

## Seniors Showcase Their Project Maverick Proposals

**Lillie Deaton Connor**  
Features Editor

On April 19, Freeman Seniors had the opportunity to showcase their unique proposals for Project Maverick. During Project Maverick, seniors had to identify a problem they are passionate about, and then research that problem to prove its significance. Following the research, the group must come up with three solutions; identify pros, cons, supporters and opponents; and then identify their best solution. All of these components are then presented at a showcase where students' families and the community can observe and interact with their presentations.

Project Maverick has evolved from the original structure of Project Citizen, which started in

*"It's all the things we want you to be able to do when you leave here."*

- Katie Striker

2019 as a school wide project for seniors. "We wanted to expand it to include other classes to be cross curricular and improve our English classes. It was mostly driven by the teachers," Freeman Principal John Marshall said. "In a good way it has evolved over



Seniors presenting their Project Maverick in the small gym.

PHOTO: CAT WHITE

time into what it has become." Because Freeman is the only school in Virginia to participate in this project, the best Project Maverick presentation gets sent to the National Project Citizen Competition, which is held during the summer in California. "We did really well [in 2019]" said Katie Striker,

social studies teacher at Freeman. The project showcases all the skills that Freeman students develop over their four years here. "It's all the things we want you to be able to do when you leave here to be good and productive citizens," said Mr. Marshall. "No matter what kind of job you have,

you have to be able to talk to people and work collectively in a group setting. And this basically encompasses all of those skills and shows off how far our students have come in their four years."

The hands-on aspect of the Project Maverick is what Mrs. Striker likes the most. "I like that you

can actually see students that really put good thought into problems that are affecting them," she said, "and come up with solutions that sometimes the adults have never even considered."

Mr. Marshall believes students are often overlooked, and Project Maverick helps overcome this. "Too often we think, 'Oh, students don't know what to do,

*"Our future is bright because of the learners and leaders that we're creating here."*

- John Marshall

they don't have experience," he said. "But when you bring fresh ideas, which we have plenty of in this building, to a solution it could have positive impacts on the community directly."

Involvement in the community is a big aspect of Project Maverick. "Project Maverick drives the community to realize that students are brilliant and capable," said Mr. Marshall. "Our future is bright because of the learners and leaders that we're creating here. I think [Project Maverick] has the potential to reframe how the community views high schoolers," said Mr. Marshall. "It also re-frames what's happening in education. The people that attended the showcase saw incredible, articulate, and brilliant students passionate about changing the world."

## Henrico Students to Return Before Labor Day in 2022

**Catherine White**  
Online Editor-in-Chief

The beginning of the 2022-23 school year will look slightly different for Henrico County Public Schools (HCPS) students. The Henrico School Board approved the calendar for the upcoming year, which features a significant change in regards to the first day of school. This year, the first day of school is scheduled for Aug. 29, 2022, which is one week prior to Labor Day, on Sep. 5.

After months of public input and surveying, the school board unanimously approved the pre-Labor Day start. Not only was the 2022-23 calendar approved but the 2023-24 school year was planned and approved as well. This included a school start day on Aug. 21, 2023 or two weeks prior to Labor Day, which will be Sep. 4. Most of Virginia's 135 school divisions have adopted pre-Labor Day start dates.

These new schedules will not add or eliminate any school days as they only shift to an earlier start and stop date for students and staff. They will also not affect the breaks throughout the school year. Winter break for the 2022-23 school year will be Dec. 19-30, 2022 and spring break will be April 3-7, 2023.

Because of this adjustment to the school year, accommodations will have to be made to summer break as well. The last day of school for the 2021-22 school year will be a regular date but the first day of school for the 2022-23 school year will be earlier, leaving the summer break a week shorter than it typically is. Instead of the normal 82 day summer break HCPS students are given, the 2022 summer break will be only 74 days long. The 2023 summer break will also be shortened, as the first day of school will again be moved up a week earlier.

The last day of school for the 2022-23 school year will be June 9, 2023 and the 2023-24 school year will come to a conclusion on May 31, 2024.

The discussion around school start dates has been a topic of conversation in Virginia dating back to the 1980s. In 1986, the Virginia General Assembly passed a law that requires public elementary and secondary schools to not open until after Labor Day unless they are granted a waiver. This was known as the Kings Dominion Law. It was passed largely because of lobbying from tourist groups like Kings Dominion, who believed they would benefit from extra time in August with families taking vacations and teenagers available to work their summer jobs.

In 2019, Governor Ralph Northam signed bills into law that would allow all Virginia schools to open up to two weeks before Labor Day as long as they give students a four-day Labor Day weekend. The Henrico School Board began to discuss this change in 2020, but had to postpone due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The decision to create an earlier calendar was approved in June, 2021.

There are differing opinions on the board's decision. "I personally believe it will be a negative change because shortening the summer break is not going to benefit the students and staff's wellbeing," said junior Cooper Hamilton. He worries about there being "less time for students to

*"Teachers felt like they didn't have time to prepare students."*

- Cara-Jean O'Neal

spend their summer hanging out with family and friends, and less time for students to go on vacation during the summer break."

Cara-Jean O'Neal, a Freeman administrator, said that part of the

### CALENDAR 2022-23 SCHOOL YEAR

#### IMPORTANT DATES 2022

JULY 1, 8, 15, 22, 29	Offices closed
JULY 4	Schools closed - Independence Day
AUG. 5, 12	Offices closed
AUG. 15-19	New Teacher Academy
AUG. 22-26	Teacher workweek/Professional learning and clerical days
AUG. 29	First day of school
SEPT. 2	Student holiday/Staff clerical day
SEPT. 5	Schools closed - Labor Day
OCT. 5	Student and teacher holiday - Yom Kippur
OCT. 24	Student and teacher holiday - Diwali
NOV. 3	End of quarter
NOV. 8	Student holiday - Election Day/Teacher virtual professional learning/Clerical day
NOV. 23-25	Schools closed - Thanksgiving holiday
DEC. 19-30	Schools closed - Winter Break
DEC. 25	Christmas

#### IMPORTANT DATES 2023

JAN. 2	Schools reopen following Winter Break
JAN. 16	Schools closed - Martin Luther King Jr. holiday
JAN. 22	Lunar New Year
JAN. 26	End of semester
JAN. 27	Student half day/Staff clerical day
FEB. 20	Presidents Day
MARCH 31	Student holiday/Staff professional learning day/End of quarter - Student half day/Staff clerical day
APRIL 3-7	Schools closed - Spring Break
APRIL 9	Easter
APRIL 21	Student and teacher holiday - Eid al-Fitr
MAY 29	Schools closed - Memorial Day
JUNE 9	Last day of school
JUNE 10	Last day for teachers
JUNE 19	Schools/offices closed - Juneteenth
JUNE 18, 23, 30	Offices closed

Students = 178 days  
Note: Making day Feb. 19

Teacher = 191 days (includes four meetings for student conferences and 14 hours for online or in-person training/PL)

For more activities and events, visit [www.henricoschools.us/calendars](http://www.henricoschools.us/calendars)



reason the board came to this conclusion was because "teachers felt like they didn't have as much time as they do in other places to get students prepared" for assessments like The Standards of Learning (SOL) and Advanced Placement

(AP) exams, which have specific time frames when they need to be completed. She believes that the schedule would not feel very different for students or staff but "if we come back earlier that gives a week or so more for teachers

to be able to get through content before testing season arrives." Mrs. O'Neal also said that the adjusted schedule would align more closely with college start times and "align more fully with other school divisions across the state."



# HVA: A Virtual School Success



Student works on his computer.

**Maggie Newton**  
Opinions Editor

Zoom, Google Meets, or Microsoft Teams. These names are something all Henrico County students are familiar with. While the majority of students returned to in-person learning by the beginning of this school year, some choose to permanently remain virtual as a part of the Henrico Virtual Academy (HVA). HVA is an opportunity offered to students who excel in the

virtual environment instead of a traditional classroom environment. According to the HVA website, virtual learning offers flexibility and an individualized space that enables students to focus on reaching new heights. This is true for junior Trent Wood, who switched from Freeman to HVA after the 2020-2021 school year. Trent decided to switch to HVA because the environment was a better fit for him. "I have ADHD, so it's really hard to concentrate on one thing when I have lots of people around me," said Trent. "[virtual

learning] really helps me narrow down my ability to pay attention to one thing instead of multiple things." Trent is enjoying his time at HVA, but he does miss the socializing aspect of life that comes with in-person classes. "It was very nice being able to see all my friends and everything [at in-person school]," said Trent. But the switch to virtual "really hasn't impacted my social life too much." Angela Rhodes, a math teacher at HVA can agree with missing the social aspect of school. "I miss the random interactions,"

she said. However, switching to HVA has granted her the opportunity to slow down and remain truer to herself, without having to stress as much. "I realized that I enjoyed being able to enjoy my coffee instead of just trying to remember to bring it," said Mrs. Rhodes. "I needed to have the option to freely release my frustrations because I was safe in my own home to respond how I needed." However, one struggle that is present within the virtual classroom is when students choose to turn off their cameras. Mrs. Rhodes struggles with getting her students to interact and she hopes that as HVA progresses, there will be some changes. "There will need to be a structured plan to make sure we have students who understand that learning virtually requires more accountability on their parts," she said. Mr. Garry Marshall has been in education for 20 years, most recently as an assistant principal at Elko Middle School before he transitioned to become the principal of HVA. "When the Henrico Virtual Academy was being launched, I saw it as a chance to pioneer something different and build something new which I love," he said. HVA is a permanent addition to Henrico County, and after becoming a fully independent school next year, they will continue to grow. Currently, HVA does not have any athletic teams, but that is something they are hoping to change. "We have a lot of events happening

in the evening at HVA even though we don't have athletics," said Mr. Marshall. "We have had a number of spirit nights and other events and will shift to offering more in-person events for our families." Currently, students are able to participate in sports teams and school functions at their assigned home school. "This will continue as we become our own school for next year until we grow our own athletic program and build our own school functions," he said. "[HVA] offers events for students

*"We ... may even launch our own specialty center in the future."*  
- Garry Marshall

monthly." HVA is also looking to augment their school by adding their own specialty center. "We hope to expand offerings each year and may even launch our own specialty center in the future," said Mr. Marshall. "Right now, we are focusing on expanding computer science related courses." HVA currently has 1330 students enrolled with 150 staff members associated with the school. They expect the same number of students to enroll next year too.

