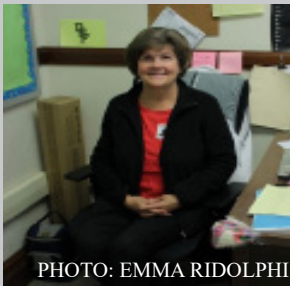
Mrs. Campfield



Mr. Given



Mr. Preston



Mrs. Layne



Mr. Pillow

Custodial and Maintenance Team Takes Care of Freeman

Abby Crowe
Staff Writer

Walking through the halls of Freeman, you can see the perfectly buffed and polished floors, fresh light bulbs, and squeaky clean surfaces. When you step outside, cut lawns, seasonal flower beds, and dusted walkways can be seen from Three Chopt Road. The hard-working people behind the beautification of Freeman are the Custodial and Maintenance team (C&M). Headed by Clifton Bridgewater, a crew of three men work during the school day, and at night a separate group comes in to clean, working around the clock to clean classrooms, fix issues reported by teachers, and prevent possible problems.

One of his assistants, Curtis Johnson, comes to Freeman at six a.m. to open the school and prepare the hallways for people to arrive. After that, Mr. Bridgewater and maintenance assistant Adam Boswell go through the work requests for the day and begin to complete as much work as possible before students flood the hallways.

Career and Technical Education teacher Rick Orr had nothing but high praise for the C&M workers. He said, "I hope stu-

dents know that they are incredibly hard-working people." Teachers have a C&M request button which they can use when an issue arises or when they would like maintenance done. Mr. Orr noticed that a water bottle filler in the upstairs hallway needed to be replaced, so he used the resource to notify Mr. Bridgewater and his assistants. The issue was quickly resolved, and he was overwhelmed with a sense of gratitude. "Mr. Bridgewater heading up the group does a phenomenal job of keeping everyone informed about where he is and what his team is doing," said Mr.

Orr. "I can't say enough great things about him." Mr. Orr knows more about being a custodian than the average teacher as he himself was one in college. From that experience forward, he has come to appreciate and understand the dedication that is required for the job. "Because you don't see that [their dedication to their work], people don't see them working at night, they just don't get the kind of credit they deserve."

Recently, bathrooms around Freeman have been trashed and destroyed, leaving custodians to silently clean up afterwards. Mr. Bridgewater

said he wishes Freeman students reciprocated the respect that he and his team give everyday. "We think about y'all when we're doing work. We try to make it the best learning environment for you" said Mr. Bridgewater. C&M works as a team to keep Freeman operating smoothly and each of the workers brings a unique skillset to the group. Mr. Bridgewater said, "Everybody has different skills." Each of them have individual strengths which help them complete specific tasks around the building. What brings them together, though, is their willingness to work

together and support each other while assisting the rest of the staff at Freeman. "We have a diverse group of guys that work really well together," said Mr. Bridgewater. "Everybody plays their part." Adam Boswell began working with Mr. Bridgewater and Mr. Johnson at Freeman in August of 2020 after previously doing maintenance for another building in the Richmond area. "It's a great place to work," Boswell said in regards to his experience at Freeman. "Everybody is nice and polite and we get along great." He said that his favorite part of the job is getting to work with new equipment and seeing how it can be used.

Junior Class President, Grayson Archibeque, has also had positive experiences with the C&M staff. To show his and other students' appreciation, Grayson organized a catered lunch for the crew. "It's not only that they do their work, but they also do it with a smile on their face, and I think that is the most important thing," said Grayson. "I have a lot of friends that I've made working in Richmond that drive past here," said Mr. Bridgewater as he laughed. "The better the school looks, the better I feel about the job that I'm doing."



The C&M staff works tirelessly to keep our school cleaned and maintained. PHOTO: CLAIRE MORRIS

Behind the Desk in Freeman Counseling

Catherine White
Staff Writer

If you have ever witnessed the organized chaos of the Freeman counseling office, you have seen Mr. Graeme Byrne, the Administrative Assistant, in action. He is a relatively new addition to the Freeman Family as he joined in Nov. 2020, right in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This is Mr. Byrne's first job in education, as previously he worked in the travel industry for 15 years. While in the travel industry, he created and organized itineraries for corporate travelers worldwide. "I didn't know what to expect coming in. I was a bit nervous interacting with young people at this level, but I have to say it's been an absolute pleasure," said Mr. Byrne. Janet Smith, the Director of School Counseling,



Mr. Byrne smiles for the camera behind his desk in the counseling office

described Mr. Byrne as "what our department needed at the right time and what I needed at the right time too." He was the replacement for Ms. Noe, the previous Administrative Assistant here at Freeman, after she retired. Mr. Byrne's role in the counseling office is "manag[ing] chaos," said Mrs. Smith. Mr. Byrne welcomes students into

counseling and directs them to their counselors if need be. He organizes and controls all the data and administration for the counseling office in addition to managing diplomas for the seniors. Another aspect of Mr. Byrne's job is organizing and planning college visits. Mr. Byrne said, "College visits this time of year and graduation the

second half of the year" are some of his main duties and he "help[s] students set up their Parchment accounts, which is a big big thing for seniors."

Mrs. Smith said, "He plays a big role in the college application process for seniors, especially when it comes to transcripts, and things like that." She describes his primary role as "supporting the functioning of our department, answering phones, obviously seeing to students as they come in, supporting every school counselor with clerical duties, assisting students as they come in and assisting parents as they call." Mr. Byrne's role in the counseling office is crucial; "It's almost hard to put into words what he does because he does a lot all at once and just helps us function so that we can work with students," Ms. Smith said.

Julia Pellet is a senior and counseling aid in the

Counseling office. Her job is to work with Mr. Byrne and ensure the office runs smoothly. Julia delivers passes to different classes, shows students around the school, gives tours, and runs errands for the counselors. Julia describes Mr. Byrne as "hilarious." She said: "He's great. He has the best sense of humor and he's so nice."

Aside from what Ms. Smith calls the "very positive presence," noticeable when talking to Mr. Byrne, you might notice something else. As you can hear in his accent, Mr. Byrne is not from America but from Ireland. Mr. Byrne developed a unique and tasty hobby. "Probably about 10 years ago, I took baking up as a hobby, and decided, let me try something new. I got into it, and I really enjoyed it," said Mr. Byrne. Soon he was baking all sorts of treats for all sorts of events. Eventually,

he started his own small business in Ireland called The Second Tasty Bakery.

After moving to the United States, his passion was not forgotten. Now he bakes for an Irish Bakery here in Henrico. "I do work at a farmers market for a local bakery called Two and a Half Irishmen," said Mr. Byrne. The bakery has a stand at Bryant Park every Saturday morning. They sell various Irish breads, Irish cakes, as well as some local American treats.

