

Dropout Rates in Henrico County Higher than State Average

Anna Meiller
Staff Writer



PHOTO: FLICKR

In Henrico County, public high schools have seen an alarming upward trend in dropout rates since 2018. This is true of many demographics, but especially those that are forced to choose between their education and basic needs of food or transportation. “The average [cost] right now ranges between \$15,000 and \$22,000 to come to the US [from other places in the world],” said Assistant Principal Jose Florez. These students who are able to come to the United States may need to support their families both here and back home. With limited time and resources, education must compete with other priorities for some families.

Additionally, being unfamiliar with the language taught can make going to school very challenging. “[Students] quickly realize that there are only so many hours in the day. And so they’re trying to juggle everything,” said Sarah-Henning Snellings, head of Freeman’s Foreign Language Department.

Ms. Snellings believes taking a step back and making sure the teachers and staff are truly listening to the needs of these students is key to tackling this problem. “It’s easy for us to think we already know what [affected students] need,” she said.

“Connection is important and if you don’t feel connected, obviously you feel you don’t belong,” said Mr. Florez. ‘Freeman Family’ is a term well-known

to Freeman students, but the family feeling is not always fully felt by our community. “We’ve made strides, and we’re making huge progress at this school [in] accepting our students,” said Mr. Florez. “But there is still a lot of [progress to be made].”

Freeman is making an effort to address gaps in connections. World Language teacher, Cara Ferras, said that a team of teachers, counselors, and administrators has been formed in order to “see

“Reaching out to families is huge.”
- Ms. Ferras

[the problem] from everybody’s point of view, what’s going on,

and then [develop] plans [to determine] what is going to help.” They hope to start up parent nights again, which were forced to stop due to the pandemic. The event previously gave parents the opportunity to interact and communicate with the teachers and staff. “Reaching out to families is huge,” said Ms. Ferras.

Freeman wants families to know that administrators and staff are active and here to help. What is important is that “we are making sure that this is a community that feels like a place that’s [welcoming],” said Ms. Snellings. For affected students to be present at school, they need to feel that coming to school is going to positively impact them. “They are thinking [about] all of these [responsibilities] for their family and that they are not

really [maximizing their time at school],” said Ms. Snellings.

“It’s a difficult set of expectations to navigate.”

- Mr. Florez

“The biggest problem is some of these kids who get here may have not been in school at all,” said Mr. Florez. Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE) are new to the United States’ school system and have had minimal schooling opportunities in the past. When older students are put into lower grade levels because they have not been to school for a while, it can become a very difficult situation

for both students and teachers. Students who have moved to the United States from challenging circumstances seek better and safer opportunities. Mr. Florez feels connected with this part of the student body. “I have identified a lot with students because they recognize someone here who [understands what they] are up against, because it’s a difficult set of expectations to navigate,” said Mr. Florez.

“It’s so important for everyone to put themselves in [affected student’s] shoes and to think ‘how would I feel?’” said Ms. Ferras. “And ask themselves ‘what would I want from a teacher or other students if I was in another country, trying to get an education, but also trying to do what’s best for myself for my future.’”

Teachers and staff want to improve the future of the students around them. “We have only just begun [and] we have much work to do,” said Ms. Snellings. “But we are passionate and we can try as hard as we can.”



PHOTO: JOSE FLOREZ

Assistant Principal Florez

Freeman Remembers Mrs. Lara Curry

Adair Reid & Abby Crowe
Editors-in-Chief
&
Hannah Tittermary
Staff Writer

The Freeman Family and community gathered at St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church on Saturday, Nov. 12 to mourn the loss and celebrate the life of Freeman teacher Lara Teague Curry, who died unexpectedly and tragically on Oct. 9. Mrs. Curry is survived by her husband Liam Curry, their sons, George and Jack, her parents, David and Barbara Teague of Henrico, and her siblings as well as her large extended family from across the country. Mrs. Curry had a lasting impact on Freeman and the surrounding community.

She was named Teacher of the Year in 2016 for her commitment to creating a positive classroom environment and for her love of learning. In a past interview with The Commentator regarding the award, Mrs. Curry said that “most importantly, I want to convey that I care so much about every single student and the idea that they have a place in my classroom — that is far more important than anything I ever teach.” Mrs. Curry was an integral part of a tightly-knit community within the Leadership Center at Freeman. Several of Mrs. Curry’s colleagues have been reflecting on her benevolence and compassion as the school and community process this tragedy.

English teacher Meredith Swain said that Mrs. Curry was an extremely friendly person. “So many people were blessed to call her a friend because she was just inherently a very kind and generous person. I think that’s ultimately her legacy,” said Mrs. Swain. She believes that what made Mrs. Curry such a great teacher was that “she really, really genuinely cared about her students, and she



Mrs. Lara Curry

could make anybody feel special and appreciated in her room. [This] made students trust her and love her and want to learn from her, which is really special.”

According to Mrs. Swain, Mrs. Curry was always “very interested in her students’ lives both here and outside of school. It was always a joy watching her get a child-like glee from those [stories].”

According to her colleagues and students, Mrs. Curry’s kindness has become synonymous with

her service to Freeman. “Nothing would give her greater pleasure than knowing we can sit here and smile and laugh about [our memories of her]. She would really enjoy that,” said Mrs. Swain.

Mrs. Curry’s empathy touched everyone that she knew and cared for. She has been described as a ‘sensitive soul’ and was known as a great teacher and friend, especially when it came to listening and giving advice.

Sophomore Maya Tluchak, a

former student of Mrs. Curry, said “I remember coming home a lot of the days after I would have her class and just thinking ‘I love Mrs. Curry. I love how she teaches. I could sit in her class and just listen to her for hours.’” Each year, Mrs. Curry completed a professional development seminar in partnership with the Virginia War Memorial, reflecting her joy to be constantly learning, along with bringing new, interesting information

back into her classroom.

History teacher Anne Trexler, another friend and colleague of Mrs. Curry, said that her biggest passions were “traveling, Italy, cooking, her kids, and going to the pool.”

Co-worker and history teacher, Drew Lovering urges people to be kind to everyone because we never know what is going on in the lives of others. “Make sure that you [are kind] like Mrs. Curry,” he said. “She wanted to make sure that you were okay--everybody else’s well-being was taken care of before hers.” Mr. Lovering also wants everyone to know that there are always people who care and to ignore fears of asking for help.

“When it comes to grief, it’s important to remember that it’s not linear. You’re going to have a couple good days and then a couple of not so good days,” said Mrs. Swain. “It’s a two steps forward one step back process. The size of grief [never] shrinks.”

But the Freeman Family is in this together — in the days following Mrs. Curry’s passing, the library was reserved as a safe space for students to decompress. There were additional school counselors offered by the county to students and faculty, along with school-wide access to Freeman’s emotional support dog, Henna.

A candlelight vigil honoring Mrs. Curry was held on the front lawn of Freeman on the evening of Tuesday, Oct. 18 with speakers Rob Peck, Meredith Swain, Ryan Densley, Benjamin Fabian, and Principal John Marshall, as well as several representatives from the student body. After listening to the speakers reflect on their memories and her legacy, everyone gathered with candles for a moment of silence in honor of Mrs. Curry.

A scholarship fund has been created in her name in order to carry on her devotion to serving students.



Bond Referendum to Bring County-Wide Improvements



PHOTO: HENRICO.US

Henrico County Board of Supervisors

Lorelei Kelley
Staff Writer

On Aug. 17, 2022, the Henrico County Board of Supervisors proposed a new \$511 million bond referendum that would fund county-wide improvements for schools, stormwater drainage systems, fire stations, and parks over the next six years. The referendum passed on Nov. 8, 2022.

Of the \$511 million, \$340.5 million will be allocated to school projects. Some of which include rebuilding and renovating five schools across the county, constructing two new elementary schools, and adding a new specialty center for environmental science at Varina High School. \$83.85 million will be allocated to six separate projects surrounding fire stations and public safety. Additionally, \$50 million will be designated to flood prevention and stormwater drainage improvements across the county. Finally, the remaining \$37 million will be assigned to projects regarding parks and recreation in the county.

Since 2010, public school enrollment has steadily increased,

except during the COVID-19 pandemic. Post-COVID enrollment numbers are up again, and many schools across the country are seeing record numbers of students in classrooms.

“We have a capacity issue now,” said Deputy County Manager for Administration Brandon Hinton. The issue is particularly in schools around the Three Chopt and Short Pump areas. “[Henrico] builds schools because of either overcapacity concerns or because of future development,” said

“It’s not about them hearing us ... it’s about us hearing them.”

- Brandon Hinton

Mr. Hinton. With a new mixed-use urban development coming to the Fairfield area, the primary reason for building the new school is that this “is going to generate quite a few elementary school kids,” said Mr. Hinton. Following the county’s

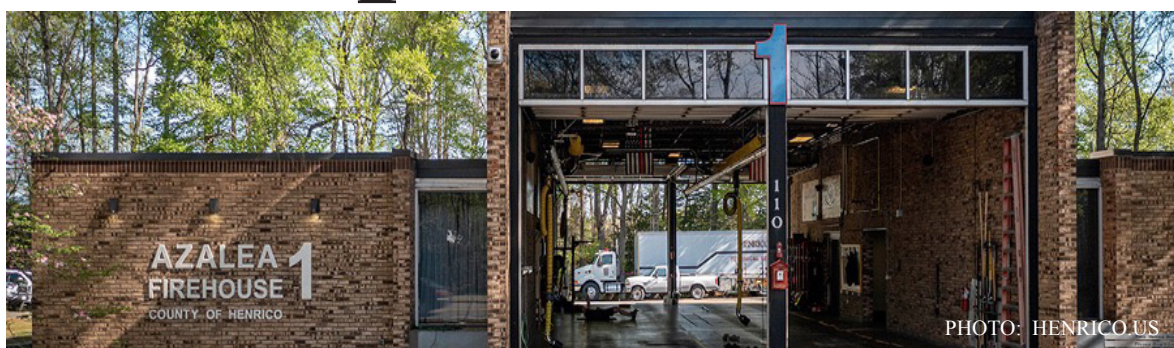


PHOTO: HENRICO.US

Firehouse 1, to be rebuilt at a new location



PHOTO: HENRICO.US

Highland Springs Elementary, one of the schools to be rebuilt

announcement about the 2022 Bond Referendum, members of the Henrico Board of Supervisors began to host public meetings, both virtually and in person, to inform the public and promote the proposed referendum. Almost 160 of these public meetings were held across the county. “It isn’t about them hearing us and what we have to say,” said Mr. Hinton. “It’s about us hearing them and being able to answer their questions.” Mr. Hinton himself has held almost 80 of these meetings and said that public meetings “are how a good local government builds credibility and trust that we know what we’re doing, that we have their best interests at heart.”

Back in 2016, a different bond referendum passed by the county approved the reconstruction of Tucker High School and funded new Highland Springs High School facilities along with many county library projects. “All

areas are benefitting from these projects,” said Tucker Principal Art Raymond. “And they are all necessary.” Mr. Raymond has been a part of Tucker since the beginning of his career in 1991, but the school has been around since 1962. Of the 72 schools in the county, over half of them are 60 years old or older. One of the best parts of the new Tucker High School is that “the facility is designed with a focus on flexibility,” said Mr. Raymond. This allows adaptation to future educational needs as the county evolves.

The firehouse and public safety projects included in the referendum will cover the reconstruction of Fire Stations 1, 6, and 11, as well as reaching the county’s goal of firefighters being “from call to living room within seven and a half minutes,” said Mr. Hinton.

Another reason for the reconstruction of these fire stations

is that 10 percent of all Henrico firefighters are female, yet most of the firehouses in the county were built before there were any women in the force. According to Mr. Hinton, most firehouses in the county are “not conducive

“We have to stay ahead of the [people’s] needs.”