# Keep it Clean Competition

**Peter Kriebel**  
Sports Editor

The lunchroom. For some, it's a commonplace to eat and socialize. For others, it's a battleground where destruction is the only way to earn the respect of your peers. Unfortunately, for janitors, like Freeman's own Ehab Shaker, the latter behavior makes their job difficult. According to Mr. Shaker, the hardest things to clean off the floor are "the grapes" and "sticky food, like candy." In an effort to make Mr. Shaker and other janitor's jobs easier, Freeman launched the Keep it Clean competition that offered an outdoor lunch as a reward for the cleanest lunch block. Junior Miles Creason hasn't been impacted very much by the initiative. "I was aware for a week but I forgot," he said. Despite his short memory, Miles has unknowingly contributed to "D block" lunch's effort in the competition. "I clean up all my stuff," he said, "I've always done that." Miles focuses on taking care of his own responsibilities, perhaps because



PHOTO: PETER KRIEBEL

*"I made sure to keep my table clean."*  
- Charlie Bernhardt

he's all too familiar with his C lunch peers not taking care of their own. "During D lunch, we always come in here and there's already trash," he said. Miles is a realist when it comes to the competition, even going as far as to abandon his D lunch alliances and

Freeman's clean cafeteria. say that "A Lunch is the cleanest." Junior, and B block lunch attendee, Charlie Bernhardt isn't so quick to sell out his own lunch team. "I think B lunch has been the cleanest," he said. Charlie has participated in the competition. "I made sure to keep my table clean," he said, "and make sure all my friends are keeping the table clean as well." B Lunch students at Charlie's table aren't the only ones pitching in. "Kids are picking up trash off the floor

and picking up after other people because they want to win this competition," Charlie said. And while Charlie's infectious optimism may have inspired B block lunch, Mr. Shaker re-

*"We should all take pride in our shared space."*  
- Carter Reilly

mains somewhat skeptical. Student's behavior has "not [improved] much," he said, and that "the [conditions] are getting a little bit better." This is perhaps not the resounding success that Freeman administrators such as Carter Reilly may have hoped for. "We really wanted students to think about how their actions affect others and how we should all take pride in our shared space," Mrs. Reilly said. The cause is certainly noble, but it's a tough

task. "I don't think the clean up competition was super successful" she said, "but if it even helped get a little bit of trash up, that's progress in my opinion." Perhaps what held the competition back was the lack of incentivization. Mr. Shaker thinks that it could have been better with a bigger reward. So next year, if the reward is a little shinier and the promotion a little louder, the Keep it Clean Competition should meet everyone's expectations.

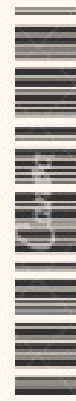


# DSF Graduation!

June 16th, 2022  
Stuart C. Siegel Center  
1200 W Broad St

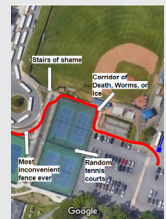


3pm - 7pm



Level 20  
Sec 22  
Row 20  
Seat 26

"The Maze"



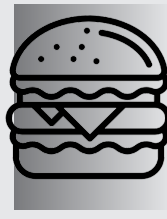
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Holocaust Survival Story



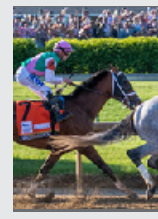
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RVA Restaurants



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The Kentucky Derby



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VMFA Exhibit



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# Freeman's Fight Against Temperature

**Morgan Strudgeon**  
Editor-in-Chief

Just imagine it: it's a warm and sunny day, the first warm and sunny day of spring, arguably one of the best days of the year. Walking from the student parking lot, the world just feels right for once—until you walk into your first period class in the upstairs hallway and are blasted with a wave of heat you would think only exists in the middle of summer in Florida.

Like many Freeman students, I too have been affected by this temperature situation. There have been many days that I have been pleasantly comfortable, only to walk into the upstairs hallway and instantly be put into a foul mood by the rapid temperature change as I make my way to the next period.

This temperature situation is something that I have heard my friends complain about on countless occasions. Somehow it is always too hot or too cold, regardless of the weather that day. My classmates and I are forced to play an endless guessing game day after day.

Even though the upstairs hallway might be the most notorious of venues for this ongoing battle against the climate, it is far from the only one. I have observed that everywhere from the annex to green acres to the math hall has had this problem during at least one point of the year. I have one vivid memory from the first week of school where I walked into my Freeman Focus and was immediately hit with a wave of heat that was shocking to my entire system. I found myself joining countless clubs in those first few weeks of school just to escape that classroom.

Even though the beginning of this war with the temperature might have started the very first week of school, it has raged on at a near-constant pace since then. Just last week I walked into my French class on a sunny and pleasant morning only to find that in French class, even in April, it is still January. Long story short, I was freezing for an hour and a

half while I tried to conjugate irregular verbs in the past tense.

These are just a few of the examples from my experience this year. Even though these are the only ones that I have explained in this article, they are far from the only times I have been personally affected by the erratic heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) system here at Freeman. In addition to this, I have listened to many of my peers complain about how they have to carry a jacket with them all day long, even when it is upwards of 80 degrees outside. This is all so they can comfortably go to their classes without worrying about shivering whilst they have to take a test.

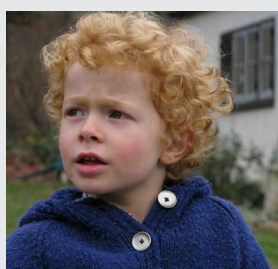
When I initially sat down to write this article, I thought that the culprit for the unpredictability of the upstairs temperature was the massive windows that are in almost every classroom located in the upstairs hallway. However, only a few days after I hypothesized this, I walked into my classroom in the middle of Green Acres, where there are absolutely no windows (which is an issue I will have to dissect in another article) and it was just as hot as my upstairs classroom with a wall of windows.

It was this day that I realized that this is not a mere matter of installing better shades in the upstairs classrooms to block out the sun on the hottest days of the year, but instead an issue of the overworked HVAC system installed in our school building. While this is definitely a more expensive fix than some curtains, I do not think that it would be too difficult to find a long-term solution to this problem.

I think that one of the most helpful things to resolve this issue would be to consult with experts in this area who could help Henrico County Public Schools to devise a plan to help improve upon the temperature situation here at Freeman.

While this would undoubtedly be an expensive endeavor, fundraising would be vital and likely take place over several months and multiple events so that our school building could be improved for not just the students that are currently here, but all of the students that will come here in the future.

## He Said



**Peter Kriebel**  
Sports Editor

I'm not into super-sitions

Too hard

No, it's like really bumpy

I believe it. Also, good name for a tropical themed pizza place.

Over 7 feet tall, with size 30 shoes? If he were real he'd be in the NBA



Conspiracy Theories

Is Stevie Wonder really blind?

Did we fake the moon landing?

Is the earth flat?

Bermuda Triangle?

Bigfoot?

## She Said



**Maggie Newton**  
Opinions Editor

If he was blind how could he hear the music?

Yeah, no. I can't get on board with this one

[censored]

2022 Summer Destination? I'll pass.

Why is this still considered a conspiracy theory? He's real.

# Freeman's Logistical Nightmare

**Adair Reid**  
Editor-in-Chief

Early in the morning, I step out of my half-thawed car into the freezing air to set out on what I can only think to call "the climb." I adjust my backpack, feeling the metaphorical weight of Monday settle on my shoulders as I bleakly stare at the winding path ahead. Convincing my feet to move through the angular corridor between the batting cages and the tennis courts is a daily battle, but the mini hill leading up to the bus loop is another story. The stairs oddly placed in the corner look discarded, and worse, like a sign of weakness. Once you go up, there's no going back - and many days, I struggle not to just turn around.

The logistical flaws of Freeman's building and grounds are harped on every school year - and yet they remain. One particular area on the campus is personally grating: the tennis-court-baseball-field-walkway-area-amalgamation that I'll call The Maze. That alone should convince you of its many faults, but a simple tour through

The Maze will do the job. While I commend the recent redesign of the football stadium pavilion, which has been revitalized as an open space, both visitors to Freeman and new students still stand to become entrapped in The Maze. On rainy days, worms flood the uneven pavement, and in the winter, the alley has its own ice rink. At night it's shadowy, and the after school rush to the parking lot is Freeman's own Running of the Bulls. The bottom line is, The Maze is WEIRD!

We've changed Freeman for the better since the 50s, so why does this relic of the county remain? While The Maze is undoubtedly a result of the philosophy "if it's inconvenient, let's leave the students to suffer", I think it could be easily changed. Simply splitting up the two tennis courts and moving a walkway in the middle would be a slight adjustment and would completely solve the problem. Not to mention, it would open up the possibility of Freeman being the first school in Henrico County to have a ski lift that would move students up the hill and into class. Within budget constraints, we could reasonably have a cov-

er for the walkway, saving students from being poured on, sunburnt, or frozen by the infamous, ever-changing Virginia weather.

This change would create a logical path from the parking lot to school, and would allow students to leave school faster, making the parking less congested. Visitors to the school and spectators of tennis matches wouldn't have to perch awkwardly on the asphalt hills, and it would balance and centralize the area between the big gym, stadium, and tennis courts. Teachers could more easily walk in from the lot into the building, and a concrete ramp as well as stairs built into the hill would ensure accessibility and a lack of potential lawsuits. Not to mention, it would alleviate the stress put upon students' mental health by seeing this concrete nightmare of The Maze every morning.

Modernizing The Maze would take some grunt work, but the benefits far outweigh the costs of some slight engineering. Freeman has taken recent steps to become a school of the present - so why not leave The Maze behind to blaze a clear path for future students and staff?

## Freeman Forecast

<b>Math Hall</b>	<b>Art Hall</b>	<b>Main Hall</b>	<b>Upstairs</b>
<b>Green Acres</b>	<b>Annex</b>	<b>Auditorium</b>	<b>Big Gym</b>