Mrs. Smith said Mr. Byrne is "the best baker ever." She describes the scones he brought her earlier this school year as "delicious" and "fancy." "One of my favorite things is the people I work with," said Mr. Byrne. "We have a great counseling team. Everyone is super supportive of everyone else and is 100% focused on students' well being, students careers and overall Freeman engagement."



Mr. Byrne's sweet creations



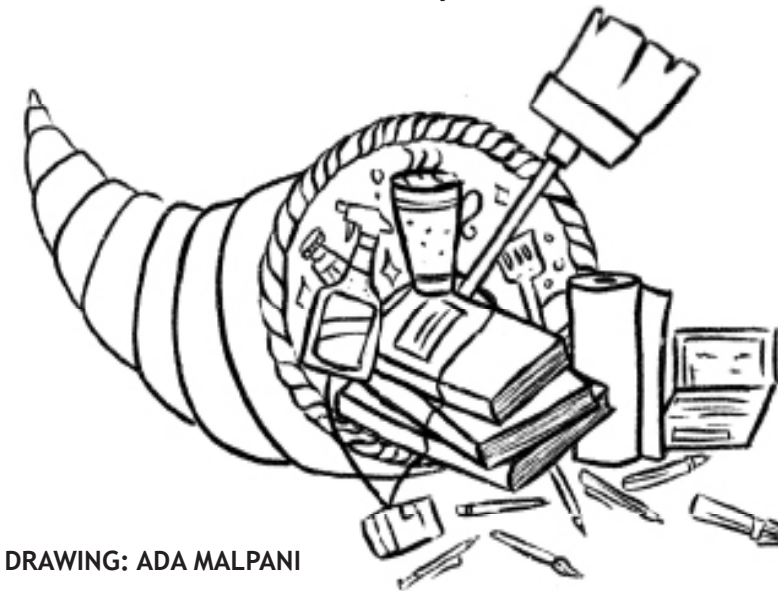
PHOTO: GRAEME BYRNE



PHOTO: GRAEME BYRNE



PHOTO: GRAEME BYRNE



DRAWING: ADA MALPANI

We Love our Office Staff



Mrs. Toccara and other office staff keep the school running smoothly throughout the day. PHOTO: EMMA RIDOLPHI

Mavericks Appreciate the Cafeteria Staff

Ella Hurlbert
Copy Editor

Freeman's Nutritional Services' staff, the servers of Mavericks' breakfast and lunch in the cafeteria, work tirelessly through early mornings and hectic lunch blocks to make sure all students get the meals they need.

Amy Adams, the Nutritional Services Assistant Manager at Freeman High School, has been a member of the Freeman cafeteria team since March 2021. "The most important part of my job is making sure the students are fed," Ms. Adams said. "[Myself and the other cafeteria workers] arrive at school at 6:15 each morning. I start opening things up and then I get breakfast ready. After breakfast is over, we're going full-force on lunch."

"Our cafeteria team ... are often some of the first people to arrive [at Freeman] each day. They keep our student body fueled for all the learning that takes place ... that's no easy task," said Freeman principal John Marshall. "[The cafeteria workers] have to, on a really tight budget, with some unpredictable circumstances—they never know who's going to buy what each day... they have to make

it work, and they do. They really operate as almost a separate unit in that they handle everything ... we're just here to support them when we can."

Countless students take advantage of the free meals provided by the school everyday. "Lots of kids aren't able to get food from home and bring it to school," said senior Lyssa Holt, a frequent of the lunch line. "It's nice to have something warm to eat, whether you're getting school lunch because you couldn't bring your own or you just forgot your lunch box at home."

"I'm not sure how many students get breakfast and lunch each day, but the lines are always pretty long," said Mr. Marshall. "It's got to number in the

hundreds, if not more, and to feed that many people in such a quick turnaround two meals a day is really impressive."

"We work as a team," Ms. Adams explained. "Not everybody can do everything, but everybody does what they can. When you ask somebody to do something, they do it. Everybody has their jobs, and we do what we need to do everyday to keep the lines moving." Freeman's cafeteria staff, however, does more than just keep the lunch lines operating smoothly. "[Ms. Adams] always makes my day," said senior Malina Kostic, who comes to Freeman early for breakfast. "No matter how bad the day's going for me... she always says 'good

morning' and is happy and smiling. It makes my day a little bit better each morning. Part of why I come to breakfast everyday is to see her." "I like working breakfast because I like talking to the kids," said

"We work as a team."
- Amy Adams

Ms. Adams. "It's more relaxed during breakfast, so I can talk to the students when they go through the line. That's the best part of my job."

"[The cafeteria workers] are very kind people," said Lyssa Holt. "When starting a conversation, they are really easy to talk to."



The cafeteria staff works hard to provide nutrition for the students. PHOTO: CLAIRE MORRIS

Politically-Driven Mavericks Contribute to Local Campaigns

Farah Abdullah
Staff Writer

The majority of Freeman students are not of voting age, but that has not stopped them from making a difference in local politics; Young Democrats at Freeman are canvassing and interning for local election candidates in efforts to make their voices heard.

In the 2021 elections, some of the Young Democrat club members interned for the Blakely Lockhart for Delegate of Virginia's 56th District campaign. Junior Rachel Stanton was a field intern for the Lockhart campaign. "This is my first real involvement with a campaign," said Rachel. "It feels really good to see how much we have grown since we started because I've been here from the very beginning." In her role, Rachel focused on canvassing and getting people out to events. She said, "I feel like it's genuinely important to support Blakely; her campaign has a big impact on the state [regardless of election results]." Rachel emphasized that the Lockhart campaign is especially important to students as Lockhart is a young woman of color and "she is able to share a lot of life perspectives that students relate to."

Senior Niamh Creighton-Preis was a communications intern for the Lockhart campaign. Her position consisted of social media management, merchandising, and overall spreading of information about the campaign through canvassing. In her internship, she was proud of the progress of the campaign, as this election set the



PHOTO: SAMANTHA DEMAREST

Lockhart campaign student interns and other campaigning members in a group photo.

record of the highest amount of Democratic votes in the 56th district. "Even though [the victory party on the night of the election] wasn't a victory party, it still felt like one just because we knew that we had made a difference," said Niamh. Inspired by her mother, Alsúin Creighton-Preis, who is the vice chair of the Henrico County Democratic Committee, Niamh said she has "kind of always been involved in politics. For the 2016 campaign, I canvassed and phone banked for Hillary, and then I canvassed with my mom for Tim Kaine." Niamh persuades students

to volunteer for local political campaigns. "It's really easy," said Niamh. "Any campaign should have a link to sign up for canvassing or a contact email ... [and] all you just have to contact them and say, 'hey, I want to canvass.'"