- Art Raymond

to a diverse population” and the rebuilding of these firehouses will help lower the time it takes for firefighters to get to the fire, which is necessary because “seconds save lives,” said Mr. Hinton.

All of these projects address current and future problems in the county and, in the words of Mr. Raymond, “we have to stay ahead of the [people’s] needs rather than be reactionary to growth.”

Henrico Increases Specialty Center Enrollment

Ellie Grace Robinson
Staff Writer

Specialty center enrollment in Henrico County Public Schools (HCPS) will be increased from 50 to 75 students per center in the 2023-2024 school year. The decision was announced by HCPS in the fall of 2022, with the intention of expanding the program and making centers available to more students.

Rob Peck, the Director of the Freeman High School (DSF) Center for Leadership, Government, and Global Economics, has

had this role since 2000. Furthermore, he’s hitting a milestone of 30 years of teaching this year.

Freeman’s center typically gets between 350 and 400 applicants every year. Similarly, at Glen Allen High School (GAHS), the number of applicants ranges from about 200 to 300 students. Since only around 50 students are admitted to each of these highly selective centers, the large number of applicants leads to rejection for many students.

In the 2023 application pool, 75 students will be accepted to each specialty center, which will lead to more opportunity for students who have a strong sense of

what they are interested in. The change going into the future has been brought about by the realization that “if we have an excess of applicants ... [we should] offer the experience to more students,” said Mr. Peck. “Why don’t we open [Henrico’s specialty centers] up to more people? Let’s offer as many things as we can so that whoever is interested in these programs has an opportunity to do them.”

Ryan Conway, the Director of the Center for Education and Human Development at Glen Allen, has been teaching in Henrico for 21 years, and for 11 of these years, he’s been Glen Allen’s center director. Mr. Conway loves the concept of specialty centers because “they give all students options to explore different content ... it’s kind of like getting an academic major in high school, and a lot of students like that,” he said.

Mr. Conway believes that specialty centers “are great because you have a cohort of students who you go through high school with and who have similar academic experiences,” he said. “This can create a trusting, positive culture that can lead to some really engaging classroom discussions and activities.”

What makes the center different from the regular high school experience? “Many of our courses that we do in the center are available to non-center students as an elective,” said Mr. Peck.

The main difference lies in the way the classes are constructed. For example, “when the history [class] is studying French Revolution literature, the English class can be reading something that makes sense with that and the



PHOTO: AUDREY JONES

Freeman Leadership Center Director Rob Peck

leadership class can be planning a unit that makes sense within that historical context,” Mr. Peck said.

Mr. Conway said that the Glen Allen center provides a unique chance to “bring all 50 students together to work on a project, debate, guest speaker, etc.” On the topic of increased acceptance, Mr. Conway “[does] not think it is going to

“We’re all here because we want to learn.”

- Rob Peck

change the way the center is run.” At Freeman, the same is true, but Mr. Peck elaborated that

“it’s going to be harder with 75 ... because there are some challenges to overcome,” referring to “the logistics of keeping the community-feel together.”

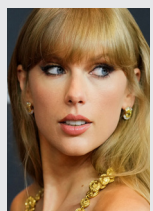
The idea of specialty centers is known to bring out passion among bright-eyed incoming freshman. “Being in a program with other highly motivated students tends to be a benefit to every student, that we’re all here because we want to learn,” said Mr. Peck. “We want to work hard; we want to do all the work.” Henrico County Public Schools offer several specialty centers for the variety of interests present in the student body. “Whatever center you go to, I think that’s a pretty powerful way to learn,” said Mr. Peck.



PHOTO: PETE ANDERSON

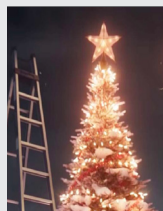
Mr. Ryan Conway

The Taylor Swift and Ticketmaster Debacle



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Holiday Ads: Yes or No?



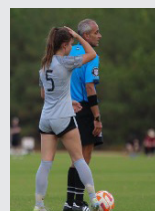
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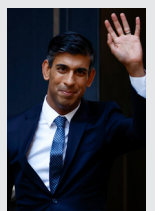
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Richmond Zoo Review

Peter Kriebel
Sports Editor

It was obvious upon arrival at the zoo that I was not their typical clientele. The sea of children in line, mean-mugging me from their strollers, was a constant reminder that I was on their turf. I had to let them know I wasn't some poser. So to establish dominance, I sprung for not one, but two \$3 treat cups. It's safe to say I spared no expense in getting the full Richmond Metro Zoo experience.

Once inside the gates, I headed straight for the monkeys. In a previous visit to the zoo, I was told these guys were some of the zoo's most charming animals and I must say, I was not disappointed. Unlike the apparently half-dead serval wildcat I passed on the way, the monkeys were full of energy. The White-Throated Capuchins were particularly rambunctious, confirming their charismatic portrayal in the well-known scientific documentary "Night at the Museum."

While most of the monkey



Peter poses at the zoo

varieties put together an impressive opening act, the Black Howler Monkeys were absolute duds. The plaque on their enclosure dubbed them "the loudest land mammal in the world." But these ones seemed to have performance anxiety because they didn't make a peep. As a whole, the monkeys were delightful, and as I headed toward the penguins, my expectations were high.



Richmond Zoo monkey

I lucked out and caught the oily birds just as the zookeeper was feeding them. The penguins were very cute, anxiously waddling around, waiting to be blessed with a fish, but after a couple of minutes, I felt ready to move on. Rounding the corner beyond the penguin cove, I faced a tough choice. To the left were the camels, to the right, the giraffes. I went with the latter.

For those who haven't seen a giraffe in person, get your priorities in order. They're elegant creatures that are somehow much bigger than you think. The coolest part of the giraffe exhibit is the ability to feed them by hand. I offered up both treat cups to these overgrown deer, who gladly accepted with their 17-inch tongues. I was pleased to see the zoo provided them with a nice, spacious pen with a lake and plenty of room to stretch their 6-foot legs.

"The chimps were a riot."
- Peter Kriebel

Next up, the cheetah enclosure. These were my favorite animals as a kid, so I was expecting the big cats to take an immediate liking to me. Instead, they stayed put, sunbathing in the corner farthest from their spectators. This hurt a little bit but I didn't hold it against them. I headed to the apes exhibit. But

to my surprise, Mr. Meador was not sitting in the enclosure. The zoo had apparently replaced him with chimpanzees. The chimps were a riot. One baby chimp was really energetic, climbing all the way up to the top of a 30-foot structure and swinging on a rope. Notably, the only thing separating the chimps from the zoo's visitors was a moat, as chimpanzees cannot swim. That means all it takes is one zoo visitor exercising some irresponsible banana use to induce a murder and a lifetime of guilt.

Speaking of Lifetime, the chimps' next-door neighbors, the Orangutans, were practically a soap opera. The two adult orangutans appeared to be trapped in a loveless marriage. The female was happily playing with an infant but the male looked completely checked out. He sat on the edge of the water, ignoring the rest of his family. It was like an episode of Jerry Springer, and I couldn't pull myself away from the rich jungle drama.

Overall, the zoo exceeded my expectations and was well worth the \$22 admission fee (treat cups not included).

All Too Expensive: The Taylor Swift and Ticketmaster Debacle

Adair Reid
Editor-in-Chief

If you really wanna know where I'll be on April 29, 2023, it won't be in Atlanta, Georgia for Taylor Swift's long-awaited Eras Tour. And rest assured, I am NOT happy about it.

Before Nov. 15, I had everything. After years of buying merch, vinyls, and collecting Taylor Swift's entire discography in ten CDs (I'm not crazy, I just don't have aux. At all. Don't ask), I was verified and selected for the tour presale. While I should have checked over the show dates I selected before heading into presale, in the slightly modified words of Donald Trump "I think if [I get tour tickets], I should get all the credit, and if [I don't get tour tickets], I should not be blamed at all." So, when I received the email for the first presale for an Atlanta show on Saturday, April 29, I checked my calendar *just in case* there was a planning issue. And of course there was — Freeman's prom is

that same night. But that's not the point of this article, although I was totally down to skip. Moving on.

The root of the issue is Ticketmaster's 2010 merger with LiveNation, as both entities have essentially monopolized the ticket aspect of the entertainment industry. While Democratic lawmakers have been calling for an investigation into Ticketmaster's business practices for years, the Eras Tour presents a new catalyst for action against the company. High ticket prices, arbitrary fees, and a dysfunctional website with insanely

"I'm hoping for a court showdown"
- Adair Reid

slow queues are some of the many arguments against the merger, with activist groups like "Break Up Ticketmaster" advocating for the U.S. Department of Justice to force the two companies to separate. And while I'm personally not really into the whole business thing

(I don't even last long in the Monopoly board game), I'm hoping for a court showdown — especially amidst reports that Ticketmaster and LiveNation "control 70 percent of the primary ticketing and live event venues market," according to "Break Up Ticketmaster."

To make things worse, the Capital One partnership with Ticketmaster that offered special access to tickets for cardholders ended in flames as the initial presale at 2 p.m. on Nov. 15 was pushed to the next day — with innumerable cardholders still not securing tickets (including me). While tickets were never guaranteed to presale or Capital One cardholders, much less the general public, the lack of disclosure from Ticketmaster on availability and the level of dysfunction in ticket purchasing remains a blot on what was otherwise an exciting event.

Taylor Swift herself has spoken out on the proceedings, saying "it's truly amazing that 2.4 million people got tickets, but it really pisses me off that a lot of them feel like they went through several bear attacks to get them."



Taylor Swift Eras Tour poster

While I can't understand how ticket demand hasn't settled after adding 25 shows to the Eras Tour, if I were the headliner herself, I personally wouldn't be mad that the population of a medium sized country wanted to see me in the United States' best selection of NFL stadiums.

Although a single glance at resale prices on StubHub has crushed my dreams (again), I'm still hoping they'll go down in a few months so I can make it to a show, having already ruled out the mythical (if it's even happening anymore) general public sale that is likely to be a digital fight to the death.

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Jess Pruett

The Commentator is a publication of Douglas Southall Freeman High School

Principal: John P. Marshall
8701 Three Chopt Rd. Henrico, Virginia 23229
http://schools.henrico.k12.va.us/freeman/
Phone: (804) 673-3700
jbpruett@henrico.k12.va.us

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.

Are Audiobooks Actually Books?

Morgan Strudgeon
Editor-in-Chief

It is a debate that I have engaged in many times. As someone who has read books upon books at an almost constant rate since I was young, it's fair to say the obsession started when the school librarian handed me my first library card and I went wild (by five-year-old standards) in that small elementary school library. Since that fateful day I have been asked the age-old question countless times: do you think audiobooks count as real books?

Personally, I will always prefer to pick up a physical book and flip through the pages, inhaling printed words faster than I probably should. Even though I might read physical books more often, I will be the first to admit that audiobooks have many advantages. However, much like anything, they are not without their faults:

- 1) They are often long, like many hours long, and take far longer to listen to than they would for me to read in the first place.
- 2) Audiobooks require headphones, which are not always possible to pull out at any moment.
- 3) There is definitely something to say about sitting down without any technology and being able to get fully immersed in a story without distractions.

That being said, I have been known to always keep an audiobook on my phone for when the opportunity to listen to one presents itself. For example, I



PHOTO: AUDIBLE

find audiobooks to be particularly nice when driving for a long distance or sitting at the beach when staring down at a paper book is not always a good option.

Additionally, I also find that audiobooks are incredibly helpful when it comes to reading a book for deep understanding instead of just for entertainment. This is especially true regarding classic literature when language and syntax are unfamiliar and sometimes difficult to understand.

It is for this reason that one of the most frequent times that I will listen to audiobooks is during English class. Earlier this school year, I found myself relying on an audiobook to decipher the meaning of "Paradise Lost" so that I could have any clue as to what was going on within the epic poem.