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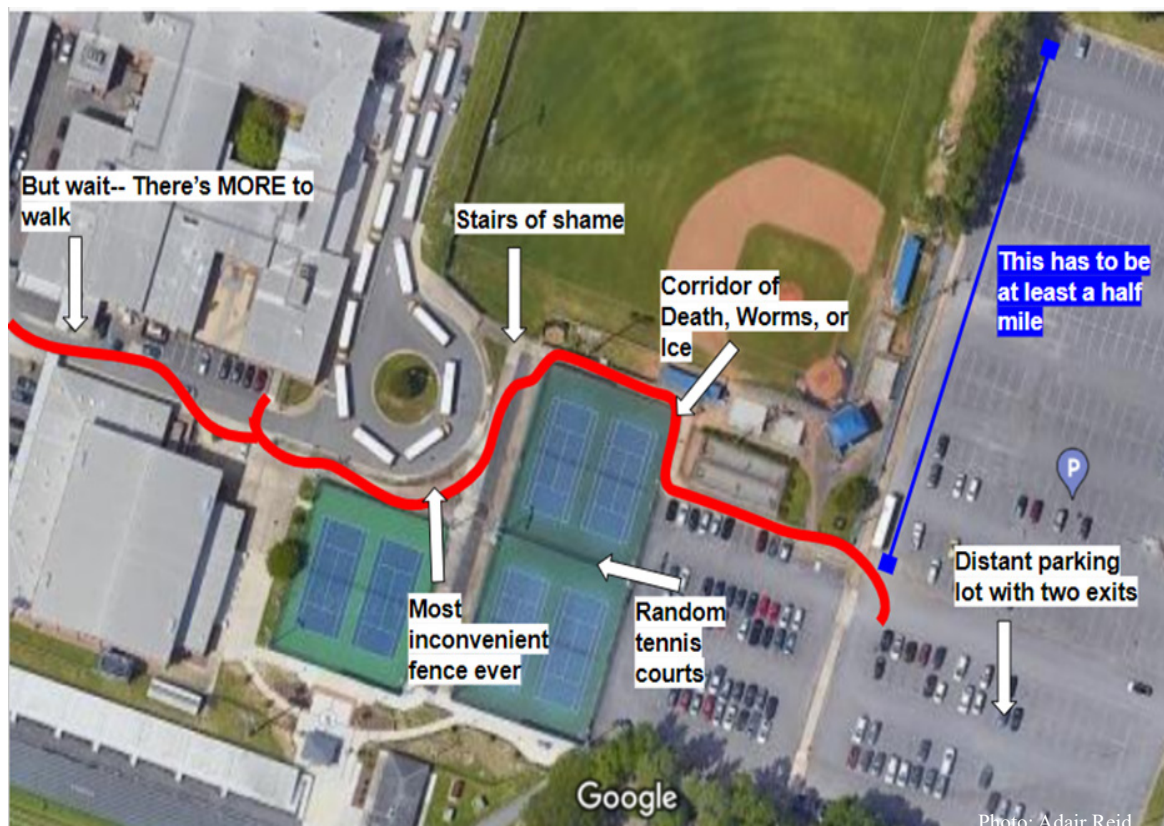
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Letters to the editor are encouraged. They must be signed before they can be printed. Because of variety and space, only a limited number of letters can be published. The Commentator reserves the right not to print a letter.



Please enjoy this unbiased infographic illustrating my grievances.



PHOTO: THE TODAY SHOW



PHOTO: CLAIRE MORRIS

## Asphalt Art

**Cathrine White**  
Online Editor-in-Chief

Most students associate the beauty of Freeman with the colorful murals that cover our hallway's walls, the beautiful dogwood trees that bloom right outside our classroom windows in the spring, and our verdant front lawn. However, I can promise you that no one thinks of our bland, black parking lot as anything but a chaotic eyesore.

The parking lot is where a large part of the DSF student body starts and ends each and every school day. The typical 720 days a student spends at Freeman over their four-year high school career can be monotonous and demanding. A positive beginning and end to each day could be enough to motivate some students. What is a better way to add some cheer into students' everyday stroll through our parking lot than allowing the seniors to paint their parking spots?

As you may have seen on social media earlier this year, allowing senior students to paint a parking spot at their school has become an increasingly popular idea. These students use something as simple as a black rectangle of asphalt as a form of self expression. They are given the opportunity to create a design, as simple or as elaborate as they would like. This customizes their individual spot for their senior year. Of course this leads

to a parking lot filled with incredible colors and art, which sets the school apart from every other parking lot in the area. It has been proven that looking at art regularly can produce a surge of dopamine, or the happy chemical! Happy students make productive students.

I believe that bringing this idea to Freeman would be something that much of the student body would enjoy. Freeman is home to quite an artistic group of students, as you can tell from our painted lockers and bright murals covering the hallways. Giving students an opportunity to have some artistic freedom creates potential for our parking lot to become a work of art.

Not only would this be a fun activity for our more artistically inclined seniors, it would encourage some students to step out of their comfort zone. There are plenty of ways to make the space yours without being the next Picasso. This would allow for students to explore their creativity in a way they probably have not experienced before. Creativity is multidisciplinary. It can be used in many different parts of life so allowing students to do it in this way would be beneficial. Being artistic and expressive can also reduce stress and anxiety, which both are emotions that our seniors face regularly. The options are endless and the canvas for self expression is blank.

Who doesn't love a good senior tradition? A student's senior year is all about savoring every

last moment they have with their classmates. A time to get together, paint some parking spots, and have fun would be a perfect addition to their senior year calendar. This memory would be something that sticks with them forever. It would also be something that the underclassman could look forward to year after year.

Now if we take a look at this concept more logistically it makes even more sense. The chaos that consumes the parking lot at 3:55 p.m. each day is a hot topic among students. Having designated parking spots for each student would create a system of organization in our parking lot. The seniors would be given the opportunity to claim the priority spots and the juniors would fill in afterwards. Again, this would be something to look forward to for underclassmen. The assigned parking spot system would eliminate student stress each morning about not being able to get a spot in our parking lot. It would also discourage the ongoing problem we are experiencing of students parking in the lot without a parking pass. I think we can all agree that the parking lot needs an improved system and this could be it.

In short, the experience that it would be for seniors to be able to get together as a class and decorate our school parking lot would be an overly positive one. We should be able to have our student parking lot be reflective of our student body.

## What New NIL Rules Mean for College Athletes

**Morgan Strudgeon**  
Editor-in-Chief

On June 30, 2021, the NCAA voted to allow for student-athletes to benefit from using their name, image, and likeness (NIL) beginning in July of 2021. Prior to this decision, student-athletes were not allowed to use their image for opportunities such as sponsorships or commercial purposes. In June of 2021, California officially suspended their NIL policies and about a month later the NCAA followed suit for all three divisions.

Even though student-athletes are still bound by both their schools' policies and their state laws, there is no longer a national ban on NIL contracts by the NCAA. One of the reasons given by the NCAA for this decision is that by allowing student-athletes to benefit from their image they can help cut back on the controversial and highly illegal pay-for-play practices that have brought multiple universities to court in the past few years. Similarly, they hope that this will cut back on illegal recruiting practices that can influence an athlete's commitment decision.

After these new policies were implemented, there was much debate about how this new era of NIL contracts would affect college sports. These concerns lead to the NCAA passing new guidelines this month that regulate the level to which booster clubs are allowed to be involved in the recruiting process for student-athletes. These rules, at an attempt to regulate the new NIL era of college sports, completely banned the involvement of booster clubs from the recruiting process. As with most things, some schools have tried to get around this rule and involve booster clubs with student-athletes who have not yet signed to the school due to lack of serious enforcement of the rules from the NCAA itself. This type of activ-

ity by booster clubs directly goes against one of the most intended effects of the new NIL rules: to put an end to the pay-to-play system.

Despite the issues that have presented themselves under the new NIL rules, the new regulations also usher in the new era for high-level student-athletes. Previously, many high-level student-athletes had to choose between receiving an education and getting a paycheck. Due to this, the NBA has made a rule that all players wishing to enter the draft must first spend at least a year playing for a collegiate team to allow for schools to receive revenue from elite student-athletes. On the same note, even though Michel Phelps attended the University of Michigan, he never actually swam there as he had already signed a high-dollar deal with the swimwear brand speedo before he went to college. Therefore, he was already technically a professional, which made him unable to compete on the University of Michigan swim team.

Furthermore, the new rules put in place by the NCAA will allow for schools to be able to receive and retain high-level athletes who are able to use the NIL rules to their advantage and be able to spend all four years at a university. This is also good news for colleges as they will be able to allow for student-athletes to play their sport at the collegiate level without worrying about monetary factors. It is likely that this will lead to more high-level student-athletes pursuing a NCAA career and ultimately make more money for schools in the long run.

However, there is the question as to what this will mean in the long run for both student-athletes and universities. However, since this is the first academic year that they have been in place, there is little else for both collegiate athletes and their coaches to do but wait and see what the NCAA decides to do in the future.

### TOP SPORTS FOR NIL COMPENSATION

TOTAL COMPENSATION - BY SPORT  
THROUGH APRIL 30, 2022

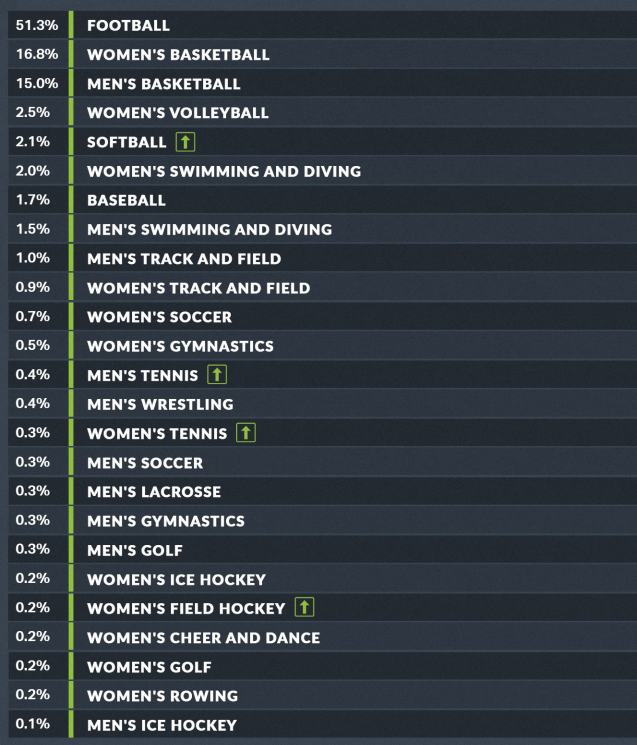


PHOTO: OPENDORSE.COM

## Underclassmen Final Exam Schedule

Friday, 6/10	Even day	Per. 6 (Even day)
Monday, 6/13	Per. 1	Per. 3
Tuesday, 6/14	Per. 2	Per. 4
Wednesday, 6/15	Per. 5	Per. 7

# Nathan Szobota Swims His Way Around the World

**Farah Abdullah**  
Copy Editor

Nathan Szobota made history during the winter sports season, becoming one of few freshmen to ever earn the most points for the Boys Swimming Team.

Nathan's swimming journey began when he was just two years old. "My parents put me in [swimming lessons] because I always liked the water," he said. 12 years later, Nathan's love for the sport has only grown. He swims for NOVA of Virginia Aquatics year-round, and during the

winter, he swims for Freeman's team as well. "I practice [in the morning] Monday through Saturday and then once a week in the afternoon with NOVA," said Nathan. "In the winter, I'll practice [about] two days a week with the Freeman team after my NOVA practice in the morning."

Nathan's favorite events are the distance freestyle and backstroke events. However, "the actual swimming part and seeing my friends is what gets me to practice every day," he said. "A lot of my closest friends are from swimming, regardless of what schools I've been in or any [other circumstances]."

Although his schedule is full of swimming, Nathan still finds time for school and other activities. "During swim practice, I focus [on swimming] and [when I] come home, I focus on my homework," he said. As for his social life, swimming does not interfere with his plans. "Since I mostly swim during the week [when] I wouldn't be hanging out with my friends anyway, [it] doesn't really interfere with [anything]," he said.