Canvassing and political participation is not limited to high school students. Senior Joseph Chambers was inspired by his older sister's political interest and started canvassing in the eighth grade. "In the environment in which I was brought up, being politically active was something that was encouraged," said Joseph. His most re-

cent political involvement was the Lockhart campaign as a field intern. "I really liked canvassing [in

“Students have been playing a big role in local elections for a while now.”

- Sagar Murthy

the past], but this [internship] was the most demanding and in-depth work I have done for a campaign," said Joseph. He believes that his involvement in local politics goes

beyond the state of Virginia. "I live in America. I have interests in America, [and] I want to make sure that my voice is being heard," said Joseph. "Given that I can't vote yet, and even once I can vote, the best way that I can make sure that I can make my voice heard is to canvass to get other people to vote, and to encourage people to be involved in the democratic process." Joseph encourages students to join the Young Democrats or the Young Republicans clubs at Freeman because "while there aren't a lot of political clubs at the school, those are the ones that you can join quite easily."

Young Democrats President and senior, Sagar Murthy, said, "Students have been playing a big role in local elections for a while now." Over the years, he has noticed Freeman's involvement in local elections. "I'm not sure how it was before my freshman year, but since I've been here at Freeman, the legacy just continued onward and the Young Democrats have been very active in local politics," said Sagar. "These [political] clubs play that

integral role in connecting the school with civics and politics." Junior Skye Allan, officer of the newly-rebuilt Young Republicans, urges Freeman students to participate in political discussions, "I would definitely like to see more members coming in and [showing] more interest, giving people a safe place to talk about politics, without feeling like they're being forced into it or there is a certain way they have to answer," said Skye. "We might have different views, but we're all working towards a better future, [and] it is definitely a priority."

Sheridan Brown Leaps Into the Spotlight



PHOTO: SHERIDAN BROWN

Sheridan Brown (second to left) posing with her friends.

Adair Reid
Staff Writer

Every morning, most Mavericks arrive at Freeman for their seven hours of in-person school, but for senior Sheridan Brown, each day is another step towards achieving her goal of being a professional dancer.

Sheridan is a member of the Richmond Ballet Trainee Program, a special opportunity for her to bridge the gap between traditional ballet training and higher-level professional dance. Founded in 1993, the Trainee Program allows a select group of 18-20 dancers to take part in formal dance training and offers opportunities to perform with the professional company.

The program requires Sheridan's total focus, as she spends six hours per day six days a week studying different genres of dance. In addition to her time spent in the studio, Sheridan is taking two on-line classes through Freeman to graduate with her class this summer. "[On] a normal day, I wake up around 7 AM. I do a quick little workout, just to get my body moving for the day, and then I do an hour and a half of schoolwork ... then I'll have breakfast and get dressed and I'll head to the studio," said Sheridan. "I usually get there an hour before classes start so that I have time to warm-up [again] and get my body ready to go. Then I'll have a two hour technique class ... and [a] pointe class ... our specialty class [will] either be jazz, theatre, or character. Then, I'll begin my rehearsals for the day, and that usually goes on until about 6:30 or later."

This balancing act is familiar for

the dancer of 13 years, but time management is still a common obstacle. "Obviously time management is a big, big deal. To stay on top of my schedule, [I have to make] sure that I know exactly what I have coming up and ... I'm always planning ahead," said Sheridan. "But challenge wise, I think the hardest thing is ... trying to maintain that focus of 'I need to get work done' and putting in full effort but not being at school. It feels weird." However, the ability to take fewer classes and not have to attend in-person school has alleviated some of the stress caused by her hectic schedule. "It's been easier this year because the classes are online and because I'm only taking two ... I can kind of self-pace and work ahead where I need to and then catch up if I need to," said Sheridan. "Currently, I'm just taking Economics and English 12. I took Government over the summer so I didn't have to take it this year."

Sheridan's family is well-versed in her schedule because of their professional experience in the performing arts. "As a family with several professional performers, our every day schedule doesn't look like other families'," said Sheridan's father, Mr. Kingsley Brown. "Sheridan was bitten early by the acting/dancing bug - we simply added another ball into our 'juggling routine'!" Because of Sheridan's time commitment to dance, time spent with friends and family is invaluable. "We have always worked to squeeze as much 'normal' into our schedule as possible. Sheridan has learned to live in the moment and appreciate her time with friends

and family," said Mr. Brown.

Despite the time strain, Sheridan maintains a love for dance because of the impact the Richmond Ballet has had upon her life. "Being able to dance through the School of Richmond Ballet has really given me the opportunity to see how much I actually love ballet more than anything else," said Sheridan.

The decision to go above and beyond in her dance training be-

came more and more appealing as Sheridan performed with the School of Richmond Ballet ensemble, and she quickly aspired to becoming a professional dancer. "I decided to do the training program because I want to be a professional dancer. But I wanted something more than just being a student in the [dance] school, just taking classes in the afternoons and on the weekends," said Sheridan. "[Performing] with the SRB (School of Richmond Ballet) ensemble really opened my eyes to the trainee program because being in ensemble, I was like, 'Oh, this is what it's like to be with professional dancers and what it's like to get to work with the company.'"

Having to step up into challenging roles has been a highlight of Sheridan's dance career, one of her particularly memorable performances being in Richmond Ballet's rendition of "Sleeping Beauty" where "half our cast ended up with the flu, and the girls couldn't perform. So they called me in and I learned four different parts over three days that I'd never [known] before and I had to go on stage and perform like I'd been rehearsing for four and a half months like everyone else," said Sheridan. "It really proved to me that [I] could work under pressure. I was like 'Wow, I can learn choreography in like five minutes. That's really cool.'"

Working with instructors from locations around the world, like South Africa, New Zealand, and New York, adds a holistic quality to Sheridan's classical training. "I am classically trained, so I do classical ballet (noncompetition). I get to work with the artistic staff that works at the company, which is really cool," said Sheridan. "They're all really great, super supportive,

“Being able to dance through the School of Richmond Ballet has really given me the opportunity to see how much I actually love ballet.”

- Sheridan Brown

all classically trained themselves, so they're from all over the place."

Sheridan's ambition and drive aren't just limited to professional dance. With the full support of her family, she also plans to pursue medicine in the future. "Sheridan realized early on that she also wants her doctorate of physical therapy, which she will pursue while dancing professionally," said Mr. Brown. "We have never doubted that whatever Sheridan puts her mind towards, she will achieve!"

DSF Quiz Bowl Team

These five gentlemen will represent Freeman in regional trivia competitions.