Furthermore, even though I might not prefer audiobooks, I know a lot of people really enjoy them. Some people find that it makes them pay more attention to what is going on in the book, for others it helps them read faster and be able to absorb information



PHOTO: CREATIVE COMMONS

more quickly. This also means that regardless of anyone's personal preference, audiobooks are great resources that make reading and literature more accessible for everyone; and as one of reading's biggest fans — I think that, no matter the format of a book, the

"The fact that more people are reading will always be a good thing."
- Morgan Strudgeon

fact that more people are reading will always be a good thing.

So, even though audiobooks might not be my personal favorite way to enjoy literature, they are definitely still real books as they accomplish the primary job of books: they take you somewhere else and force you to see things from a different perspective. At the end of the day, audiobooks do just that. When you listen to an audiobook it is not as if the book itself is different and it's not as though they change the words, audiobooks just put the story into a different medium.

Simply put, the purpose of reading books is not merely to look at words on a page and absorb sentence after sentence, the purpose of reading is to find meaning within those words, no matter whether you read them or heard them spoken aloud.

Now, if you watch the movie and say that it's "just like the book," I have many issues with that.

Emotional Support Water Bottles: An Analysis of Aquatic Decanters

Adair Reid
Editor-in-Chief

Water bottles: you love them, you hate them, you probably don't devote any thought to them at all. And yet, each represents the specific emotional journey of their owner, whether you want them to or not. As a six-year water bottle devotee who is never caught without the most boring liquid ever (it doesn't taste that good unless you're dying), I wanted to share my thoughts on the water bottle population at Freeman.

Hydroflask

Starting off strong with a classic option: the Hydroflask. Likely the first water bottle to become an aesthetic, Hydroflasks are the hallmark of middle school girls and anyone who goes to REI regularly. Once a commodity, Hydroflasks have seen their popularity plateau as their actual usefulness has taken on more importance than their trendiness. As someone who started their water bottle evolution with a 16 ounce bright blue Hydroflask skinnier than any bottle should be (it was on clearance) and now somehow has accumulated four, I can now say that the aesthetic value has decreased after six years. Still, they're reliable, do their job, and somehow still function after being dented about 100 times. But I can't say I'll miss the terrifying clattering sound of them falling out of my backpack side pockets (that they BROKE) and tumbling down Freeman's stairwells.

Hydroflask (with stickers)

The sheer amount of stickered Hydroflasks is the lasting lega-

cy of Pinterest, college students, and dads everywhere as sites like Redbubble continue to up the ante on hyperspecific paper stickers with \$10 shipping fees. As someone whose water bottles are scarred with sticker 'tan lines' dating back to 2018, I only have one thing to say: it's not worth it. My message to all stickered water bottle owners is that it is okay if not everyone knows all of your interests all of the time ... but thank you for the conversation starters and please don't hit me with your Harry Styles/Grey's Anatomy themed steel cylinder.

Nalgene

After finally getting over my fear of condensation (the water should be on the INSIDE), Nalgene have become my water bottle of choice this year. Whether passed down like a family heirloom or bought

“Nalgene are for people who want to be granola but can't figure out how to start a fire.”

- Adair Reid

in hiking stores, Nalgene are for people who want to be granola but can't figure out how to start a fire — or you just have siblings and are taking advantage of what you can get. Infinitely throwable, convenient (those cap ridges are A1), and BPA free, Nalgene are likely the most peaceful water bottles I will ever own, even if the water is lukewarm every time. In the midst of school, sports, clubs, and college applications, Nalgene are a



Freeman students hold up their emotional support water bottles.

little like an elephant tranquilizer to the face. In a good way, I swear.

Those Gatorade Ones

One glance at a Gatorade water bottle and suddenly I'm twelve years old, feet on the starting line of the Tuckahoe Middle School gym, Pacer Test audio blaring as I tell myself I have to make it to 30 this year. These waterbottles show that the legacy of those stupid neon yellow Nike socks boys wore in elementary school continues to live on, slowly poisoning their owners with stray turf pellets made out of recycled tires. Still, I have to say these are the easiest water bottles by far to manage when it comes to actually drinking (probably Creatine contaminated) water.

Yeti

Finally. A water bottle that actually does its job, for the low price of \$40 for 10 ounces. Maybe it's just my parents, but there's just something oddly intense about them, with their all-business logo that says 'I have a mortgage' and casts a cold eye on themed Tervis tumblers and S'wells (more on that later). I have to give props to Yeti though, because their ecosystem of water bottles, ranging from rambler to dog bowls to massive coolers is pretty top notch.

Stanley

Because all good things must come to an end, Stanley is likely the next stop on my water bottle journey (sorry 8-year-old Nalgene

from a random camp in New Mexico). It's a relatively reasonable price (\$25 for a 20 ounces isn't ideal, but anyone who remembers the price of any Hydroflask OR Corkcicle in 2017 gets what I'm saying), has a good color scheme, and has that crucial metal shell designed to show up on a Richter scale when it inevitably falls off my desk. The handle (!) is perfect for users aged toddler to elderly and also allows Stanleys to be fully functional as a battering ram or personal protection (just in case). It has the best of both worlds as it is efficient and aesthetically pleasing but not overtly trendy — although I don't think I've ever seen anyone with a Stanley actually drink water before.

Corkcicle/Swell

As the first microtrend water bottle established in 2016, the era of Corkcicles and S'wells is truly a time to reflect on, but simultaneously never want to go back to again. I have to hand it to these two: these water bottles were actually fun, before they completely saturated the market and buried their consumers in different iterations of themselves. Still, major issues like the tiny top part that is impossible to get ice into and the paint chipping off have unfortunately made mine obsolete. Despite these flaws, Corkcicles and S'wells still take me back to a better (?) time, and for that I have to be grateful for them.

Plastic Water Bottle

...Why? I'm genuinely asking. At the very least I hope you're either drinking Deer Park or the Kroger brand. Aquafina isn't worth it.

No Water Bottle

How are you still alive?

Holiday Ads - Ho, Ho, Ho, or Oh No: Are Seasonal Ads Overdone?

Shishira Nakka
Staff Writer

After Halloween, one of two things is likely to happen — your candy will put you in a sugar induced coma, or your TV, radio, and phone will be flooded with holiday commercials. The latter is more likely, but never say never. Holiday commercials come around every year at the same time, but do they really add to the festive spirit as a whole? I think yes. In fact, I think there would be no holiday spirit without them.

When I first think of holiday commercials, my mind instantly goes to the annual Old Navy ad. Every ad seems to feature some celebrity or another raving about the store's holiday sales. One year it was Neil Patrick Harris showcasing scarves, this year it's Jennifer Coolidge playing the piano in cherry red heels. These ads always feature a festive tune in the background, with families smiling and spinning around throughout. Overall, this commercial represents the joy and core of what the holiday season is all about — Jennifer Coolidge. Kidding.

To me, the holidays are about family, comfort, and togetherness. Old Navy prides themselves on catering to families, which they show in their ads. Who doesn't want matching Christmas jammies for the whole family? The feature of families in the commercial reminds me of being cozy at home with my own.

Admittedly, when I used to think of holiday ads, I never

thought of any other holiday except Christmas — I'd never been shown anything else on TV. But then, for the first time, I saw a Target commercial that showed otherwise. Last year, Target made a commercial in which multiple families are celebrating the holidays, but not just Christmas — Diwali and Hanukkah. For what I'd consider the first time, more than just Christmas was shown to the American public via our television screens. People at home were shown different holidays that extended past just them, which made people like me feel seen.

As an avid and annual celebrator of Diwali, I had never seen the holiday represented on television, and I thought it would stay that way. Being able to see Diwali included in the holiday season made me feel festive for more than just Diwali! I felt ready and excited for every holiday out there, all because I had seen it in an ad. This proves the power of holiday commercials. By seeing all the holidays on TV, no matter how different they may seem, the holiday becomes more exciting and festive.

“While our holidays might be different, the reason we celebrate them is the same.”

- Shishira Nakka

Though this might have been one of the first times the word “holiday” meant more than Christmas on television, it certainly wasn't

the last. This year, Walmart's holiday commercial features multiple different families talking about different holidays they celebrate and how they celebrate it. The family members go on to describe the foods they like, traditions they celebrate, and what they love about the holiday season.

What makes this commercial so pivotal to the holiday season is that they all shared the same things. It might've been different types of foods, but it was still food, and

while our holidays might be different, the reason we celebrate them is the same: to be together, rejoice with family, and to steep in the feelings the holidays bring around.

By including those sentiments, the commercials capitalize on the soul of holidays: family, unity, and comfort are always at its core. However, the spirit of all those aspects come from the same feelings. The notions of being together, of seeing yourself on TV, being truly at 'home' makes the

holiday season special. Without these ads, the very feelings that we value and cherish during the holidays would never seem as important and, in turn, the holidays wouldn't mean as much. We as humans are only aware of what we have or what we look like when we are shown these kinds of images. Holiday commercials have only good things to add to the festive season, and they make us feel much better than a sugar-crash would.

HE SAID SHE SAID

SPORTS EDITOR
Peter Kriebel



GUEST CONTRIBUTOR
Maggie Newton



Christmas ads before thanksgiving is an L



Spicy chicken nuggets?

My sweet solitude



I'll risk the E. Coli.

Chipotle's next door



Cardboard, pizza? Or both.

No one wants your chicken sandwich



I've never willingly gone here

If a spoon's required it isn't a milkshake



10/10 milkshakes, but 0/10 everything else.

bada bap ba blah



Salt makes everything taste good



PHOTO: OLD NAVY

Jennifer Coolidge for the Old Navy Holiday Campaign

Freeman Teacher's Budding Earring Business: BearBeeClayCo

Maggie Newton
Staff Writer

By day, she teaches Freeman high schoolers about grammar rules and Shakespeare's iambic pentameter, but that's not where Mrs. Meredith Swain's work ends. In her freetime, the English teacher and mother of two runs BearBeeClayCo, an Etsy business that specializes in clay polymer earrings.

The name BearBeeClayCo is an ode to her two daughter's nicknames: Lydie Bee and Claire Bear. "It started as a craft for fun to relax after I had my second daughter Lydia," said Mrs. Swain. "I had postpartum depression after my first kid so I figured I needed something that was going to keep my hands busy and give me a creative outlet." One night, as she was scrolling through Etsy, shopping for earrings, she ran into a pair of clay polymer earrings, and realized that she could probably make her own. "I fell in love with it. I like crafts in general; I like being able to do things with my hands. And I really just stumbled upon it," said Mrs. Swain. One of her favorite parts about the earrings is that each one of them is unique. "They're lightweight, unique and hypo-allergenic," said Mrs. Swain. "They're not all alike. I call my earrings sisters, not twins for that reason."



Mrs. Swain with her earrings

After people showed interest in her earrings, she decided to open up the Etsy shop. In addition to her online platform, she sells her jewelry at local markets. "[At the last market] I probably sold twenty pairs in a day," said Mrs. Swain. "But on Etsy, on average, I'll maybe have five or six sales of a couple pairs a month. I definitely saw more around Christmas." About twelve of her

total purchases are accounted for by Freeman students. One pair that she created was a custom order for Freeman's prom. "That was probably the craziest custom order so far because we had multiple jewels dangling from the clay piece that I made," said Mrs. Swain. Mrs. Swain wears her earrings almost every day. One day, she says she will consider moving off of Etsy and building her own

website, but for now, she is too busy. "I don't have the time to upkeep a website of my own just yet, but maybe someday," said Mrs. Swain. Her budding business has almost 800 instagram followers, and she has sent orders as far as California and Oregon. Her earring designs transition on a seasonal basis. "I [recently] made a bunch of fall earrings and I love this pair of off-white pumpkins on a rose gold hoop," said Mrs. Swain. She said that her favorite technique "is definitely like a faux stone marble technique because it involves a lot of chopping of the clay into small pieces, which is kind of therapeutic."