Though swimming has played a huge role in Nathan's life, it has also been a huge part of his family member's lives as well. A former collegiate swimmer for William and Mary, Nathan's mom, Karen Szobota, understands what it takes to be committed to the sport. "We are definitely a sports focused family," she said. From early morning practice, to meets over the weekend, Nathan's parents are always supporting him. "We're just really proud of him," she said. "[Nathan] really pushes himself."

In addition, Mrs. Szobota makes sure she is there to help, as swimming relies heavily on volunteers. "I'm a stroke and turn official," she said. "That's just something that I like to do to support him and his teammates." Mrs. Szobota appreciates the inclusivity within the swimming community. "Swimming is a team sport [and] an individual sport, [but] it's not you against your teammates," she



PHOTO: MIKE LEWIS

Nathan swimming for NOVA of Virginia Aquatics.

said. "You are all in it together."

To guide him through his first year in high school swimming, Career and Technical Education (CTE) teacher and swimming coach, Steven Gromling, has been there along the way. "Nathan is a very conscious and responsible person, and as a swimmer, he is a top athlete," said Coach Gromling. "Being a freshman and being faster than [upperclassmen] is an unbelievable task."

Coach Gromling emphasizes that he enjoys seeing swimmers put in mental and physical effort to improve. "[Nathan] got a total of roughly 684 points just for this school season," said Mr. Gromling. "He has the whole package."

In April, Nathan placed sec-

ond in the 2022 US Open Water Nationals, qualifying him for the 2022 FINA World Open Water Junior Championships in Beau Vallon, Seychelles. "I'm super excited," he said. "I didn't expect [it]. I just raced my race and ended up getting that opportunity." The World Junior Open Water Championship is scheduled for September 2022. "[I'm] not really [nervous] because I've already gotten what I need to go there, so I'll just get there and enjoy it," said Nathan.

As of right now, Nathan hopes to continue his swimming career in college. "I'll have to see what opportunities I get with swimming over the next couple of years," he said. "But that's definitely something I'm interested in."



# Teachers for Tomorrow, Today!

**Henry Haggard**  
News Editor

One wall in Freeman teacher Heather McMunn's classroom looks like it came straight out of an elementary school. It is decorated with a season-themed calendar that any student would recognize from their childhood if they saw it. But this is no elementary school classroom. This is Teachers for Tomorrow.

Teachers for Tomorrow is a Career/Technical Education (CTE) class that has been running strong at Freeman for many years. Its goal is to create the next generation of educators.

Ms. McMunn has been teaching this class for the past 14 school years. While students who enroll in Teachers for Tomorrow "learn all types of skills that would help [them] be a teacher," she said. They also cover topics "that would really be good for anyone."

The first of these skills is "the discovery of who you are as a per-

son," said Ms. McMunn. "It's a lot of self reflection." Everyone in the class makes presentations at the beginning of the year about their strengths, their weaknesses, and everything in between. "If you're going to lead and be a teacher, you have to understand yourself first," she said. "And then that can help you understand others."

With this goal in mind, students in Teachers for Tomorrow also learn about different ways kids learn, whether it be through watching, listening, or hands-on activity. "What makes a really good teacher is not just understanding one learning style ... but a variety of them," said Ms. McMunn. "We go into learning a little bit about psychology, some educational theories, some child development" in order to get a better grasp of how kids think.

After learning and preparing, "we start to create lesson plans," said Ms. McMunn. The goal is for students to create a lesson "that isn't just a PowerPoint [and] some questions- it has to be hands-on."

But it must not cater to just one type of student. "The challenge is for them to pull in the different types of intelligence and learning theories that we don't always see on a regular basis in classe," she said.

At the end of the juniors' first semester, they "go to an actual elementary school," working "in a real classroom with a teacher three days a week," said Ms. McMunn. "And while they're there, they learn a lot from watching the teacher."

Junior Teachers for Tomorrow student Zara Issak recently began her internship back at her old elementary school. "It's nice to have the experience of working with kids, doing lesson plans, and talking to them and seeing their life," said Zara.

Zara has been working hard to help her assigned teacher. "I've been grading papers for about three weeks and I can already see improvement," she said.

But despite what some may think, Teachers for Tomorrow



PHOTO: ZARA ISSAK

Teachers for Tomorrow creating lesson plans.

students like Zara aren't always dead set on being a teacher. "I don't know if I want to be a teacher," she said. "But I do know I want to work with kids."

Junior David Badohoun, however, seems to feel more strongly. "I've always wanted to be a teacher [because] I like helping people," he said. Like Zara, David said he "like[s] working with kids and helping them understand things."

Looking back, Ms. McMunn has seen many students as resolved as David and as open-minded as Zara. "About 50% of my Teach-

ers for Tomorrow students want to become teachers," she said. "And another 50% just want to learn the content and go back to their old elementary school."

For students considering becoming a teacher, Ms. McMunn said, "it's a hard job, but it's a very, very rewarding job."

Zara seems to find the class equally rewarding. "People need to take this class next year," she said. "I really like Teachers for Tomorrow, and I think it deserves more recognition."

# The Creation of Elsie Frieda

**Lillie Connor**  
Features Editor

Colorful jewelry adorned with African record beads, are placed along the shelves of the Elsie Frieda store located off Douglasdale drive. The African record beads and metals are the staple pieces that makes this jewelry company stand out from the rest.

Owner Chrissy Harrison has always been enthralled with the fashion industry and is now getting to live out her childhood dreams. In 2018, she tapped into these early aspirations and created her successful jewelry business, Elsie Frieda. Years ago, Chrissy started making jewelry for herself without any professional training, wearing her pieces to her job as an IT Consultant. Little did she know that her colleagues would quickly become captivated by her uniquely handcrafted pieces. She started receiving requests for purchases as Christmas gifts. Shortly afterwards, Chrissy decided to focus solely on her full time job for the time being and put away her beads. One night her husband, David, encouraged her to revisit her passion for jewelry. "He knew that that would make me happy," said Chrissy.

Chrissy started piecing together random pieces of jewelry from the scraps that she had found in her jewelry box. "I started just kind of creating without an actual vision," said Chrissy. Recognizing her talent and interest in jewelry making, she decided to research beads to use for her creations. "I came across the African record bead and that is what we started with in the



PHOTO: ELSIE FREIDA

Elsie Frieda's owner, Chrissy Harrison.

original collection at Elsie Frieda," said Chrissy. "We then continued to weave it through our designs and even in our metal work".

Chrissy named her business after her grandmother, Elsie Frieda, whom she looked up to as a role model. "My grandmother was ahead of her time, she had so many different aspects and characteristics but she always was also very well dressed and stylish," said Chrissy. "She used to always tell me Chrissy ... you have to work hard, be kind and look good. That's why I named my business after her."

"A lot of people used to call my grandmother Katharine Hepburn because Katharine Hepburn was considered a trailblazer in Hollywood," said Chrissy. A trailblazer is somebody who's willing to take risks and go on a path that isn't already established, they create a new trail and leave a path for others. Elsie Frieda is the definition of a trailblazer. A master bridge and

golf player along with one of the first women to graduate Temple University, Elsie demonstrated these redeeming qualities. As a descendant of German chocolatiers, Elsie grew up alongside her family's Pennsylvania chocolate factory that started with nothing and turned successful through hard work. Growing up with valuing the importance of hardwork, Elsie passed this trait to Chrissy as well. "She stressed the values of kindness, hard work, and looking good while doing it," said Chrissy.

David said he supports and is proud of his wife's accomplishments with how far she's come. "It's brought our friends and family closer, and for our boys specifically, it's sparked an interest in business and entrepreneurship along with figuring out ways to start their own business," said David. "Elsie Frieda opened up a different creative mindset for them, which I think has been the most important part of the whole thing".

## Who Am I?

- He was born in Highland Park, New Jersey
- He played D3 Soccer and Baseball Earlham College
- He lived in Thailand and taught English from 2014-2015
- He just moved from Brooklyn, NY to Richmond this past summer
- He is a Star Wars Fanatic and can tell you all about the Star Wars Legends universe

# RICHMOND RESTAURANTS

BY THE FREEMAN COMMENTATOR STAFF  
DESIGNED BY CENTERSPREAD EDITOR ADA MALPANI



## THAI FLAVOR

Thai Flavor is the place to go for authentic and delicious Thai food. Along with an incredible variety of soups, noodles, currys, and rice dishes comes a fantastic experience, with cute decorations and a great staff. Try Tom Yum soup on a winter's day, or the Drunken Noodles for a spicy and flavorful kick.



## VIETNAM



Whether it's lunch or dinner, Vietnam One has you covered. From 10 incredible Phở options, to a ranging variety of entrees and appetizers, you will not be disappointed. It has a welcoming atmosphere and exceptional service that makes your dining experience one of a kind. While you're at it, be sure to try the delicious Vietnamese iced/hot coffee.

## FULL KEE

Starting off your meal with an oolong tea, Full Kee offers an array of authentic Chinese dishes. The steamed dumplings and egg rolls are the perfect shareable appetizer paired wonderfully with their sauced chicken dishes. Whether you're a fan of white or fried rice, there are many ways to mix and match your sides with your main course. The large portions provide the perfect leftovers for lunch or dinner the following day!



## LITTLE NICKEL

Little Nickel is a tropical oasis on the South Side of Richmond with tropical and Mediterranean influences. Serving typical American plates with Hawaiian flair is what the themed restaurant does best. You can enjoy burgers, Hawaiian pork, specialty sandwiches, and more while basking under warm glow and listening to upbeat music.



ISLAND

LATIN AMERICAN

THE AMERICAS

UNITES STATES



## THE CONTINENTAL

If you are looking for a classic RVA hot spot, The Continental is your place. The menu has an incredible variety of food ranging from a Burrito Azteca to chicken parmesan to burgers. This restaurant has the perfect atmosphere to watch your favorite sports game or just hang with your friends.

## CAFFE CALAO



The Caffe Calao restaurant on Patterson Avenue is an authentic Dominican spot close to Freeman. Get a taste of their famous Cubano sandwich or their plantain-based mofongos six days a week. It's never too crowded, and the atmosphere is warm and inviting. And be warned: their french fries are to die for.

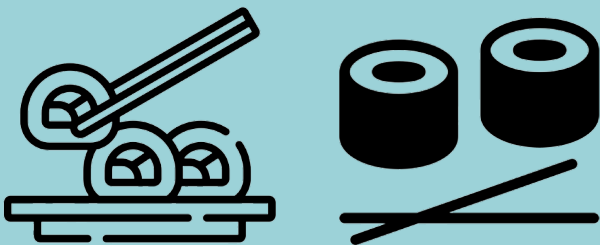
EAST

ASIA

SOUTH

# WHAT TYPE OF FOOD DO I WANT?

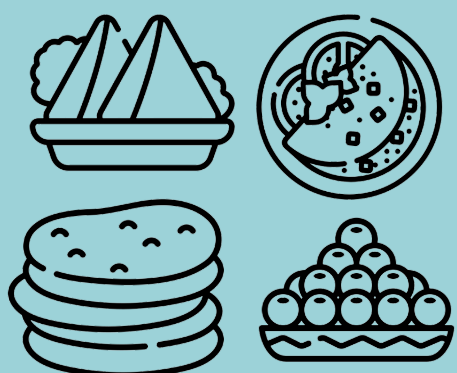
## AKIDA



Akida Japanese Restaurant is the perfect spot whether eating in or taking out. The service is speedy and the sushi is reasonably priced and high quality. You instantly feel at home when walking into this Richmond gem.