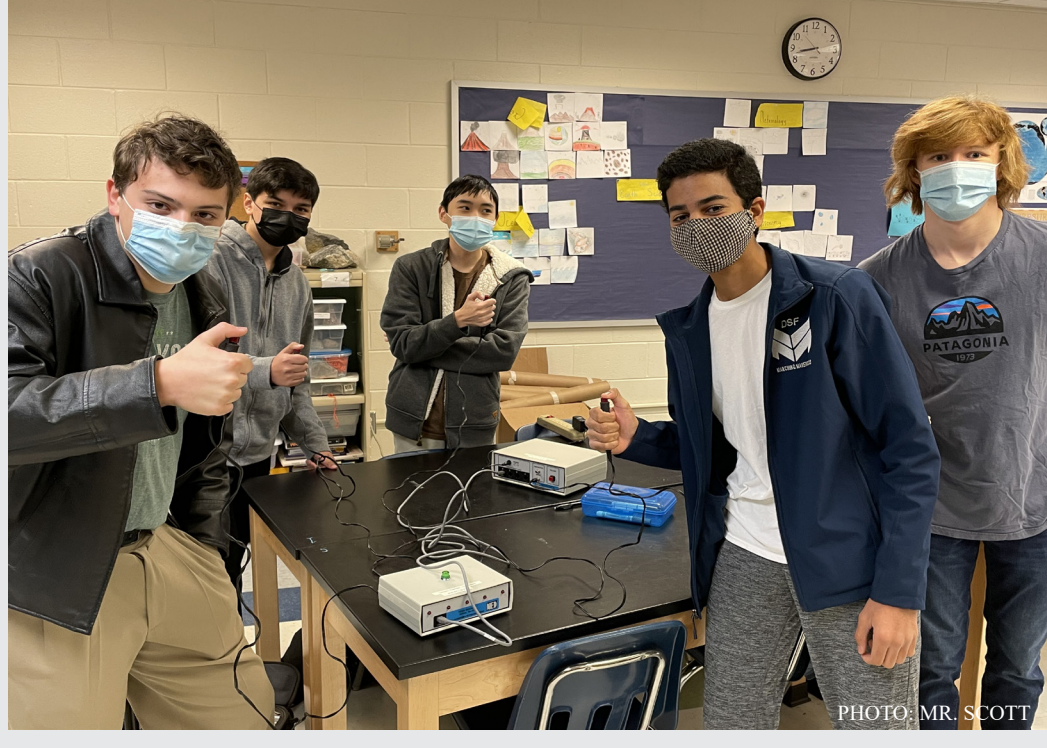


PHOTO: MR. SCOTT

Pictured (L to R): Gio Mazzeo (12), Anuj Damle (9), Kenny Vo (12), Joseph Chambers (12), and Kieran Wall (12)

Ellie O'Neil Wins Field Hockey Regional 5C Player of the Year

Emily Waters
Sports Editor

Senior Ellie O'Neil, one of Freeman's own field hockey players, was recently named Region 5C Player of the Year. No Freeman player has ever won or even been nominated for this award.

Last season, Ellie made the First-Team All Region and the All-Metro teams. According to Ellie, however, the Player of the Year honor was the most exciting. "Getting [player of the year] was crazy," Ellie said. The Region 5C

Getting [player of the year] was crazy"

- Ellie O'Neil

Player of the Year is chosen from a pool of three First-Team players. The coaches in the region get together to decide which of the three players receives the honor.

Ellie started playing field hockey her freshman year, and by her sophomore year she joined the varsity team. "Ellie played so much that winter, spring and sum-

mer," said Ellie's mom, Mrs. Julie O'Neil. "When I saw her play as a sophomore I realized she had really come so far in just a year."

"I really loved the sport right out of the gate so I wanted to get better and play more," said Ellie. She learned a lot from her older teammates at Freeman, and hopes "to give back ... to my teammates like my old teammates did for me."

Ellie's field hockey coach, Cassandra Perez, describes her as a "driven and passionate member of the team," always willing to put in the extra effort. "She stays after practice to help other players develop skills, holds pick-up hockey for anyone willing to put in extra work, and organizes team bonding events to make sure the team stays connected," said Coach Perez.

One of Ellie's teammates, Britt Mauck, said, "Ellie has grown tremendously since we first started playing together freshman year. We were both awkward and didn't know what to do and now Ellie plays with such elegant confidence."

Coach Perez was also Ellie's physical education teacher at Tuckahoe Middle School in seventh and eighth grade. "She transformed from this quiet, hard-working student, to a passionate,

driven, and loving player, captain, and person," said Coach Perez.

There is "no one more deserving [of the Player of the Year Award] than Ellie," said Britt.

Coach Perez added that Ellie "encompasses everything a student athlete should be," describing her as the "heartbeat" of the team over the last few years. "My reaction when I found out she won Player of the Year was instant hysterical tears ... She is not the flashiest player but she will out-work every single person and for her to be recognized over some of the other players in our region was just amazing," said Coach Perez.

This season, Ellie recorded 51 defensive saves (Coach Perez added that "most people only record saves in the teens and twenties"), scored six goals, and had nine assists. In her time at Freeman, she's had more than 100 defensive saves.

The endings of senior seasons are always bittersweet. "Now that my senior season is coming to an end, it feels like the end of an era," Ellie said. "[I'm] really thankful for my amazing teammates and coaches for making practices and games something to look forward to at the end of the day."



Ellie O'Neil dribbling the ball.

PHOTO: BILL MCCLURE

Two Senior Athletes Sign NLI's

Cameron Cavender
Sports Editor

Every year, Freeman produces numerous student athletes that go on to play collegiate sports; this year is no different. On Nov. 10, players, coaches, friends, and parents gathered in the big gym for signing day, where players solidified their collegiate academic and athletic futures.

This year, two Mavericks signed their National Letters of Intent to officially commit to play their respective sports at the colleges they've chosen. Meet this year's fall signees: Macho Santiago and Brett Bishop.

For Macho, this moment has been a long time in the making. "College baseball has been a goal of mine since elementary school," said Macho. He's been playing baseball since he was three years old. Now, he has officially committed to play Division I baseball for Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU).

Macho decided to commit to VCU for a few key reasons. "The coaching staff at VCU was absolutely incredible," said Macho. "The energy they had towards me was awesome and I really gravitated towards them."

However, there was one thing in particular that drew him to the school. "The big reason I chose VCU was to stay close to my grandparents," said Macho. "They're my biggest supporters and nothing makes them happier than watching me play."

Freeman Varsity Baseball Coach Ray Moore spoke on Macho's behalf on signing day, mentioning his history with Macho's family as well as praising the type of player and person Macho has become.

"I've known his family for most of my life," said Coach Moore. "Seeing Macho grow and develop has been fun to watch; everything comes full circle."

Being a Division I athlete is no easy task. Less than 2% of high school athletes go on to play Division I sports, making this feat even more impressive. Ac-



PHOTO: JODIE BISHOP

Brett and his coach pose on signing day.

complishing such a status takes a lot of work and dedication.

"Macho is an elite level athlete and has a blue collar mentality when it comes to work ethic and dedication to the sport," said Coach Moore. "He's always training and looking to improve his craft at all times."