Freeman's ceramics teacher, Mrs. Elizabeth Jones recently came upon BearBeeClayCo when she was looking at different vendors of a craft show that took place in downtown Richmond. "I came upon hers and I was like, 'oh, those are so cool,'" said Mrs. Jones. "And then I saw that



BearBeeClayCo's earrings

but also has her eye on a pair that are shaped as pencils. "She has a pretty thriving business. She's pretty popular," said Mrs. Jones. "It would be really cool if she taught some classes in it."

Freeman senior Trisha Nagulagari recently bought a pair of Mrs. Swain's earrings at a market. "I went to Tucker and there was a little market going on with a bunch of small businesses setup," said Trisha. "I was just walking around and I saw Mrs. Swain, and so I bought some earrings from her." She picked out a pair of light blue medium sized studs with little daisies in the middle. "I like them because they're really unique. And they're kind of like statement earrings," said Trisha. "I can kind of wear them to spice up some outfits." Trisha would love to buy another pair in the future. "I also just think that because Mrs. Swain makes them, it just feels a little more special," she said.

"They're lightweight, unique, and hypo-allergenic."
- Mrs. Swain

it was Mrs. Swain, and I was like, 'oh, wait a second.'" Mrs. Jones plans on buying a pair in the future; she likes the ones that are more design/pattern oriented,

Lydia Prak: Honoring Her Family Through Advocacy

Katie Hall
Staff Writer

Junior Lydia Prak draws on deep connections to her culture and her family as president of Freeman's Asian Student Alliance (ASA). ASA participates in school wide events, including some Freeman favorites: the Homecoming parade and Culture Day.

Lydia shared that she hopes to expand the club further through events such as guest speakers and field trips, potentially to local restaurants that offer Asian cuisine. She plans to collaborate with other clubs at DSF to "celebrate all the diversity [at] Freeman," she said.

Lydia said that the club provides a space for Freeman's Asian students to come together and celebrate the various cultures represented by the club members.

She expressed that her interest in advocacy for the Asian community stems from a strong bond with her family members. Lydia's father and aunt are among members of her family who survived the Cambodian genocide that occurred in the late 1970s, under the Khmer Rouge regime.

Last year, Lydia's aunt Amanda Prak Sam came to Freeman and shared her story with members of the student body. "I think what motivated me to join the club most was last year, my aunt, Amanda Prak Sam, came [to Freeman] and she spoke about the Cambodian genocide," said Lydia. "Her speech about her experiences as a survivor is very moving. I think it was important to hear a personal account from a genocide survivor."

Lydia was especially motivated to join ASA after she noticed a lack of respect from fellow students at Freeman during her aunt's speech. Her aunt shared her experiences as a survivor of the genocide and spoke about the charity foundation she started called H.O.P.E., which stands for Helping Others Pursue Education. Her foundation gives back to communities in Cambodia by building schools. "I looked around and I could see people on their phones and not paying attention," said Lydia. "Stories should be heard [and] they should be available to people who actually want to listen and want to learn."

Lydia's determination as an activist comes as no surprise to her father. "I'm really proud," said Mr. Prak. "She has this curiosity ... she's always

been a free thinker. She's very passionate about what she does."

The Prak family remains connected to local communities in Cambodia and visits there frequently. "My sister [Amanda] does a lot of charity work going back to Cambodia [to build] schools. She set an example for Lydia," said Mr. Prak. "Our family has always been pretty close and we get really involved with the community." The family tries to make an effort to go back to Cambodia every other year. "We visit friends and family and also we bring care packages for the unfortunate. Lydia witnessed all that," said Mr. Prak.

Although her family is a primary motivator, other factors have influenced Lydia's decision to become more involved. "She feels a need with the recent political climate ... Asians are somewhat of a target," said Mr. Prak.

Lydia remains determined to share her family's experiences while elevating the many voices of Freeman's Asian community. "I'm going to honor my aunt's stories and my family's stories [with] surviving the Cambodian genocide. I just want to make Asian History more known," said Lydia.

ASA serves as an educational



PHOTO: KATIE HALL

Lydia Prak, president of ASA tool for students to learn about the diversity in our community. According to Lydia, many non-Asian students have joined the club, simply to learn. "A lot of people will appreciate products of culture, [but] they don't

appreciate the actual people who play a role and who are members in that community ... I think having the club and sharing more Asian culture [will] help people appreciate the student body," said Lydia.

Sastha Tripathi, Leader of the Literacy Teen Advocates Club

Lizzie Herod
Staff Writer

Sastha Tripathi, a junior at Douglas Freeman High School (DSF) takes the lead in the Literacy Teen Advocates club (LTA) and helps students find a love for reading. "LitWorld Teen Advocates are a group of individuals who believe in promoting literacy in our communities with book drives and distributions," said Sastha. The main goal of the club is to "provide people with literature to read and to get young people in our community interested in reading again."

As the LTA's purpose is to enlarge students' and the community's passion for reading, the club is involved in many activities in and out of Freeman. The LTA contributes to the DSF community by participating in "Trunk or Treat, Henrico Christmas Mother Drive, and other collections throughout the year," said Sastha.

At events like Trunk or Treat, "We hand out books to young kids and encourage them to read. Those kinds of events are our main focus in the club," said sophomore and club member Genevieve Lin.

As president of LTA, Sastha has many responsibilities and roles that go into keeping the club active. "I search for new volunteer opportunities for the club, arrange the collections and donations we do throughout the year, and update our club members on meetings



PHOTO: MAIA ZASLER

Sastha Tripathi and new volunteer opportunities they can take on," she said.

In order to be a president there are certain expectations to fulfill. "Sastha is a wonderful president who puts her all into making sure the club runs smoothly," said

junior and club member, Lydia Prak. "She's worked hard to restart the club these last two years, and we're starting to see the efforts pay off as we move forward."

After COVID limited the club's ability to stay active, the current

members of LTA are hoping to grow membership and impact the community. "There are currently 10-12 active members [and we meet] once a month, or as needed when we're planning events," said Sastha. "Right now, we only have the president and vice president, but we want to expand as the club grows."

The LTA has been a part of DSF since 2016 and has evolved over the years. "It's become more fluid in terms of the responsibilities the members take on," said Sastha. "We didn't want to make LTA a stressful club, so it's very casual. As long as you join the meetings from time to time and make an effort to help us with our projects, you can be a member."

With Sastha graduating next year, she has goals and plans for the continuation of the club. "I'm looking to create new leadership positions this year that will hopefully expand the membership count, so that we can grow LTA in their own right," she said.

The club was started by Keeley Wood, who was a former student here at Freeman. "Keeley was the first one I worked with and she wanted to promote literacy," said Laurie Kaplan, the teacher sponsor of LTA. Despite Ms. Kaplan and the club member's efforts, they were "unable to [stay active] because of the restrictions," she said. Previous club activities have included fundraisers, book donations to feeder schools, and book drives. Although, "since

COVID happened, we just haven't been able to go out into the community," Ms. Kaplan said.

In order to fulfill the expectations for the club, Sastha must have leadership qualities. "She's definitely dependable, gets along well with others and is a great communicator. I believe those are vital roles in being a leader," said Ms. Kaplan. "Sastha organizes meetings to plan book drives to get people to donate books, organize the books, and then distribute the books in the community."

"Sastha is a wonderful president who puts her all into making sure the club runs smoothly."
- Mrs. Swain

LTA is an opportunity to unite with book lovers and impact the community to those who don't have access to books. Sastha recommends the club to anyone who has a love for books and providing them to our community, and anyone looking for volunteer opportunities as well.

Apart from regulating LTA, Sastha is occupied in many other school based activities. "Outside of the club, I am a part of 3 other clubs, National Honor Society, Festival Choir, and I'm an Equity Ambassador," said Sastha.

NOW SHOWING: 2022

WORLD NEWS

Russia-Ukraine War On February 24, 2022 Russian troops under the leadership of Vladimir Putin launched an invasion on Ukraine. The conflict between the two countries has been developing since about 2014 over various political matters, some involving the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The war between Russia and Ukraine is ongoing and continues to affect world politics and economics.



PHOTO: PBS

WORLD NEWS

Johnny Depp-Amber Heard Defamation Trials One of the most publicized events in 2022 was the Johnny Depp-Amber Heard defamation lawsuit. The trials took place from April 11 to June 1 in Fairfax County, Virginia. While much drama surrounded the case and caused the public to pick sides, the jury decided to award Depp \$15 million and Heard \$2 million in damages.



PHOTO: CNN

WORLD NEWS

Death of Queen Elizabeth The death of Queen Elizabeth II was news that shocked the world and took over headlines. The late queen passed away September 8 at Balmoral Castle in Scotland due to old age. This event marked the reign of the new king, Charles III.



PHOTO: ANN King Charles III

FASHION

Platform Shoes

Shoes sporting a high platform were found in every store front this year. From flatforms, loafers, ankle-strap heels, boots, and even clogs, shoes with a good chunky sole could be found for every occasion.



Left - Right: Neiman Marcus, Neiman Marcus, Dolce Vita, Steve Madden

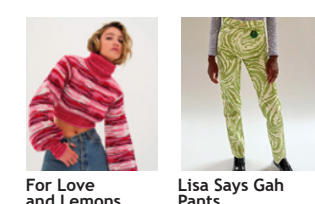
Cut-Outs

Fashion in 2022 was not afraid of showing a little skin. Many garments featured unconventional cutouts. This trend was obvious when looking at the Emmil top, Free People dress, Revolve dress, and Revolve Pants. DSF student's choice of homecoming and prom dresses this past year.



Bold Funky Prints

Many designers gave a nod to the '60s this year along with a dash of Y2K in the form of attention-grabbing, colorful patterns. These patterns ranged anywhere from checkerboards to abstract swirls and stripes.

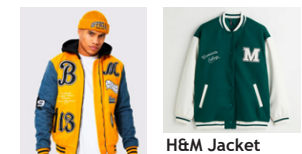


For Love and Lemons Sweater

Lisa Says Gah Pants

Varsity Jackets

A throwback to our parents' high school fashion came in the way of varsity jackets this year. These wide cut and boxy jackets were seen on practically everyone from Dua Lipa to BTS members.



H&M Jacket, Boohoo Jacket

Flat Brimmed Hats

In the past year, fitted flat brim hats (previously sporting popular team logos) have risen in popularity, more so with company logos, colors, and designs. From popular bands to trendy brands, everyone was looking to get in on this trend.



Aviator Nation Cap

New Era Cap

The North Face Cap

FREEMAN NEWS



PHOTO: DSFBAND INSTAGRAM

The Marching Mavericks received an unanimous superior rating at the state marching band assessment in October.

After falling to Maggie Walker in the state competition, Freeman's We The People team placed third at nationals.



PHOTO: ROB BECK

Students from the theatre and choral departments put on shows Legally Blonde The Musical and Almost, Maine throughout 2022.



Freeman's Quizbowl team won states and placed tenth at nationals.

PHOTO: DSF QUIZBOWL INSTAGRAM

SPORTS

2022 Beijing Winter Olympics

For sports fans around the world, 2022 did not disappoint. From February 2 to February 20 the Winter Olympics returned with style in Beijing. Featuring a wide array of events including figure skating, ice hockey, and ski jumping, the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics provided action filled athletic entertainment for the world to watch.



PHOTO: CNN

2022 Qatar Fifa World Cup



PHOTO: PRINT MAGAZINE

Soccer fans around the world are tuning in to watch the FIFA World Cup, as it returned this November in Qatar. While lots of controversy surrounds the event due to its interference with club leagues and abuse of migrant workers, many sports fans will still watch the final with enthusiasm on December 18.

Freeman Championship Wins

The Freeman Mavericks dominated in athletics this year. Between several individual and team regional and state titles in Girl's Lacrosse, Girl's Tennis, Boy's Baseball, Cross Country, Track, and Boy's Tennis, there's no doubt that the Mavericks were on top of their game in 2022.