## LEHJA

Located in Short Pump Town Center, Lehja is one of Richmond's premier Indian restaurants. The interior is contemporary, with many eye-catching fixtures and elements adding an energy to the space. Popular dishes include Tikka Masala and Kulfi as well as Biryani, a mixed rice dish with multiple options for vegetarians and meat-lovers alike.



EUROPEAN

8 1/2

Strawberry Street in the Fan and Marshall Street in Churchill house one of the best Italian restaurants in Richmond, 8 1/2. Customers are immediately greeted with the smell of fresh herbs and spices upon walking into the authentic Italian takeout spot, and the food does not disappoint. 8 1/2 has options for everyone including the pizza, pasta and calzone to the eggplant, subs, and lasagna.



## STELLAS GROCERY



Stella's Grocery offers a variety of Mediterranean-inspired delicious prepared foods, drinks, gifts, and more that are perfect for the person on the go. With six locations around the Richmond area, Stella's Grocery is a great option for anyone who is looking for a quick and easy meal with restaurant quality.

MEDITERRANEAN

## ZZQ

If Barbecue is what you're in the mood for, ZZQ is the place for you. With tender, smokey, pulled pork, and plenty of classic southern sides, this BBQ joint is a must-hit. I recommend the thick sauce on the pulled pork with mac and cheese on the side.



## PERLY'S

Perly's is a unique, upbeat, and retro restaurant that offers you food like nothing else in Richmond. You can order their delicious potato latkes-- served with sides of refreshing apricot applesauce and tangy sour cream. Make sure to also order a slice of their decadent chocolate babka and maybe a black and white cookie to go...or a few.



## EL GALLO

El Gallo brings the flavor of Mexican street food to the middle of Carytown. The tacos and street corn are wonderful, but almost everything on the menu is tasty. This authentic, yet modern, spot is a great place to stop if you are exhausted from a day of shopping in the city.



# Teacher by Day, Rockstar by Night



PHOTO: FLASHLIGHT TAG

Flashlight Tag playing at a concert.

**Morgan Strudgeon**  
Editor in Chief

High school English teacher. Bass player in a rock band. An unsuspecting combination that Brian Durrett has embraced. His band,

Flashlight Tag, has practiced once a week for the past seven years.

Mr. Durrett has been a part of Flashlight Tag, playing the bass, since the band's formation in 2015. The other members include Justin Laughter on vocals and guitar, Brian Phelps on lead guitar and vocals, Lee Brooks on drums, and

Sam Bennett on keyboard. Mr. Durrett said these men are "all very good friends from many different bands." Flashlight Tag "happens to be the latest and by far the best band we've been in," he said.

The group plays strictly covers and would describe their sound as "three-minute avant-garde rock,"

said Mr. Durrett. He said the band has been compared to "Cracker, Wilco live, and Pavement," which he added were "all high compliments."

Music has always been a passion for Mr. Durrett. His interest in music started in "6th grade when [he] started playing the saxophone." After he graduated, Mr. Durrett kept up with music. "When I was in college, I went to school with a guy named Keller Williams and I was in a band with him post college for a few years," he said. "We were doing quite well." The band split up due to "artistic differences." However, he mentioned that after the band split up "[Keller Williams] then went out to California and became a nationally known solo artist."

There is no doubt that being both a teacher and a musician can be an incredibly challenging balancing act. "It's hard but it's what I live for," said Mr. Durrett. "So I will make the time [for it]." He later said that the creative and improvisational nature of music is also present in teaching. "I think that in teaching you're improvising a lot and teachers fail [sometimes] but I'm not upset about failure," he said. "It happens and I move on and I teach the next class." Similarly, when improvising a song goes badly, Mr. Durrett "moves on and keeps playing."

This spring, Flashlight Tag will be playing live in bars and breweries around Richmond. They are also currently working on their first record which they hope will be released in spring 2022.

Mr. Durrett's current favorite Flashlight Tag songs are "Skel-eton" and "Manners," but when he is practicing, he has "found [himself] playing the melody to the song from Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory called 'Pure Imagination' almost daily."

Mr. Durrett's passion for music comes from "the times when the playing experience becomes transcendent. It's when I lose the sense of time and space, get totally out of the way." He said he loves when "the entire band is there and gets connected in the moment ... it's that fleeting, magical moment that all artists constantly chase."

As for the future of the band, they have no plans of slowing down. "I'm definitely in it for the music and the camaraderie, but I would be a liar if I said I wasn't interested in sharing stages and audiences with bigger names," said Mr. Durrett. He has no interest in touring but does think bigger things are possible for his band. "The Broadberry. The National. The Norva. 9:30 Club. The Black Cat. A guy can dream," he said.

## SODA and MLL Students Collaborate Once Again

**Jazmyn Howell**  
A&E Editor

Freeman's Student Organization Developing Attitudes (SODA) and Multi-Language Learner (MLL) students are collaborating after a two year hiatus. Much to the excitement of both students and teachers, the two groups began reconvening once again.

When the club was formed in late 2019, SODA students initiated meetings with the MLL students. "We try to match up [meetings] with holidays," said SODA Vice President Jordanna Silverman. "We did a winter theme, a Valentine's day theme, and we just [had] a spring themed meeting."

During their meetings, they typically do all kinds of activities. From decorating cookies during the winter to hanging out with each other outside in the spring, they find creative ways to help bridge the gap between languages. SODA teacher sponsor Lara Curry said that "students use their knowledge from foreign language classes to help facilitate conversations," and that "both groups enjoy mingling

and celebrating their cultures."

This collaboration provides new opportunities for both SODA and MLL students. "Our foreign language students are speaking to the SODA kids in their native tongue, and SODA students are getting practice speaking another language [too]," said MLL teacher Mrs. Campbell.

Since the collaboration was new this year, some of the SODA students were nervous about this new endeavor. "I was a little nervous because I knew that some of the students didn't speak fluent English," said Jordanna. However, she later said that she "quickly got over that when [she] started learning more about [her] buddies and getting to know them."

Throughout this collaboration, there are many goals for each set of students. "[Our goal is] to help our MLL friends feel welcomed into the Freeman Family," said Mrs. Curry.

Many of the MLL students are new to Freeman this year. Mrs. Campbell said that "there are four levels [of MLL], and these are the most recent students who have come to Freeman from another country."

Several teachers have seen the impact this collaboration has brought to Freeman. "It is a tremendous experience for them," said Mrs. Campbell. "A lot of [the] students this year are Spanish speakers so they get to practice practical conversation skills with native English speakers."

*"Our goal is to help our MLL friends feel welcomed into the Freeman Family."  
- Lara Curry*

The program has also allowed for students to be able to socialize with students that they would not otherwise have met. "We all have buddies and it's really fun to run into them in the hallway and say hi," said Jordanna. "It's great that we're helping them feel like a part of the school."

The joint effort has also opened new doors to many of the students. "I'm really glad I was given the opportunity to be a part of it," said

Jordanna. "I've met some really cool people and I learned that you don't always need to speak the same languages in order to connect and have fun." Jordana also added

that while there is a language barrier, "working with them has really helped me improve my Spanish skills and I think it's helped them improve their English as well."



PHOTO: JORDAN SILVERMAN

SODA and MLL Meeting.

## Holocaust Survivor on Being a "Lucky One"

**Abby Crowe**  
Editor-in-Chief

"Love will prevail." Holocaust survivor Halina Zimm has been spreading this message for decades and says she will never stop doing so. She has dedicated her life to denouncing hatred in the world, saying "forgive but never forget."

Freeman librarian Laurie Kaplan connected Halina Zimm and her late husband Alan Zimm with the DSF community many years ago so that they could share their stories with new generations. Mrs. Kaplan recognized the importance of students hearing their firsthand accounts about surviving the Holocaust. "There are so many people trying to change history," she said. In March, Mrs. Zimm returned to the Freeman auditorium to educate and warn students about the past, present, and future.

The recent controversy of burning and banning books has brought up distress among those who know the history and consequence of such actions. Before the Holocaust, the German Student Union called for the burning of books that went against the Nazi ideals. Mrs. Kaplan said, "[if you] study people who have burned books ... you will see they are on the wrong side of history." Throughout different points in history, the burning of books has foreshadowed oppression, which is why some people are worried about the current conversation.

Mrs. Zimm said, "Anything that creates hatred is something to be aware of." With the rise of violence around the world, "talk of burning books is only becoming



PHOTO: ABBY CROWE

Halina Zimm, left, with English teacher Ms. Barrow, right, in the Freeman auditorium.

ing more concerning," she said.

Halina Zimm grew up in Poland and was a young Jewish teen when Poland was invaded by the Nazis. By nearly impossible odds, she survived the most deadly attack on Jews in world history: she was blessed with the right people, at the right place, at the exact right time.

The generosity of those who went out of their way to save Mrs. Zimm's life during World War II have made a profound impact on the way she has lived her life since moving to the states in 1949.

She has had decades to reflect on the generosity of the many people who helped her escape danger: her father, a Christian neighbor, an aristocratic young woman, and an elderly couple.

### Her progressive, affectionate father:

"He was just so open minded. I mean, he believed in women's education in those days," said Mrs. Zimm. She believes her father's support is the main reason she is the strong, resilient woman she is today. He encouraged Zimm and her sisters to stay in school and receive the best schooling that was available at the time when not everyone valued girls' education.

When tension was heightening at an alarming rate in Poland, the Zimms relocated from Lodz to the more secluded town of Zarnow. Along the way, German soldiers confiscated many of their belongings. As stories of Nazis killing Jews became more preva-

lent, their father took steps to save his daughters - at all costs. He concluded that the only way his daughters could survive would be to pass as Christians. After trying unsuccessfully several times to obtain papers for them, a Christian woman who bought soap from the family offered to help.