Outside of football season, Macho said he practices "about 15-20 hours a week." He trains both in and out of school. "I get a majority of my lifting done here [at school] and then I try to long-toss four days a week," he said.

Brett Bishop, Freeman's second signed athlete, is no different- he trains six to seven times a week for his sports: track and cross country. "I train in and around the neighborhoods surrounding Freeman," said Brett. "We do three or four long distance workouts a week [as a team] and two or three track workouts a week." He also said he runs "any 5Ks my dad can find me ... I also run with my personal coach at Endorphin Fitness."

Brett committed to run both cross country and track and field at Columbia University. He's been running

track for six years, and is entering his third year running cross country.

Brett chose Columbia University due to the variety of opportunities available to him. "There is something for everyone there and the athletics are equally as prestigious [as the academics]," said Brett. "I just know I'll be challenged there no matter what."

Unlike Macho, collegiate sports were not on Brett's radar until recently. "I never wanted to continue to the collegiate level," said Brett. "What changed my mind was our team development [at Freeman] over the past three seasons and my drive to do better."

Brett said he first realized that a collegiate athletic career could be in the cards after winning a state title in cross country. Freeman Athletic Director Vance Harmon noted at the event that Brett is just the third Freeman runner in school history to win a cross country state title, and Brett still has the potential opportunity to repeat his state champion victory in the near future.

Brett was quick to give credit to those around him, saying, "I wouldn't be here without support from all my coaches and teammates."



Brett and Macho Sign their National Letter of Intent.

PHOTO: CAMERON CAVENDER

2021 Football Season Recap

vs. Prince George

W
17-14

vs. James River

W
37-9

@ Mechanicsville

W
21-6

@ Atlee

W
38-6

@ Godwin

L
21-7

vs. John Marshall

W
54-0

vs. Deep Run

W
55-14

vs. Hermitage

L
28-20

@ Glen Allen

W
8-6

vs. L. C. Bird

W
31-26

@ Highland Springs

L
36-0

Back to Basketball: Freeman's Athletes Return to the Court

Henry Haggard
Staff Writer

Instead of practicing and playing games last winter, Freeman's basketball athletes were relegated to practicing in their driveways. Shooting, dribbling, but never passing, they found themselves wishing for a return to the Freeman court they had grown to love.

Fortunately for players in this position, winter sports are back. Now, the Freeman boy's and girl's basketball teams are starting their first seasons in nearly two years after the unprecedented absence of in-person sports.

The Boy's Varsity Basketball Coach, Chapin George, said, "We've had players now and then not able to play a season individually because of injury, but we've never experienced something like this."

The Girl's Junior Varsity (JV) Basketball Coach, Mr. John Larkins, said, "just the fact that we're getting to have a season is good" after such a long hiatus.

The players themselves seem to agree. Senior Davis Cauble, a boy's varsity player, said that "ever since the end of sophomore season, I've been looking forward to this point."

"Last year, we were all robbed of winter sports and it was devastating," said Bridget Amrhein, a senior on the varsity girl's team. "I could not be more excited for our new season to start."

However, starting this season will be no easy task, "There is a lot of excitement going around," Coach George said, but nevertheless, "it will be different and difficult for everybody."

One of the biggest challenges the teams will face is inexperience. On the boy's varsity team, there are only three athletes who have played on the team previously. For everyone else, including many seniors, Coach

George said, "this will be their first ever varsity experience."

Some DSF players are far from rusty. Many used their time away from school games and practices to train. Senior boy's varsity athlete Gray Proffitt is an example. He said that last year he had "more time to focus on individual training because [he] didn't have any practices."

Bridget had a similar experience. She said that while it was "hard to find motivation to play in such a dark time," she did "find a love for running and staying fit."

When lockdown restrictions eased, both Bridget and Gray, along with many others, played for private Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) teams, keeping their basketball skills sharp.

No matter how much practice they got in between seasons, the 2021-2022 season will test every player's skill and drive. Who will rise to the occasion? On the boy's varsity team, "I think Davis Cauble will have a breakout year," said Gray.

For the girl's varsity team, Bridget describes senior AK Canavos as "someone I really admire ... I just

know she is going to be an amazing player and leader this year."

"I think [girl's] varsity would be competitive and certainly looking to win some games," said Coach Larkins. However, for JV, he wants "to have as many girls as possible on the team to participate."

The varsity teams traditionally put a great emphasis on winning and hope to continue that this season. "I expect us to work hard enough ... to have the opportunity to win every game," said Coach George.

Winning will rarely be easy, but some games will be harder than others. Davis said, "I think L.C. Bird and Glen Allen will be our toughest competition this year."

Bridget believes the girl's hardest match this season will be against Godwin. She said, "Our goal this year is to finally beat the Eagles."

But perhaps the Eagles could agree that this season will be like no other. Coach George said, "The pandemic made us all realize not to take anything for granted."

The DSF basketball game schedule can be found online at <https://douglasfreemanhs.rschoollteams.com>.



PHOTO: CLAIRE MORRIS

Freeman's home court eagerly awaiting the upcoming season

College Football AP Rankings

Team	Record
1. Georgia	12-0
2. Michigan	11-1
3. Cincinnati	12-0
4. Alabama	11-1
5. Oklahoma St.	11-1
6. Notre Dame	11-1
7. Ohio State	10-2
8. Ole Miss	10-2
9. Baylor	10-2
10. Oregon	10-1

Premier League Standings

Team (Points/W-D-L)

1. Chelsea	(30/9-3-1)
2. Man City	(29/9-2-2)
3. Liverpool	(28/8-4-1)
4. West Ham	(23/7-2-4)
5. Arsenal	(23/7-2-4)
6. Wolves	(20/6-2-5)
7. Tottenham	(19/6-1-5)
8. Man United	(18/5-3-5)
9. Brighton	(18/4-6-3)
10. L. City	(18/5-3-5)

The Return of Freeman's Swim Team

Jazmyn Howell
Staff Writer

Changes in coaching, leadership, and COVID-19 protocols have forced the swim team to make huge adjustments for this upcoming season. However, the team's new coach, Mr. Gromling, and the new senior captains are ready to tackle these new challenges head-on.

Mr. Gromling, Freeman's Engineering teacher, has also officially taken on the role of Freeman swim coach this season. He brings experience to the team, as he swam throughout college and eventually went on to coach collegiate-level swimming. Mr. Gromling described his coaching as "competitive ... but with the sense of family and teamwork, we all pitch in to help drive the success of each individual." Mr. Gromling might be new to coaching here at Freeman, but he has done plenty to prepare for the upcoming season.

This season the team will also see a shift in student leadership with three new captains. Senior Captain Amelia Macholz said, "it felt super different not having a season last year; [now] the upperclassmen that I grew up on the team with [are] not [here], and [I don't] know the sophomores."