PHOTO: INSTAGRAM



PHOTO: INSTAGRAM

Boys Baseball and Girls Lacrosse Teams

MOVIES & TV

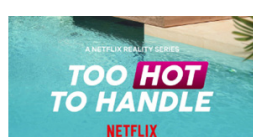
The Proud Family: Louder and Prouder

This year a re-boot to the classic "Proud Family," was dropped on Disney+. The re-boot showcased special guest stars such as Lizzo and Lil Nas X.



Too Hot to Handle

The year 2022 brought back the fascination of reality TV. "Too Hot to Handle" was one of the stars of reality television. Since the show's inception in 2020 the hit reality show's popularity has continued to grow.



MOVIES & TV

Minions: Rise the Gru

After the release of the "Despicable Me" prequel, the internet went feral. Following a TikTok trend, hundreds of thousands of people flooded into movie theaters wearing tuxedos to watch this new movie. At the box office, this global phenomenon made over 920 million USD.



Elvis

"Elvis" the movie, starring Austin Butler and Olivia DeJong, was released in June of this year. Taking Hollywood by storm, the movie made over 286 million USD at the box office.



MUSIC

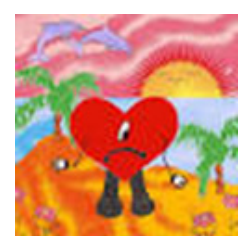
Taylor Swift

Following Taylor Swift's legal battle with her former label that prompted her to re-release old music, what shocked fans was the dropping of her new album "Midnights" this year. Upon releasing the album, she broke over 70 records.



Bad Bunny

Releasing "Un Verano Sin Ti" in May of 2022 led Bad Bunny to become one of the most dominant artists of this year, being named Apple Music's most-streamed artist of the year and "Un Verano Sin Ti" being the most streamed Latin album ever on Apple Music.



Harry Styles

The former "X-Factor" contestant Harry Styles not only dropped an album this year but also starred in two movies. The debut of his acting career, mixed with the success of his tour and a new album, made Harry one of this year's most successful male artists.



FOOD

Plant Based Protein

Plant-based protein options have been one of the biggest trends in food over the past five years, and in 2022 this market has only grown. As of recently, the initiative has expanded to plant-based chicken and seafood, with alternatives like jackfruit and "Chi Protein."



Like Meat Chicken Substitutes

Healthy Energy Drinks

High school students may be familiar with a variety of popular energy drink brands, but in 2022 the trend with these was health and wellness. Brands like OCA, Machu Picchu, and CLEAN Cause created drinks that both tasted great and were made without artificial sweeteners, colors, or preservatives.



Clean Cause Energy Drink

Unique Ice Cream Flavors

Research says that 89% of Americans like ice cream, but does the appeal lessen with flavors like chocolate cayenne and goat cheese with blueberry swirl (as per Blue Cow Creamery)? Clearly not, since in 2022 the popularity of unusual or unconventional ice cream flavors increased in ice cream shops across the country.



Van Leeuwen Mac & Cheese Ice Cream

TRENDS

Bullying Generations

In light of the "ok boomer" phenomenon, it became popular to bully whole generations, with Gen Z poking fun at Millennials, Boomers hating on Gen Z, and Millennials making fun of both.



Twitter user getting mad about millennials



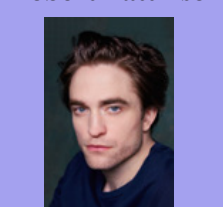
Pinterest Board of the "That Girl" aesthetic

"That Girl" trend

Being "that girl" became popular this year, with many trying to imitate TikTok star Emily Mariko. The trend encourages productivity and has made it socially acceptable to be over the top regarding self-care.

CELEBRITIES

Robert Pattinson



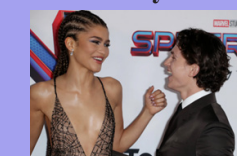
After it was announced that Pattinson would play Batman, the internet grew enamored with this former Twilight star, leading him to be one of the most successful male actors of the year.

Britney Spears

Since the termination of Britney's conservatorship last November, Britney sprung back into the public's eye. Following the legal battle, Britney has gotten married, reactivated and deactivated her Instagram accounts, and said she "probably won't perform again."



Zendaya



The actress' starring roles in movies like "Spiderman: No Way Home" and "Dune" in late 2021 brought Zendaya back into the mainstream media. She pushed herself to be this year's "it girl" by announcing her relationship with fellow co-star Tom Holland.

ODDITIES

First dormant black hole found outside the Milky Way

July 18th, 2022
A dormant black hole nine times the mass of the Sun was found outside the Milky Way for the first time, in what researchers have called a "very exciting discovery".



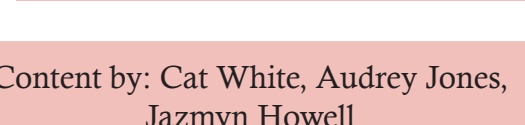
Will Smith slaps Chris Rock

March 27, 2022
While onstage at the Oscars, Chris Rock made a joke about the shaved head of Jada Pinkett Smith — who has alopecia — and the actress' husband, Will Smith, approached the comedian and slapped him across the face.



'Succession' star James Cromwell glues his hand to a Starbucks counter in a protest

May 10, 2022
Cromwell sat on the Starbucks counter wearing a "Free the Animals" T-shirt and read a statement denouncing the surcharge for vegan milk alternatives.



Content by: Cat White, Audrey Jones, Jazmyn Howell
Designed by: Ada Malpani

Madeleine Garrett's Unique Commute to School

Farah Abdullah
Copy Editor

Most Freeman students wake up bright and early to catch the bus, carpool, or to get a good parking spot, but freshman Madeleine Garrett doesn't need to. Madeleine has been biking to school almost every day since she was in kindergarten.

Like most, Madeleine learned to bike as a child, but it wasn't limited to being an after school activity. "I started biking [to school] in kindergarten because I got tired of riding the bus," she said. "I was like, 'I want to be outside', and my elementary school was really close, so it was easy." Years later, she still chooses to bike to school. "I think [now] it's just to get exercise," she said. "I also think my parents have gotten used to me [biking]."

Madeleine has found benefits to her biking journey throughout her athletic career. "For school, I run cross country, and outside [of school] I play soccer, sail, and ski," she said. "I really enjoy [biking] because it eliminates a lot of stress, especially in the morning. It can wake me up and get me ready for the school day, [and] it's nice to be outside; it's calming."

On her route to and from school, Madeleine bikes a total of about 4 miles. Though she tries to bike to school every day, "snow and heavy rain days" are safer in a car or the bus.

Though Madeleine's biking journey was mostly her decision, it was heavily influenced by her family. "Our family did a lot of biking growing up," she said.

Her parents share her love of biking. "[Madeleine's dad] grew



Madeleine with her family

up as a big biker and that was kind of his way of commuting when he was in graduate school," said Madeleine's mother, Kim Garrett. "[As a family], we bike to church every Sunday, and then we'll bike to the grocery store sometimes." Despite concerns the family received about Madeleine's commute starting at an early age, Mrs. Garrett believes that "there [was] a risk to not letting her bike." Over the years, her parents guided her into a safe but fun routine. "From a young age, [we have] been talking to her about paying attention to [her surroundings]," said Mrs. Garrett. "You do whatever you need to do to get out of the way and be safe."

When Madeleine started middle school, her commute became

much further than before. "That was a big jump," said Mrs. Garrett. "We weren't certain that we would feel comfortable with her doing it so we would ride the route with her in the beginning and then once we kind of got comfortable with it and felt like it was fine, we let her do it [alone]." Mrs. Garrett feels comfortable with Madeleine biking to school because she "has seen her make consistently good choices."

When her brothers entered middle school, Madeleine guided them with their commute to school. "She definitely kind of set the tone for them," said Mrs. Garrett.

Though she comes from a family of bikers, Mrs. Garrett credits her strength and power as well. "Madeleine can crush me

on the bike and she can push her father, who is a very good biker as well," said Mrs. Garrett. Her "desire for independence is very much a part of who she is and she thrives on it when you give it to her," said Mrs. Garrett.

Sofia Moore, friend of Madeleine, shares similar remarks. "I think [biking] fits her personality so much," she said. "Her family is sporty and she's very sporty, so it didn't surprise me at all." The two met in elementary school, so Sofia has witnessed Madeleine's early biking days. "From the get-go she has always been like, 'Let's bike everywhere!' and that was a little bit hard for me at first because I didn't really bike," said Sofia. "But I feel like she was just so



Madeleine biking



Madeleine Garrett

enthusiastic about it that I was like 'well, I guess I might try.'" Eventually, Madeleine led Sofia to start biking more and they "just incorporated that into whatever [they] do," said Sofia. Whether it's to each other's houses or to 7-Eleven, biking has "really strengthened our friendship," said Sofia.

Madeleine plans to continue biking throughout high school. "Once I can drive, I probably will be biking less," she said. "But I'd imagine I'll still be doing some and it's just a fun way to get to school."

Turner Phaup Rides His Way Into the World of Media



PHOTO: TURNER PHAUP

Turner practicing a trick on a handrail

Ella Post
Staff Writer

Turner Phaup, a junior at Freeman High School, recently began his debut in the world of media by creating videos for a local BMX bike shop, Powers Bike Shop. A lifelong biker, creating videos for the shop merges two of Turner's interests. When Turner first started filming, he used social media platforms to start his career. "When I started biking, I made a lot of videos through Instagram, documenting my progression as I rode my bike," said Turner. Since then, he has shifted his projects in a different direction. "After a while, I started to watch professional BMX edits and decided I wanted to start making edits with a real camera myself," he said.

Filming for Powers Bike Shop has opened a lot of doors for him in the biking community. "Working for the bike shop opened me up to traveling with the professional team to film at events around the [United States] like Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina, Philadelphia, and a few other places," he said. "It also helped me meet with bigger companies in biking, which will hopefully lead me to new opportunities for sponsorships and filming jobs," he said. Turner has also been able to make bonds with fellow bike enthusiasts that have helped him in his interest. "Before I got my job at Powers, they had a digital media manager named Donovan, and we got pretty close. He helped me find the camera I use today

and has given me tips on filming and video editing," he said.

Turner's love for what he does shows up in his work and he has found different ways to gather inspiration for new ideas for his job. "I get my motivation from visualizing my final product while filming and editing. [For example], lining up the shots to tell a story and using different editing techniques to highlight the tricks in the videos," he said. He finds enjoyment in the process and continues to do what he is passionate about. Alongside that, Turner enjoys riding bikes himself. He started BMX biking 2 years ago and also mountain bikes. "I am on the professional team for Powers Bike Shop and I can do a number of tricks on my bike", he said. "The most well-known tricks I can do are things like tailwhips, grinding, big handrails, and different 360 variations," he said.

Currently, Turner is working hard to improve both sides of his biking endeavor. "I try to ride my bike every day and I'm actually enrolled in the video and media elective here at Freeman to improve my filming and editing skills," he said. He is planning on pursuing a media path throughout college. "After high school, I plan to pursue a major in filming and new media," he said. "I don't have any schools in mind, but [I think I want] someplace in a more urban location where I'm still able to ride my bike during college." Turner has had some difficulties along the way, including ones with technology. "My comput-



Austin Deignan Freeman's upside-down drummer

When did he start drumming?

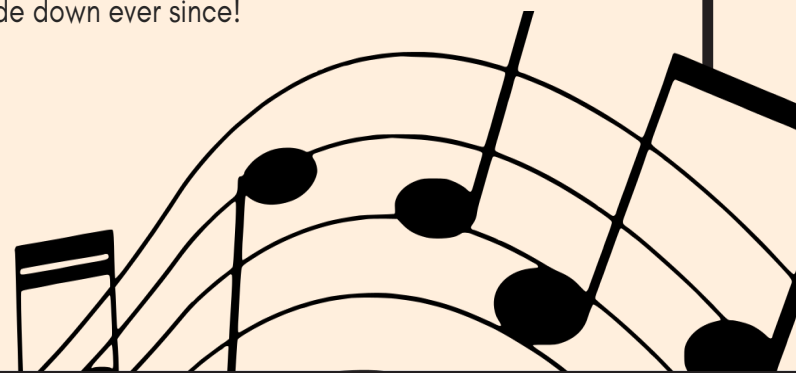
Austin started playing drums in fifth grade after his dad brought home a drum set one day from one of his work friends.