### A mother with two daughters hiding a secret:

Without telling anyone, the Christian woman went to her priest and requested her own daughters' birth certificates. She insisted that the Zimm girls take her own children's legal papers. "She sacrificed her own life for ours and didn't tell her husband or girls what she was doing," Mrs. Zimm said. "They would've killed her." The papers

gave her a way out of the dangerous life of being a Jew in Zarnow and a way into the larger city of Warsaw with a new false identity of a Christian girl named Vanda. **A wealthy, young woman of the aristocracy:**

From this point, Mrs. Zimm found herself doing housework at the home of a rich, young couple. The wife acted as a protective older sister to her, not realizing she was actually Jewish. One day in a Warsaw market, a woman from Zimm's past recognized her and reported her to Nazi officials. The woman she so admired defended her status as a Christian and saved her from going to a concentration camp or being killed. After living with the couple for months, she found out they were incredibly antisemitic and thought of Jews as less deserving of life. An elderly couple in rural Poland:

Later in the war when Mrs. Zimm was on the run, she came across a farm house where she attempted to hide from Nazi persecution. The hesitant yet accepting elderly couple who took her in provided her with food scraps and the corner of their attic to live in for a few days. When they were approached by Schutzstaffel (SS) officers and asked if they knew of any Jews, the couple said no and forced the soldiers to leave their house. Her life had once again been saved and she was one step closer to freedom.

While the generosity of these four people helped Halina Zimm escape death, her own perseverance and energy also helped her survive the circumstances she endured. From outsmarting officers to befriending attractive young men, Halina often acted bravely on her own. She had, and still has, a personality of trust and admiration.

# Jason Abbey Commits to VT

**Peter Kriebel & Adair Reid**  
Sports Editor/Editor-in-Chief

At 6-foot-4, 220 pounds, Jason Abbey looks, to just about anybody, like he might be pretty good at football. To more trained eyes, specifically those of Division I (D-I) recruits, there's no doubt. The Freeman junior has totaled eight offers to play D-I college football. The schools include Kent State, Marshall University, East Carolina University, Vanderbilt University, Virginia Tech (VT), James Madison University (JMU), University of Richmond, and finally, the University of Akron. During a recent visit to their annual Spring Game, Virginia Tech's active fanbase proved to be a major pull factor for Jason. "A

*"He has the ability to be one of the best that has ever come through [Freeman]."*  
- George Bland

lot of fans came out," he said. "I wouldn't think a lot of fans would come out for the Spring Game, but I think you have a good fan base down there. I really love that." For a player who only started playing football as a freshman, he's improved rapidly, especially his "overall strength and physicality," said Freeman's

football coach, George Bland. As for what makes him so coveted by recruiters, Coach Bland said it's his "speed and length."

Jason's skillset makes him versatile, but he has since narrowed down what position he'll likely be playing in college. "[I'll] probably [play] defensive end," he said. For those who aren't familiar with football, that means Jason wants to hit the quarterback. In the offseason, however, his position has its own demands. "Putting on weight, getting bigger, faster, better, stronger. That's about it." Despite how good he's been, Jason still sees room for improvement. "I need to use my hands more, especially when I'm on defense," he said. Considering it's only his third season playing football, it's safe to assume his hands could be a whole lot better next season.

Coach Bland thinks Jason's hands could be utilized next season in a totally different way: catching passes. Coach Bland anticipates that Jason "will be stronger and able to play more offense. We envision using him as a tight end." At 6-foot-4, he's already taller than the National Football League's (NFL) average tight end. Good luck to any high school safety or linebacker who has to cover him next year. They're gonna need it.

It's not just Jason's physical tools that make him an excellent pass rusher. "He is a very self-motivated player," said Coach Bland. "He just needs to continue to focus on the work that has gotten him here and not get



PHOTO: JASON ABBEY

Jason posing for a photo on a visit to VT.

distracted by all the attention."

As the offseason continues, goals for his upcoming senior season have surpassed the field. "[My] main goal is just to keep grinding and keep practicing," said Jason. "See how many more schools I can get, talk to more coaches, stuff like that."

The recognition brought on by the recruiting process has had an effect in school as well. "People [were] coming up to me asking where I want to go to school," said Jason. The increase in interest has added some pressure to the process as well, coming from students, coaches, and the colleges them-

selves. "It's actually more pressure, cause you have new coaches texting you ... wanting you to visit," he said. Still, Jason enjoys parts of the recruiting process, especially "the visits, seeing the schools, getting to dress out in the uniform, stuff like that," he said.

Coach Bland realizes the great opportunity Jason has. "It's been

*"My main goal is to just keep grinding and keep practicing."*

- Jason Abbey

exciting to see all the interesting coaches have in Jason," said Bland. "The opportunity to get a free college education pursuing a passion of his is a remarkable opportunity." Bland also sees Jason's athletic potential. "He has the ability to be one of the best that has ever come through [Freeman]," said Bland. "But there still is a long way to go."

On April 22, Jason Abbey committed to Virginia Tech, ending his recruiting journey with a well-deserved destination. The Commentator wishes Jason the best of luck for his senior football season and for his future career as a class of 2027 Hokie!

# March Madness in Review

**Audrey Jones**  
Online Editor-in-Chief

Each year, the month of March is a special and exciting time for college basketball fans across the country. This year was no different. The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) March Madness basketball tournament left many shocked yet satisfied with upsets, rivalries, and some of the most intense games the tournament has ever hosted.

March Madness is an annual Division I basketball tournament put on by the NCAA. It provides fans with the chance to fill out brackets, place bets, and watch madness ensue when unlikely teams are pitted against each other. "[March Madness] is probably the most exciting sport event in the world, but I'm biased," said Chapin George, an English teacher

*"Anything can happen in March."*  
- Sahel Rahman

and basketball coach at Freeman. The tournament bracket is divided into four regions: West, East, South, and Midwest; within each region, the top 16 teams are matched up. Each matchup is 'sudden death', and the team that wins



PHOTO: THE NEW YORK POST

Kansas Jayhawks celebrating their national championship win.

moves on to the next round. Eventually, the regions mix up in the final four with the top team from the West playing the East, and the top teams from the South and Midwest playing each other. Finally, the tournament ends with the championship game where one team is crowned the national champion.

This year, the final four consisted of Duke, UNC, Villanova, and Kansas, and the championship game ended up being a showdown between UNC and Kansas. Kansas snuck out with the win by just three points and became the newly crowned National Champions.

Many students and faculty at Freeman enjoy watching the tour-

nament and filling out predictions for their own brackets. "I like watching my favorite team compete against others for the championship," said junior Sahel Rahman. "The adrenaline rush leading up to a game is one of the best feelings."

Each year the biggest and most popular teams are joined by smaller ones who don't typically get a lot of media attention. "I enjoy watching the lesser known schools [when they] get a chance to play on a pretty big stage," said Mr. George.

Much of the excitement surrounding the tournament stems from filling out brackets and predicting what will happen in each

game. "My friends and I fill out brackets and place cash wager bets on the winner of the basketball games prior to the start and watch the games on four different devices at the same time," said Sahel.

The goal is to fill out a perfect bracket, but that has never been done before. It is very common for a bracket to end up being completely wrong because of the unexpected upsets that occur. "Whatever bracket I make is typically ruined by the end of the first day," said Mr. George.

There are some strategies that can be used to limit the number of casualties in a bracket. "I try to pick teams based on the matchup rather than looking at

their seed because anything can happen in March," said Sahel.

"As a basketball coach, I typically just try to think about which team should be better in regards to skill and talent which is hard sometimes because a lot of the matchups are close," said Mr. George.

One of the biggest upsets and 'bracket busters' this year was the number 15 ranked St. Peter's Peacocks. They came out stronger than expected and even made it to the Elite Eight. "They are not very big, but that means that a lot of their players can match up very well to other teams because they can switch a lot of screens, and they have a lot of good players at every position," said Mr. George. "They just really had to outwork teams that are more athletic than them, and they did, which was really fun to watch."

Mr. George added that he hopes to see some former Freeman basketball players compete in future March Madness tournaments. "Right now Caleb Kenny [a Freeman alumni] is at Holy Cross, so I'm hoping at some point in the next three years he can help get that team in the tournament."

March Madness is one of the most exciting sports events each year. It holds a special place in the hearts of many at Freeman, and who knows if we may see a former Maverick in the tournament in the next few years.

## WASHINGTON COMMANDERS SCHEDULE

<b>Week 1</b> Jacksonville Jaguars	<b>Week 10</b> Philadelphia Eagles
<b>Week 2</b> Detroit Lions	<b>Week 11</b> Houston Texans
<b>Week 3</b> Philadelphia Eagles	<b>Week 12</b> Atlanta Falcons
<b>Week 4</b> Dallas Cowboys	<b>Week 13</b> New York Giants
<b>Week 5</b> Tennessee Titans	<b>Week 14</b> BYE
<b>Week 6</b> Chicago Bears	<b>Week 15</b> New York Giants
<b>Week 7</b> Green Bay Packers	<b>Week 16</b> San Francisco 49ers
<b>Week 8</b> Indianapolis Colts	<b>Week 17</b> Cleveland Browns
<b>Week 9</b> Minnesota Vikings	<b>Week 18</b> Dallas Cowboys

GRAPHIC: ADA MALPANI



PHOTO: CASSIUS

St. Peter's Peacocks playing the Kentucky Wildcats.



PHOTO: FOX NEWS

The University of North Carolina's Armando Bacot.



# NFL Off-season Winners & Losers

**Peter Kriebel**  
Sports Editor

As a football fan, the months following the NFL draft is a time of mixed emotions. On the one hand: the vague outline of 2022 NFL rosters are visible. On the other, we've entered the semi-newsless slog that will last until mid-to-late July when training camps open up. For now however, in favor of thinking about the latter, let's make snap judgements about players who will almost certainly prove us wrong. I present: NFL offseason winners & losers.

**Winner Number One:** the New York Jets - against all odds the Jets show promise! It seems crazy to heap praise onto a team whose last playoff berth came over a decade ago, but here we are. The Jets had a solid free agency: addressing multiple needs and finally beginning to sort out an identity. A major part of this was the signing of guard Laken Tomlinsen, which helped pave the way for the league's seventh-best rushing offense last season in San Francisco. The signing of former Bucs safety Jordan Whitehead is one that I believe will pay dividends for them this season. Whitehead is an excellent tackler and a much needed tone-setter for a team that sported the league's worst defense. Where the Jets excelled was through the draft, simultaneously getting great value and addressing team needs (to be fair there were a lot of them). They



PHOTO: ESPN

**New Broncos QB Russell Wilson.**

secured their future lockdown cornerback at pick no. 4 before later stealing Jermaine Johnson at pick no. 26. In between these two future defensive stalwarts the Jets selected Ohio State wide receiver Garrett Wilson, a player that should accelerate the evaluation of quarterback Zach Wilson.

**Winner Number Two:** The Denver Broncos - where the Jet's draft may have propelled them onto this list, the Broncos did so through trade. The significance of the Russell Wilson acquisition cannot be overstated. No matter who the Broncos drafted at pick no. 9 it wouldn't have transformed the team the way Russell Wilson has. We should finally see an unlocked Jerry Juedy this season as well as a solid ground game led by second year runningback Javonte Williams. The Broncos expect to be playing with a lead next season and their second round pick proves it. Pass rusher Nik Bonitto will provide depth

alongside Bradley Chubb and free agent addition Randy Gregory. It will be tough for the Broncos to make it out of the AFC West this year, but this offseason makes it seem at the very least, plausible.