"I'm definitely really excited," said senior team member Ian Donellan. "But it's going to be weird having two classes

[grade levels] we don't know."

The swim team has not had a season since 2019, which means that two classes have graduated. "I feel like the dynamics really changed because we had a lot of older swimmers who were like the cornerstone of the swim team," said Ian. "They were so strong for so many years that it's definitely changed because we had a lot of older swimmers who were like the cornerstone of the swim team," said Ian. "They were so strong for so many years that it's definitely changed because we had a lot of older swimmers who were like the cornerstone of the swim team," said Ian.

One of the switches that will make this season much easier, however, is the new location for practices and meets. Mr. Gromling said, "Practicing at the NOVA in Regency is super convenient for the athletes to get to school in the morning." Before the switch, the swim team would have meets at Collegiate High School, which is thirty minutes away. With the new venue's close location, the athletes will not be rushed on their way to and from practice, allowing them time to pick up breakfast and still get to class before the bell.

This winter season will also have a lot of new protocols due to COVID-19. While COVID-19 meant a year away from winter sports, these changes make the start to this season unique. "It's a whole new experience just because after a year off, it feels like a brand new

start and hopefully, we'll have a really good season," Amelia said.

Many new regulations are being put in place for this year's winter sports. The details are unknown, but if a student does not have proof of vaccination, a Henrico County Public Schools policy will require student-athletes to be tested weekly for COVID-19. The School Division said to NBC12, "It's an effort to ensure [we] stay ahead of asymptomatic cases and help prevent the spread around students."

"It's a whole new experience just because after a year off, it feels like a brand new start and hopefully, we'll have a really good season."

- Amelia Macholz

Like many aspects of this school year, swimming will look very different than it has in past seasons. Regardless of these adjustments being thrown their way, the leaders and athletes at Freeman are working to ensure they have a successful season. "I hope everyone on the team genuinely has a good time, meets new people and improves this season, regardless of the changes," said Amelia.



PHOTO: ELLA HURLBERT

Maverick swimmers pose for their official team picture

Freeman to Get Pugmill for Ceramics Classroom

Lillie Connor
Staff Writer

Upon entering the ceramics classroom, one might see students with their hands submerged in a trash can filled with a mixture of clay and water, each of them remolding clay scraps to use on their next projects.

Since clay dries up quickly, rather than throwing clay scraps away, they are reclaimed and can be turned into a workable piece. This is Mrs. Jones and Ms. McManus's ceramics class's current way of restoring clay scraps. Instead of using this "messy process," as Mrs. Jones called it, she had been advocating for a more advanced tool, a pugmill. The pugmill takes clay scraps and processes them back into usable clay for the students to use.

The current process for reclaiming clay scraps is messy, since hands are the only tool available for the job. A team of rotating students are usually in charge of completing this job, one putting the clay in the bucket and one squeezing the clay to make it usable. "They mix the clay around in there for a while until it becomes a [workable] thickness," says Mrs. Jones.

After completing this process, students' hands are covered in a thick layer of clay. "Clay is all over [their] hands like clay mit-



PHOTO: DAISY FULLER

Hermitage's Pugmill on Loan to Freeman's Art Department.

tens," says Mrs. Jones. "At the end of class we usually have a bucket at the end of our tables, where all the kids get the excess clay off of their hands before washing their hands in the sink."

One of Mrs. Jones's main incentives to advocate for the addition of a pugmill to her classroom was the impact of COVID-19 and the need for better sanitary practices. "Because of COVID-19, we can't share [or get] in the bucket at the same time, so we were having to use individual hand buckets," said Mrs. Jones.

Last year, Mrs. Jones first experienced the impacts of this issue. "We were giving kids clay to take home, because they were all doing school virtually. It was

really hard having to have physical materials," said Mrs. Jones. "Because of all that, there [were] lots of little extra pieces of clay, which all came back to us."

These scraps were discarded instead of being reclaimed upon their return to school to prevent the spread of COVID-19. "Now we have four buckets full [of unusable scraps] from last year. When getting my classroom ready I asked myself, how are we going to do this [COVID-19 protocol] this year?" Mrs. Jones says.

These safety measures resulted in the need for Mrs. Jones to stay longer hours at school. "This [problem] was adding about [ninety minutes] worth of work for me a day to clean those [in-

dividual] hand buckets out and get them ready for the next class, which is not manageable," said Mrs. Jones. "That's why we pushed so hard to try to figure out what we're going to do to be able to get that piece of equipment."

Freeman's school board representative, Marcie Shea, was a prominent advocate for this tool. "Getting the pugmill will not only lead students to use more time in class to actually create ceramics, it'll also result in a safer process for students particularly during COVID-19," said Shea.

Mrs. Jones has been requesting this tool since she started teaching at Freeman eight years ago. "I've been putting in a request for this tool, when the school

asks for a furniture request, every year. But there's a priority for equipment and it just never made it onto the priority list up until this point," says Jones.

Lots of different parties and factors went into the process for obtaining this tool. After Mrs. Jones talked to the PTSA president, Amy Boyle, she reached out to Ms. Shea, as this tool was too great for the PTSA's budget. "I talked to Mr. Marshall and he was trying to free up funds in his next budget, but that means that we wouldn't be able to get it until next school year," says Shea.

Ms. Shea got to visit Freeman and see the work and process of one ceramics class. "I think it's really important, especially this year, to focus on safety anywhere we can have COVID-19 safe practices," says Shea. "Our teachers are doing so much extra and they have so much on their plate[s]. If we can have a new process in place that both makes it safer for the students and takes something off teachers' plates, that's a win."

After a long-fought battle by Mrs. Jones, Ms. Shea, and other caring members of the school community, Freeman will finally obtain the much-desired pugmill. This piece of machinery will last up to 20 years and possibly more. "It'll be here well beyond my time here at Freeman. When you break down the cost that way, it's totally worth it," said Mrs. Jones.

Creativity is a Lock at Freeman



PHOTO: DAISY FULLER

Peter Kriebel
Staff Writer

With the likes of Post Malone, Kermit the Frog, and Peppa Pig adorning the walls here at Freeman, a visitor's first time walking through the school might seem abnormal. For the students, however, painted lockers are a common sight in their everyday school routine.

Freeman offers clubs and individuals the opportunity to paint lockers for the price of five dollars per locker. The money generated goes to the Freeman Project, a club whose goal is to improve Freeman in any way it can. Olivia Bargatze, a senior and member of the Freeman Project as well as a student leader of the locker painting initiative, said it's a "great way to get involved." Those who don't participate in the painting process themselves still reap the rewards, according to Bargatze, who said, "[The lockers] make the school more comfortable or homey, instead of staring at grey lockers."