What are his favorite things about the drums?

"The expression and release from playing drums is my favorite part. Just being able to groove and jam out is a really good way to relieve stress while still being productive and having fun," said Austin.

What made him want to play upside-down?

A few years ago, a tenor player named Cameron Peterson played upside down. Some people told Austin that he should try it, and he's been playing upside down ever since!



er has crashed a bunch of times while working on big projects, deleting my footage and having to restart [an] entire video," he said. He has learned to push through these types of occurrences. "My old camera used to overheat every hour or so and would delete all of my footage, which used to be really annoying," he said. He got a new camera, which has helped him lose less footage as well as tackle obstacles he faces.

Not only does BMX biking allow for opportunities in media production, but it can also unfold new experiences in other places of work. "There's something for everyone," said Turner. "From being a team rider, manager, mechanic, filmer, working in the warehouse, digital media design, as well as many more."

Turner has been able to find a job that he both enjoys and is dedicated to. He continues to bike and edit videos while at-



PHOTO: TURNER PHAUP

Turner's video tag

tending Freeman, finding a balance between his job and school. Turner is looking forward to going on more trips with Powers Bike Shop and continuing

to create and edit videos on social media. Curious as to where this path will take him, Turner said, "I just try to have fun when creating new projects."

Freeman Soccer Player Makes Finnish National Team

Celia Acey
Staff Writer

Freeman junior Iisa Elovaara was pulled up for the U-17 Finland National team camp in November 2022. The camp, which took place Nov. 15-18, showcased the best U-17 soccer players from Finland, and ended in an international match against Estonia.

As soon as she could walk, Iisa was playing soccer. "I've been playing soccer pretty much my whole life," she said. "My first team was when I was five. But before then, I would always play outside with my dad or with my brother."

Iisa has been dominating the Virginia soccer scene, playing on both Richmond United's U-17 team and the Freeman varsity team. The key to her success is not luck, but hard work.

"It's definitely not possible to be at this level if you don't [work hard]," she said. "If I hadn't woken up early to do workouts or watched game film with my dad, I wouldn't be where I'm at right now."

Not only is the majority of Iisa's time taken up by practices and workouts, but she's also frequently traveling to tournaments. "This year, I'm going to Tennessee, Florida, Texas, and San Diego [for tournaments and showcases]. Last year I went to Phoenix and Seattle," said Iisa.

Despite how long she's been playing, Iisa's love for the game

"It still doesn't feel real."

- Iisa Elovaara

has never faltered. "I love traveling to different places and playing, it just brings me so much joy. It's always been a part of my life so I can't really imagine not playing," said Iisa.

This past November, Iisa was invited to play at the four-day



PHOTO: IISA ELOVAARA

Iisa winds up for a shot on goal

Finnish National Team camp. "There's multiple camps throughout the year, and each camp is different. Players change every single camp depending on injuries, who they need, and who they want to see," said Iisa.

At the Finnish National Team camp, players spent each day training and practicing together. "The first day we had testing. So we did sprints, jumps, and endurance tests to see where we're at. And then the next two days we practiced, and the last day we had a game against Estonia," said Iisa. "We also looked at videos from [Estonia's] previous games, and looked at how they might play."

The final game against Estonia took place on the last day of the camp. Despite Iisa's team only playing together for 3 days, they were extremely successful and efficient on the field. "Each player played for half of the game and we won 7-0. I played defense and had an assist on a goal," said Iisa. "We played really well together and everything that we practiced in the days before, we did well in the game, so

we were definitely successful."

Iisa knows the importance of fostering team chemistry. "When you have good relationships off the field with your teammates, it really helps you play together and be successful on the field," she said. "I think it really showed in our game [against Estonia] that we had a good bond."

Iisa's teammates were especially welcoming when she first came to Finland. "I got to know them really

fast because we spent the whole day together, every day. I really got to know the players I roomed with the best, since we spent the most time together and were in the same room at night," Iisa said.

In addition to forming relationships with the players, Iisa was also able to get to know her coaches. "I really liked the coaches. They had a good balance of having high expectations, but they were also very nice and wanting

to help. I could tell they were there to help us get better," she said.

Playing with other elite athletes on a national team is one of the most valuable experiences for a player. "I've had the dream of playing for a national team since I was very little, so it still doesn't feel real," said Iisa. "I definitely gained a lot from this experience and I think there's a bunch I can bring from the environment [in Finland] back to my team [in America]."



PHOTO: ZEYNA M'BENGUE

Iisa waits to receive a pass

Freeman Kicker Starting Off On the Right Foot

Ava Flournoy
Staff Writer

When on the football field, Freeman's junior varsity kicker, freshman Kyle Bitsko, represents two sports: football and soccer. He wears a soccer cleat on his right foot to kick the ball and a football cleat on his left foot.

Kyle recently shifted from playing on the pitch to the turf. "I've played soccer all my life but last year I decided to try football out and I liked it a lot," he said. "My soccer background is also the reason why I became a kicker." This season is the first time he has experimented with wearing two different types of athletic footwear.

Different shoes have different functions when it comes to sports footwear. "I chose to wear two different cleats because football cleats [are] made to plant [your foot] and a soccer cleat is made to kick," said Kyle.

The junior varsity football coach, Mr. Cook, explains the science behind it all. "I think the soccer cleat, which is designed [to be] specific to the kicker's foot so that when he kicks the ball, it gives him more velocity and better angle and arc on his kicks," said Mr. Cook.

Another source of Kyle's inspiration was senior Ty Bowman, who also plays with both a soccer and football cleat as a varsity football player. "I got the idea from the varsity kicker that does the same thing," said Kyle. "[Ty has] been kind of my mentor throughout the year and



PHOTO: KYLE BITSKO

Kyle Bitsko sends the ball away on a kickoff

is probably the biggest reason I wear the two different cleats."

Kickers in the National Football League (NFL) use this same strategy, also wearing two different types of cleats. The purpose is to create stability and ensure better ankle support during a kick. This allows them to still use a football cleat for performance but a soccer cleat for a better kick.

Kyle shared one big reason he wears different styles of shoes when he plays football. This has also affected Kyle's decision "You see the [professionals] doing it when you watch NFL games on Sunday," he said. "That really just gives me a boost of confidence when I look down at my cleats before I kick and see that I'm doing the same thing as them."

The physical aspect of a shoe can affect the mental aspects as well. "The soccer cleat helps because it is tighter to the foot so that means less errors, it is really a confidence thing," said Kyle. "And that's the most important thing because [sometimes] it's a mental game."

Kyle mentions how his teammates are supportive of his decision to wear two different cleats

even though they do not follow his lead since this is practiced primarily by kickers. "At first my teammates thought it was a little weird, but after they saw how it helped me out, I think they thought it was pretty cool," said Kyle.

For Kyle, his coach, Mr. Cook, being supportive of his decision to wear two different cleats was a big part of the game for him. "Me and my coach have a good relationship, so he made some fun of it at first but like my teammates, I think he just let me do my thing," said Kyle.

"The first time I ever saw him," said Coach Cook, "I thought he got dressed in the dark and put on two different cleats by accident, but then he told me that he actually has a special kicking shoe."

"I thought he got dressed in the dark and put on two different cleats by accident."

- Coach Cook

Kyle prioritizes comfort over brand when picking out the right cleats. "It is not so much the brand [so] usually I prefer the older looking leather cleats because they have some padding but they are still tight and very comfortable," said Kyle.

In the future, Kyle plans on moving up to the varsity team with his unique style choice. "I mean, I might as well just stick to what works."

DSF WINTER SPORTS



WINTER TRACK

BOY'S B-BALL

GYMNASTICS

WRESTLING

GIRL'S B-BALL SWIMMING

Andy Quach: Male Cheerleading at Freeman

Maggie Jacoby
Staff Writer

Andy Quach, a junior at Freeman, has established his presence as a core member of the cheer team and has become a familiar face of the Freeman Family.

“I signed up during May of my freshman year, meaning I went to the open gyms and did the try-outs for the fall sideline season of my sophomore year. No one specifically inspired me to try out, it kind of just happened,” said Andy. “There was a post on Schoology while we were still virtual, and it advertised conditioning, which I figured would be nice since I needed an excuse to work out, socialize, and get out of the house during quarantine.”

Andy is a backspot on the team, meaning his role is to stand behind the stunt in the back while holding the ankles of the flyer. He is mostly responsible for controlling the stunt while the bases provide most of the upward power.

Andy first learned the cheers for tryouts, but the cheer coaches are “very flexible” with Andy and his

“My main advice would be to keep an open mind and communicate with the team and coaches.”

- Andy Quach

comfort level. “I choose not to do many of the cheers and dances because I don’t feel that entirely comfortable with doing some parts in front of the whole school,” said Andy. Andy’s favorite cheer is called “Scared.” He thinks it’s easy to remember and when the football team is winning by a lot, Andy gets to call out the cheer.

Before cheerleading, Andy played a variety of sports for fun



PHOTO: ZEYNA M'BENGUE

Andy poses for a photo

with his friends. He played volleyball his freshman year, and he still plays for fun in his spare time.

While Andy is a proponent of the team, he has one criticism. “My uniform isn’t the most comfortable. The top is vertically short and tight, so whenever I raise my arms it tends to become essentially a crop top and show my stomach area,” he said. “The pants are the opposite and are on the longer and bigger side, so the bottoms can drag against the floor sometimes.”

His friends have always been supportive of Andy and his cheerleading career. Even strangers have supported Andy at our football games throughout the season, which he has appreciated. Andy doesn’t usually catch people making rude remarks or giving him the side-eye in the Freeman community. “I’m sure I have gotten a few glances and various comments with underlying meanings but I’ve learned to ignore and forget them,” he said. “I try to take it lightly and give them the benefit of the doubt.”

Andy was asked what advice he would give to any other guy trying out for the cheer team. “I’d say that if you’re interested in trying out, definitely go for it,” he said. “It would be great to have a friend on the team. It’s a fun sport and they become your family in a way. My main advice would be to keep an open mind and communicate with the team and coaches.”

Some of Andy’s more practical advice includes “expecting cold football games and coming home late on Fridays because you have to go to every game and stay the entire time. There are also August practices that you have to keep in mind.”

For now, Andy is content with sideline cheer, as he does it to have a fun time and get a workout into his day. He recognizes the huge time commitment for competition cheer, but supports his friends that perform on that level. Andy also wishes to learn how to tumble in the future.



PHOTO: BILL MCCLURE

Andy prepares to catch a fellow cheerleader

Accessibility of Varsity vs. Club Sports

Shishira Nakka
Staff Writer

For many students, playing a sport is an integral part of the high school experience. Those who decide to play for their school either play on the varsity or junior varsity team. Those who want to play a sport outside of school can play through a club or recreationally. However, a disparity found between the two persists — accessibility. This raises an all important question: which teams are more accessible to students?

Lisa Elovaara, junior and avid soccer player at Freeman, participates in both school and club sports and is no stranger to the differences between the two. The main difference between varsity and club sports is that club sports are “outside of school [and] can be very expensive,” she said, as money can “prevent a lot of people from having access to [club sports].”

Coach Bland, varsity football coach at Freeman, said that “varsity sports are sanctioned by an outside governing body — VHSL (Virginia High School League) in our case — for regional and state competitions.” Varsity sports “also receive funding support from the county and boosters,” he said.