**Loser Number One:** The New England Patriots - unfortunately for some teams, neither the draft nor free agency brought much improvement. The Patriots are one of these teams. Their best move was re-signing right tackle Trent Brown, but trying to supplement pro-bowl corner J.C. Jackson with an over the hill Malcom Butler will be a major downgrade. The draft was just as disappointing. New England traded back four spots in the first round and in doing so lost out on seemingly the best center in the draft, Tyler Linderbaum. But rather than cutting their losses and selecting a player at a different position, they reached and drafted the University of Chattanooga's Cole Strange at pick 25: a player who many had

graded as a late-second to third round talent. They followed that pick up by selecting wide receiver Tyquan Thornton: a deep threat who lacks size and physicality. Thornton will bring a new element to the offense but he'll likely struggle against physical corners. The offseason in New England wasn't horrendous, but you can't help but feel like the Patriots took a step back in an already loaded AFC.

**Loser Number Two:** The Chicago Bears - like the Jets, the Bears have pretty much been perennial losers in this century. Unfortunately for the Bears however, it doesn't seem like immediate change is on the way. Last year there was finally hope when they drafted Justin Fields, a talented quarterback out of Ohio state. In order to select fields, they had to trade up and forfeit this year's first round pick. Tevin Jenkins, their second round pick last season, had a dismal rookie year and unless

he takes a massive step forward, shouldn't be trusted to protect Fields' blindside. Even if Tevin did make that second year leap he'd be the singular bright spot on an offensive line that allowed the most sacks in the league last year. The Bears are a team with very few "blue chip" players and are likely a few years away from being able to fairly evaluate Justin Fields, much less contend for a championship.

When evaluating a team's offseason it's important to understand where that team is in relation to the rest of the league. A big-ticket free agent signing may seem exciting but if the team is multiple years away from contention it doesn't make sense to allocate that much capital into a single asset when the whole roster needs to be re-tooled. The teams that made this list for the right reasons have a good idea of where they are and made moves accordingly.



PHOTO: ESPN

**Bears QB Justin Fields.**

## The Kentucky Derby in the Eyes of Freeman's Equestrians

**Lillie Connor**  
Features Editor

Vibrant colors, floppy hats, and a sea of ribbons fill the seats at the Kentucky Derby located in Churchill Downs; Louisville, KY. Annually, on the first Saturday in May, thousands gather at Churchill Downs to participate in viewing America's longest-running sports event.

According to Comcast, around 16 million people gather around their televisions to watch the televised race, tuning in for both the horses and the exaggerated fashion. Women and men alike pull out all the stops to show off bold, spring-inspired fashion. And you can't ignore the elegant and flamboyant hats, the statement pieces of the event. These "Southern Belle" in-

*"I enjoy this sport so much because there is no other feeling like it."*  
- Claire Riley

spired pieces are believed to bear good luck, along with expressing creativity and individuality.

The Derby oozes tradition, such as mint juleps, placing a garland of roses around the winner, and the crowd singing "My Old Kentucky Home." The crowd starts to sing this 19th century number by Stephen Foster as the horses trot onto the track before

the start of the race. Meriwether Clark began granting the winning jockey a wreath of roses in 1884 and in 1925, a sports columnist nicknamed the Derby the "Run for the Roses." Since then, it's been customary to bestow the winner with a garland of roses.

Admiration for horses extends outside the Kentucky Derby. Junior Simone Fortier found her love for horses in fourth grade. "I was just obsessed with horses and would watch all the horse shows on Netflix and decided this looks like so much fun," she said.

Simone is a jumper at the club she has gone to since she started riding, the James River Equestrian Center. "I also just do flat work which is very collected, trotting and cantering. But I mainly enjoyed jumping and competing against other riders at my barn," said Simone.

According to Simone, horseback riding is a lot harder than it looks. "A lot of it really depends on the horse you're riding, but it's a lot of legs," she said. Strong leg muscles are a necessity in riding. "You have to engage muscles you don't use on a regular basis," said Simone. "And it's exhausting, utilizing your leg and arm muscles, and [as well as] all the care that comes along with [horseback riding] it."

Freshman Claire Riley started riding about a year and a half ago. "I've always been interested in horses and riding, but never pursued the sport due to other activities and I didn't really know how to get started," said Claire. "I enjoy this sport very much because there is no other feeling like it."

*"When I jump over obstacles it feels like I'm flying."*  
- Claire Riley

Claire participates in English riding: hunter and show jumping. "When I jump over obstacles it feels like I'm flying," she said.

According to Claire, there are many difficulties in horseback riding because you are working with a wild animal that has a mind of its own. "This can lead to miscommunication between you and the horse and thus leading to problem-solving and working with the animal through the issue," said Claire.

The sport is often stereotyped

as easy or weird. "It really isn't, people that ride go through so much with the animal they are working with," said Claire. "Horseback riding involves a lot of mental and physical work due to the extent of the sport."

Claire has always been a huge fan of the Kentucky Derby. "The Kentucky Derby draws huge attention to horseback riding in general due to its popularity," she said. "The broadcast demonstrates the difficulty and skill it really takes to ride a horse not just physically but mentally."

Not all equestrians agree with this statement. "The racing industry has always been corrupt because it's more focused on the money than the horses," said Simone.

"The horses have always been treated badly, more than half of them are drugged or have received procedures to help them run and are super painful." She adds that racehorses are retired young, around age five, and oftentimes sent to slaughterhouses. "It's not a very good life for the horse," said Simone.

One thing Simone can appreciate about the annual derby is the fashion. "I think it's cool that everybody participates [in the fashion], it's an expressive thing," said Simone.

"Whether you are watching the Derby for fashion or the racing it is always a special annual treat," said Claire.



PHOTO: DON SNIEGOWSKI

Horses and their jockeys racing at this year's Kentucky Derby.



PHOTO: SPORTING NEWS

2022 Kentucky Derby winner Rich Strike and jockey Sonny Leon.



PHOTO: COURIER JOURNAL

2022 Kentucky Derby winner Sonny Leon.

# Introducing AP Studio Art 2D to Freeman

**Lily Bowman**  
Copy Editor



PHOTO: USPLASH

are really strongly considering doing art at the college level.” Instead of taking an AP Exam at the end of the year, students in AP Studio will have the option to submit their portfolio to a

“...Taking an AP art class will be a way to let that passion grow and flourish!”

-Paloma Lheriter

panel of College Board judges. It is also a hope of Mrs. Jones that these students will be able to use some of their pieces for their future college portfolios.

Currently, only two students, Callie Sackett and Paloma Lheriter, are signed up to take this class. “I am excited [about] being able to join one of the first AP Art Studio classes, and I’m looking forward to the different projects I will get to face next year,” said Callie. Both students are very passionate about the arts and are excited to be a part of a class that will push them to expand their artistry.

“I am very passionate about the arts,” said Paloma. “So taking an AP art class will be a way to let that passion grow and flourish!”

ric artists.” The art department hopes that the promise of a class that will bump up students grade point average and provide a more rigorous coursework will draw students in and motivate them to continue their art classes to the

“We really want to give them a richer experience.”

- Miriam Bonano

upper levels. “We really want to give them a richer experience so hopefully they will continue on to [AP Studio],” said Ms. Bonano.

While AP Studio Art will differ

from AP Art History because of the prerequisite requirement, it will also include other differences in terms of the course material. The official title of AP Studio Art is AP Studio Art 2D. “It’s going to be encouraging students to make anything that’s two dimensional, so it’d be painting, drawing, collage, or anything like that,” said Mrs. Jones. Students will be required to come up with a thesis with one big question that they will be asking and answering using their art. Along with creating content for the thesis, and eventual portfolio, students will be writing an analysis for each work. “It’s a little different than some of our other studio classes that we have right now which are based on

developing skills as the projects generally come from the teacher,” said Mrs. Jones. “The [students] that might take this [class] in the future are [students] that



PHOTO: USPLASH

# Arts are Back in the Park



PHOTO: ABBY CROWE



PHOTO: ABBY CROWE

Pictured left Eliza Askin. Pictured right Arts in the Park 2022.

**Abby Crowe**  
Editor-in-Chief

Returning to the Richmond art scene is the community-loved Arts in the Park outdoor event, after a two-year interruption. Showcasing over 350 exhibitors with pieces ranging from painting, ceramics, jewelry, furniture, textiles, and more, the show was held in Byrd Park from April 30 through May 1.

Paige Quilter has been involved with Arts in the Park for over 50 years as her mother, Pat Lovelace, was instrumental in bringing the event to life in 1972. Mrs. Quilter now runs the event’s PR and Marketing; however, when she was little, she said, “I was involved in all sorts of neighborhood activities.”

As the coordinators prepared for the event, artists from previous shows looked forward to returning to “one [of] the most

“One of the most coveted art shows on the east coast.”

-Paige Quilter

coveted art shows on the east coast,” said Quilter. Arts in the

Park has around 400 artists who specialize in any kind of fine art or craft imaginable. Many of the artists return each year and Quilter said, “They go to other art shows and they talk amongst themselves about the all really good shows.”

One illustrator who has come back year after year is Eliza Askin. As a Richmond native she enjoys the humanity and friendliness of the show and said, “Arts in the Park has the best volunteers of any art show I’ve ever participated in. They are people who live in the [surrounding] neighborhood so they are invested in getting us in and out as quickly as possible.”

Askin first displayed her art in the show of 1982 which included some paintings but mostly drawings. Since then, her style of art has evolved and her process now includes starting with a photo and then visiting the location to finalize the details. Much of her artwork is of recognizable Richmond spots, such as the James River, The Nickel Bridge, and even locally famous restaurants like The New York Deli in Carytown. “My favorite drawing is of Hollywood Cemetery - it has the city and the river in the background,” said Askin.

This year was the first Arts in the Park since the pandemic began and Mrs. Quilter said, “People are overjoyed.” Richmond’s show has been listed as one of

the best places to buy art in Virginia Living Magazine as well as Richmond Magazine.

Another returning artist, Eleanor Cox, said, “The crowds this year speak volumes about the interest and we’re so glad for that.”

This year’s event has brought new excitement to the show, but also new challenges. “There’s two projects going on in the park,” said Quilter. “They’ve been renovating... the Carillon building itself [and] the city of Richmond is doing a stormwater drainage replacement project on Pumphouse Road.” This makes parking difficult as Arts in the Park runs a free shuttle for visitors to and from City Stadium throughout the weekend.

As a staple of local culture, sophomore Rowan Donovan said, “I feel like a big aspect of Richmond is the events and [Arts in the Park] allows artists to really show off what they’ve made.”

Arts in the Park is one of many community oriented events that Richmond hosts. “I think it is embraced really well because there’s so many other festivals that you can go to like the Richmond Folk Festival and the Armenian festival,” said Rowan. “There’s just so much going on throughout Richmond and [Arts in the Park] is very fun to go to.”