For students who decide to paint lockers, their only parameters are that the painting has to be "school appropriate" and must be "affiliated with the school," i.e. Freeman or Maverick imagery, said Bargatze. The pandemic interrupted some of the painting last year. "Some of them didn't finish because we closed school, so for those people we didn't make them pay," said Bargatze.

Really cool [way] to express what Freeman has and what Freeman is."
- LJ Straw

In the eyes of junior LJ Straw, the locker painting is a "really cool [way] to express what Free-

man has and what Freeman is." Straw, a member of the Freeman marching band, decided to paint a locker for the flute section. The locker displays the words "DSF FLUTES" in large blue letters accompanied by a few musical notes set against a white backdrop. Her creativity is expressed in her decision to include all the names of members of the flute section since 2019. Regarding this detail, Straw said, "As people come and go, their names will be added to the locker. So it's never truly finished, I suppose." Boosting membership in the band and flute section is something Straw cares about, saying, "I am hoping that it'll convince people to join band

As people come and go, their names will be added to the locker. So it's never truly finished, I suppose."

- LJ Straw

if they had previously had at least some small thought of it." Straw's own experience in the band has led her to take such a promotional approach saying "I know at least for me, band has been a really good community and fellowship."

In order to get a locker approved, students must fill out a form detailing their plan for what they want to paint, including whether the painting proposal is an individual or a club project, and acknowledging that the painting must be both school appropriate and include a DSF or Mavericks logo. Once the project gets the greenlight, it's up to them to decide what they want to bring to the project. Whether they're promoting a club or cause they're passionate about, or just celebrating the lifetime achievements of an icon like Elmo, locker painters leave their mark on Freeman.

Review: Red (Taylor's Version)

Jack Harenchar
Online Editor in Chief

Friday, November 12th was a glorious day for Swifties, as the 31-year-old singer released her long awaited re-recorded Red (Taylor's Version) album. Swift's second re-recorded album and third release within the past year (Evermore - Dec 2020 and Fearless (Taylor's Version) - April 2021) comes in the wake of her inability to buy back her album rights from Big Machine Records and former record executive Scooter Braun.

Swift released her first re-recorded album this past April, Fearless (Taylor's Version). The original recording of the album was her second studio album when released in 2008 and peaked at number one on the Billboard 200 that year. Fearless is still her most purchased album, with 7.2 million copies sold in the United States alone.

Senior Aubrey Walker, who described Taylor Swift as "the greatest musician of our generation," said that Fearless (Taylor's Version) "especially [exceeded my expectations] considering it isn't in my top tier." She added that, "it definitely made me like the album even more."

On the whole, Aubrey thought the re-recorded Fearless was "great" and that it is "interesting to see how [Swift] is changing [her album] to fit her current way that she makes music."

The inclusion of vaulted songs - those recorded for the album originally but never released - was a concept that Swift's fans came to love from the new Fearless album and continues to be a popular prospect in her recent release of Red (Taylor's Version).

"There is stuff we have never heard in the vaulted songs, so that's the first thing I listened to when she releases a [re-recorded] album," Aubrey said.



PHOTO: THE ROLLING STONE

Taylor's new album cover

Red (Taylor's Version) contains ten vaulted songs, including the highly anticipated 10-minute version of "All Too Well," and 20 of the original 22 songs released on the album initially.

The Review

The highly anticipated album certainly lived up to expectations upon release. Between Swift's matured voice and never-before-heard songs, listening to Red (Taylor's Version) was an emotional experience that had many students, headphones in, tuned out of class on November 12th.

Nearly a decade since the album was initially released, Swift's age and experience were certainly on display, giving some of her greatest hits a taste of her more modern style. "Red," "State of Grace," and "22," all songs I had enjoyed from the album initially, were nice to hear re-recorded years later.

The album also made me appreciate songs that I had not initially been as attracted to such as "The Last Time," "Starlight," and "Come Back ... Be Here." I'm not sure if it was Taylor's development as a musician, the anticipation surrounding the release, or

the sheer amount of times I listened to the album in 72 hours, there was something magical about Red (Taylor's Version).

Now if the album itself was extraordinary in general, there was magic going on in "All Too Well (Ten Minute Version)." The song that details Swift's short-lived romantic relationship with Jake Gyllenhaal was re-recorded in its original form from the 2012 album, but Swift also blessed her fans with a ten minute version of the song, detailing more of the story about the relationship. If you still can't empathize with Swift after listening to that lyrical masterpiece, then you have got to watch the Short Film she produced for the song that has her fans in a frenzy.

One of the best additions to the album was the release of ten vaulted songs Swift had initially written for Red. While "Nothing New" with Phoebe Bridgers seemed to be a crowd favorite, I thought that "Message in A Bottle," "Run," and "I Bet You Think About Me" were all very well done.

With a good mix of old and new, Swift's latest work is certainly worth the listen for fans and skeptics alike.

Movie Review

Dune (2021)

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

Pros:

- Amazing graphics
- Skilled acting
- Likeable characters
- Engaging Plot

Cons:

- Feels like half a movie

Overall Rating:

★★★★★

Newest VMFA Exhibit: Ansel Adams

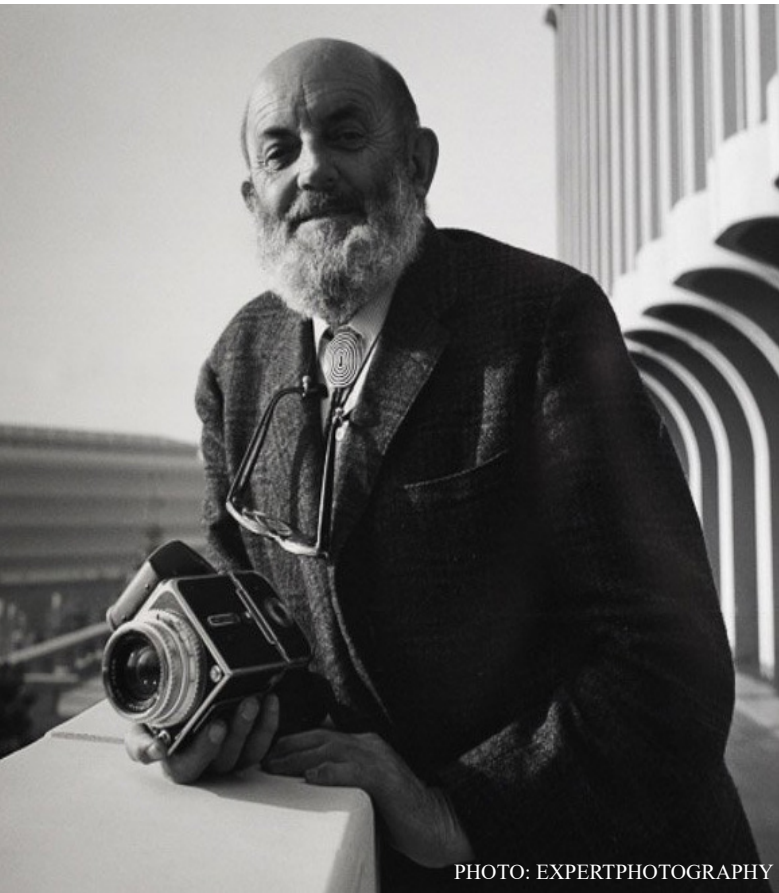


PHOTO: EXPERTPHOTOGRAPHY



PHOTO: AUDREY JONES

Audrey Jones
Staff Writer

American photographer Ansel Adams once said “the composition of photography is the strongest way of seeing.” On October 25, 2021, the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (VMFA) opened the “Ansel Adams: Compositions in Nature” exhibit, featuring photographs of American landscapes and portraits taken by Adams throughout his career. The exhibit is organized chronologically and showcases some of Adams’s most beloved work. According to the VMFA, Ansel Adams is “a celebrated photographer ... and a persuasive advocate for nature conservation.” His work reflects his passion for the preservation of American landscapes. Adams’s expertise of photography composition combined with his knowledge of the dark room allowed him to produce stunning images of America’s natural geography. Miriam Bonano, an art teacher at Freeman, described the exhibit as “vivid, striking, and a bit mysterious.” Throughout the exhibit, you

Portrait of Ansel Adams

can see the progression of Adams’s art and the stylistic choices he made in each era of his work. The exhibit states that “his photography naturally changed with his own personal interests and tastes- from soft-focused, impressionistic Pictorialist photography to hard-focused ‘straight’ photography.” There are several sections where two of the same picture are shown side by side to highlight the differences in Adams’s photography style early on in his career versus later in his career. The curator of the exhibit, Dr. Christopher C. Oliver, Bev Perdue Jennings Assistant Curator of American Art, said, “One of the major points we hope to make in the exhibition is the processes that Adams used to produce a final photographic print that came as close as possible to the image he had in his mind before he ever used his camera. It was a very deliberate and careful endeavor that relied on Adams’s artistic eye as much as his technical know-how.” “This exhibition was partially organized to celebrate the recent gift of several important, rare photographs from a museum patron, Andrea Gray Stillman,” said

The artwork referenced by Mrs. Bonano

Dr. Oliver. “She was Ansel Adams’s assistant for several years in the 1970s, and has given us some tremendous works. Once we accepted those gifts from Andrea, we knew we had to find a way to get them out on view!” Ansel Adams’s love for music is also highlighted at the exhibit, as the light piano music playing in the background is actually a recording of Adams playing himself. “The hand that you hear on the piano is the very hand that printed the photographs in front of you,” said Dr. Oliver. The exhibit is meant to have a broad audience and inspire people to connect with nature. “I think

“*I think Adams’s work really is about our connection.*”
- Dr. Oliver

Adams’s work really is about our connection to nature,” said Dr. Oliver. “He believed in the palliative qualities of nature, and I think it’s something we’re continuing to find true in our own time.” Mrs. Bonano is a frequent visi-

tor of the VMFA. “I try to stay up to date with the shows that are coming to the VMFA for the obvious reason that I love art,” said Mrs. Bonano. She was recently drawn to the Ansel Adams exhibit because of her interest in the National Parks which play a prominent role in Adams’s work. “I have a great fondness for our National Parks, especially Yosemite, and wanted to see his photographs in person,” said Mrs. Bonano. “It was a totally different experience to stand in front of these iconic photographs compared to looking at them on a computer screen or in a book. They are incredibly stark, with such immense detail.” Specifically, her favorite piece in the exhibit was “Aspens, Northern New Mexico”, ca 1958. “This photograph showcased Adams’s style of identifying clear tonal values and manipulation of light during the printing process. It was so stunning, I did not want to walk away,” said Mrs. Bonano. Freeman alum, Jeff Newton, also took a trip to the exhibit with family. Jeff said that “in the past I have not been particularly good about appreciating art.” However, he was intrigued by the similari-

ties between his hobbies and some of the scenes depicted in Adams’s photographs. “I really enjoy skiing and other activities in the mountains, and Adams certainly includes much of these environments in his work,” said Jeff. He found it interesting that “rather than just relying on the beautiful scenes he was photographing, Adams was able to enhance these scenes with his editing of the photos.” Overall, Jeff would recommend this exhibit to others because Adams’s “ability to magnify the already beautiful scenes of nature through the editing to black and white was truly unique.” Adams’s work can be found frequently in books and documentaries. However, “it is actually pretty rare to have a chance to see a large collection of Adams actual fine art photographs,” said Dr. Oliver. “I would seize the opportunity to see them while I could.” The Ansel Adams exhibit resides in the Evans Court Gallery at the VMFA and will be open until January 2, 2022. Tickets are free for members and children ages 6 and under, eight dollars for youth ages 7-17 and college students, and ten dollars for adults.

Spoons Up for Ruby Scoops



PHOTO: RUSSELL NYSTROM

The store front of Ruby Scoops

Russell Nystrom
Design Editor

Everyone knows the traditional winter food items - hot chocolate, anything peppermint flavored, eggnog, etc. But one thing that no one discusses as a winter treat is ice cream. When I saw that Ruby Scoops, a local Richmond ice cream shop, won a \$20,000 prize on Food Network’s new show, “Clash of the Cones,” I knew I had to try it. So I made the trek out to Richmond’s northside and was met with a bright pink storefront in a sea of gray. Inside the store I got to meet the nicest work staff one could ever find. They took me through

the 12 different flavors currently offered in the store (most flavors change weekly) and offered their opinions on each. As I first went during Halloween season, an employee let me know that every flavor tasted just as one might expect- so therefore if I did not like candy corn, I would certainly not enjoy the ice cream. They helped me and my family through our order, and we finally decided on the award-winning Black Joy flavor, Candy Bowl, and lemonade-flavored vegan ice cream. The ice cream overall was very impressive. I even found that their vegan ice cream, in the shock of the century, actually tasted like ice cream, and it even tasted like the marketed flavor, as an added benefit. The best flavor was probably

the Candy Bowl, a Halloween specific flavor. The treat was amply creative, yet not to the point that it distracts from the ice cream itself. Finally, there is the flavor that won the grand prize on “Clash of the Cones,” Black Joy, which consists of salted malted dulce de leche ice cream, vanilla ice cream, Old Bay caramel swirl, dark chocolate fudge brownie chunks, and salty toffee hazelnut blondies. To me, there was too much going on with the flavor, and there were some aspects that just are not flavors that I enjoy whether in ice cream or in normal food form. However, I will say that if that description at all sounds up your alley, I have no doubt that you would enjoy a trip to Ruby Scoops.

Top 5 Gift Ideas of 2021