Lisa said that she has “played for a Freeman varsity [team] since freshman year, so [she] thinks it’s a lot easier to access because they’re after school and you don’t have to pay to be on the team.”

However, Lisa thinks varsity sports falls short in the fact that “if you don’t make varsity [as a] junior or senior then you can’t play at all.” Surprisingly, both teams are equally accessible for getting in touch with coaches. For information about their teams, “you can reach out to the coaches [to] ask any questions you might have,” she said.

Although both teams have this going for them, transportation remains an issue for some students. For varsity sports, “you can just walk right out on the field, unless it’s an away game. At least after COVID, we haven’t had bus rides to away games, you’ve had to get a ride,” she said. For club sports, it’s a little different. “[The] money aspect is a big thing, especially for club soccer, because you’re travel-



PHOTO: ZEYNA M'BENGUE

The Freeman girls volleyball team huddles up

ling. For example, I’m going to Florida in January, and you have to pay for the hotel, [and] pay for gas if you’re driving,” she said.

Though there is a difference between the accessibility of both teams, hope is not lost for either. On a college level, to make their teams more accessible, club teams can “offer financial aid or extra resources” to those students who “think [they’re] a good player, but can’t afford it,” said Lisa.

On varsity teams, students that play for more funded schools have “[more motivation] for their sport, however for less funded schools, they have less resources, and [lose motivation],” said Lisa. “Succeeding gives you money. So the schools with more resources win more money, creating even more of a gap between the two because the less funded ones don’t have the resources to [help their teams win].”

Lisa believes that it is important for schools to make their sports, both varsity and club, accessible and open to all students. “Henrico

has a wide variety of students and they definitely need the resources because they might not be able to do it on their own,” she said.

Lisa thinks that the origin of inaccessibility within both teams comes from a divide rooted in exclusivity, but also confidence. “Varsity sports are for everyone at school [and] anyone can try out, but for club sports, I think it’s very exclusive,” she said. “Anyone can [still] go to tryouts for club sports, but it’s on a higher level. I would say confidence [makes it] inaccessible as well. Both teams are hard to get on to.”

Sports, especially here at Freeman, “create a [feeling] of unity,” said Lisa. From the first home game to the last, students love to show their support either from the stands or on the field, but it’s up to the schools to make sure that those sports are available to every kind of student. “It’s very important for [the schools] to support those students because it could be all they have,” she said.

FIFA WORLD CUP

BRACKET

FRANCE	ENGLAND	FRANCE	
MOROCCO	PORTUGAL	MOROCCO	FINAL MATCH
ARGENTINA	NETHERLANDS	ARGENTINA	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: 30px; margin: 0 auto;">?</div>
CROATIA	BRAZIL	CROATIA	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: 30px; margin: 0 auto;">?</div>

Wakanda Forever (and ever)

Poppy Friske
Staff Writer

After the cultural phenomenon of “Black Panther” in 2018, audiences anticipated an equally impressive sequel. For the first time, Black communities received long-overdue representation amidst a cinematic universe overpowered by white leading roles. Despite the death of star actor Chadwick Boseman in August of 2020, Marvel Studios was able to produce a second movie that honored his legacy both in American media and the fictional kingdom of Wakanda.

Before it premiered in Richmond theaters, the anticipation for the sequel, entitled “Wakanda Forever”, was prevalent throughout the halls of Freeman High School. Junior Blessing Atra, a member of Freeman’s Black Student Union (BSU) and native of Cameroon, was particularly enthusiastic.

“[“Black Panther”] had a really big impact on me because I was seeing people like me being represented on the screen with all the cool visuals. I was amazed that I was being represented,” said Blessing. “When I came to the US, I saw so many white dominated studios, so I always felt a bit of pressure to be like the white girls ... on TV.”

Blessing said “seeing how black girls like [herself] are being represented now provide[s] comfort.” The cast of Wakanda Forever, starring Letitia Wright, Angela Bassett, and Dominique Thorne, appeared on screen with stunning hairstyles that have previously been criticized for their ‘lack of professionalism’ in Western society.

“I actually had a similar hairstyle to one of the char-



PHOTO: THE CUT



Chadwick Boseman and Letitia Wright actors,” said Blessing, “And I was so amazed that [I was] seeing this on screen ... being represented.” These strong role models embraced their culture in the form of box braids, cornrows, and natural afros, defying formerly-coveted European beauty standards.

For those who know little about the first Black Panther movie, Willa Sharrar, a junior at Freeman and dedicated Marvel fan, gave a recap of the first movie. “After T’Challa’s dad dies, they’re trying to figure out who’s going to be the next king,” she said. T’Challa is then challenged and defeated by Erik Killmonger, played by Michael B. Jordan. “[Killmonger] becomes the king, but he’s just using that power to sell their weapons and take over” said Willa. T’Challa later reclaims the throne, solidifying his reputation as Wakanda’s leader.

The movie has an engaging plot that even a Marvel novice can follow. Starting with a funeral for King T’Challa — the Black Panther — the movie follows his sister, Shuri, as she navigates her grief alongside her mother, Queen Ramonda.

A new villain, Namor, is also introduced, played by Mexican actor Tenoch Huerta, further enhancing the diversi-

ty of the film. In his aquatic kingdom of Talokan, Namor is surrounded by the influence of Latin and Mesoamerican folklore, such as jade head-dresses and serpent-like deities.

During the film, Shuri is faced with agonizing sorrow and pressure, yet she prevails as the hero of the story. The entire cast channels their grief from losing one of their own into protecting their kingdom from the unrelenting forces of Namor. Letitia Wright does an incredible job of portraying real emotions in a fictional setting, reflecting the very real loss of costar Chadwick Boseman.

“To see [the African community] out [on the screen] is very free and very beautiful,” said Blessing. “[It] was very positive for me.” By spotlighting people of color in the film industry, the Black Panther series plays a major role in making the arts a more inclusive space for people of all races. The success of the movie was credited to the many accomplished performers and producers that break the mold of typical American cinema, and continue to ignite a sense of acceptance, pride, and joy in minority youths.

Artist of the Month: Virginia Broughton



PHOTO: VIRGINIA BROUGHTON

Abby Crowe
Editor-in-Chief

As 5-year-old Virginia Broughton left an open house at Echo Lake Elementary School, she could not stop thinking about the group of students she had seen playing violins. From that day, Virginia knew she wanted to be a violinist just like those older kids, but little did she know of the success that she would later achieve.

She is now both the Concertmaster of the Freeman Orchestra and a member of the Richmond Youth Symphony Orchestra.

As she moved up chairs in the Freeman Orchestra, Virginia found herself in the leadership role of Concertmaster as a junior. A Concertmaster is the first chair violinist, meaning they are second in authority only to the conductor, who at Freeman is Rob Blankenship. “[I] make sure the other musicians are ready for the concert and I help tune their instruments when we have practice,” said Virginia. “I work with musicians on certain sections [and] help ‘Mr. B’ prepare for everything.”

In addition to playing here at Freeman, Virginia has also been playing for the Richmond Youth Symphony Orchestra since seventh grade. As a supplement to her private lessons, the symphony provided a new challenge of playing with others. The group practices together once a week and has two performances a year.

As with any instrument, learning to play well takes time, which Virginia has understood since she began playing violin. When she was

younger, she started a challenge to play for 100 days straight. This initial goal evolved into an 800 day playing streak. “I think I broke it in seventh grade,” said Virginia, “but since then, I’ve just tried to stick with practicing almost every day.”

In November, Virginia played violin in the Senior Regional Orchestra (SRO) with other orchestra students from across various states. Students who play either strings, harp, wind, or percussion instruments auditioned in September and musicians of any grade level can participate.

Representing Freeman was senior Virginia Broughton, junior Emmet Townsend, and sophomore Nathaniel Taylor. “[We] had a tornado drill that cut into our time but we were able to make use of the time we had,” said Virginia. “[and] the performance went well.”

Jasmin Abdalla, a friend of Virginia’s, has been with her in orchestra since freshman year. “She and I play the same part in our music and whenever I am struggling with harder notes, she always takes the time to help me understand them,” said Jasmin. During the orchestra class period, Virginia leads the violin sectional by herself and helps tune instruments even without Mr. Blankenship’s help. “She is very determined and puts in a lot of practice,” said Jasmin. “She’s definitely become a lot more confident being our concertmaster over time.”

Virginia hopes to continue her musical career and studies of violin after high school. “I hope that she continues to play her whole life,” said her mother, Tamara Broughton. “I hope that it brings her happiness.”

Virginia Art Museum Showcases the Guitar



PHOTO: VMFA

Henry Haggard
News Editor

Freeman artists and musicians get ready as the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (VMFA) presents “Storied Strings,” an exhibit that showcases the guitar in American art. The exhibit opened on Oct. 8, 2022 and will end on March 19, 2023. Entry costs \$10 for students and is free for VMFA members.

Junior Matthew Kish has been to the VMFA a few times and said he “really enjoys it.” Matthew hasn’t seen the “Storied Strings” exhibit yet, but plans “to go this weekend,” he said. “I’m excited to see how they convey some motions of music.”

Matthew plays the electric guitar for Freeman’s Jazz Band alongside junior Otto Tobin. Otto said that the guitar is “central to how music is shaped these days.” He is a fan of “punk rock music,” which is known for its distorted electric guitars. “The guitar is a very creative instrument,” said Otto. “[Because] there are so many ways to play it.” The instrument, played by nearly every folk singer and rockstar from Woody Guthrie to Kurt Cobain, “is such a staple of American folk culture,” he said.

“Storied Strings” curator Leo Mazow believes that this folk culture may be going unnoticed. Mazow said in a public comment that the exhibit is a way to “tell stories that might otherwise go untold,” about American history and music. Mazow structured

the exhibit to focus on nine different themes, ranging from race and gender to politics and money.

Otto agrees that the guitar plays an important role in questions of race and politics. “A lot of the music that I listen to today has very political roots,” he said. And as the exhibit looks back through history, Otto said he is “super interested [to see] its focus on African-American culture and the guitar.”

Otto is also interested to see how the museum ties what we see to what we hear, because “music and visual art go hand in hand,” he said. “Storied Strings” boasts a range of auditory and visual elements, including six sound loops, 42 paintings, 38 photographs, and 34 guitars, along with many other pieces of art, musical and visual alike. Two nylon-string guitars are also available for visitors to play.

Leo Mazow said that he made “Storied Strings” this interactive because the guitar is “as meaningful to hear as it is fun to play.” For those interested in hearing the instrument, look no further than Richmond Sessions ‘22 ‘23, which is “a recording studio space for musicians of national and regional renown to record songs,” he said. Some of the artists who have played in the Richmond Sessions include Nels Cline of indie-folk band Wilco, blues guitarist Corey Harris, and musician Tommy Emmanuel.

If you do not get the chance to see these performances through the “windows going into the studio [...] at the end of the exhibition,” said Mazow. “The [recordings] will also be available

on the museum’s YouTube page.”

Freeman art teacher Elizabeth Jones has not seen the exhibit yet, but “will definitely go see it,” she said. The guitar, she said, is “not usually a subject matter that we see” in exhibitions, “but it’s obviously present in lots of different work.” She herself is not a musician but respects it as a medium for art. “I always think of music as another language,” she said.

Mrs. Jones encourages her students to visit the VMFA often, because “you might see something slightly different each time [and] it’s not that far from us here at Freeman,” she said. The museum is also open “365 days a year, even on Christmas,” she said, “except for inclement weather.”

As excited as Mrs. Jones is about the museum, Otto Tobin seems equally enthusiastic about playing guitar. “If you don’t have a guitar, pick one up and play it,” Otto said, “They’re really fun, and they’re not that hard to learn.”