PHOTO: ARTS IN THE PARK WEBSITE

Arts in the Park tents and exhibitions.



PHOTO: ARTS IN THE PARK WEBSITE

A posters booth at Arts in the Park.

# Supper Club Food Club to Open Near Freeman



PHOTO: JACK JACOBS, WTVR

A poster outside of Supper Club's location in Tuckahoe Shopping Center.

**Henry Haggard**  
News Editor

Freeman parent Carlisle Bannister will open Supper Club, a local market for groceries and precooked meals, in the Tuckahoe Shopping Center. The shop is scheduled to open in the second week of May, with store hours running from Tuesday through Saturday.

Mr. Bannister's previous business, Chef Carlisle, was forced to close during the worst months of the pandemic. But he wasn't going to let anything keep him from cooking. "In order to keep some income coming in," he said. "We started selling meals to friends, family, and neighbors."

From the comfort of their home, the Bannister family be-

gan preparing meals to sell and deliver. "The business immediately took off," said Mr. Bannister. "We had lots and lots of orders."

The time eventually came for Mr. Bannister to open up a real store. "We took a huge leap of faith," he said. "We had to raise a lot of money ... but we were confident [that] our business plan was going to be a big success."

"There'll be no dining in our store," said Mr. Bannister. But customers can pick from a variety of "butcher cut meats, fresh seafood, produce bakery items, groceries, a nice cheese and charcuterie selection, and some wines as well." Mr. Bannister also plans to serve "fried chicken and potato wedges, hot and ready," he said.

This fried chicken will actually be named after his daughter, freshman Molly Bannister. "It's called Miss Molly's fried chicken," she said.

Being located so close to Freeman, Mr. Bannister expects that a lot of Mavericks will shop at Supper Club. "I think a lot of the Freeman families will be great customers," he said.

He hopes that these customers "feel like they're in a special place to buy special food" while shopping at Supper Club. "I want people to come in and be able to have a conversation with me about the best way to prepare things, or a sauce to put on their dish," he said.

Anyone seeking Mr. Bannister's culinary advice would probably find it helpful. "I'm a fourth generation restaurateur," he said. "I was born into the kitchen."

His children agree. "My dad's been cooking for basically his whole life," said Molly. "He gets a lot of compliments [on his food]," she said.

Mr. Bannister's son, fresh-

man Michael Bannister, said "I think he could cook anything very well, but my favorite meal of his is the steak."

Supper Club will in large part be a family business. "Once I get my license, I'll probably be a delivery driver [for Sup-

per Club]. In the meantime, I'll probably just work at the cash register."

Mr. Bannister and his family "took a bad situation and created a new business," he said. "I'm really looking forward to supporting our neighborhood and our community."



## Riverrock's return



A photo of the Ultimate Air Dog Contest.

**Jazmyn Howell**  
Community/A&E Editor

For the first time in two years, the Dominion Energy Riverrock Festival will make its return to Richmond, Virginia (RVA).

After being virtual due to COVID-19, Riverrock's schedule is similar to previous years. The festival will be a three-day event from May 20th to the 22nd, with activities running from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. Riverrock offers hiking, mountain biking, paddling races, fishing tournaments, and several contests. "I've gone to Riverrock since I can remember," said sophomore Eva Hodges. "I got to try so many new things that I still love, like kayaking."

Riverrock offers activities for all ages and even dogs! Any size and breed of dog can enter the Ultimate Air Dog contest. "[It's] exciting to see dogs jump well over 20 feet," said CTE teacher Mr. Gromling. "The training and agility that the dogs and handlers have is amazing."

Next in the lineup of events is the music. In previous years, Riverrock has had local RVA artists perform, and that's no exception this year. The lineup includes Sierra Ferrell, Suggesting Rhythm, Tre. Charles, Leon III, and Futurebirds. "The music is one of my favorite things about the festival," said Eva. "It introduces me to upcoming local artists."

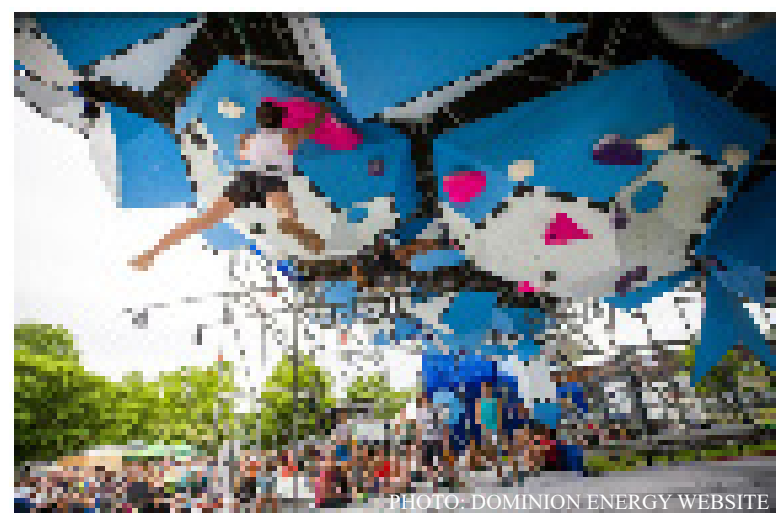
Before COVID-19, Riverrock

would bring out people from all over the country. In 2019, Riverrock had an estimated number of 100,000 spectators. With this precedent, Dominion Energy plans to follow CDC guidelines. Dominion is planning to update their guidelines as the virus progresses. They are currently taking precautions such as unvaccinated volunteers will be required to wear a mask. "I'm really happy to see that Riverrock is taking such precautions," said Eva.

Another way to experience Riverrock is by volunteering. Volunteers at Riverrock help with registration, passing out waters, and being trail court marshals. "I got to work for the L.L. Bean booths," said Mr. Gromling. "[I] got to hand out free products and help with contests."

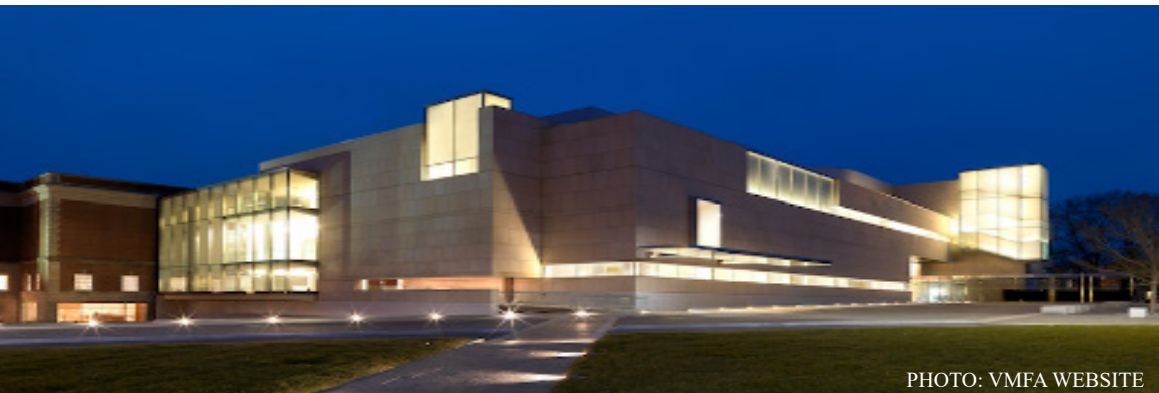
In addition to those volunteer options, Dominion Energy also does their part in keeping the environment clean and safe. Days before the event, volunteers go out to close trails and remove invasive species from the river park system. After the event, Dominion hosts a Riverrock cleanup with the James River Park System. "After the event, we helped clean up as well," said Mr. Gromling. "It was amazing seeing the amount of support from the community."

After being virtual for the past two years, Riverrock is making minor changes but is still planning to have an action-packed festival.



Rock climbing at Riverrock.

## New Exhibit at VMFA: American Painters in France



The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (VMFA).

**Maggie Newton**  
Opinions Editor

The VMFA's (Virginia Museum of Fine Arts) new exhibit Whistler to Cassatt: American Painters in France opened April 16th, and will remain open until July 31st, leaving Richmonders a three month window to view it. It features over 100 pieces of work from artists such as Mary Cassatt, James Whistler, Childe Hassam, John Singer Sargent, Winslow Homer, Edward Hopper, and more.

"[The paintings] document a 'letting-go' of the rigid formulas and moralizing role of art and mark a new appreciation for art as a means of celebrating everyday life and people," said Susan J. Rawles, PhD Elizabeth Locke Associate Curator of American Decorative Arts. "[There are] approximately 60 public and private collections, from the United States and Europe, [that] contributed to this exhibition," said Rawles. The VMFA has been in preparation for the exhibit for the past three years.

As the viewer walks through the seemingly endless and winding rooms, they will witness not only the art, but the transformation of the artists' style. The viewer starts out in France and gets the full experience of Le Salon - including a "Livret" (a small booklet naming the artists and their paintings) that is offered to each guest. The room features works that were previously displayed at Le Salon, which was a prestigious annual Parisian art exhibition. As they continue through the rooms, they learn about the painter's experiences and background, and then what they experienced when they came back to America as impressionists.

While the VMFA is not familiar with the history of all the paintings in the collection, the painting La résurrection de Lazare (Resurrection of Lazarus) by Henry Ossawa Tanner has a complex background. "[Tanner] was awarded a third-class gold medal at the Paris Salon and was purchased by the French government in 1897. Tanner was an African American artist studying in France and, as he recalled, the recognition 'gave me a courage and a power... and a hope that I had never before possessed,'" said Rawles. Tanner's mother was a former slave in Virginia who ran away through the Underground Railroad, and she eventually enrolled in Avery College and earned a teaching degree. Tanner's father, Benjamin Tucker Tanner, was a minister and later a bishop in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. "He was also the author of numerous books and editor of the Christian Recorder, the largest black-owned newspaper in the United States at that time," said Rawles. "As a result of his parents' teaching, Tanner was well-versed in biblical subjects and often employed its themes in his paintings." When Tanner won the award at the Paris Salon, it was recognized as a rare honor for a black artist. "But Tanner did not like his work being qualified as 'Black' or 'African American' - he just wanted to be an artist whose work was appreciated for its own merits," said Rawles.

Henry Ossawa Tanner is just one example of an artist with a complex background that is featured in the exhibit. Shown below are pictures of paintings from artists such as Mary Cassatt, John Whistler, John Singer Sargent, Childe Hassam, and Winslow Homer. To learn more about this exhibit, visit the VMFA website.

**John Singer Sargent (1856-1925):**



Painted on the shores of Lake Gerda, Italy, *The Sketchers* by John Singer Sargent portrays two painters bathed in light while surrounded by the greenery of the lake.

**Childe Hassam (1859-1935)**



Childe Hassam is another American impressionist painter who is famously applauded for his depictions of scenes with flags. This particular painting is a scene of the French Bastille Day celebrations, which Hassam painted from a balcony.