PHOTO: THE CHARLES WHITE ARCHIVES

It’s “Almost, Maine” in Henrico, Virginia



PHOTO: ZEYNA M'BENGUE

Afton Hessian
Staff Writer

The Freeman theater department shines once again in the first production of the 2022-23 school year. On Nov. 17-20, the Douglas S. Freeman High School (DSF) theater department put on a production of John Cariani’s play, “Almost, Maine.” The play follows the intricacies of relationships in short glimpses, and features a small cast that is, at times, tasked with playing multiple roles.

“It’s a series of vignettes,” said senior Abby Kirchoff. “It’s about different characters falling in love and breaking up at the same time in a town called Almost, Maine.” The concept itself is different from the traditional linear structure of a play, and therefore different from past DSF theater productions. “I was excited to audition because I’ve never seen any show like that and I have never been in a show like that,” said Abby.

“Almost, Maine” is a play with extensive involvement in student leadership. Actor and head of set design for “Almost, Maine”, senior Lola Mühlenfeld, was tasked with building the set for the play. Through this process, she received support from parents and members of the Freeman family. “The community that’s been helping out the whole time has been really heartwarming to see ... [everyone’s] excited to get the show off the ground and running,” said Lola. With this responsibility comes a great shift in her day to day schedule. “I’ve been working every day after school for four hours to get the set built and on Saturday we have a seven hour work day,” she said.

The setting of “Almost, Maine” is integral to the story because of the weather conditions that are present within the story. “The Northern Lights are a defining feature [in the play], and they are scientifically just a chemical reaction, but here they are used to explain people,” said junior Jesse Blankenship.

Due to the higher altitude, costume manager and junior Jordan Mayers was tasked with creating outfits for a frigid setting. “It’s winter in Maine so expect lots of jackets, scarves, hats, and boots because of the snow,” said Jordan. “I definitely like Lola’s costume a lot ... she wears a fun hat.”

The stage managers for “Almost, Maine” are juniors Jamie Han and Holly Jahn. “I take care of the blocking and in the show I am in the wings, telling people where to go and when to go ... I also work with transitioning the sets,” said Holly. Blocking is the position and movement of actors in a scene and it was a particular favorite of Holly’s. “Scenes with lots of physical comedy are always really fun to block so those were definitely my favorite,” they said.

In addition to this, other work for the play has been mental, with actors having to find ways to embody their character. “One of [my characters] is very macho,” said Jesse. “I’ve had to practice my handshake.”

There is also a consensus among the cast about their relationships with each other. “We’ve always been a family, and we are a family,” said Abby. A similar sentiment was shared with Lola. “We’re thick as thieves, honestly ... it’s just a very thoughtful, supportive environment,” she said.

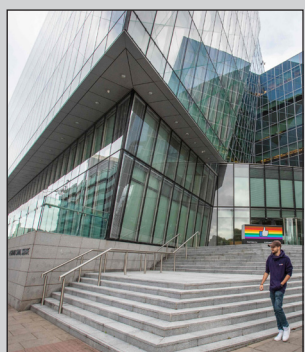
What's going on in the tech world?



Around 3,700 staff at Twitter were let go due to supposed monetary loss after Elon Musk bought the company in late October. Many are concerned over the rise in hate speech and mis-information on the app since Musk's arrival.



The world of cryptocurrency may be coming to an end due to the fall of one of the largest crypto exchange companies, FTX. The failure of the company has led to token prices tumbling and investors pulling their money out of all investments.



On November 28, 2022, The Data Protection Commission fined Meta for a data breach that exposed personal information from more than 500 million users. The company faces a fine of 265 million Euros (approximately \$275 million).



The Qatar World Cup, riddled with technology, is aiming to produce the most precise gameplay possible. From soccer balls equipped with sensors that increase the accuracy of referee calls to face recognition in stadiums, this tournament offers perspective into the future of sports.

Content by Afton Hessian, Katie Hall, Poppy Friske, and Shishira Nakka

Warnock Wins the Georgia Runoff

Abby Crowe
Editor-in-Chief

Incumbent Democrat, Raphael Warnock, secured the 51st seat in the Georgia senate runoff on Tuesday Dec. 6. Edging out by a narrow margin, Warnock's win will give Democrats a more secure majority in the Senate. For the past two years, Vice President Kamala Harris has been needed to break a tie between the 50-50 Democrat-Republican split. Democrats will now have full power to send legislation without Republican objection, and use subpoena power for investigations.

Warnock, a Baptist pastor, will be Georgia's first black full-term Senator. His campaign was deeply influenced by religion and he often referred to voting as a form of prayer. Warnock focused on issues of social-justice, bipartisanship, climate, and voting rights to name a few. His opponent, Herschel Walker, is a former NFL player and heavily relied on his long-time friendship with Donald Trump in hopes of gaining Republican power. The association with Trump proved to be detrimental, not only to his campaign but many other candidates running in the midterm elections. Walker's history is plagued with scandals of all descriptions and it was for these combined reasons that he lost the runoff.

Warnock's success can be attributed to his identity as a pastor and his more moderate views.



Senator Raphael Warnock

Britain's New PM



PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

New British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak

Merrick Mock
Staff Writer

On Oct. 25, 2022, Rishi Sunak filled Liz Truss's role as Prime Minister of Britain. According to National Public Radio (NPR), Truss tried to push through a forceful tax cutting policy leading to a down-fall in Britain's economy and financial stability, causing the Britain pound to plummet to a record low against the U.S. dollar. This led to her resignation just 44 days after being elected, making her the shortest-serving prime minister in history. Rishi Sunak is now the first ever Indian and Hindu prime minister of the United Kingdom. Although Truss did not leave Sunak with many expectations to live up to, he still has the desire to better the country's government and overall well-being, "I will unite our country not with words but action. I will work day in and day out to deliver," he said.

Sunak was born in 1980 in Southampton to Indian parents who had moved from east Africa to the UK. Coming from wealth, Sunak attended a private boarding school and Winchester College where he was a head boy. He then went on to study politics, philosophy, and economics at

the University of Oxford. After graduating, he achieved a masters of business administration at Stanford University, where he met his eventual wife, Akshata Murty.

Regarding political policies, Sunak said he wanted to "fix [the United Kingdom's] economy, unite [the Conservative] party and deliver for our country." Sunak also said he would push legislation designed to unilaterally overrule the Brexit deal while still trying to negotiate with the European Union (EU). The European Union is a supranational political and economic union of 27 member states that are located primarily in Europe. The bill, currently in parliament, has been heavily criticized by the EU. Broken down, Sunak hopes to "keep Brexit safe" and set up a new governmental unit to review EU regulations that still apply in British law (New York Times). With intentions of avoiding a recession and stabilizing the economy, Sunak called for billions in spending cuts and sharp tax increases.

In recent weeks, Sunak has reportedly been considering how the UK will move forward in its relationship with the EU. Sunak told The Independent, "I know that Brexit can deliver, and is already delivering, enormous benefits and opportunities for the country." Control of migration

is one of the benefits of Brexit, said Sunak. He is also in favor of Britain developing a similar trading relationship with the EU that Switzerland has. Switzerland is not a member of the EU, however it does have several agreements with the trading bloc, and has access to the single market for most of its industries. Switzerland also pays into the EU budget and has freedom of movement, meaning EU citizens can live and work in the country.

Regarding the environment, Sunak said, "we're in the midst of an energy crisis." He attended the COP27 Summit on Nov. 6, 2022 alongside 190 other countries. The COP27 follows a year of climate-related disasters and record temperatures. The outcome of this year's summit was a deal on 'loss and damage' regarding climate induced disasters. Recently, the United Nations released a report showing that the rate at which sea levels are rising has doubled since 1993. Sunak also told BBC News, "Fighting climate change is not just a moral good — it is fundamental to our future prosperity and security." Now, Sunak is expected to chair a meeting of world leaders to drive progress on the pledge signed by 100 countries at Glasgow to halt and reverse deforestation and damaging land use by 2030.

Protests in China

Abby Crowe
Editor-in-Chief

Exhausted by demanding Covid protocols, Chinese people are taking to the streets in protest to express their dissatisfaction. The Chinese government has had a "zero covid" policy for almost three years which has shown itself in the form of extreme lockdowns. Many argue the lockdowns have done more harm than good because of how difficult it can be to get to hospitals and the negative economic repercussions that have impacted millions of people. It is believed that Xi Jinping, the leader behind the zero Covid policy, has been using it to bolster his own political campaign. Some protesters are going as far as to urge Mr. Xi to step down after

10 years as president of China.

Another complaint of the protesters is Mr. Xi's censorship policy. The extremely strict policy has banned not only speech but men's earrings, tattoos, cleavage, and much more. Many describe the censorship as taking the fun out of daily life.

In response to the uproar, China has set up sensors to track who is participating in the marches and those who protest are often faced with jail, detention, harassment from the police, or worse. A majority of the protesters are young people who are boldly proclaiming that they do not want the current system of government. Despite how broad the protests appear to be, the vast majority of China is pro-government, making it difficult for this wave of political awakening to fully take over.



Demonstrators hold up a signs in protest

"Women, Life, Freedom"



Demonstrator's hold a banner in support of Iranian women

Lillie Deaton Connor
Features Editor

Mahsa Amini's death on Sep. 16, evoked a spread of mass protests across Iran regarding police brutality and women's rights. The "shy, reserved woman who never challenged the country's clerical rulers or its Islamic dress code," a source close to the family said, allegedly breached the Islamic republic's strict dress code for women resulting in her arrest. Cited

as "inappropriate attire" — too much hair protruding from a headscarf, Amini met her death only three days later. Iranian security forces issued a statement claiming that Amini died of a heart attack at the detention center. However, many, including her family, do not believe this to be true.

In response to Amini's death, crowds gathered at the 22-year-old's funeral on Sep. 17, chanting the slogan 'Woman Life Freedom.' This slogan has become the rallying cry of the movement and a symbol of feminist solidarity across the world.

While the current uprising may seem

new, it follows decades of women's resistance. During the Constitutional Revolution in 1906, women played a critical role; establishing women's associations, joining protests and supporting strikes. And in 1979, a month after the Islamic Revolution, demonstrations were initiated after hearing talk about a hijab mandate. Although activists were able to postpone the mandate, it was eventually instated in 1983.

Amini is not alone. Five days after Amini's death, Hadis Najafi posted a TikTok with this message during a protest, "I hope in a few years when I look back, I will be happy that everything has changed for the better," said Najafi. She was shot in the head hours later. Another 16-year-old blogger, who asked on social media, "I always think, Why did I have to be born in Iran?" was reportedly beaten to death during a rally in Karaj. The government claimed the 16-year-old jumped from a rooftop.

Recently, multiple protesters have been sentenced to death on the charge of "enmity against God," and on Dec. 8, a 23-year-old man was executed for his involvement.

Lawsuit Filed Over Virginia Beach Walmart Shooting

Adair Reid
Editor-in-Chief

An employee who survived the Nov. 23 shooting in a Chesapeake, Virginia Walmart that killed six and injured four is now suing the company for \$50 million after alleging the company was negligent in continuing to employ the shooter, a store supervisor.

The plaintiff, Donya Prioleau, alleged that the company had ignored complaints of the gunman, 31-year-old Andre Bing's "known propensities for violence, threats and strange behavior," that she had filed months before the shooting. The lawsuit also seeks compensation for post-traumatic stress disorder suffered by Prioleau after witnessing the attack in the breakroom and the deaths of her colleagues.

The lawsuit also contains

information about the gunman's behavior leading up to the shooting, including a "death note" detailing personal vendettas against fellow employees and a list of people to target and spare, along with disturbing comments to coworkers about active shooter training. It also details Walmart's disciplinary actions towards Bing, such as a demotion for "improper and disturbing interactions with others" which was reversed as he was later reinstated as a "team leader."

Employees will continue to be paid, but the Chesapeake store will remain closed for the foreseeable future. In a memo released on Nov. 29 memorializing the six victims, head of Walmart U.S. operations John Furner said "We'll work closely with the team to decide how and when we might remodel and reopen in a way that will help them move forward."